

TUSCANY ENVIRONMENT FOUNDATION



ANNUAL REPORT 2024





TABLE OF CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION

Foreword	3
Our mission & vision	4
From selection to impact	5
Areas of interest	7

OUR WORK 9

Innovative Tools in Sea Turtle Conservation	11
Bluefishers	13
Protecting Beavers in Tuscany	15
X-Pollination	16

LOOKING FORWARD 17

S. Antonio Forest Biodiversity Conservation	19
T.A.L.A.M.O.NE.	21
Educational Gardens	22

IMPACT SNAPSHOT 23

OUR TEAM 25

FORWARD

Tuscany is widely admired for its iconic rolling hills, lined with vineyards, cypress and hedgerows, yet its natural heritage extends far beyond this image. Ancient forests, wetlands of extraordinary value, and over 600 kilometres of coastline make it one of Italy's richest regions in biodiversity and habitat.

Yet, this unique ecological wealth is increasingly under threat. Unsustainable farming and forestry, marine pollution, illegal fishing, mass tourism, and climate change are driving biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and increasing threats for endemic species as well as human well-being.

There are many excellent grassroots initiatives in Tuscany, often lacking critical funds to achieve their long-term goals. With well targeted funding, there is huge potential to boost this work and enable it to make a far greater impact.

Tuscany Environment Foundation (TEF) has been building strong partnerships with local groups since 2021, enabling them to carry out projects to safeguard biodiversity and restore ecosystems.



Since 2021, TEF has awarded over €200,000 to 16 projects. Examples of recent funding initiatives include a grant to monitor and protect marine turtle nests and a programme focused on seagrass meadows, critical for marine biodiversity and carbon capture.

TEF has also campaigned at the national and European level for the protection of beavers in Central Italy, is supporting the restoration of forest wetlands in Sant'Antonio Forest, and contributed to the campaign to reduce the use of disposable polystyrene in the fishing industry.

Through initiatives such as these, TEF has played a crucial role in preserving and restoring local habitats and species, while actively engaging communities in caring for nature and highlighting the importance of collective action in our mission to protect Tuscany. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported - and continues to support - TEF.

Together, we will keep building partnerships and funding projects that safeguard and regenerate the natural beauty of Tuscany.



Laura Lo Presti
Executive Director

OUR MISSION

Tuscany Environment Foundation (TEF) aims to protect and enhance the natural beauty, biodiversity and ecosystems of the much-loved Tuscan environment for the benefit of all.

OUR VISION

A more resilient and sustainable Tuscany, where nature and biodiversity are protected, regenerated, and thrive together with local communities.

OUR STRATEGY

Climate change, unsustainable resource management and pollution are accelerating the decline of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems worldwide — and Tuscany is no exception. Extreme weather events such as droughts, sudden and heavy rains, floods and landslides have made this crisis increasingly visible at the local level.

Tuscany Environment Foundation (TEF) exists to channel expertise and resources to the most effective grassroots initiatives in Tuscany, helping them grow, replicate and deliver lasting environmental and socio-economic impact. Many excellent projects already exist on the ground but often lack the financial and strategic support needed to scale up. TEF fills this gap.



FROM SELECTION TO IMPACT

TEF's Approach to Grantmaking

GRANT & PROJECT SELECTION

We support initiatives led by grassroots organisations working within TEF's areas of interest (outlined below/on page 4). To be eligible, projects must meet at least two of the following criteria:

- ✓ **Measurable results:** ability to deliver tangible, evidence-based impact on the ground.
- ✓ **Scalable:** potential to be replicated or expanded, multiplying the benefits.
- ✓ **TEF added value:** TEF can utilise its expertise and experience to magnify the impact of its financial support.

DECISION MAKING PROCESS

TEF applies a professional, rigorous and transparent process to every funding decision:

- **Executive Director** – coordinates the grant-making process and supports applicants during the development of a proposal, ensuring that it meets the guiding principles outlined above;
- **Advisory Board** – a panel of leading scientific and technical experts who review projects, provide guidance, and strengthen project design to maximise impact;
- **Steering Committee** – the final decision-making body that reviews expert recommendations and awards grants.



