

PRESS RELEASE

Studying the tiger mosquito like true scientists



An innovative project to gain knowledge and monitor the bothersome insect with Triestine students in the leading role. In this way, *citizen science* is entering the classroom

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A health and environmental educational project that sees boys and girls from Triestine schools engaged as real researchers. This is the goal of "Adopt a Triestine Tiger", an initiative supported by the Municipality of Trieste – Department of Education, School, University and Research – in collaboration with the SISSA "Franco Prattico" Master's course in Science Communication. Since last April, three classes from the Deledda and Galilei institutes in Trieste have been involved in an educational activity to learn about all the aspects of the tiger mosquito's life, the good practices to be adopted in order to reduce its development and the techniques used to study its spread. Throughout the summer, the same classes will then participate in monitoring the insect and gathering important scientific data which will be disseminated and provided to the experts.



"This initiative", explains Town Councillor Angela Brandi, "forms part of the multiple and innovative actions that aim to promote scientific knowledge and the development of new teaching practices for science education in Trieste schools". "The project", recalls Councillor Brandi, "is conceived and conducted by Sara Petrillo, a Master's student at SISSA, winner of the scholarship named after Baron Giuseppe Marenzi and offered by the Municipality of Trieste, Department of Education, School, University and Research".

"This is an innovative citizen science project – literally "science made by citizens"– that provides for the participation of non-expert volunteers in the scientific process" explains Sara Petrillo, who graduated in environmental sciences, is an employee of the ARPAFVG and currently attending the second year of SISSA's "Franco Prattico" Master in Science Communication programme in Trieste. "It is particularly important to involve schools in this type of activity because it allows students on the one hand to understand how researchers work and on the other to actively participate in a process that has significant impact on society in terms of health and environment". Indeed, ministerial programmes include "a conscious and responsible behaviour with regard to public health" among the goals of the study of biology. Furthermore, speaking of tiger mosquitos, in 2013 the Municipality of Trieste issued an ordinance for the control and prevention of infestation by the "*Aedes albopictus*", which is this insect's scientific name.

The initiative is divided into two parts and will involve two classes from the Grazia Deledda Technical Institute and one from the Galileo Galilei High School in. The first part, which started at the end of April, will come to an end in June and includes a series of lessons in class to learn of key concepts related to the tiger mosquito's biology and ecology, to explore the effectiveness and impact of the different types of preventive actions and, also, to understand how its monitoring is carried out technically. The second part will take place this summer in a process that is self-managed by the students.

Petrillo explains: "It is here that this initiative's title "Adopt a Triestine Tiger" will assume significance. In fact, each boy and girl will place real traps for eggs and mosquitos in their garden or in places considered suitable for their reproduction. By proceeding with? a periodic count, we will be able to collect data on the number of these insects on the Triestine territory, on their distribution and reproduction, with the same approach used by scientists in these types of studies. In this way, we will contribute to providing information to the authorities that is useful for control strategies and the fight against the tiger mosquito".

The project will end at the beginning of the next school year, with an event that will present the initiative and the data collected. In the meantime, a lot of information is already available on the project's blog adottaunatigretriestina.wordpress.com.



LINKS:

The blog of the project: <https://adottaunatigretiestina.wordpress.com>

- **Picture: Wikimedia Commons**

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