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A peculiar plant community characterized by the strictly endemic *Cirsium alpis-lunae* (Asteraceae) in the Central-Northern Apennines (Italy)

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Cirsium alpis-lunae Brilli-Cattarini et Gubellini (Asteraceae) is a strictly endemic yellow-flowered thistle that was discovered and described in northern Apennines in relatively recent times (Brilli-Cattarini & Gubellini 1991). Its presence was investigated and reported in regional and national floristic and vegetation studies, but due to the difficulties in accessing its typical sites of occurrence, coenological surveys concerning the communities where it grows had never been done yet. In fact, this thistle grows only in very steep and unstable slopes, which can not be visited without specific techniques and equipment for vertical works. The aim of this work was therefore to investigate its synecology, contributing to better understand the biotic preferences and the conservation status of this peculiar species, for which sound auto-ecological studies are lacking. We surveyed all the known locations where occurrences of *C. alpis-lunae* plants were reported and carried out 16 relevés using the phytosociological method. We performed exploratory analyses of the comprehensive table using standard statistical methods, and we found that the phytocoenoses can be divided in two main groups, one typical of more open sites, where cover of higher woody layers is not relevant, and another one in which the tree cover is higher, and where *Cirsium alpis-lunae* has lower cover values. We discuss the ecological requirements of this thistle and of the associated plant communities. In the end, for these peculiar phytocoenoses we propose to establish a new association, named *Laserpitio latifolii*-*Cirsietum alpis-lunae*, attributing it to *Mulgedio-Aconitetea* class and putting in evidence the important role of some differential species of the class *Trifolio-Geranietea*, at least in the typical ecological conditions.

Brilli-Cattarini A.J.B., Gubellini L., 1991. Una nuova specie di *Cirsium* (Compositae, Asteroideae, Cynareae) dell'Appennino etrusco meridionale. *Webbia*, 46(1): 7-17.