



Trails through the Park

Mountain Bike

and Horseback





The islands of Elba, Pianosa and Giglio, protected by the Tuscan Archipelago National Park, are ideal for exploration by mountain bike or on horseback. On Elba, the largest island, in particular, visitors who leave the coast and head for the uplands of the interior will find a network of unpaved roads that enable them to travel the island in greater tranquillity and enjoy stunning views, discovering striking landscapes and important natural features at a calm pace. The best itineraries follow old military or forestry tracks that enable us to get away from the road traffic and enjoy our excursion undisturbed, although we will often be forced to return to the paved roads and join other vehicles to regain our starting point

General advice for all

Take sufficient reserves of water and energy supplements with you.

Respect your natural surroundings. Do not damage the flora or disturb wild animals and birds. Take your litter home with you.

General advice for mountain bikers

Always wear a helmet.

Be objective when assessing your level of fitness and weigh up the weather conditions before starting a ride.

Proceed with caution, adapting your speed to suit the trail conditions and reducing speed when going downhill, on bends and on uneven ground.

Take care when passing other vehicles or walkers who are using the same trails and follow the Highway Code.

Check your bike before starting and take a standard repair kit with you.



Wear suitable clothing for the time of year.

General advice for horseriders

For riders only: bring your usual protective gear with you since it will not always be available at your chosen equestrian centre. Use suitable insect repellent for the area and time of year: ticks and insects may be a threat.

For riders travelling with their horses: contact the ferry companies for information in advance when planning to take horses on the Piombino – Portoferraio crossing. Toremar offers a good service on the vessel Aethalia, which has an open area on the car deck where horses enjoy good conditions on the crossing even in summer, when temperatures in enclosed areas may reach 40°C.

Naturally, the service must be booked well in advance, especially in summer. As well as the equipment required to groom and care for your horse, also bring plenty of tack, since there are no shops selling these articles on Elba. Last but not least, it is best to be well equipped with insect repellents and basic medical necessities for treating horses, which might not be easily available.



1

Length: 20.5 km

Road and trail surface: paved 23% unpaved 77%

Total climb: 250 m

Average time: 2 h 30 minutes

Difficulty: easy/medium

Monte Calamita Circular Ride **Calamita Bike Park Eastern Elba**

Il Starting point

The route starts from Piazza del Cavatore, outside Capoliveri town hall, from where we head for the southern slopes of Monte Calamita. At the starting point, close to the small roundabout with an old mine truck loaded with magnetite near it, follow the road signs for the Calamita mine.

The route forms part of the Calamita Bike Park, a series of routes running for more than 100 km across the Monte Calamita near Capoliveri, and is one of the easiest of them.

Things to be seen

The route runs around the southern outskirts of Capoliveri and for a short section it follows a smooth paved road. For Capoliveri's older inhabitants, this is still the road to the iron mines, that used to take the miners to the Capo Calamita and Ginevro workings: the mines, closed in 1982, were a major source of income for eastern Elba for centuries. Many of the miners used to use bicycles (not modern mountain bikes, of course) to get to work. The paved road soon gives way to an unpaved surface, although the road is still wide and fairly good, especially because it remains more or less on the level, at around 165 metres above sea level for a large proportion of the route.

The route then continues along the flanks of Monte Calamita (410 m a.s.l.); here the ancient rocks are deeply scored by valleys and seasonal watercourses, which force the track to take long zigzags along the mountainside. On the right are striking views of the sea, over Golfo Stella towards the Monte Capanne massif. Below are the beaches and seaside villages of Morcone, Pareti and



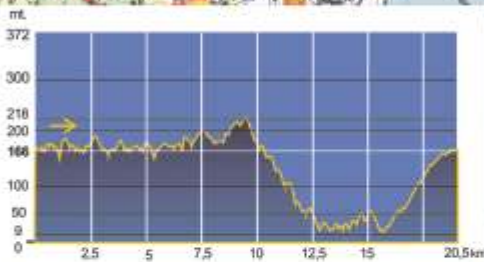
Innamorata, charming south-facing resorts sheltered by the mountain. There is a sea view all along the route. The islands of the archipelago mark the line of the distant horizon, with Pianosa lying long and low to the south-west, Montecristo to the south and Giglio, further away to the south-east, appearing on the clearest days. On these clear days, the long, mountainous outline of Corsica also appears to the west.

