

VareseNews

In Brinzio, the wood that feeds bodies and souls, has been reborn

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From pushers' wood to natural heritage, able to feed bodies and souls: the chestnut forest of **Brinzio** and **Castello Cabiaglio** is reborn, thank to a project that will permit, next spring, to be able to enjoy up close the treasures of our mountains, and to teach the youngest the importance of biodiversity, if the pandemic permits.

In these days, the extensive recovery work of some chestnut forests located in **Parco Regionale of Campo dei Fiori** was concluded.

This is one of the actions contained in the project **“Corridoi Insubrici – a network for the protection of the natural capital,”** which is funded by the Cariplo's Foundation, that the Park Authority is leader of.

In total **21 measures** are being taken in this project which will end in December 2021: the traditional chestnut woods recovery work, carried out by the Regional Park Campo dei Fiori, have taken place **in Brinzio and in Castello Cabiaglio**, on about seven hectares of land, divided in three areas.

“Ca di Asen,” of which we offer you some images, is certainly the most visible. It is on the **provincial road sides**, not long after Cabiaglio's occupied castle. People who often drive along that road and walk the **310 path through the woods**, which skirts the castle for a stretch of road, certainly had the occasion to see and to appreciate the change during these months.

This area is acquiring again its original splendor. It is available for the local community as a treasure trove of biodiversity, as a characteristic traditional landscape element and as a symbol of the history and of the culture of this places.

The three areas strengthen the ecological connectivity improving wildlife and vegetational habitats, avoiding the excessive network fragmentation and the consequent eco-systemic variability loss. These, as well as the other chestnut woods, are important elements of environmental diversity in the uniform wooded extents, which characterize the pre-Alpine area. Naturally, at the same time they represent the recovery an historical heritage which has a high significance also in terms of slow and sustainable tourism.

Going into detail, **the intervention was carried out by a group of local companies**. Indeed, under the coordination of the **Chestnut Growers Consortium of Brinzio, Orino and Castello Cabiaglio**, local operators collaborated, thus bringing an additional social value to the project, which allowed a further strengthening of the local chestnut-growing industry. This is an issue that the Park Authority has been working on for several years.

In addition to cleaning and reopening the forests, the project involved the pruning of examples of chestnut trees to restore their vigour, while maintaining cavities and spaces for fauna (avifauna and **bats** in particular).

About 180 new chestnut seedlings were planted from local seeds, which will be grafted with traditional local varieties in the Park, in the coming years. **The flowering plants**, which had previously been harvested from the meadows of Brinzio thanks to the “Fiorume 2.0” project, **were used** to recreate the meadow under the chestnut trees, thus guaranteeing the conservation and enhancement of local biodiversity. Lastly, three showcases, made of chestnut wood of course, were put up, on which the information panels of the Cariplo project will soon be placed.

In the coming years, the three interventions will be maintained and enhanced thanks to the cooperation of the Chestnut Growers Consortium and the owners, so we will see the growth of the meadow and seedlings, an improvement in the quality of chestnut production, and a decrease in the abandonment of our territories.

The areas, which are also the site of naturalistic studies and research, will also be used for the production of honey, for educational activities and to get to know these places where you can get back in touch with nature and its rhythms.

And to think that only two years ago, these very woods were in the hands of heroin dealers who set up one of the Upper Varese’s distribution hubs here, with cars and people coming and going at all hours and moments of tension with landowners who were often in danger from unscrupulous gunmen.

The work of the police has been the first step towards regaining control of these areas, and the recovery project that has become reality thanks to the work in recent months is the path that the agents in this case intend to follow.

The initiative was able to combine environmental protection, the promotion of sustainable local development and the recovery of traditional culture, proving that Protected Areas can be a source of exemplary and replicable projects, thanks to cohesion and cooperation with local operators and communities.

The partnership project is made up of all the competent territorial institutional bodies and environmental associations: Province and Municipality of Varese, Comunità Montana Valli del Verbano, Insubria University, Oikos, Legambiente, Lipu-BirdLife Italia coordinated by Campo dei Fiori Park, with the participation of some municipalities and agricultural and private companies.

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