

GENETIC DIVERSITY AND HYBRIDS IDENTIFICATION WITHIN THE *SERAPIAS* GENUS USING SSR MARKERS

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Serapias, SSR, genetic diversity

The *Serapias* genus is terrestrial and some of its species are distributed in the Mediterranean region, including Italy. Its taxonomy is rather controversial. Some authors distinguished seven - nine species, whereas others recognized 17 species and three subspecies. In addition, most of *Serapias* species are endangered because of the rapid disappearance of the scanty meadows where they live. SSR markers, previously identified in *S. vomeracea*, were used in assessing the diversity among Italian *Serapias* species *S. lingua*, *S. parviflora*, *S. vomeracea*, *S. apulica*, *S. nurrica*, *S. neglecta*, *S. cordigera*, *S. politisii*, and in identifying markers for the identification of inter-specific hybrids between them. The six SSR markers used showed a significant variation among species and the possibility of identifying hybrids and their parents.