



The wetland between the Mount Pratomagno and the Chiantishire

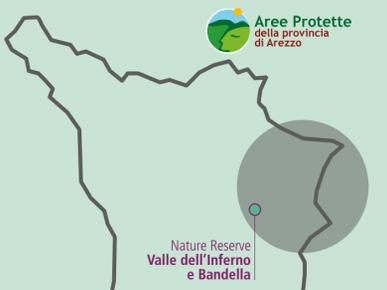
GUIDEMAPS



Nature, information, four itineraries and path map

PROTECTED AREAS IN THE PROVINCE OF AREZZO

Foto di Giuseppe L. Di Marco, 2016 di G. S.C. - San Giovanni Valdarno (AR)



AREE PROTETTE della provincia di Arezzo

Nature Reserve Valle dell'Inferno e Bandella

REGIONE TOSCANA

PROVINCIA DI AREZZO

Realized by the Province of Arezzo with the contribution of the Region of Tuscany.

VISITOR CENTRE
"Le aree umide"
Loc. Monticello - 52028 Terranuova Bracciolini (AR)

CREDITS
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HOW TO GET THERE
From Arezzo: 1) go along the road SR 69 toward Monteverchi and turn toward Montalto or continue as far as Levane then turn toward Terranuova Bracciolini and, after crossing the bridge on the River Arno, take the road to Monticello; 2) take the road "SP 1 - Setteponti" toward Castiglion Fibocchi and, after Laterina, follow the road markings to Montalto or, just before the Romito bridge, turn right and continue as far as Pian di Chena. **From Florence:** take the A1 motorway and exit at "Valdarno", then go along the road "SP 1 - Lungo Arno" toward Arezzo, near Acqua Bona, before the bridge, turn left to Monticello.

Etruria mobilità - www.etruriamobilita.it - Toll-free number: 800.115605

TERRITORY



The Nature Reserve "Valle dell'Inferno e Bandella" encloses a 4km stretch of the Arno valley, wedged between Mount Pratomagno and the Chianti hills, where gentle hills alternate with enclosed wooded valleys carved by the Arno tributaries. The heart of the Nature Reserve is the wetland of Bandella, which formed in 1958 after the construction of the dam in Levane and the flooding of the Ascione valley. In the hills in the north of the Reserve there is a large Contiguous Area where farming and other activities are regulated so as not to negatively influence the equilibrium of the wetland and the river. The waters of the Arno in the past provided a rapid means of transport for goods and a free energy source for the operation of the mills. Moreover, during the course of its life, the river carved deep banks creating ideal positions for fortifications and villages, built through the ages on the rocky spurs jutting into the river. Of these settlements the Reserve conserves the ruins of Castellare, the fortification of the Ubertini family destroyed in 1345 by the Florentines, and of Castiglioncello, a medieval hamlet only definitively abandoned in recent times, when the construction of the dam began.

The hell of the "foderai"
The name "Valle dell'Inferno" (Hell valley) probably originated among the "foderai", men who defied the Arno on broad rafts, sailing the tree trunks (cut down in the Casentino forests) which from the river ports of Pratovecchio and Ponte a Poppi floated along the river as far as Florence and Pisa. During the floods the rush of the Arno waters - pressed between the banks of this valley - must have been a source of worry and accidents, so much so to remind the hell. From the mid-1900s, with the construction of the Levane dam, the river lost much of its original force, slowed down by the weir.

GEOLOGY



The Valdarno basin formed in the later Pliocene (about 2 million years ago), when in a large part of Tuscany mighty tectonic extensive movements fractured the earth's crust forming ridges and hollows. One of these depressions, the present-day Valdarno, soon became a lake where lime and clay were deposited, the same sediments we walk on today to visit the Bandella creek. The Valdarno lake had a relatively short life and was soon filled by sandy sediments and roundstones brought down by the streams descending from Pratomagno. Some time later, about one million years ago, the Arno began to run along the Valdarno basin also depositing its sediments. However it was only in recent times that the river began to model the current landscape: about 200,000 years ago both the Arno and its tributaries began to rapidly erode the sediments previously deposited, in some points reaching down as far as the underlying Macigno sandstone. In the Valle dell'Inferno the Arno dug its bed in this rock, creating a deep narrow valley, a feature which made this one the chosen site for the construction of fortified hamlets and in more recent times, of the dam. In other cases where the clay surfaced, the streams managed to expand further forming wide gentle valleys, as in the case of the Ascione valley, where the Bandella wetland formed.