BEYOND FUNDRAISING

TEF's role goes far beyond writing cheques:



We provide expertise and mentoring to strengthen projects



We connect organisations with a wider network of partners and supporters



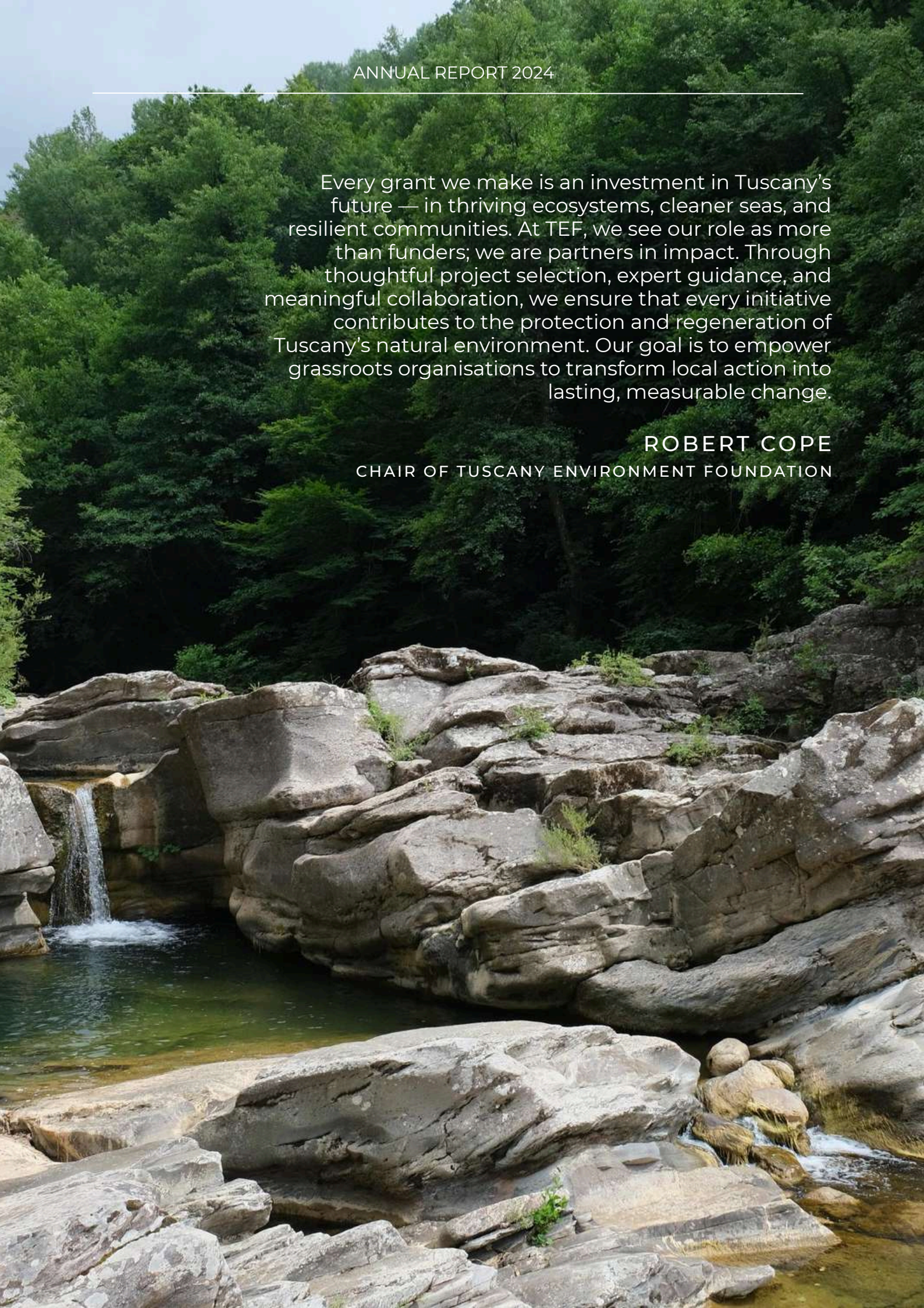
We raise visibility for innovative local solutions

By combining rigorous project selection with active support, TEF ensures that every donation is used thoughtfully and efficiently, protecting and regenerating Tuscany's unique environment for the benefit of nature and people.