The trail continues to lead south, to the old mine workshop (6.2 km), today a location for guided tours, and the Capo Calamita mine workings, with very large magnetite deposits. We keep pedalling eastwards with a few ups and downs (Fosso del Calestrone 188 above sea level), along the slopes of Poggio Polverai, and along the way we get glimpses of the coast below, with the lovely Remaiolo bay, its charming beach and the cliff running along to the Ripalti point. Fosso del Remaiolo (about 170 metres a.s.l.) marks the start of an uphill section, climbing to Piano del Gorgo, the highest point on the route (216 metres a.s.l. - 10.3 km), where the Ripalte Estate buildings are located.

At the farm entrance, we take the road to the right, following the Capoliveri Bike Park sign, and our ride around the eastern slopes of the mountains starts with a steep descent. This section of the route has quite a lot of greenery, with maquis vegetation and a few pinewoods, which fortunately survived a terrible fire that devastated the area in 1998.

Tav. 1

Monte Calamita Circular Ride





The trail curves downwards along the slopes of the mountain: there are thrilling views of the sea, the island's eastern coastline and the strait of Piombino. Unless we wish to stop for a swim in the pretty cove, at 12 km we ignore the track that leads down to the Stagnone bay and keep on to the north towards the Sassi Neri mining area, where a small pool has now formed in the workings (13.20 km). We have now descended a great deal and will soon reach Punta di Buzzancone, 14 metres a.s.l. Now a few up and down sections take us past some of the loveliest coves on this stretch of coastline, quiet little inlets against the green background of the maquis: in this order, they are Punta Nera, Buzzancone, Istia, with the pretty Liscoli island (14.44 km), Calanova (15 km) and Malpasso. A little further on, just before Straccoligno, we come to the paved road again, and from there we restart the climb that will take us back to Capoliveri to complete our circuit of Monte Calamita (20.5 km).



2

Length: 19.8 km
Road and trail surface: paved 70% unpaved 30%
Total climb: 540 m
Average time: 3 h
Difficulty: hard

Circular Ride on the Slopes of Monte Capanne - Western Elba

Starting point

The start of our ride is close to the village of Sant'Ilario, near the car park beside Via del Salicastro, the road along which we will be setting out.

Things to be seen

Before starting the ride, or on our return, it is worth visiting Sant'Ilario, a little urban and architectural gem, with a defensive structure consisting of a barrier of buildings arranged in an oval to protect the centre of the village. A maze of narrow streets leads to the heart of the village, the light-filled Piazza di Chiesa, dominated by the ancient church of Sant'Ilario.

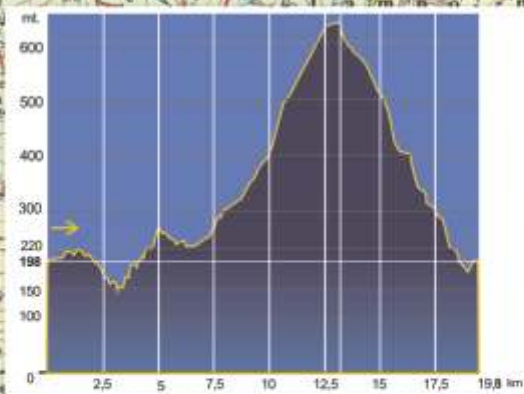
We now take Via del Salicastro, which leads to the edge of the village and soon afterwards becomes unpaved. The way climbs gently up the slopes of Monte Perone, crossing a few bridges over the little seasonal watercourses leading down from the mountain. The name of the road we have taken is very apt - "Salice" is the Italian for "willow", and there are trees of this species growing in the damp valleys. The trail is surrounded by maquis vegetation. At times, the terrain is sandy: this is due to the crumbling of the granite, the rock of which Elba's western massif consists, which is modified and oxidised by the weather, transforming it into a pale, slightly yellowish sand. Holes can be seen in the eroded rock along the roadsides; they are the nests of bee-eaters, the colourful migratory birds which come from Africa to nest on Elba and elsewhere in the area. A few pines stand high above the maquis. The trail drops down a little, becoming rougher, and comes to Le Solane, where we will take the trail to the left (2.6 km). This drops even further down and remains rough, as it leads us onto another side of the mountain. We now venture



