

Monte Alpe nature reserve: woods, squirrels and peaks towards the highest peak in the Staffora Valley

Nature



The Monte Alpe Nature Reserve, located in the Staffora Valley and lying between the municipalities of Menconico, Varzi and Romagnese, is an important site of Community interest. A veritable treasure trove of biodiversity, with a variety of plant and animal species that are endemic to the area. It is managed by ERSAF, Ente Regionale per i Servizi all'Agricoltura e alle Foreste.

A jewel of biodiversity

The area covers an area of 328 hectares, 28 of which are pastureland, offering a varied and fascinating environment. The presence of meadows, chestnut groves, pines and larches contributes to the landscape diversity of the area. These habitats provide shelter and sustenance for numerous plant and animal species.

The coppice forest

The old coppices in the Reserve are an important part of the natural or semi-natural forests, characterised by a variety of trees such as black hornbeam, white hornbeam, downy oak or hybrids with oak, beech and hawthorn.

Magical encounters in the reserve

Among the mammals recorded in the reserve are the cute squirrel, the dormouse, the fat dormouse and the wild boar. These species, which have adapted to the characteristics of the territory, find food and shelter in the Monte Alpe Nature Reserve.

As far as birds are concerned, the reserve offers an ideal environment for several species. The sparrow hawk, buzzard, tawny owl and red woodpecker are just some of the species that can be seen flying in the skies over the reserve.

The Grey-tailed Whitethroat

The Reserve is also an important habitat for the Grey-tailed Whitethroat, a species that nests in the thermophilic environments of the Oltrepò Pavese in Lombardy.

The titmouse, the crossbill and the tordella are other species that frequent the coniferous forest of the reserve. These birds find shelter and food in the dense foliage of the conifers, creating a fascinating environment rich in life.

Monte Alpe, the highest peak in the Staffora Valley, offers nature lovers and hikers an extensive network of trails to explore and enjoy its scenic beauty and rich biodiversity.

For those looking for an easier, but still scenic hiking experience, there are trails that offer spectacular views of the valley and surrounding mountains. These trails allow you to enjoy breathtaking views without requiring a high level of physical fitness.

For more experienced walkers and nature lovers, the Sentiero del Ponte, recommended with a guide, is a fascinating, challenging but extremely rewarding choice.

The ant moth

In the 1950s, the University of Pavia set out to find innovative solutions to contain the damage caused by the processionary moth to reforestation trees. Scholars focused on the use of ants as natural control agents of the processionary moth. *Ants lugubris*, a variety of *Formica rufa*, were identified as particularly effective in combating the proliferation of this pest. Entire nests of *Formica rufa* were taken from the provinces of Bergamo and Brescia and reintroduced into the reserve. The experiment was a success.

Information Point and Visitor Centre

The Information Point and Visitor Centre is located at the Forestry Corps' barracks along the Penice Pass road 461. Here you can obtain detailed information on the available routes, technical difficulties, distances and points of interest along the way. There is also a free accompanying service for nature excursions.