

Project partner: Department of Biological, Geological and Environmental Sciences, University of Catania

Island

SICILY

Species name (Family)

Astragalus raphaelis G. Ferro (Fabaceae)

Common name

Astragalo di Ciferri (Italian name), Ciferri milk vetch (English name)

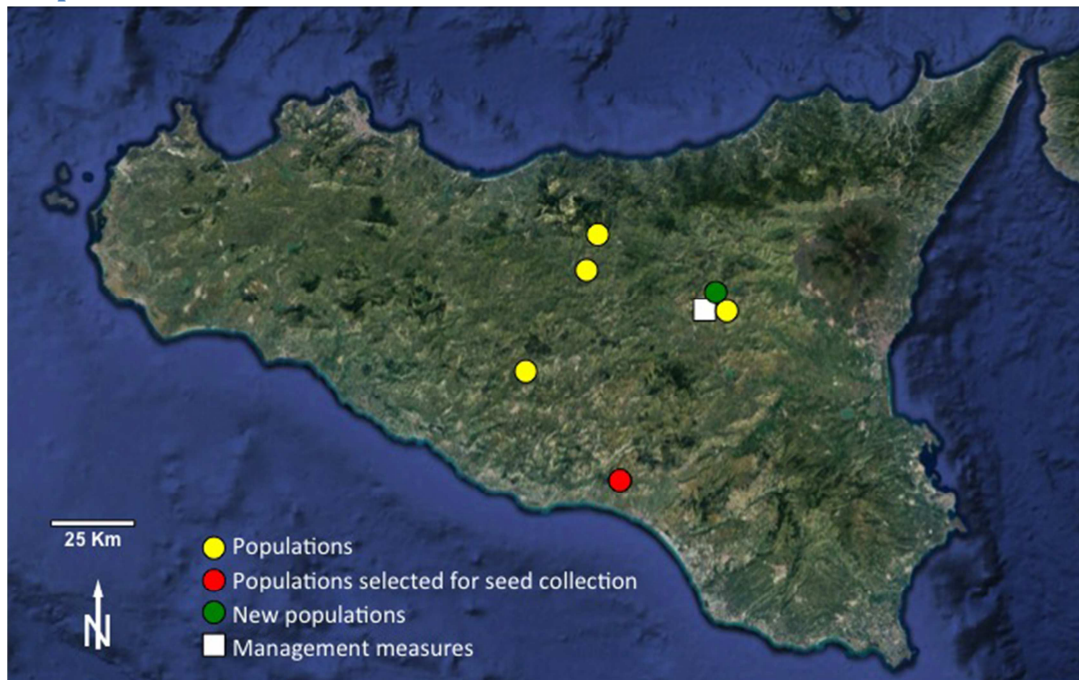
Plant description

- ✓ *Astragalus raphaelis* is a therophytic plant, with stem branched only at the base; it shows a main stem erect and numerous ascending basal stems, densely tomentose. Leaves petiolate, composed by 7-11 pairs of green leaflets. Calyx tubular, with tube shorter than teeth. Flowers pale blue, slightly longer than calyx. Fruits are erect legumes, oblong, blackish, rounded at the base, ending in a patent straight beak. Self-pollination is very typical for this species, while seeds are dispersed by wind or by small insects (e.g. ants or ground beetles).
- ✓ This species typically colonizes the clearings of the *Lygeum spartum*-dominated dry grasslands, within the thermo-Mediterranean dry and sub-humid bioclimatic belt (80-230 m a.s.l.).

Distribution

Narrow endemic species of Sicily, exclusively growing on clayey substrates of central and southern Sicily. Currently, 5 localities and 1 historical extinct locality where the species has been recorded falling within the Enna, Caltanissetta and Palermo provinces.

Map



Legal status

None

Main threats and conservation status

According to the IUCN Threats Classification Scheme (Version 3.2) the main threats in Sicily are:

- ✓ Threat 2.3.2, Small-holders grazing, ranching or farming.
- ✓ Threat 11.1, Habitat shifting & alteration.

Currently, the IUCN assessment for *Astragalus raphaelis* is CR.

Main threats addressed in the project

The main threat addressed by the project is to create new populations featured by similar ecological conditions.

Conservation actions carried out in the CARE-MEDIFLORA project

- Seed collection.
- New populations of *Astragalus raphaelis* were established within the Nature Reserve “Vallone Piano della Corte” (Enna, central Sicily).

Photos



Left: *Astragalus raphaelis* from Enna (central Sicily). Right: Translocation of *Astragalus raphaelis* (N.R. “Vallone Piano della Corte”, Enna)



Left: Translocation of *Astragalus raphaelis* (N.R. “Vallone Piano della Corte”, Enna). Right: Translocated plant of *Astragalus raphaelis* (N.R. “Vallone Piano della Corte”, Enna)



Localization of the new populations of *Astragalus raphaelis* within the N.R. “Vallone Piano della Corte” (Enna)