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ABSTRACTS

***Fostering Integrative
Studies of Volcanoes***



Daniele Andronico, Gilda Currenti, Sergio Longo, Lorenzo Brusca, Sergio Calabrese, Tommaso Caltabiano, Antonino Cristaldi, Walter D'Alessandro, Cinzia Federico, Ferruccio Ferrari, Filippo Greco, Alessandro La Spina, Manfredi Longo, Lucia Messina, Rosalba

Submission 927

SEW – Save the Etna World

At more than 3,330 m high and ~40 km wide, Mount Etna in Sicily, Italy, is the highest volcano in Europe and one of the most active in the world. Etna stands majestic wherever you look at it, showing a distinctive skyline from each side. More than 200,000 people live around its mid-slopes, while another 300,000 are in the biggest city, Catania, located at its southern lower slope. The volcano is so imposing that there are many different landscapes and habitats, often highly dissimilar. Ente Parco dell'Etna (Etna Park) is the institution, started in 1987, covering the core of the volcano, protecting its biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes, and lastly promoting the sustainable development of local populations. Within this framework, Etna has recently been added to the list of the World Heritage sites of UNESCO, which described it as "an iconic site encompassing 19,237 uninhabited hectares on the highest part".

Save the Etna World (SEW) is an Italian National project funded by "Fondazione CON IL SUD", which through a multidisciplinary approach aims at implementing a common strategy for monitoring and protecting unique habitats and biodiversity at Etna. Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia, Osservatorio Etneo (INGV-OE) is one of the partners of the project. Our main duties are monitoring and assessing the impact of the volcanic activity on the environmental elements. The territory surrounding Etna is frequently affected by tephra fallout and volcanic gas dispersion, which may alter the chemical-physical features of the ecosystem but also provides excellent nutrients for soils and vegetation. The data collected will advance our understanding of the relationships between the environment and volcanic activity and will help towards defining the best practices for a more efficient use of economic resources with implications for the socio-economic activities in the Etna area.

A broad-spectrum of outreach activities will promote the environmental, social, economic and cultural heritage of Etna and raise awareness towards the environment among the local population. INGV-OE will participate in the "information, education and governance" of SEW activities, providing modules dedicated to volcanology, organizing seminars and workshops, and developing teaching tools for schools. Furthermore, INGV-OE will play a scientific support role in the dissemination of the monitoring activity results and collection of best practices in the field of environmental risk.