onto Monte Perone's north-eastern slopes, and the vegetation gradually becomes taller and more wooded, with more and more ilex trees. The way continues along a rather rough forestry track, with ups and downs, some of them steep, taking us to the small chapel of Santa Rita, with a number of thank-offerings inside. We carry on through woodland and soon afterwards we come to Acqua Calda, passing close to the farm of the same name and then a number of majestic ilex trees. The track climbs steeply before joining a wider road that joins Via di Lavacchio, a paved road which passes close to the little church of the Madonna del Buonconsiglio before leading into the woods towards Poggio. After the Da Luigi restaurant, we take a narrow path on the left (7.3 km), a real historic mule track, where it is best to get off our bikes because the cobbled surface is breaking up and for reasons of safety, since there a number of unprotected drops to the valley below. The path climbs into the vegetation to a stone bridge and then onto Via di Rimercoio, which leads onto the paved provincial highway (SP 25) near the village of Poggio (8.7 km). We will now be sharing the road with motor vehicles, so we need to ride carefully. Before turning onto the Monte Perone provincial highway (SP 37), it is worth taking a detour to the village of Poggio, with its narrow streets and its buildings arranged in an ellipse along the contour lines of the hill. We return to our route to start the steepest climb on the circuit, rising from 300 m to 600 metres a.s.l. at the pass, and if we wish up to 630 metres on the summit of Monte Perone (13.2 km). The strip of asphalt winds through the shady Nivera valley, which takes its name from a number of unusual stone cisterns created to conserve the winter snow and ice for use in summer ("neve" is the Italian for snow, hence "Nivera"). The

Tav. 2

Circular Ride on the Slopes of Monte Capanne





road leads through woodland of ilex, chestnut and maquis trees: we are facing the last pull up to the highest point on our circuit, the top of Monte Perone, covered with a fine pinewood consisting mainly of umbrella pines, their trunks bent by the wind, rising from a carpet of fern. When we reach the pass, we may decide to turn left along the fire break that leads to the top of the mountain, for a thrilling view of the island and its coastlines. On the other side, near the path that leads towards Monte Capanne, is the Butterfly Sanctuary, a fascinating location for the observation and conservation of these creatures. For another panoramic view, follow the nearby path for the visually impaired, which leads to a clearing with benches overlooking the plain of Campo and the sea, dotted with the southern islands of the Archipelago. On our return to the paved road, we start the descent, travelling swiftly across the southern flanks of Monte Perone, sometimes down steep drops, through pinewoods, maquis and chestnut woods. On the way there are more surprises, such as the ruins of the church of San Giovanni in Campo (XII Century), one of the finest examples of the Pisan Romanesque style, with its large bell gable. A little further down is the striking square tower of San Giovanni (XI Century), also from the Pisan period, standing on a large block of granite. We continue on down the last, steeper downward stretches and soon afterwards we come to provincial highway 29, turning towards Sant'Ilario to complete the circuit.

3



Pianosa by Bike

As the name suggests (“piano” means “flat”), Pianosa is the flattest of the islands in the Tuscan Archipelago, making it ideal for cycling.

The island was closed to visitors for a long time, since until 1998 it was entirely occupied by a large prisonfarm and maximum security prison.

The island was therefore divided in two by a large reinforced concrete wall; the prison, with its various buildings dotted across the island and the land cultivated by the detainees, and the smaller village area, home to the prison staff and others serving the community. After the closure of the prison, Pianosa was virtually abandoned, and it was not opened for guided tours until 1999.

Although there are no hills as such, with just a few slight ups and downs, the large tyres of mountain bikes are ideal for the surfaces of the island's roads. Except for within the village itself, there are no paved roads but just unpaved tracks, too rough for the tyres of ordinary touring bikes but ideal for mountain bikes' larger, tougher wheels. It should be remembered that the area of the former prison farm can only be visited accompanied by environmental guides, who offer various itineraries through the reserve, allowing visitors to explore the island's landscape.

Starting point

Mountain bike rides start from the old village, not far from the quay where the small ferry from Marina di Campo to Pianosa docks.