FAUNA



The birds, especially those associated with marsh and river environments, are undoubtedly the best represented group in the Nature Reserve and their number has increased since the protected area was set up. In fact, despite their size and artificial origin the small protected wetlands - such as this one of Bandella - play an important role for migratory waterfowl, who find a safe place here to spend the entire winter or to rest during the long journey they make every year. From the huts looking onto the wetland different species can be observed depending on the season. The whole year-round it's possible to observe mallards, common moorhens, kingfishers and grey herons, which nest here, as well as black crowned night herons and little egrets which visit Bandella in search of food. In the point where the Ricavo torrent flows into the Arno River there is an important herony. Among the rare species of herons which live in the Reserve are noteworthy, the squacco heron and the purple heron both of high conservation value. Only attentive observers will be able to catch a glimpse of elusive species such as the water rail, usually hidden amid the marsh vegetation, the great reed warbler, the Cetti's warbler and the Eurasian penduline tit, small ordinary-looking passeriformes. In winter the protected area is populated by northern lapwings, common teals, little grebes, common snipes and black-headed gulls, as well as great egrets and great cormorants. For a few years there has been the green sandpiper too, a shore bird which nests in northern European boreal forests and spends the winter in the Mediterranean area. In past years even a greater spotted eagle wintered in the Reserve, an extremely rare event in Tuscany. Autumn and spring migrations often reserve surprises with the appearance of rare birds which

stay in the Reserve for several days before setting off again, rested and restored. In these periods, it is possible to observe various migratory shorebirds such as the spotted redshank, the black-tailed godwit, the common sandpiper, the wood sandpiper and ducks such as the garganey. The woods add species to the Reserve, thanks to its cool microclimate and the good quality of these environments. Nest here species that usually prefer higher altitudes, such as the song thrush and the marsh tit, rare species such as the lesser spotted woodpecker and migratory birds of prey such as the black kite. In the tributaries of the Arno still live the spectacled salamander, the Italian stream frog and the Italian freshwater goby, three species exclusive to the Italian peninsula. The Reserve is also home to the porcupine, the roe and the boar, in addition to some insectivorous mammals as the Etruscan shrew, the smallest known mammal by mass.

Spectacled salamandre



It is a little amphibian whose Italian name is due to the yellowy spots above its eyes.

Grey heron



It is a typical bird of the Bandella wetland, where it finds to fish frogs and fishes.

Guided boat trips

Boat trips allow to observe the Reserve from the river, through a unique and privileged point of view on environments otherwise unreachable by land as the herony in the mouth of Ricavo.



Arno goby



The Arno goby is a species of goby endemic to Italy. It occurs in streams stony-bottomed.

Bandella meander



The Bandella wetland formed with the flooding of the Ascione valley, as a consequence of the construction of the Levane dam in Fifties. Site used for migration stopover and hesting by several protected species of birds.

Yellow flag



It blooms in spring along the Arno banks.

Flowering rush

It grows in shallow fresh waters. It is an endangered species due to the mechanical ditch cleaning and the use of herbicides.



Castiglioncello botanical garden

The Castiglioncello botanical garden is one of the teaching facilities in the Nature Reserve, which offers an exhibition of local flora: there are many species of shrubs and grasses, but also several orchids.



Black-winged stilt



It is a rare marsh bird that lives in the shallow waters of the Bandella meander.

The stream Agna



This stream is one of the Nature Reserve torrents locally known as "borri". These tributaries of the River Arno have dugged narrow beds embanked in river sediments.

Green sandpiper

It lives in open wetlands and feeds on small invertebrate items picked off the mud as this species lives steadily around the edges of its chosen pond.



VEGETATION



The river and, to an even greater extent, the reservoir created by the dam strongly influence the microclimate of the valley, determining an unusual distribution of vegetation. The clearest example is in the Bandella creek where the wetland is bordered by a belt of willows and poplars and invaded by dense rushes with various species of rush mixed with sedges, hemp agrimony and pale yellow iris, plants able to withstand periodic immersion, as well as species which on the contrary need to have their roots and stems constantly immersed, like the arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*) and the water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*). The flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) lives here too, a rare plant with leaves similar to the rush but with a gaudy pink umbrella-shaped blossom. The higher hills and the sunnier south-facing valley slopes have a climate much more similar to the Mediterranean climate, as shown by the fields of olives and vines crossed by the network of paths in the Monticello area. In the woody parts the warm dry climate favours the presence of the downy oak, the strawberry madrone, the broom heath and even of several holly oaks, as on the rocky spur of Castellare. However, it's in the bottom of the Arno valley that the most interesting forest species are to be found thanks to the cool damp conditions given by the reduced penetration of the sun and the presence of the reservoir. Here the wood dominates and is characterised by the presence of the turkey oak and the English oak, an oak typical of the valley bottom which has disappeared almost everywhere to leave room for farming and building. Closer to the water there are also the European hornbeam, the European filbert and the speckled alder, in some

PUBLICATIONS



Riserve Naturali della provincia di Arezzo - Guida
Provincia di Arezzo, Edizioni Compagnia delle Foreste, 2016

