

Parco del Ticino turns 40

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Parco del Ticino turns 40: the 40th anniversary of the creation of the Lombard Park of the Ticino Valley falls on 9 January 2014. The park includes the banks and the Lombard side of the “Fiume Azzurro” valley, from the area around Sesto Calende to the plains in the area of the Province of Pavia, where the waters of the river born in Switzerland flow into those of the Po (in the picture, you can see the swollen river in Somma Lombardo).

The Lombard Park of the Ticino Valley – as an **institution safeguarding a natural heritage created over millennia** – is **the oldest among the Italian regional parks** and its birth occurred 4 years earlier than that of the reserve on the Piedmontese bank, located in Cameri. It is **a vast corridor following the western border of Lombardy** and it is divided into two parts, the 22,249 hectares of the Natural Park (where the safeguard is more urgent) and the 69,161 hectares of the Regional Park. **In the Province of Varese, it includes thirteen municipalities**, from the least densely populated, such as Vizzola Ticino, on the banks of the river, up to towns such as Sesto Calende, Somma Lombardo and Gallarate. **In the Province of Varese there are also some of most valuable areas of the “Fiume Azzurro”**, such as the “Canalgrande”, between Sesto Calende-Golasecca and Somma Lombardo (where the valley is narrow and the banks are steep and wooded), and the area of the Gaggio, between Lonate Pozzolo and Tornavento, which is considered as one of the last patches of moor left and recognized as a Site of Community Importance and a heritage for all Europe. Right in this area – which is threatened by the expansion projects of Malpensa airport – there is also the Park Centre of the Austro-Hungarian Customs, one of the most important centres of the park institution.

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