

## FROM THE HILLS TO THE SEA - A NATURE LOVER'S PARADISE

The mediterranean vegetation known as the "macchia" is the dominant feature of the natural environment of the region. It provides the setting for the Etruscan, medieval and modern features in all the parks, but especially in the coastal parks where the macchia runs down to extensive sandy beaches as well as in the forest parks. Paths through nature, far from the sound of traffic, can be explored on horseback, by bicycle and on foot.

The **Sterpaia Coastal Park** is reclaimed woodland. After almost thirty years battle, the area has been saved from destruction by unauthorised building and made available for the public to enjoy. The forest can breathe again and as a witness to its past vicissitudes, lines of tamarisk, butterbush and eucalyptus remain bordering square patches; they leave a record of what were the confines of illegal building lots. Today, the three hundred hectares rescued by the municipality of Piombino, are an extremely valuable habitat consisting of dunes, wetlands, cultivated clearings, woodland and a rare section of humid coastal forest. The monumental dimensions of some of the trees are a feature of special botanical interest: ash, oak and Turkey oak with trunk circumferences of several metres. But even more important is the character of the landscape - it is a relic and record of the use of land as woodland grazing which was typical of the Maremma in the early twentieth century: 296 hectares, 17 of which are of sand stretching 10 kilometres along the coast, 124 hectares are dunes, 155 hectares are woodland with cultivated clearings.

The **Rimigliano Coastal Park** in contrast, is a strip of green vegetation running down to the sea. A wild landscape running along a low lying sandy shore. 150 hectares of "macchia" shaped by sea breezes and dominated by holm oak and patches of shady pinewood. This characteristic Mediterranean vegetation lies behind the shore, where the grasses that colonise the dunes give way to low scrub consisting of juniper, myrtle and phyllirea and finally a fantastic forest of holm oak dotted with cluster and umbrella pine bent over by the constant buffeting of the sea breezes. The woods are populated by small rodents, hedgehog, fox, and weasel but also by jay and green woodpecker.

In the **Poggio Neri Forest Park** there are stupendous examples of chestnut, oak and holm oak. A realm of green forest dominated by roe deer and wild boar but not far from the medieval village of Sassetta. Traces of an ancient economy based on charcoal, chestnut and hunting are clearly visible in the 700 hectares, 600 of which are totally tree-covered. There is a woodland museum in the park which houses tools and introduces the visitor to the trades and crafts of the forest. It boasts a perfect and detailed reconstruction of the charcoal burner's craft: a traditional hut, a drier and a charcoal pile.

The landscape of the **Montioni Natural Park** also has a history linked to charcoal production and tree felling. There are 700 hectares of tree-covered hills where the visitor can roam along countless paths once used by woodcutters, charcoal burners, shepherds and hunters. Another feature is mineral exploitation involving alum - the remains of a mining village built by Elisa Bonaparte, Princess of Piombino of the Napoleonic era are still visible. A forest of evergreen sclerophylls dominated by holm oak is sometimes interspersed with deciduous species. A feature of great interest among the fauna is the large number of free roaming ungulates: wild boar, fallow deer and roe deer.

Press office

Mobile +39- 3483415648

E-mail [ufficiostampa@parchivaldicornia.it](mailto:ufficiostampa@parchivaldicornia.it)