

DEER AND THE FOREST ECOSYSTEM

Biodiversity at risk

Because of its extensive clearings and the lack of large predators, the deer population at Cansiglio Forest has grown excessively in the last decades. This has caused:

- a drastic reduction, if not complete disappearance, of the grassy and shrubby vegetation and young trees, which represent the future of the forest;
- a drastic reduction of the animal species that inhabited the forest because of its rich, widespread and diverse undergrowth; one of these is the hazel grouse.



Exclusion fences for studies and/or monitoring



Young spruce plants deformed by deer nibbling (Photo: E. Piutti)

How can we assess the impact of deer on forest biodiversity?

Assessing the impact of deer on the forest's natural renewal process is possible by fencing off some of the areas where they graze.

This **reduction of vegetation** and, **therefore, of biodiversity**, has negative consequences on all the wildlife. This is especially true for protected species like the western capercaillie and the hazel grouse, but also for small passerines, rodents and invertebrates.

When the forest's ecological balance is compromised, important links of the food chain that ensure the survival of other animal and plant species go missing.