Things to be seen

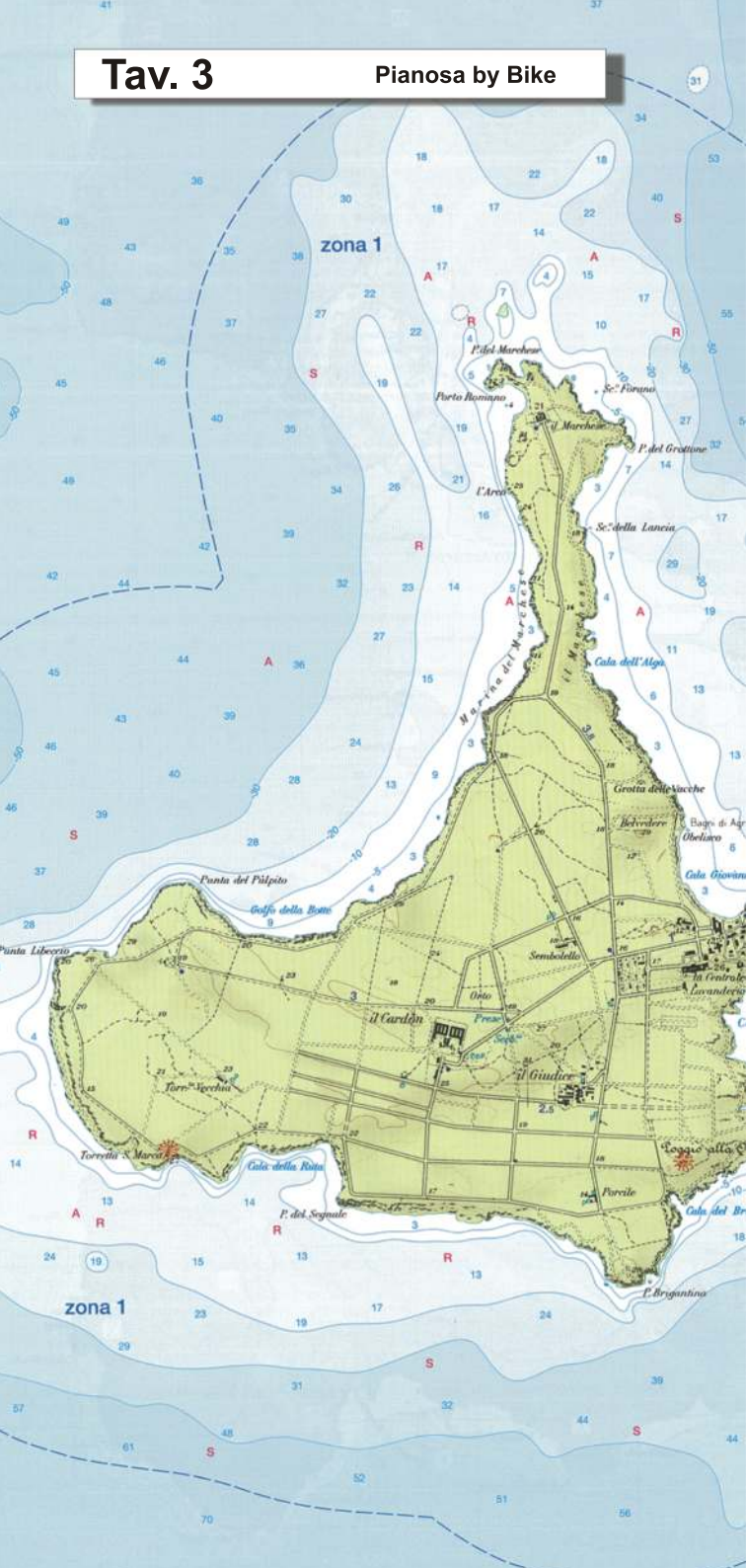
Leaving behind the village and the barriers, the oldest built in the Nineteenth Century to separate the village from the prison area, we can venture into the area of the former prison farm, which included the five prison buildings, surrounded by the fields cultivated by the prisoners themselves.