Every grant we make is an investment in Tuscany's future — in thriving ecosystems, cleaner seas, and resilient communities. At TEF, we see our role as more than funders; we are partners in impact. Through thoughtful project selection, expert guidance, and meaningful collaboration, we ensure that every initiative contributes to the protection and regeneration of Tuscany's natural environment. Our goal is to empower grassroots organisations to transform local action into lasting, measurable change.

ROBERT COPE

CHAIR OF TUSCANY ENVIRONMENT FOUNDATION



AREAS OF INTEREST

Biodiversity

Tuscany is a biodiversity hotspot, home to rare and endemic species, such as the Appennine yellow-bellied toad, the Italian cave salamander, the Mediterranean shearwater, and the sea daffodil. However, its ecosystems are under pressure due to factors connected to climate change and human activity, including unsustainable farming and forest management practices.

To address these threats, TEF promotes local engagement, scientific research, and the use of technology to monitor wildlife and collect data on protected species. TEF's strategy includes preventing disturbance and mortality, restoring ecosystems, and promoting sustainable management practices to ensure long-term conservation and human-wildlife coexistence.



Marine Conservation

The Tuscan coast and its islands host an extraordinary variety of marine ecosystems, but they are increasingly threatened by overfishing, pollution, marine litter, mass tourism, and the spread of invasive species driven by rising sea temperatures. To address these challenges,

TEF supports the fight against illegal and unsustainable fishing, promotes effective marine protected areas, and engages communities through education and projects that raise awareness, reduce marine pollution, and encourage more sustainable practices.



Regenerative Agriculture

Tuscany has a long and proud agricultural tradition, dating back to the Roman and Etruscan eras. Still today, vineyards and olive groves characterise the classic Tuscan landscape. However, recent changes associated with modern agricultural practices, have caused a wider biodiversity decline.

To tackle this issue, TEF supports projects that encourage local farmers to adopt sustainable agroecological practices, which maintain healthy soils capable of producing high-quality produce and at the same time, in synergy with the ecosystem and resilient against hydrogeological instability.



Sustainable Resource Management

Tuscany has some of the best-preserved forests in Europe, from the ancient beech woodlands of the Apennines to the verdant chestnut forests of Monte Amiata. However, illegal logging and unsustainable management threaten many of these vital habitats. TEF actively works to prevent and highlight these threats and develop ways to ensure the long-term protection of these precious forests.

TEF also actively supports initiatives that promote and enable sustainable waste management practices, including the reduction, recycling and upcycling of plastics and strategies for both renewable energy and water saving policies.



OUR WORK

An insight into some of TEF success stories





Innovative Tools in Sea Turtle Conservation

Grantee: TartAmare

Duration: July 2024 - June 2025

Amount: €9,890 awarded

Area of Interest: Marine conservation

Every year, thousands of sea turtles die because of pollution, ingestion or entanglement in marine debris, or accidental capture in fishing gear. In addition, human activities combined with the effects of global warming, are increasingly disrupting nesting activity and further threatening sea turtle populations.

THE PROJECT

TartAmare is a non-profit organization founded in 2016 to protect marine species and ecosystems along the Tuscan coastline, with a particular focus on sea turtles. The organisation manages a Rescue Centre dedicated to the rehabilitation and treatment of turtles found entangled in fishing nets or stranded on beaches and supports all phases of sea turtle nesting and hatchling development.

