

## Let's stop the circulation of the virus, but not the circulation of news!



While this month's issue brings you news from the Medforval network as usual, we all know that **things are far from normal at this time**. Around the network we are working from home following the Covid-19 lockdown in all countries in the region, but **this in no way affects our commitment to Mediterranean forests**.

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## Ecosystem destruction and the rise of pandemics



**A new report by WWF Italy** explores the **correlation between humanity's impact on natural ecosystems and the outbreak of viruses** such as Ebola, AIDS, SARS and the new Coronavirus, COVID-19, that is currently having a profound effect on our lives. Deforestation, over-exploitation of natural resources, alteration of the soil all have a direct impact on our well-being and on our health. The **destruction of forests**, in particular, can expose humans to new forms of contact with microbes and with the wild species that host them. We need to take special care of protecting, managing and restoring high ecological value forests, which is the core mission of the Medforval Network. We will continue our important work and raise awareness of the crucial changes that the world will have to make in the future. As summarized in WWF report: we must **reduce by at least half our footprint** on nature; we have to **halt the loss of natural habitats**; we must **stop the extinction** of living species. Our work on forests will play a key role in favouring the natural balance of ecosystems and in reconstructing the ecosystems that humanity has destroyed or degraded.

*Francesco Marcone and Fabrizio Canonico, WWF Oasi, Focal Points for the  
Cratere degli Astroni Medforval site*

*[f.marcone@wwfoasi.it](mailto:f.marcone@wwfoasi.it), [f.canonico@wwfoasi.it](mailto:f.canonico@wwfoasi.it)*

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## Before and after: good forest practices in Turkey



Turkey has been working to improve the management and conservation of forest landscape sites for many years, to reverse the trend in the destruction of green spaces and forests. Mediterranean forests and woodlands are among the most vulnerable forest ecosystems on earth and they are increasingly exposed to risks related to drastic land use changes and climate change. **Preventing deforestation** is key to protecting, managing and restoring Mediterranean forest landscapes of high ecological value in the face of global change. Over the last 14 years, major forestry activities in Turkey have included **afforestation, combating erosion, improvement of degraded forest areas and pastures**. As we can see in these before and after photos, Turkey's efforts in reforestation have contributed to the integrity and resilience of Mediterranean landscapes.

*Nesat Erkan, Forestry Faculty, Bursa Technical University -  
[nesaterkan@yahoo.com](mailto:nesaterkan@yahoo.com)*

*Osman Yöntem, VI Regional Directorate of Nature Protection and National  
Parks, Burdur, Turkey - [osmanyontem@gmail.com](mailto:osmanyontem@gmail.com)  
and Selin Devranoglu, WWF Turkey, Focal Point for the Ermenek-Konia  
Medforval site - [selin.devranoglu@gmail.com](mailto:selin.devranoglu@gmail.com)*

Photo: 1980-2015 Boyabat-Sinop © Hikmet Kaya, Aykut Ince (Turkish General Directorate of Forestry)

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## A partnership for pasture restoration in the Massif du Luberon



**Open Mediterranean environments**, linked in particular to pastoralism, are home to birds and many other species whose survival depends on the maintenance of these open spaces. The **Massif du Luberon** is an area of great ornithological wealth, with **some of the most endangered bird species in Europe**. The reduction of open areas associated with pastoral abandonment constitutes a major threat to these species. The Luberon Regional Nature Park is working with shepherds, flock owners, pasture and forest managers to plan actions for pasture management, to support biodiversity, the rural economy as well as the use of grazing to mitigate fire risk. The regional branches for forestry (ONF) and grazing management (CERPAM)\* have been partners of the Park for almost 40 years, working together towards the **restoration of pasture lands**. Recently, about **25 hectares of dry grasslands** – habitats of European interest – benefited from field work to clear pastures on private and public land, thanks to funding from the European Commission and the French Government (Rural Development Programmes). This is part of a Natura 2000 restoration program with regular activities.

\*CERPAM (Centre d'études et de réalisations pastorales Alpes-Méditerranée); ONF (Office National des Forêts).

*Sophie Bourlon, Luberon Regional Nature Park, Focal Point for the Luberon-Lure Medforval site - [sophie.bourlon@parcduluberon.fr](mailto:sophie.bourlon@parcduluberon.fr)*

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## Field trip in Talassemtane National Park



This photo was taken during **research fieldwork in early March** with forest engineering students in the **Talassemtane National Park** in the Rif region of northern Morocco. Characterized by high mountain conifer forests, the Park has over 200 endemic species of which 80 are specific to this mountainous area which was classified in 2004 as a National Park, and in 2006 as an Intercontinental Mediterranean Biosphere Reserve. The National Forestry School of Engineers in Rabat are testing a **hierarchical system for monitoring forest vegetation and population species**. Their research is also contributing to an update of the conservation status of some endemic rare and threatened species in the park. During this first short visit they were able to confirm the location of a population of an endemic species, *Rhodanthemum laouense*. Field work could not be finished because of the pandemic COVID-19.

*Mostafa Lamrani Alaoui, National Forestry School of Engineers, Rabat, and Focal Point for the Talassemtane Medforval site - [mostafa.lamrani@yahoo.fr](mailto:mostafa.lamrani@yahoo.fr)*