Behind the reinforced concrete wall, the lighthouse which is the highest point anywhere on Pianosa is immediately visible. Of the prison buildings, we recommend a visit to Sembolello, the smallest, which from 1932 to 1934 housed the future Italian President Sandro Pertini as a political detainee. If the weather conditions allow and if we have enough energy, we can continue to the Punta del Marchese, the northern tip of Pianosa, with the prison building of the same name, built to resemble a castle. From here we can see the Roman Port, an attractive inlet used as a shelter and natural harbour in ancient times. The tracks lead us alongside the land which was once cultivated by the prisoners, with vineyards, olive groves, fields and orchards. Livestock were also kept, with wilder areas and fields used for grazing. The prisoners' handiwork can be seen in the many drystone and faced walls alongside the tracks. The inmates themselves cleared the land and removed tonnes of stones, later used to build these structures, which also protected the fields from the strong salty winds which often sweep across Pianosa in winter. But a bike ride around Pianosa also means a chance to take a look, at a slow pace, at a rich, astonishing natural world, with the thousand spring flowers in the former arable fields, which change colour several times from March to August as the various species succeed each other. During the same spring and summer months the maquis is equally varied in hues, with the bright blues of the

Tav. 3

Pianosa by Bike





rosemary and the white and pink of the cistus that accompany the cyclist together with the fragrances drawn by the sun from the fronds of the various plants. The seaside landscapes are thrilling, with the small inlets, edged with juniper scrub, with turquoise waters rich in marine fauna, with the cliffs falling sheer to a crystalline, turquoise sea, or with the uneven, fragmented coastal flatlands, interspersed with small hollows where salt deposits form, once used as natural salt pans for this very reason. Here a few pages in the island's geological history are revealed to the reader: the many fossils of shells and other sea creatures tell us that once the island was part of a seabed, and that most of its rocks consist of the calcium-rich shells of these ancient species. Birdwatchers will be able to observe the colourful flight of the bee-eaters or the soaring birds of prey, or enjoy seeing the partridges and pheasants run alongside the bikes when the group passes. What's more, during migrations countless species of birds stop over to feed at Pianosa, a large platform that is the ideal staging-post on their long journeys across the sea.



4

Length: 39 km (return)
Road and trail surface: paved 98% unpaved 2%
Total climb: 880 m
Average time: 4 h
Difficulty: hard

Giglio by Bike

Giglio is the Archipelago's second largest island, 21.1 km² in area. It is much smaller than Elba, but its hills are high for its size and it can have pleasant surprises in store for cycling and sports enthusiasts. Naturally, a certain degree of fitness is required for the climb from sea level to the 400 metres of Giglio Castello, but after all it is climbs like this that provide the necessary challenge for the keenest cyclists, especially when hard work with our legs has earned us the views to be enjoyed from the fortifications of Giglio's old town or the boundless vistas across the open sea from the Capel Rosso lighthouse. And in any case, we can always get off and push; this is definitely not a race, and the important thing is to get the most from the route, at our own speed. We will be putting our energy into exploring an island on a human scale, and we will find that two wheels are one of the best ways of observing the landscape and natural heritage. The routes mainly run along the paved provincial highways that link the island's three villages, and the minor roads running to the island's southernmost part and the heart of the Tuscan Archipelago National Park.

Starting point

The route starts from Giglio Porto, accessible by the scheduled ferry service from Porto Santo Stefano. We may take bikes across on the ferry or hire them on the island itself.

Things to be seen

The two lights welcome us to the entrance to Giglio Porto, the small village on the eastern shore of the island dominated by the round tower built by Ferdinando I de' Medici in 1596. Today, Giglio Porto is a charming seaside village, bustling and packed with visitors during the summer months. We leave the busy promenade along Via di Castello, provincial highway 15, which immediately climbs away from the harbour. We ignore the left turn for the Cannelle beach,



which we may choose to visit on our return for one last swim before we leave the island. We will already have seen our destination from the ferry shortly before disembarking: high above us, it is the island's dramatic Castle, dominating the upland area and built on rock, like an eagle's nest. The road therefore continues to climb; we pass the turn for the small Arenella beach on our right, and on our left the old cobbled mule track which takes a steeper path to the Castle. As we go, we have views of the granite cliffs and glimpses of the sides of the island's hills, once almost completely terraced to accommodate the vines that produced ansonica grapes, used to make Giglio's fine Ansonaco wine. A sharp bend brings a change in direction: we are near the bottom of the Poggio Verdello hill. On its top, surrounded by a dense pinewood, is the old lighthouse, now no longer in operation. We continue along the Provincial highway and soon afterwards come to the turn for Giglio Campese: this point (4 km - 267 m a.s.l.) is the start of Provincial highway 57, which quickly descends around a series of hairpin bends to the attractive resort on the island's western coast. This is the island's most recent settlement, which has grown up around the XVII Medici Tower, a defensive structure built on a small island at the northern tip of the bay. Today Campese (7.5 km) is a holiday resort with all amenities, offering two different beaches: one with paler granite sand, consisting of tiny quartz crystals, and the other darker with higher iron content, rich in fragments of pyrites and haematite. The water is crystal-clear, ideal for swimming and observing the underwater life. The western end of the limestone Franco promontory ends in the sea with an impressive needle rock formation at the gulf's southern tip. Once we have retraced our steps to the junction for the Castle (highway 15), the climb continues, and leads to Piazza Gloriosa (13 km - 371 m a.s.l.), just outside the ancient hamlet itself. Here there is a thrilling view of the old village. We have only to enter through

