

Information Sheet



The Research Centre for Alpine Ecosystems - France

In brief

In autumn 2004, The Research Centre for Alpine Ecosystems (CREA) launched a new research programme called 'Phenoclim'. This project measures changes in the seasonal emergence of various plants. The specific dates serving as indicators for climate change within the Alpine region.

They are monitored with the objective of assessing the long term impact of climatic variations on vegetation. The project maintains 65 sample plots in recreational areas in altitudes from 250 to 2150m. With the help of 86 voluntary and professional observers the plots are sampled seven times per year. More than 1,000 participants have attended the accompanying educational programme. The new project funding of EUR€30,000 will allow for expansion of the information, incorporating more data, e.g. more sample plots and satellite data. In addition the aim is to attract more observers in areas that are currently under-represented by the general public. And finally the project plans to foster an environmental education programme covering the Alps and its population.

The Project

The Research Project for Alpine Ecosystems (CREA) launched a new research programme called “Phenoclim” in autumn 2004; “Phenoclim” comes from phenology – the study of the timing of life-cycle events of organisms – and climate.

More specifically, Phenoclim focuses on the effects of altitude, local climatic conditions and climatic changes on vegetation phenology in the Alps. These are monitored with the objective of assessing the long term impact of climatic variations on vegetation. The CREA maintains 65 sample plots in recreational areas in altitudes from 250 to 2150m. With the help of 86 voluntary and professional observers the plots are sampled seven times per year. More than 1,000 participants have attended the accompanying educational programme. The present project will incorporate more data, e.g. more sample plots and satellite data. In addition it aims to attract more observers in areas that are currently under-represented by the general public. The last part of the project will be to foster an environmental education programme on the Alps and its population.

Phenological changes have the potential to contribute to the climate change impact debate because many historic observations exist. There is actually a need to ensure the continuation of existing networks and to invest in the expansion and creation of new networks to provide better global coverage and cover areas where few observations are available. The latter is the case of mountainous regions.

The Organisation

The CREA aims to develop scientific research in high altitude environments: the biology of high altitude populations, the impact of climate change and human activities and on high altitude ecosystems. The goal of the CREA is to pursue scientific research at the fundamental and applied levels, in order to improve our understanding of these ecosystems. The results of this research are communicated in scientific conferences and published in international scientific journals.

By increasing public awareness through educational activities the CREA aims to pass the scientific knowledge about the alpine ecosystem to the wider public. Accordingly, several activities are organised in order to facilitate exchanges between researchers and the general public: publications, training courses, leaflets, conferences, exhibitions, films.

Primary Mission:

The CREA aims to develop scientific research in high altitude environments and to increase public awareness through educational activities.

www.crea.hautesavoie.net