

VareseNews

The orchards that nourish the body and the soul are revived in Brinzio

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From drug dealers' woods, to natural heritage that can nourish the body and the soul; the chestnut orchards of **Brinzio** and **Castello Cabiaglio** have been revived, thanks to a project that, next spring, will enable people (pandemic permitting) to enjoy, close-up, the treasures of our mountains, and to teach children the value of biodiversity.

The extensive work to revive a number of chestnut orchards that lie in the **Campo dei Fiori Regional Park** was completed a few days ago.

This was one of the interventions contained in the project **“Corridors of Insubria – network to protect the natural capital of Insubria”**, which is being led by the Park Authority, and which is being funded by the Cariplo Foundation.

The project has a total of **21 interventions**, which will all be completed by December 2021; the revival work on the traditional chestnut woods, which is being led by the Campo dei Fiori Regional Park, has been done in the municipalities of **Brinzio and Castello Cabiaglio**, on about seven hectares of land, divided into three areas.

The most evident, of which we have published some photos, is certainly that of “Ca di Asen”, which is situated along the provincial road, just after the municipality of Castello Cabiaglio. Those who often use that road, and the **310 B trail**, a section of which runs along beside it, will certainly have noticed and appreciated the change in the last few months.

This area is returning to its previous splendour, and will be available to the local community, as a showcase of biodiversity, which is a typical, traditional feature of the landscape and a symbol of the history and culture of these places.

The three areas will consolidate and enhance ecological connectivity, by improving the habitats of the fauna and the vegetation, preventing excessive fragmentation of the network and the subsequent loss of variability of the ecosystem. Just like other chestnut orchards, these are an important feature of the environmental diversity within the uniform wood extensions, which characterise the pre-Alpine area. Naturally, at the same time, they represent the recovery of a cultural-historical heritage, with a high value linked to slow and sustainable tourism.

The intervention was carried out by a group of local companies. Those involved in the collaboration included local operators, under the coordination of the **Consortium of Chestnut Farmers of Brinzio, Orino and Castello Cabiaglio**, thus bringing additional social value to the project, which further strengthened the local chestnut supply chain, which the Park Authority has been working on for several years.

In addition to cleaning and reopening the woods, the project included pruning the chestnut trees, to revive their strength, while maintaining cavities and spaces dedicated to the fauna (birdlife and bats, in particular).

Around 180 young chestnut seedlings, obtained from local seeds, **have been planted**, and will be grafted onto the local traditional varieties in the Park, over the next few years. To revive the grass under the chestnut trees, **seeds previously gathered in the meadows of Brinzio were used**, thanks to the project Fiorume 2.0, to guarantee the conservation and promotion of the local biodiversity. Finally, three notice boards, made of chestnut wood, of course, have been put in place, and on these, information panels from the Cariplo Project will soon be put.

In the next few years, the three interventions will be maintained and enhanced, thanks to the collaboration of the Consortium of Chestnut Farmers and of the owners, so we will witness the growth of the grass and of the little trees, the improvement of the quality of chestnut production, and a reduction in the abandonment of our territories.

The areas, which will also be the site of nature studies and research, will also be used for honey production, for educational and information activities, to teach about these places, where we can get back in touch with nature and its cycle.

And to think that, only two years ago, these woods were in the hands of heroin dealers, who had established here one of the meeting points for buying and selling in Upper Varese Province, with the coming and going of cars and people at all times, and moments of tension, with the wood's owners who were often in danger, due to armed and unscrupulous people.

The work of the forces of law and order was the first piece in getting back these areas, and the revival project, which was created a few days ago, thanks to the work done in the last few months, is the path that the people involved in this story intend to follow.

It was an intervention capable of combining environmental protection, the enhancement of sustainable local development and the revival of traditional culture, proving that Protected Areas can be a hotbed of exemplary and replicable projects, thanks to the cohesion and collaboration with local operators and local communities.

The project partnership includes all of the territorially-competent institutional organisations and environmental associations: Varese Province and Town Council, the Verbano Valley Mountain Community of Verbano Province, the University of Insubria, Oikos, Legambiente, Lipu-BirdLife Italia, coordinated by Parco Campo dei Fiori, with the participation of a number of municipalities, farms and private companies.

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