



IRATI FOREST

Description and situation	Located between Soule (Larrau), Low Navarre (Mendive and Lecumberri,) to the north of the Basque Country and Navarre, bordered on the top part by Okabe (1466 m) and the Bizkarze Peak (1,657 m).
Surface area	2,500 ha
Protection status	ZEC-NATURA 2000 (FR7200753)
Other regional or national protections	Natural Zone of Ecological Interest, Zone of Importance for Bird Preservation.
Main uses	The main use of this area lies in the woods, associated with forestry, the wood industry and hunting. The forest also provides shelter to the sheep that extensively graze in the high zones, mainly covered by meadows.
Ownership	Mainly public.
Habitats targeted by LIFE	(4020) Wet Atlantic <i>Erica ciliaris</i> and <i>Erica tetralix</i> heath (4030) Dry European heath, (7110) active high fens, (7120) degraded high fens capable of natural regeneration, (7140) transition mires, (7150) Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion, (7230) low alkaline fens

Straddling France and Spain, Irati is home to the second-most extensive and best-preserved beech forest in Europe, after the Black Forest in Germany. It extends over a

low mountain of sedimentary rock, called flysch, where between 900 and 1300 metres dominate the deciduous tree forest, while moors and pastures dominate the higher zones.

Irati is in a scarcely populated zone, so it has always maintained a wild and mysterious appearance, the stuff of numerous Basque legends. In the current forest, one of the most important aged forests, 90% of the trees are beech.

The Irati Forest is a natural treasure of great ecological value. Thick beech, pastures, fir and fresh waters paint a landscape of bright colours that transform with each new season.

Its inaccessibility and lack of exploitation has led to a remarkable presence of flora and fauna. Of the large mammals inhabiting the Irati Forest, roe, wild boar and deer are of note. Grey dormice live in holes in the centenarian trees. Other habitual species are the pine marten, the Pyrenean desman and the water shrew, as well as certain bats deemed of community interest.

Regarding birds, the white-backed woodpecker and black woodpecker are of note. Birds of prey include the birded vulture, the peregrine falcon and the golden eagle.

The LIFE activities

- Monitoring feed production in habitat 4030 under different management conditions (burns, brush clearing or livestock load).
- Monitoring the evolution of vegetation depending on different ways of managing the habitats of community interest