ABSTRACTS' BOOK

Global Strategy for Plant Conservation

First International Symposium of the FIP

Valencia 13th-17th September 2011 | Botanical Garden University of Valencia

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Edita: Jardín Botánico, Universitat de València
Textos: De cada contribución sus autores
Impresión: Zamit Digital, Valencia 13 de septiembre de 2011

Depósito Legal: V-3005-2011

THE RELICTUAL WOODLANDS WITH LAURUS NOBILIS L. OF SICILY (ITALY): PHYTOSOCIOLOGICAL, PHYTOGEOGRAPHICAL, ECOLOGICAL AND DISTRIBUTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Gianguzzi Lorenzo, Damico Agostino, Ilardi Vincenzo, Cuttonaro Pasquale, Cusimano Dario
University Of Palermo, Department Of Environmental Biology And Biodiversity, Palermo, Italy

Abstract:

The Council Directive 92/43/EEC – more commonly known as Habitats Directive, and aimed at the conservation of biodiversity in Europe – includes the forest vegetation with Bay Laurel in the "Arborescent matorral with Laurus nobilis" habitat (5230* code), considered as priority. In this regard, also in Sicily (Italy) some surveys have been undertaken in the territory aimed at monitoring sites, leading to the reporting of some interesting stations characterized by the presence of forest nuclei with a relic character (Gianguzzi et al., 2010), phytosociologically attributed to the association *Acantho mollis-Lauretum nobilis (Arbuto-Laurion nobilis, Quercetea ilicis).*

These forest stands, found mainly in the areas of Sicani, Nebrodi and Hyblaean Mountains, are characterized by very old *L. nobilis* stumps, showing signs of antique coppicing, with plenty of branches up to 13-15 metres high, and 30-45 cm in diameter. In these woodlands some other laurophyllous (*Hedera helix, Rhamnus alaternus subsp. alaternus, Ruscus aculeatus, Smilax aspera* and sometimes also *Viburnum tinus*) and lianous (*Rubia peregrina* var. *longifolia, Asparagus acutifolius, Tamus communis, Clematis vitalba, Calystegia sylvatica* and *Rubus ulmifolius*) species are associated with significant frequency, together with few other broad-leaved grasses, such as *Acanthus mollis* and *Cyclamen hederifolium* subsp. *confusum,* these latter dominant in the undergrowth.

Under the phytogeographical aspect, the Sicilian association is interpreted as a southern vicariant of other similar coenoses distributed in the Mediterranean region; in the regional area the coenose contributes to increase the variability of woody formations hitherto known for the insular territory, as well as to provide useful elements for the understanding of the most recent paleoenvironmental dynamics. In fact, the distribution of these residual nuclei is indicative of "ancient shelter sites" for that floristic component little tolerant to the climatic rigidities, where it remained shelved during the most critical stages of the Pleistocene-Holocene period. Given the scientific-naturalistic relevance of these residual forest nuclei, a careful conservation action would be appropriate, considered the habitats vulnerability because of the looming threats, determined primarily by human activities which affect the territory.

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