



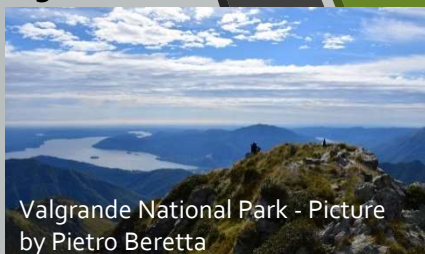
Newsletter

LIFE FOR LASCA

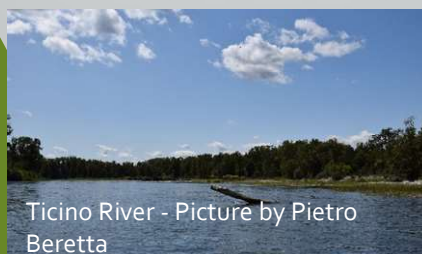
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The Ticino River originates in Switzerland. Its main source is at the head of Val Bedretto, at the Novena Pass, at about 2,480 meters above sea level, while another source is near the Hospice of San Gottardo, the river continues in Swiss territory up to the delta that flows into the Lake Maggiore. Once out of the Verbano basin, near Sesto Calende (VA), the Ticino crosses the entire Po valley, cutting it deeply for about 110 km and, after having lapped Pavia, ends in the Po, in Ponte della Becca (PV). Its valley and its waters are one of the *breeding sites of the Lasca*, an endemic fish species of northern Italy and Slovenia, object of the Life for Lasca project, financed by the European Union, in Italy in the Ticino Park and in Slovenia in the Vipava Valley. The Ticino Valley in Italian territory is protected: for the Lombard part by the *Lombard Park of the Ticino Valley* and for the Piedmontese part by the *Management Body of the Protected Areas of Ticino and Lake Maggiore*.

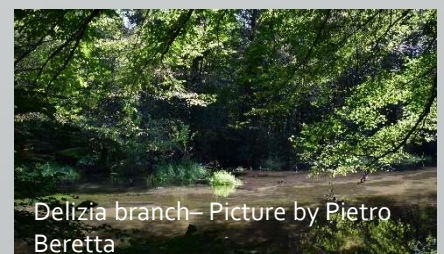
The Lombard Park of the Ticino Valley covers an area of approximately 91,800 hectares, of which approximately 20,500 are protected as a Natural Park. The presence of a rich and varied set of ecosystems, in many cases well preserved, means that in the Park there is a heritage of biodiversity that has no equal in the Po Valley. This has allowed the recognition in the Park of some *Sites of Community Interest (SIC)*, as many as 14 *Special Conservation Areas (SACs)* and 1 *Special Protection Area (SPA)* pursuant to the Habitats and Birds Directives. These areas are part of the so-called Natura 2000 Network, a system of sites with a high degree of protection that involves the entire territory of the European Union and is intended for the conservation of biodiversity and in particular for the protection of a series of habitats and rare and threatened animal species and plants. The valley as a whole also obtained in 2002 the recognition of a Biosphere Reserve under the *Unesco Man and Biosphere Program (MAB)*, a program with the aim of improving the relationship between man and the environment and reducing the loss of biodiversity. After an initial expansion recognized in 2014, the *Ticino Val Grande Verbano Reserve* was designated in July 2018 as a further extension of the Ticino Valley Reserve, which reaches the Swiss border, including the Valgrande National Park, the two Ticino regional parks and the Campo dei Fiori Regional Park.



Valgrande National Park - Picture by Pietro Beretta



Ticino River - Picture by Pietro Beretta



Delizia branch - Picture by Pietro Beretta

The Vipava Valley in Slovenia

Also the Valley and its environment in 2004 were included in the areas of interest of the **Natura 2000 Network** for Slovenia, with an area that constitutes 0.05% of the entire surface of the valley. There are preserved the habitats of numerous species such as *Chondrostoma genei*, *Rana latastei*, *Lethenteron zanandreaei*, *Lycaena dispar*, *Emys orbicularis*, *Lutra lutra* and *Lucanus cervus* just to name a few of the best known.

The Vipava Valley is located in the west of Slovenia. To the north the valley is surrounded by the Nanos plateau, the Hrusica plateau and the Ternovo wood; to the south from the Vipava mountains while to the west the valley ends with the Gorizia plain where it borders with Italy.

