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cooperativapassiflora.ambiente@gmail.com**

MAKING IT EASIER THE IDENTIFICATION OF VASCULAR PLANTS IN MEDITERRANEAN TEMPORARY PONDS: THE ONLINE INTERACTIVE GUIDE

Bagella Simonetta^{1,2}, Caria Maria Carmela¹, Pittao Elena¹, Filigheddu Rossella^{1,2}, Moro Andrea³, Nimis Pier Luigi³

¹ *University of Sassari, Department of Science for Nature and Environmental Resources, 07100 Sassari, Italy. sbagella@uniss.it, mccaria@uniss.it, filighed@uniss.it*

² *University of Sassari, Desertification Research Centre, 07100 Sassari, Italy.*

³ *University of Trieste, Department of Life Sciences, 34100 Trieste, Italy. amoro@units, nimis@units.it*

Despite their relevance for conservation, Mediterranean temporary ponds are poorly known and their importance is not appreciated, which makes them vulnerable to unintentional destruction. The need for stimulating protection measures through the improvement of public perception is thus urgent. This neglected habitat, however, is ideal for engaging public in practical actions, which could be strongly encouraged with the support of interactive identification guides.

The aims of our research were: i) to implement a checklist of vascular plants, and ii) to create an interactive guide for the identification of plants growing in the Mediterranean temporary ponds of Sardinia.

Data collected in about 60 ponds were integrated with published plant inventories and the revision of herbarium material.

The online interactive guide, created with program FRIDA (FRiendly IDentificAtion), consists of two query interfaces: a multi-entry query permitting to specify several easily observable characters is followed by a richly illustrated dichotomous key to the species sharing those characters. Experts can also use the first interface to create keys to all species of a given taxon. The key is also available as a stand-alone application for Apple and Android mobile devices. The system is open to new findings and can be extended to other areas.