Riserve Naturali della provincia di Arezzo - Cartoguide
Provincia di Arezzo, Edizioni Compagnia delle Foreste, 2016

Lungo l'Arno: paesaggi, storie e culture - Volume
Saïda Grifoni, ASKA 2016

Mentre l'Arno scorreva (Memorie orali sull'Arno e i suoi affluenti raccolte nel territorio di Laterina) - Volume
Comune di Laterina in collaborazione con I.C. F. Mochi di Levane e Provincia di Arezzo, 2006

TOURIST INFORMATION



Visitor Centre with exhibition "Le aree umide"
Open by reservation
Loc. Monticello - 52028 Terranuova Bracciolini (AR)
Ph. 393/8353089 - mail: info@alcedoambiente.com
web: www.alcedoambiente.com

Information office in Laterina
Via Trento, 21 - 52020 Laterina (AR)
Ph. 0575/880133 - mail: suap@comune.laterina.ar.it

Ufficio Promozione del Territorio
Via Roma, 89 - 52025 Monteverchi (AR)
Ph. 055/9108212

Information office in Terranuova Bracciolini
Via Poggilupi - 52028 Terranuova Bracciolini (AR)
Ph. 055/9738828 - mail: infoturismovaldarno@gmail.com

Regione Toscana - Direzione Ambiente ed Energia
Settore Tutela della Natura e del Mare
Via A. Testa, 2 - 52100 Arezzo
mail: areeprotette@regione.toscana.it

ACCOMODATION



	bed number	Info
Holiday farm Il Palazzo La Spiga	24	Open from March 1th to October 31th and at Christmas. Loc. Il Palazzo, 1 - 52020 Pergine Valdarno (AR). Ph. 3336244180 mail: info@ilpalazzoagriturismo.com web: www.ilpalazzoagriturismo.it
Holiday farm Il Pino Bioagricoltura	24	Open from March 30th to December 14th. Loc. Castiglion Ubertini, 78 - 52028 Terranuova Bracciolini (AR). Ph. 055/9703807 mail: mail@ilpino.com web: www.ilpino.com
Holiday farm I Lecci	16	Open from Easter to November 1th. Loc. Monticello - Via per Castiglion Ubertini, 76/C - 52028 Terranuova Bracciolini (AR). Ph. 3385436977 mail: tenutalcecc@libero.it
Holiday house Poggio alle Fonti	17	Open all year round. Fraz. Castiglion Ubertini, 49 - Loc. Castellare 52028 Terranuova Bracciolini (AR). Ph. 055/971399 - 366117512 mail: info@poggioallefonti.com web: www.poggioallefonti.com
Tenuta Vitereta	36	Open from March 1th to October 31th. Via Casanova, 108/1 - Loc. Vitereta - 52020 Laterina (AR). Ph. 3475915186 - 3480596149 mail: infobnonnaria@gmail.com
Bed and Breakfast Nonna Maria	3	Open all year round. Via Mazzini, 83 - Fraz. Montalto - 52020 Pergine Valdarno (AR). Ph. 3394148618 - 3383199369 mail: bbtoscanastation@virgilio.it web: www.bbtoscanastation.it
Bed and Breakfast Toscana Station	6	Open all year round. P.zza Unità d'Italia, 6 - Fraz. Montalto - 52020 Pergine Valdarno (AR). Ph. 3394148618 - 3383199369 mail: bbtoscanastation@virgilio.it web: www.bbtoscanastation.it
Bed and Breakfast Il Prunello	10	Open all year round. Villaggio Enel, 10 - Levane - 52025 Monteverchi (AR). Ph. 3289281081
Restaurant Lo Strettoio	-	Loc. Pian di Chena, 10 - 52020 Laterina (AR). Ph. 0575/89161
Restaurant Il Romito	-	Via Vecchia Aretina, 60 - 52020 Pergine Valdarno (AR). Ph. 0575/959423 mail: ilromito@aise.it
Restaurant La Valle dell'Inferno Da Frasca	-	Loc. Acqua Bona, 58 - 52028 Terranuova Bracciolini (AR). Ph. 055/918031 mail: ristorante.ladiga@libero.it
Holiday farm Dimore di Poggiano	28	Open from March to October and at Christmas. Loc. Poggiauto - 52020 Pergine Vno (AR). Ph. 0575 894475 - 3354562200 mail: info@dimoredipoggiano.it web: www.dimoredipoggiano.it
Holiday farm Borgo Santa Maria in Valle	29	Open all year round. Via S. Maria in Valle 2 - 52020 Laterina (AR). Ph. 0575 4027454 mail: segreteria@agricolledocesane.it
Camper area	10 campsites	Open all year round. Via B. Latini - 52025 Monteverchi (AR). Ph. 055/9108343

places scattered around the oak woods, in others forming small riverine woods, as at the mouth of the Ricavo stream. The undergrowth recalls that of forests at a higher altitude and is at its best in spring with the blossoming of liverworts, periwinkles fire lilies and the rare mouse plant (*Arisarum proboscideum*), typical species of mountain woods. Today the wood is taking much of the land no longer farmed or used as pasture. Along the Arno in fact, some decades ago, the farmland stretched almost as far as the banks of the Bandella creek, thanks to the ramified agricultural system which enabled crops to be grown on even the most inhospitable slopes. Today one gets some idea of this change, still in progress, by observing the distribution of the shrubbery of singleseed Hawthorn and blackthorn, pre-announcing the return of nature after the abandoning of farming, remained only on the peaks of the gentler hills.