TEF awarded a grant to TartAmare to strengthen its critical work monitoring the Tuscan coastline for turtle nesting sites during the summer season.

The funds were invested in essential equipment, including drones and data-loggers. Nest monitoring is highly demanding, requiring significant time and human resources.



Sea turtle egg illuminated by a beam of light.

Moreover, due to global warming, TartAmare has observed a northward expansion of loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) nesting areas, making it necessary to patrol increasingly larger stretches of coastline. Data-loggers have proven especially valuable, as they detect abnormal incubation conditions without requiring invasive nest excavations.

This technology ensures proper embryo development, reduces losses, and increases the number of healthy hatchlings making it back to the sea.



80 KM
of coastline
surveyed



71%

success rate of turtle eggs hatched
in 2024 (from 46% in 2019)

500+

people attended
35 events on turtle
conservation



2



Loggerhead turtles rescued,
rehabilitated & released



“TEF has supported our progress by providing essential tools such as DataLoggers and drones. In the next phase, our monitoring activities have become increasingly technological and advanced. Thanks to TEF’s support, we are now more effective in our actions and able to engage a growing number of people in protecting sea turtles.”

LUANA PAPINI
DIRECTOR OF TARTAMARE



BLUE FISHERS

Grantee: Marevivo

Duration: October 2023 – March 2024

Amount: €21,552 awarded

Area of Interest: Marine conservation

Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) is widely used in the seafood industry for fish crates, due to its insulating and water-resistant properties. It is also a serious environmental hazard, breaking easily into millions of micro-fragments which persist in the marine environment for centuries, and can be ingested by fish, seabirds, and filter-feeding organisms. These particles accumulate along the food chain, ultimately ending up in seafood consumed by humans.

Italy uses an estimated 50 million polystyrene fish boxes every year, many of which end up in the sea and along beaches. Addressing this source of marine litter is urgent and requires scalable alternatives.

THE PROJECT

Launched by Marevivo, one of Italy's oldest environmental NGOs (founded in 1985), the Bluefishers project works to reduce EPS marine pollution by introducing reusable and recyclable polypropylene fish boxes.

The initiative was piloted in Viareggio, in collaboration with Marevivo's Tuscany Delegation, the municipality, coast guard, port authority, and the Cittadella della Pesca, a cooperative representing nearly the entire local fishing sector. Beyond providing a sustainable alternative to EPS, the project engaged directly with local artisanal fishers, raising awareness of the environmental impacts of polystyrene waste.

These reusable boxes are guaranteed for two years, after which they can be recycled into new boxes or used for a range of other purposes including road surfaces. They have been designed by DuWo with circularity in mind and can be tracked through integrated microchip technology.

RESULTS

Over six months;



2,320 reusable crates distributed to **70** fishermen with **58** small boats



Replaced **35,000** polystyrene boxes



Prevented **35 billion** microplastics from entering the sea

The project has also fostered strong community engagement, with fishermen reporting high levels of satisfaction with the new system. The initiative has gained visibility through local and national press campaigns.

The advocacy work around Bluefishers has already spurred expansion: thanks to its demonstrated success, the project will be replicated in Marina di Carrara, again with the support of TEF, and has been included in broader regional environmental programmes.

LOOKING AHEAD

The long-term ambition of Bluefishers is to scale this model to other ports in Tuscany and beyond, gradually replacing EPS with sustainable alternatives throughout the fishing industry. By combining direct environmental impact with awareness-raising and advocacy, the project represents a concrete step toward a future national ban on polystyrene in seafood logistics.



Clockwise: Boxes in use at a harbour of Viareggio | Pope Francis holding a Bluefishers box! | Distribution of boxes to the fishers in Marina di Carrara



Protecting Beavers in Tuscany

Duration: January 2023 - January 2024

Budget: € 50,000

Area of interest: biodiversity

Beavers have long been part of Italy's ecology, history and cultural heritage. Their presence was documented until the 1500s, when the species was hunted to extinction for its fur and castoreum. After centuries of absence, in 2018, beavers were once again spotted living freely between Tuscany and Umbria.

