



Exploring Arboreal Rodent Communities in Mediterranean Forests: The R.A.MO.CA. Project

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Arboreal rodents represent an often overlooked component of forest ecosystems, and their ecology and distribution remain poorly understood. Their elusive behavior, nocturnal activity, and preferred activity habitats make them difficult to detect using conventional monitoring methods, which are often limited to presence–absence data and provide little insight into behavior or habitat use.

With this challenge in mind, we developed the R.A.MO.CA. project: an initiative aimed at studying arboreal species within the Gliridae and Sciuridae families. The project was implemented in the Special Area of Conservation “Montagne di Casalbucchio”, an area characterized by high ecological heterogeneity, representing a valuable ecological corridor in southern Italy.

The project was structured around two complementary methodological approaches. On one side, it relied on arboreal camera trapping, a technique rarely applied outside of the tropical context, which enabled the direct observation of canopy-dwelling species. On the other side, the project actively involved local communities through citizen science initiatives. The presence of the invasive variable squirrel (*Callosciurus finlaysonii*), known for its potential impact on crops, offered an opportunity to explore how local stakeholders perceive this and other arboreal species. Through surveys and the collection of local observations, the project gathered insights into both species occurrence and human–wildlife interactions in agricultural landscapes.

The entire project was ultimately conveyed through a short-documentary film. Combining camera trap footage, fieldwork documentation, and explanatory narration, the film translates the research process into an accessible format conceived as a tool to communicate both the initiative and its outcomes to a broader audience beyond the scope of technical reports and scientific publications.

In conclusion, by integrating methodological innovation with participatory approaches, R.A.MO.CA. proposes a flexible and scalable framework for studying elusive arboreal species and supporting biodiversity conservation in Mediterranean forest ecosystems.