



S.It.E. – SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI ECOLOGIA

## BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

# **XXXIV Congresso Nazionale della Società Italiana di Ecologia**

*Ecologia e sostenibilità:  
strategie per affrontare le sfide del terzo millennio*



CASERTA, 17 – 19 SETTEMBRE 2025

Libro degli abstract presentati al XXXIV Congresso della Società Italiana di Ecologia “Ecologia e sostenibilità: strategie per affrontare le sfide del terzo millennio” — Caserta, 17 – 19 Settembre 2025. Tutti i diritti riservati. Nessuna parte può essere riprodotta senza l’autorizzazione scritta del legale rappresentante della S.It.E. Copyright © 2025 della S.It.E.

Volume curato da Alessandro Bellino ed edito dal Comitato organizzatore. Logo del convegno prodotto da Valerio Cenciarelli. Infrastruttura digitale per la gestione dei contributi ([www.sitetool.eu](http://www.sitetool.eu)) sviluppata da Alessandro Bellino.

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In recent years, Citizen Science (CS) has become increasingly important for monitoring biodiversity and its pressures and threats, such as invasive alien species. In the European, some of the invasive alien species with the greatest impact on biodiversity are listed under the Regulation (EU) No. 1143/2014, which requires all Member States to conduct management actions, including continuous monitoring. This monitoring is essential to identify new invasion foci (early warning) for potential eradication, as well as heavily invaded areas, where management and containment measures must be implemented. This study aims to implement a national-scale CS initiative (AilantItaly) to enhance knowledge on the ecology, distribution, and spread of the invasive species *Ailanthus altissima* (Mill.) Swingle in Italy.

Through active public engagement and collaboration among 15 research institutions and organizations, the project, launched within the framework of the TESO working group (Tavolo ESOTiche – UniMiB and UniMoRe) under the National Biodiversity Future Center (NBFC), seeks to collect large-scale occurrence data to support early detection, detailed mapping and modelling, and the development of targeted management strategies. Data are collected and shared through a dedicated project, AilantItaly, launched on March 15th, 2025, on the iNaturalist platform (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/ailantitaly>), a global biodiversity data repository. The initiative promotes active and structured monitoring in urban, natural, and semi-natural environments. By comparing *Ailanthus altissima* records on iNaturalist before and after the launch of AilantItaly, we explored and provided evidence of: (i) the effectiveness of CS in enhancing spatial and ecological knowledge of the target species at a national scale in Italy, and (ii) the identification of geographic areas with higher susceptibility to invasion, based on citizen-contributed data. Combining scientific rigour with participation, the project fosters dialogue between academia and society, showcasing how CS contributes to addressing invasive species challenges.