Often described as ecosystem engineers, beavers shape landscapes by building small dams that create wetlands, which in turn help mitigate floods and droughts, while also providing habitats for a wide range of wildlife. Many European countries have reintroduced beavers, but Italian national authorities ordered their removal, arguing that they may threaten local flora and fauna and that their reintroduction was carried out illegally.

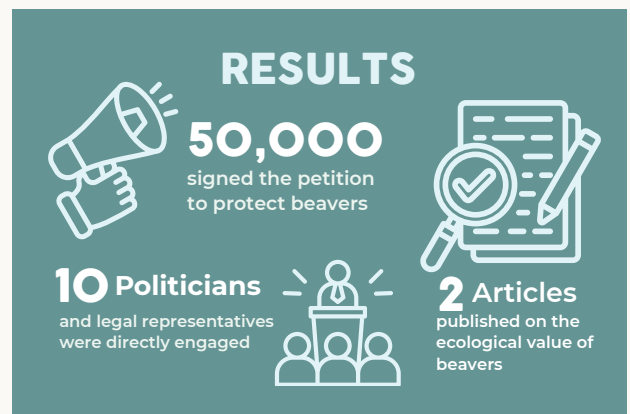
THE PROJECT

In 2023, the Tuscany Environment Foundation (TEF) and partner NGOs launched a national and European campaign to protect this native species. The campaign stressed that beavers have established populations in every country bordering Italy and are naturally expanding their range, meaning there is no certainty that the individuals in central Italy were illegally introduced.

Furthermore, the Eurasian beaver is listed in the EU Habitats Directive, which requires member states to ensure strict protection of the species within its natural range.

In September 2023, TEF and its partners submitted a letter and the petition to the European Commission to highlight this case. Although the official response was not favourable, no beavers have been removed to date. Importantly, the mobilisation of major wildlife NGOs – including WWF Italia, Greenpeace Italia and LAV – has demonstrated the breadth of support for this keystone species. This collective effort has also contributed to shaping positive coverage in the Italian press and strengthening public opinion in favour of the beavers' return.

TEF hopes that beavers will be allowed to continue their quiet work of restoring ecosystems and coexisting with other species, to the benefit of nature and people alike.



X-Pollination

Grantee: Silva Cooperativa

Duration: October 2023 - March 2026

Budget: Two awards totalling €19,500

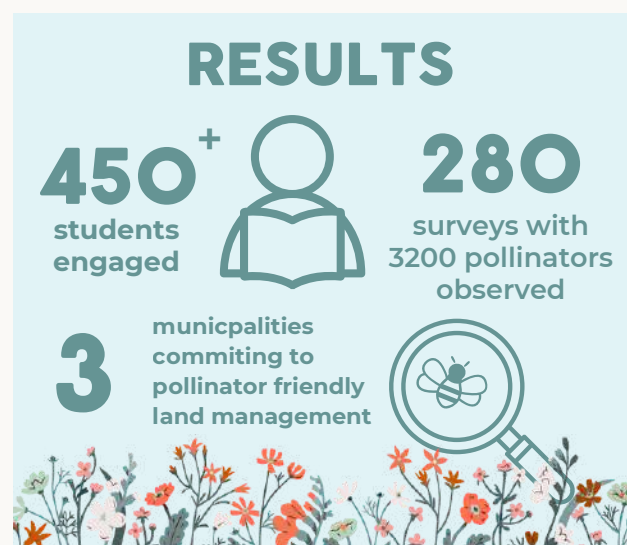
Area of interest: biodiversity

In recent years, pollinating insects have been experiencing a drastic decline, mainly due to factors such as climate change, intensive agriculture but also habitat degradation, diseases, parasites, and the spread of invasive species. Yet, their role is crucial: without them, biodiversity, agricultural productivity and, indeed human survival would be at serious risk. For this reason, it is essential to deepen our understanding of the distribution and quantity of pollinators.