Tav. 4

Giglio by Bike





one of the three gates in the walls to explore the old buildings with their maze of streets and alleyways, climbing to the most impressive structure, the medieval Rocca Aldobrandesca fortress. Not far away, fine views of the island and the sea around it are to be had through a number of openings in the walls. After visiting the village, we can get back on our bikes and take Via Santa Maria, which runs along the western edge of the Poggio della Chiusa hill and then follow Via del Corvo around the Poggio della Pagana, the highest hill on Giglio, towards the southern part of the island. Here, around the northern side of the Poggio della Pagana, we will find the island's main ilex woods, which will then give way to maquis and scrubland a little further to the south. The road gradually descends along the western slopes of the island's hills; here again, we will come across abandoned terraces, carpeted in spring with the thousand flowers of the Mediterranean vegetation. The paved road ends just before we get to the lighthouse. We continue along the unpaved track (19.5 km) and then along the path which we may take on foot to reach the beacon on the farthest tip of Capel Rosso. We are near the great lighthouse, surrounded by maquis vegetation of cistus, broom and rosemary. Before us is the endless vista of the open sea, only interrupted, on the clearest days, by the small humps of the hills on Giannutri to the south east, and the rugged mountain crests of Montecristo far away to the west.



5

Horseback Excursions

Horseback excursions are another way of appreciating the landscapes of the Tuscan Archipelago National Park to the full, at a natural pace. Following the paths, crossing the islands' countryside, climbing the gentler hills, exploring the peninsulas, riding along roads that seem to lead over and into the sea and travelling through a natural landscape almost in symbiosis with one's horse, are all thrilling experiences for lovers of this sport. On Elba, the largest of the Tuscan islands, one almost has the impression of going back in time, to an era when horseback was the normal, most effective way of getting around, rediscovering long-lost sensations. There are a large number of footpaths or mountain bike trails also suitable for horses. Some of the easiest of them lead to locations of great environmental importance providing wonderful views. Elba has several nationally approved riding centres with reliable horses and qualified instructors and guides able to lead even beginners along the trails to lovely locations in the hills or by the sea, and help them to appreciate the Park's variety of landscapes and natural life. These centres are also able to provide riding lessons for those requiring instruction.

Riding Centres on the Island of Elba

Le Farms

Località Litemo
57034 Campo nell'Elba (LI)
Tel. 0565 979090
339 3147179



A.S.D.

Via Equestre Toscana

Punto base Loc. Capo Bianco

Porto Azzurro (LI)

Tel. 348 7803140

info@viaequestretoscana.it

(For riders travelling with their horses)



For those in search of more information and for nature-lovers the Park offers additional publications available in its visitor centres and from specialist retailers.



-  National Park Visitor Centres
-  National Park and local area Info Points
-  Riding Centres



For more information, the Visitor Centres...

The Park's visitor centres at Marciana and Rio nell'Elba are an important resource for presenting the area's environmental and cultural values. Visitors are encouraged to visit the protected environments and areas for themselves, especially since the facilities are run by qualified Environmental Guides.

The Visitor Centres are open approximately from April to October.

For full information: Casa del Parco di Marciana tel. 0565-901030;

Casa del Parco di Rio nell'Elba tel. 0565-943399

Trails through the Park

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Printers

Bandecchi e Vivaldi

*Thanks to Aurora Ciardelli, Giuliana Gillone,
Stefano Luzzetti, Mario Ferrari and Susanna
Lemmi, Giacomo Cardia and Alfonso Gigante*



*Ministero dell'Ambiente
e della Tutela del Territorio
e del Mare*



United Nations Decade on Biodiversity