IDENTITY CARD OF THE PROTECTED AREA
Municipality: Laterina, Monteverchi, Terranuova Bracciolini, Pergine Valdarno
Area: 531 ha (contiguous area 2.164 ha)
Established: July 10, 1996
Management: Region of Tuscany in collaboration with the interested Municipalities.

EQUIPPED DEPARTURE POINTS

The Monticello Visitor Centre
There are two good places to access the Reserve from, both with parking facilities: Pian di Chena for those coming from Arezzo and Monticello for those coming from Valdarno or the "Valdarno" exit of the A1. In Monticello there is the Visitor Centre of the Reserve where you can find information, publications and further details about the wetlands, the Arno and the fauna in these important environments. It's also possible to book boat trips with departure from the pier in Bandella. The Centre is easy to reach from the roads at the bottom of the valley more than from the S.P. 4 of the Val d'Ascione, coming off the A1 at the Valdarno exit and taking the S.P. 11 towards Arezzo; the turn-off for Monticello is shortly before Levane and the bridge over the Arno; at the present time access for large coaches may prove problematic.

TOUR ITINERARIES

Some of the trails in the Nature Reserve start from the Visitor Centre. By contacting the Guides it's possible to access to the observation huts, the Botanical Garden and to the "Aula verde" (green hall) in Castiglione, an open-air teaching area designed for school children and groups interested in furthering their environmental education. For information about guided tours of the dam installations in Levane please contact the Visitor Centre or the Guides who will check the availability with ENEL. Moreover, in the North of the Nature Reserve and its Contiguous Area it is possible to ride the mountain bike trail "MTB Ascione".

The trails in the Reserve

The Nature Reserve has its own network of paths enabling visits to both sides of the Arno valley and offering a choice of itineraries varying in length. All the paths may be freely used but for a more satisfying excursion and access to some of the facilities make arrangements with the Guides.

The Bandella creek - TRAILS A and B

Length: 4 km
Travel time: 1h 15'
From the Visitor Centre in Monticello this path leads a short way down to the valley until it joins the B path on the left which leads down to the Bandella marsh, offering excellent views over it, through shrubby and woods. The path skirts the wetland as far as the observation huts, from where you can go back to Monticello along path A.

From Monticello to Pian di Chena and back - TRAILS A and C

Length: 5 km
Travel time: 2h
From the Visitor Centre in Monticello this path leads along an unmade road as far as the Bandella creek where it climbs up the slope as far as Pian di Chena, through woods and farmland. For the return journey use the Trail C, reached by continuing another 300m along the road and then turning right. The path descends along the Agna stream in a narrow wooded valley lush with vegetation, looking over the Arno and - after skirting it - it joins the A trail again leading back to Monticello.

From Acqua Borra to Montalto - TRAIL D

Length: 6.2 km
Travel time: 3h 30'
The path runs through the southern part of the Reserve on the left bank of the Arno. It starts from the town of Acqua Borra, just before the dam for those coming from Levane, and in the initial stretch it follows the road leading to the ENEL village, then it crosses the valley of the stream Ricavo and continues along the hillside as far as the village of Montalto (near the cemetery). Several detours offer marvellous views over the Arno.

The GERDA

The Great Hike of the Arno Reserves (GERDA) runs along the right bank of the Arno, a path which from the town of Acqua Borra crosses the entire protected area as far as Ponte del Romito and from here reaches the Nature Reserve of Ponte a Buriano e Penna, where it ends. The section of the GERDA relevant to the Nature Reserve, from Acqua Borra to Ponte del Romito, largely coincides with the layout of the trails and is 7.8 km long, taking about 3 hours for the outward journey; the return may be along the same path or, after crossing the Ponte del Romito, along Trail D from Montalto to Acqua Borra (about 4 hours). Another solution is to organise a number of cars at different points or to use public or private transport services. The GERDA provides an opportunity to get to know the Valdarno: small detours offer the chance to visit ancient churches such as Santa Maria in Valle, built on a hill looking onto the plain, or town centres rich in history such as Laterina, an ancient medieval fortified settlement famous for its brick furnace, already active in Roman times.



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