THE PROJECT

The X-Pollination (Cross-Polli:Nation) project, led by Silva Cooperativa, combines research, education and citizen science to monitor pollinator populations in Tuscany. Schools, local communities and municipalities are directly involved, fostering awareness of pollinator decline and encouraging habitat improvements in both rural and urban places.

Partnerships with botanical gardens and the Natural History Museum of Maremma have broadened outreach, while a redesigned digital platform now makes it easier to collect data from mobile devices. The platform also hosts “Polli Promises,” where individuals commit to pollinator-friendly actions such as planting pots, flower beds and green spaces.



Images, courtesy of Silvia Cooperativa, capture citizen science in action, recording and monitoring pollinator populations.

LOOKING AHEAD

Importantly, all data gathered from this project was submitted to the national ISPRA database, building knowledge for scientific and conservation purposes. X-Pollination will continue to grow its network of schools, citizens and municipalities, linking scientific monitoring with education and community action. Its approach offers a replicable model that can be scaled across Tuscany and other regions to help reverse pollinator decline.



LOOKING FORWARD

A snapshot of projects awarded in 2025 and
currently underway





Guardians of the S. Antonio Forest

Grantee: Gruppo Perché No

Budget: €13,200

Duration: June 2025 – December 2025

Area of interest: Biodiversity



PC Enrico Fiordiponti

The project focuses on the ecological restoration of a wetland within the Sant'Antonio Forest, part of Natura 2000 (a network of protected areas covering Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats), located in north-eastern Tuscany. The primary objective of this project is to safeguard and increase populations of native species—particularly amphibians and invertebrates—that are currently endangered or in decline, by addressing the ongoing impacts of climate change and the growing issue of seasonal water scarcity.

Restoration of the wetland will improve water retention and habitat quality. Carefully designed pathways will enable the site to serve as an educational and awareness-raising resource for schools, visitors, local residents, and institutions. Information signs and public outreach will increase environmental awareness and foster behavioural change regarding water conservation and biodiversity protection.

In addition, the project aims to reinforce the case for the creation of a National Park in the Montagna Fiorentina–Pratomagno area. By restoring a critical habitat and promoting scientific knowledge and community engagement, this initiative represents a significant step toward the long-term conservation of the region's natural heritage.



A fire salamander in its aquatic habitat — a species this project is dedicated to protect.

"People often talk about protecting nature, but concrete action is rarely taken! Thanks to funding from TEF, however, it was possible to restore a vital wetland area located within a Natura 2000 forest site. This intervention is helping to prevent the disappearance of amphibians that are highly endangered, such as the Great Crested Newt and the Apennine Yellow-bellied Toad, making a real contribution to safeguarding biodiversity!"

Enrico Fiordiponti, Head of the Ecomuseum of the Florentine Mountains and part of Gruppo Perché No



Educational Gardens

Grantee: Faremo Foresta

Budget: €5,000

Duration: October 2025 – October 2026

Area of interest: Biodiversity

In an age marked by the climate crisis and a growing disconnection between people and the natural world, urban rewilding – restoring parks, gardens, and underused areas – not only supports biodiversity and helps mitigate the impacts of climate change but also enriches the social and cultural fabric of our communities. Wilder, more resilient urban environments can provide spaces that improve well-being, foster a renewed sense of coexistence between people and nature, and deliver tangible benefits for mental and physical health.

THE PROJECT

The Educational Gardens project, led by *Faremo Foresta Association* involves three schools in Florence, Grosseto and Elba Island. It is an environmental and educational initiative to rewild schools by creating miniature native woodlands (about 25 m²) in playgrounds.

The woodland is introduced to students as a 'new class of companions', fostering respect for trees as living beings rather than objects. Four seasonal lessons will be delivered, covering seeds, tree behaviour, biodiversity, and practical forest stewardship.

Throughout the year, the project actively involves students and teachers, promoting environmental education and ecological awareness as they maintain and observe the forest, learning about cooperation, biodiversity, and resilience.