The Vipava is a typically karst river with 3 main sources: the Vipava, the Hubelj and the Lijak. A peculiarity of this territory is that the karst springs do not dry up and have an average hydrological regime. The bottom is mainly gravelly therefore suitable for the proliferation of many species of protected fish including the Lasca. According to ecological standards, the waters of Vipava are of good quality and the temperature varies between 12 °C and 24 °C.

The Vipava is mainly populated by Cyprinids and Salmonids which are mainly present in the lower part of the river. The coexistence of cyprinids and salmonids is typical of flat areas with sufficient water quality that corresponds precisely to the needs of the Lasca.



Vipava Valley – Picture by FRIS



Vipava Valley – Picture by Marijan Močivnik, www.studio-ajd.si



Vipava Valley – Picture by FRIS

How was born the Natura 2000 Network in Europe

Natura 2000 was born thanks to the application of two Community Directives known as the *"Birds" Directive (of 1979) and the "Habitats" Directive (of 1992)*, aimed at the conservation of particularly vulnerable habitats and animal and plant species and therefore subjected to special measures conservation. The two Directives provide that the Member States contribute to the constitution of a European ecological network based on the presence and representativeness on their territory of environments and species of Community interest, identifying areas of particular environmental value called Sites of Community Importance (SIC) which become Special Conservation Areas (SACs) following the implementation of management plans and Special Protection Areas (ZPS).

The Natura 2000 Network therefore has as *a priority objective the conservation and management of portions of the territory*, with the ultimate aim of ensuring the maintenance or restoration in a satisfactory state of conservation of the *natural habitats* and the *living conditions of the species*. This objective is also concretely pursued through the application of specific directives, management guidelines and binding checks for plans, projects and interventions to be carried out within or adjacent to the same sites of the Natura 2000 network.

Natura Network in Italy and in the Park

In Italy, SCIs, SACs and SPAs cover a total of approximately 21% of the national territory. In Lombardy, 242 Natura 2000 sites have been established, equal to 15% of its territory, divided into 194 Sites of Community Importance (SCI) and 66 Special Protection Areas for Avifauna (SPA).

The Ticino Valley is identified as an *ecological corridor*: an area with characteristics that favor the connection between habitats and allow the movement of animals that along these "corridors" do not find anthropogenic barriers that prevent their natural expansion and contact with other populations of the same species.

The role of the valley has also been recognized under the Habitat and Birds Directives by establishing, on the Lombard shore, 14 Sites of Community Importance (for about 17,000 hectares) and a Special Protection Area, which covers about 20,000 ha. It is *one of the areas with the highest levels of biodiversity at regional and provincial level*.



Natura 2000 Sites

Natura 2000 sites are identified for the protection of important habitats and species at community level. Each Member State is required to ensure the good state of conservation of the site, avoiding its deterioration and compromise. From this it follows that all those activities that may have some significant impact on protected habitats and species are prohibited within or near SACs and SPAs. Various tools are used to ensure the maintenance of the protection objectives, among which the Management Plans are fundamental. The first Management Plan approved by the Park in 2007 was that of the "Lago di Comabbio" SAC.

The Management Plans

The setting of the plans includes:

- a preliminary part of cognitive study of habitats and species, as well as a territorial, social, economic framework of the reference site;
- an analysis of the risks and any threats related to the various habitats and species;
- the choice of a strategy of interventions to be implemented to counter the threats and to enhance the site;
- the identification of individual actions, with the attribution of the priority level and a rough calculation of possible costs.

A new SCI for the Ticino Park

9 Management Plans are currently in force in the Ticino Park and with the help of these tools, the Authority has been able to activate, where resources have allowed it, various actions that have made it possible to intervene on the priorities identified by the plans.

The action of the Park was not limited, however, to the management of the sites already designated: in 2011 the body promoted the establishment of a new SCI / SPA called "Brughiere di Malpensa e Lonate", in order to protect the largest example of the *Calluna vulgaris* moorland formations in the Po Valley, a habitat of community interest that is also very important from the faunal point of view. The Park has also prepared the design of an ecological network within the boundaries of the protected area and towards the external natural areas, in order to avoid the danger of the isolation of natural areas and instead favor their effective networking, through the creation of ecological requalification and defragmentation works.

Recently, in the Park, was also started the procedure at the Ministry of the Environment for the recognition and establishment of a new SCI in order to protect the populations of *Acipenser naccarii* present.



Calluna vulgaris – Picture by Alice Pellegrino



Moorland in the Ticino Park – Picture by Alice Pellegrino