

## PROJECT "BOSCHI PER LA BIOSFERA"

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/Ana Anastasova, Bulgaria/

Coming to Bronte and doing this volunteer service has certainly been one of the right choices I've made in my life. On the contrary, I am sorry that this experience has happened to me only now, almost 30 years, because I have learned so many things for myself and for the relationships with others that would have helped me so much even before.

The 5 months spent here have been wonderful months for me because I shared my life with wonderful people - the other Green Jackets volunteers. Even if we come from different countries and cultures, we have different age and experience, we have had to go to life in another country and in a new situation, we have been able very quickly to become friends who love each other. The Green Jackets (Gino, Andrea, Lidia and Tobia) and Stefani who welcomed us to Bronte as members of a family also played an important role in creating this friendly atmosphere. The fact that we had this experience right in Sicily and right in Bronte where people on the street that is unknown to you know very well who you are and is open, curious, smile, joking, talking and asking also gave a particular "heat" of our life here.



The work we did during our volunteer period in Sicily was useful both for the realization of the "Boschi per la Biosfera" project and for our personal development. The workshop with environmental experts from all over Europe in which we participated after our arrival was a sort of introduction into our future activities and a nice opportunity to see and understand more things for culture, traditions, nature and the problems of the place. During the workshop we met Salvatore Vinciguerra and Nicolò Longo, from whom we learned many things during our voluntary service and which we admire. Since before I had almost no experience in working with children, the beginning of the teaching activities for me was a bit scary. The nice thing is that during the first meetings with elementary school children in the area the main role were Andrea, Lidia, Salvatore, Marco and Rossella from whom we could learn a lot. Then when we went out of classes and we started taking the children out to teach them knowledge and above all respect for nature, it seems to me that we all felt more at ease.



The choice to concentrate environmental education in elementary schools still sambrava right from the beginning, but then looking at the development of the project I really believe that work with children brings results and that even satisfaction to those who are committed.



The elimination of garbage that contrasts so evidently with the beauty of the nature of the area has become a dream for all of us from the moment we arrived in Sicily. Precisely for this reason during meetings with children we have used every possibility to raise awareness of this problem. Also in practice we received a little satisfaction with the solution of this problem. As a result of our work in the park abandoned in Mascali that we have turned into a Bio Park we have seen how in a few days with the effort of many people you can get great changes.

Another important part of my voluntary service in Sicily was the work on the realization of the "Bufo bufo" nature trail near the village of Santa Domenica Vittoria. By studying different aspects of the nature of the area to prepare information panels and position them along the way, I learned many things about the environment, but writing I have definitely improved my level of Italian knowledge as well.



During the past months here we also had many opportunities to travel, see many other cities and areas of Sicily. Gino and the collaborators of the Giacche Verdi Bronte Salvatore, Nicolo and Fabio helped us with lots of ideas and suggestions for routes, refuges and beautiful places on Etna and the Nebrodi. During the organization of our first weekend on Etna we realized that the role of Gino in our life here would be that of boss / father, as we later defined it many times :) Since many of us did not have sleeping bags to be able to sleep in a shelter, the night before the day when we had to go on Etna, Gino has traveled 100 km on the way and 100 km on the way back to get them. Since it is not always easy to return to Bronte by means of public transport, he repeated to us many times that if we stop at any point on the way back we can call him to pick us up. Fortunately we did not have to do it, but during all the trips we made in the following months we knew we could count on him to save us. It was the same thing about all the problems that we had to solve in our apartment, Gino always tried to help us immediately becoming (depending on the need) electrician, plumber also coming late in the evening or during the weekend. As Giulia told him one evening when

he came at 10 pm to settle a problem we had with the electrical installation: "Gino, you are our hero"!!



To cover all the activities and experiences I have had here during the period of my volunteering I have to fill 10 pages of text. This is why I stop here without mentioning all the lessons, conferences and conferences that we have been part of during the project and from which we have learned many new things. My experience as a volunteer of the Bronte Green Jackets was absolutely positive and if I could go back I would do it again. I'm glad that I met so many new people with similar interests and values to mine and that we spent together this wonderful period. Thanks to every volunteer of our group and to every person of the Giacche Verdi Bronte for the experience we have shared.

23 febbraio 2018

Bronte