Its main goals are to increase vegetative cover, regenerate soil, improve microclimates, and enhance biodiversity through the planting of native and bioindicator plant species. The project includes seed collection and preservation, biodiversity monitoring, and hands-on training in sustainable land care as well as fostering a sense of shared responsibility for the planet. In this way, urban rewilding becomes not just an ecological strategy, but also a catalyst for civic engagement and cultural regeneration.



Dario Boldrini showing seeds to students during the first seasonal lesson. PC: Marta Casa.

T.A.L.A.M.O.N.E.

Grantee: Bioscience Research Centre

Budget: €9,500

Duration: June 2025 – December 2026

Area of interest: Marine Conservation

Posidonia oceanica is a species of seagrass which grows in shallow, sunlit, saline waters where it performs a range of critical ecological functions. Seagrass meadows sequester carbon up to 35 times faster than tropical rainforests, whilst providing a key habitat for a vast range of marine life. Seagrass habitats have suffered extensive degradation in recent decades, with threats including boat anchoring, climate change and pollution.

T.A.L.A.M.O.N.E. is a marine conservation and community engagement initiative dedicated to safeguarding *Posidonia oceanica* meadows in Talamone Bay, a biodiversity hotspot on the southern Tuscan coast. Led by the Bioscience Research Center (BsRC), the project links environmental protection with community well-being and sustainable development.

Beginning with a baseline assessment to evaluate the existing condition of the seagrass meadow, the project will also engage the public in educational activities. T.A.L.A.M.O.N.E. will highlight the crucial ecological and socioeconomic value of *Posidonia*, as well as promoting a Local Network for Coastal Stewardship with local stakeholders, including fishermen, diving centres and boat owners. Eventually, BsRC aims to create a shared Code of Conduct to protect the *Posidonia* meadows locally. Through this integrated approach, T.A.L.A.M.O.N.E. aims to protect a vital marine habitat while empowering the local community to become active custodians of their natural heritage



Divers observing *Posidonia* seagrass meadows and the marine organisms which inhabit them. PC BsRC.



PC Angela Tozzi

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Since 2021 TEF has awarded a total of €215,887 to 16 projects across Tuscany

SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

3 CLEAN UP DIVES RECOVERING

400 KG discarded fishing nets (as well as boat batteries, outboard motors, tyres, and mattresses!)

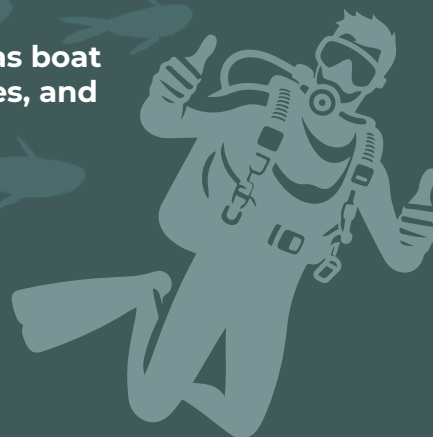
2,320 REUSABLE FISHING BOXES GIVEN TO

58 fishing boats

70 fishers

avoiding

35,000 polystyrene boxes

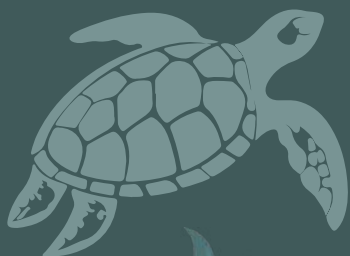


MARINE CONSERVATION

639 SEA TURTLE EGGS MONITORED LEADING TO:

453 successful hatchlings, and

71% success rate in 2024 (from 46% in 2019)



