



Beech woodland is the prevailing type of broadleaf forest which at altitudes between 900 and 1900 m, extends all the way along the Italian Apennines as far as north-eastern Sicily. However, over the centuries, felling, fires, and advancing pasture land have greatly reduced its extent.



Changing conditions of soil and exposure give rise to considerable physionomic diversity within Apennine beech-woods, leading to great variety in the types of plants which live in them.



The fauna too revolves closely around the dominant tree species, and fluctuations occur in the populations of birds and mammals that depend on the products of the beech, which vary in quantity - from abundance in one year to scarcity in the next.



Of great naturalistic interest are the animals which occupy dead wood in the better preserved beech-woods.



Beech-woods are environments of enormous naturalistic value, but they have long been exploited by man for their timber. Their future, as discussed in this volume of "Italian habitats", is therefore linked to the delicate equilibrium which must exist between responsible woodland management and proper conservation policies for the entire forest ecosystem of this part of Italy



Beech forests of the Apennines

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Museo Friulano di Storia Naturale

