



## MAIN RESULTS

- Census of tree of heaven presence in the Alta Murgia National Park with satellite mapping system
- Implementation of a sustainable and environment friendly control strategy effective for tree of heaven and other woody invasive species
- Durable eradication of the species
- Raising awareness in the local population, public administration and all stakeholders on biodiversity and invasive alien species issues



Photo by: Francesca Casella



With the contribution of the LIFE financial instrument of the European Community



Control and eradication  
of the invasive exotic plant species  
*Ailanthus altissima*  
in the Alta Murgia National Park  
LIFE12 BIO/IT/000213

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## INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES: A THREAT TO BIODIVERSITY



## PROJECT

Control and eradication of the invasive exotic plant species *Ailanthus altissima* in the Alta Murgia National Park



LIFE12 BIO/IT/000213  
www.lifealtamurgia.eu

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

### Title:

Control and eradication of the invasive exotic plant species *Ailanthus altissima* in the Alta Murgia National Park ([www.lifealtamurgia.eu](http://www.lifealtamurgia.eu))

### Programme:

LIFE+ Biodiversity

### Coordinator:

**CNR, ISPA** – Institute of Scienze of Food Production, Bari ([www.ispa.cnr.it](http://www.ispa.cnr.it))

### Associated beneficiary:

- **CFS, CTA** – National Forest Service, Environmental Territorial Unit ([www.corpoforestale.it](http://www.corpoforestale.it))
- **Alta Murgia National Park** ([www.parcoaltamurgia.it](http://www.parcoaltamurgia.it))
- **ARIF** – Regional Agency for Forestry and Irrigation Activities ([www.arifpuglia.it](http://www.arifpuglia.it))

**Period:** 1/10/2013 - 31/12/2017

**Total Budget:** 1.757.000 euro

**EU Contribution:** 832.000 euro

**Project area:** Parco Nazionale dell'Alta Murgia



## WHAT IS LIFE+ BIODIVERSITY

LIFE+ program is the financial instrument set up by the European Commission with the aim of offering specific support for the conservation and protection of the environment, nature and biodiversity at Community level. Since 1992, LIFE has co-financed some 4,000 projects, contributing with three billion euro to environmental protection.

LIFE+ Biodiversity program co-finances projects that contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the Commission Communication "Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 - and beyond".

## ALTA MURGIA NATIONAL PARK

*Natura 2000 SCI/SPA IT9120007 "Murgia Alta"*

Established on March 10, 2004, the Park is one of the most extended national and European parks with its 68 thousands hectares and includes thirteen municipalities belonging to the provinces of Bari and BAT. The Park is mostly characterized by mediterranean dry grasslands, rocky crests, sweet hills, sinkholes, caraic caves, scarps, natural pastures and cultivations, pine forests and oak woods. Here the perennial action of nature blends with the thousand years action of man who built fortified stone farmhouses, fences and sheepfolds, tanks, snow warehouses (called neviere) and endless network of dry stone walls. Some of these areas are priority habitats for conservation purposes, protected under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

## BIODIVERSITY PROBLEM

*Ailanthus altissima* is a plant species with Asian origin. It is highly "invasive" as it spreads spontaneously in natural, semi-natural and even urbanized environment. The species is very rustic and able to adapt to any type of soil and water regime. It reproduces equally well both by seed and asexually, by an extended and vigorous root system generating numerous suckers and progeny plants. One plant can produce up to 300,000 dried fruits (samaras) per year. Young seedlings grow very quickly and have a remarkable vigor. Once established they are very hard to eradicate. Plants invade natural areas forming highly dense stands that displace and outcompete native species altering protected habitats and ecosystems. Invasive alien species are the second most important threat to biodiversity after habitats loss. They must therefore be eradicated to prevent biodiversity loss and to preserve our landscapes, natural environments, and all native species.



[www.lifealtamurgia.eu](http://www.lifealtamurgia.eu)



## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Eradication of the invasive alien woody species *Ailanthus altissima* from the Alta Murgia National Park by innovative, eco-friendly and sustainable control methods with the aim of:

- halt the loss of EU biodiversity and strengthen its conservation
- reduce the spread and negative impact of the most widespread invasive alien species of the Park
- safeguard and restore EU most important natural habitats and wild species protected under the Habitat and Wild Birds Directives

## MAIN ACTIVITIES

- *Ailanthus* mapping in the Park
- Production of a questionnaire for landowners and farmers
- Technical personnel training
- Managing invasive plants with eco-friendly methods
- Trunks recovery and disposal
- Evaluation of the impact of the project activities
- Web page development
- Organization of meetings, seminars and educational events
- Production of leaflets, panels, brochures
- Field demonstration of the proposed techniques
- Dissemination of results
- Media communication
- "After LIFE +" program set up for long term use
- Network with other projects