35 OUTREACH EVENTS EDUCATING

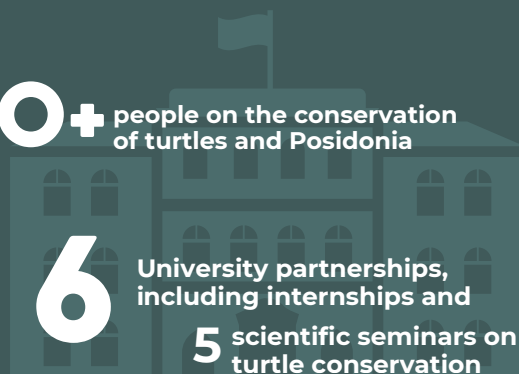
500+ people on the conservation of turtles and Posidonia

10 people trained on advance sampling techniques for Posidonia conservation

6

University partnerships, including internships and

5 scientific seminars on turtle conservation





BIODIVERSITY

450 people participated in pollinator awareness activities, involving 13 schools

80 volunteers involved in forest wetland creation

50,000 SIGNATURES ON PETITION TO PROTECT BEAVERS

2 articles published on beavers

10+ meso-large mammal species recorded, contributed to a scientific paper on population threats and human-wildlife conflict.

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

36 farmers and specialists
on a 4 day course outlining watershed restoration and regeneration

including the development of a **Regional action plan**

1 podcast
covering key learnings and highlights from the workshop

OUR TEAM



Laura Lo Presti
Executive Director



Alice Montioni
Fundraising &
Communication Manager



Robert Cope
Chair



Ben Goldsmith
Founder Conservation
Collective



Josephine De Chazournes
Steering Committee



Margherita Puri Negri
Steering Committee



Janie Price-DeNegri
Steering Committee



Lara Boglione
Steering Committee



Anna Gavazzi Asseily
Steering Committee



Lorenzo Curci
Steering Committee



Virginia Tronchetti Provera
Steering Committee



Yoav Gottesman
Steering Committee

ADVISORY BOARD

The Advisory Board is a panel of scientific and technical experts, with deep knowledge and proven experience in TEF's Areas of Interest. TEF's Advisory Board is there to provide ad hoc support to the foundation's team and partners to maximise impact, including when designing and reviewing projects, or to provide guidance directly to grantees. The Advisory Board members are all volunteers.



"Tuscany is more than just history and beautiful landscapes. It's also home to a wealth of natural habitats and biodiversity that need our help. TEF grants offer a unique opportunity for protecting these lesser-known, but equally important, natural treasures. The Advisory Board's role is to evaluate and recommend the best ways to seize these opportunities."

Andrea Sforzi | Director of Maremma Natural History Museum



Edward James Cutler
TEF Founder & Green-Tech
Conservation Visionary



Marta Manca Zeichen
Marine Ecology
Researcher



Lorenzo Costa
Certified permaculture
teacher



Giuliano Trentini
River Restoration
Engineer



Cristiano Manni
Forest Conservation
Specialist



Enzo Favoino
Zero Waste
Pioneer



Monia Renzi
Ecotoxicology
Environmental Scientist



Lorenzo Fioramonti
Sustainability Policy
Innovator

OUR NETWORK



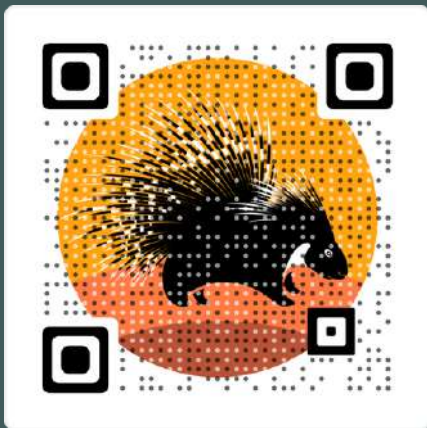
Tuscany Environment Foundation is a member of Conservation Collective, a global network of local foundations funding effective grass-roots conservation initiatives to protect the environment, restore nature and safeguard against climate change.

OUR SUPPORTERS



THANK YOU

to all our donors and supporters.
We couldn't have done it
without your generous support.



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 laura@tuscanyenvironment.org

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