

UBI Banca and the WWF for the support of important projects in protected areas in Italy

Bergamo, 16th January 2009 - UBI Banca is assisting the WWF with seven important projects to protect the environment in Italy. Thanks to a series of donations made by the Parent Bank and by the network banks working in the community on the initiative "*Qui UBI per l'ambiente*" (UBI for the environment), from today the UBI Banca Group is now supporting projects in the WWF Italy Oasis system and it has **symbolically adopted** five WWF oases, supporting their activities for the whole of 2009: Valpredina and Bosco di Vanzago in Lombardy, Valmanera in Piedmont, Ripa Bianca di Jesi in the Marches region and Le Cesine in Puglia. It is also supporting **two projects linked to the Cinque Terre National Park (Liguria) and to the Adamello Regional Park (Lombardy)**, all natural areas, symbols of the communities in which the Group has its largest presence.

The "*Qui UBI per l'ambiente*" initiative (www.ambiente.quiubi.it - Help the environment section) is designed to support concrete projects for environmental conservation, research and education implemented in these seven natural areas: the creation of a **botanical garden at Valpredina** or of a nursery to restore **vegetation destroyed by fires at Cesine**; monitoring of roe deer and lepidopterans in the Bosco di Vanzago; using bees to monitor pesticides and the presence of metals in the Ripa Bianca area; the creation of **an ecological corridor to connect the natural areas of the Alps and the Apennines in which the Cinque Terre Park is an important link**; a **project with schools at Valmanera** to teach children to find their way in nature with a compass and a map.

"*Qui UBI per l'ambiente*" is a sustainability project designed to make UBI Banca Group customers more aware of how they can **reduce the environmental impact of normal banking transactions** (reduction of CO₂ emissions with fewer trips from home to the bank and lower paper consumption by reading bank statements in electronic format) by using **Qui UBI internet banking**. It is also intended as an **effective instrument for making more and more people aware of just how extraordinarily valuable our natural heritage at risk is**.

"The initiative 'Qui UBI per l'ambiente' is further evidence of the attention that our Group pays to environmental issues", **Emilio Zanetti, Chairman of the Management Board of UBI Banca** declared. "The donations made for the seven natural areas located in the areas in which our Group has its greatest presence bear witness to its constant attention to the communities in which it operates. I would also like to underline that this operation in particular, as an initiative to protect and restore our environmental heritage, is one of the first concrete actions taken to implement the new environmental policy which the Group has recently adopted".

 **Banca Popolare
di Bergamo**

 **Banca Regionale
Europea**

 **Banca Carime**

 **Banco di Brescia**

 **Banca Popolare
di Ancona**

 **Banco di San Giorgio**

 **Banca Popolare
Commercio & Industria**

 **Banca Private
Investment**

 **Banca di Valle Camonica**





"The oases have constituted the most important WWF conservation project in Italy for more than forty years", **Michele Candotti, the general manager of WWF Italy** declared. "It is a natural heritage of biodiversity that is extremely close to our cities, but often little known and it allows us to protect over 37,000 hectares of wetland, woodland, mountain, coastal and lake areas each year, not to mention thousands of plant and animal species ranging from the great white egret to the peregrine falcon and including large mammals such as the bear and the wolf. All this has only been achieved through constant daily work and through specific local projects which conserve and enhance its great value. That is why we recognise the enormous worth of initiatives like "Qui UBI per l'ambiente" and it is our hope that the co-operation of the UBI Banca Group with the WWF Italy Oasis system is just the first appointment in many years of working together in the future".

For further information:

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SPECIAL FOCUS

The areas and projects supported by *Qui UBI per l'ambiente* with the WWF

THE WWF BOSCO DI VANZAGO OASIS (Province of Milan) — 143 hectares

This is one of the last woodlands remaining on the plain in Italy and it includes ancient oaks, elms, limes, maples, wild cherry and horse chestnut trees. Many species of mammals are present (such as roe deer, the symbol of the reserve) and 123 species of birds (including the great white egret, an exceptional visitor to the Po River valley). The Oasis has a centre for injured wild animals, a nature trail with information boards and observers.

THE WWF DI VALPREDINA OASIS (Province of Bergamo) — 90 hectares

This oasis follows the course of the Predina River and faces onto the Bergamo Alps. It contains woodland mixed with rocky and cultivated hillsides and provides refuge for peregrine falcons, different types of deer and many other animals. Facilities: visitor centres, bed and breakfast, conference rooms, a centre for injured wild animals, nature trail, information panels and educational ponds, observers, fauna areas, a composting area and woodland fire fighting tank.

THE WWF DI VALMANERA OASIS (Province of Asti) — 10 hectares

This extends to the North of Asti and comprises hilly broadleaf woodland and an undergrowth of shrubs remaining from the ancient Monferrato flora. It includes mammals (badgers, foxes and dormice) birds (the green woodpecker, the red woodpecker and various types of tits) and reptiles. The environmental education centre of "Villa Paolina" lies within it, with educational workshops and an environmental library.

THE WWF RIPA BIANCA DI JESI OASIS (Province of Ancona) — 310 hectares

This oasis, lapped by the River Esino and by a lake, is typical of the Marche landscape with great biodiversity: oaks, willows, poplars and various species of fauna. A "nature centre" and an "environmental experience centre" are housed in a rustic farmhouse built according to bio-architectural principles with classrooms, a specialist library, an educational chemistry laboratory and a conference room.

THE WWF DELLE CESINE OASIS (province of Lecce) — 380 hectares

The Le Cesine Nature Reserve, the last surviving tract of the ancient and vast marshland lying between Brindisi and Otranto contains dunes, marshes, drainage canals, mixed woodland, *maquis* shrubland and areas under cultivation. Crossed by a huge migratory route, it hosts numerous aquatic birds. Facilities: visitor centre, nature trails (one for the differently abled), observation "hides", apiary and ringing station.

THE CINQUE TERRE PARK (Province of La Spezia) — 13,152 hectares

The park is a UNESCO world heritage site. It protects and enhances the environment and culture: cliffs over the sea with bays and small beaches, kilometres of stone walls protect terraces for the cultivation of vines, medieval villages, sanctuaries, footpaths with scenic views over the sea and hillsides. The finest Ligurian wines, fresh fish, the local cuisine and local crafts add to the beauty of the park.

THE ADAMELLO PARK (Province of Brescia) — 51,000 hectares

This comprises the whole of the Lombard side of the Adamello mountains in the North East of the Province of Brescia. All Alpine fauna is to be found and it is estimated that the flora includes 1,400 species. Environmental education projects are available within the park: workshops, libraries and video libraries and activities for children, adolescents and schools.