

Val Caronella, Val Bondone, Val Malgina Precious valleys

History reminds us that these valleys, or rather their first slopes looking out onto Valtellina, were once very popular and filled with activities related to its natural resources. The woods here still hide a wide network of terraces, evidence of the farming and herding that flourished in the past. Mining ore and ironworking also used to be very common. The trees provided timber and wood for burning and charcoal, while the rich water supplies allowed the local populations to harness inexpensive hydraulic power from the streams, leading to an abundance of watermills, sawmills, hammermills and trip hammers. As far up as 800m altitude, below the Park's borders, trees were cultivated for fruit, especially chestnuts. These chestnut woods

were especially common around the area of Castello dell'Acqua, where the practice of drying these precious fruits on grat has survived to this day. These mountains are a natural terrace over mid to high Valtellina, here you'll still find many small villages and pastures whose buildings have been turned into holiday homes. Carona, at the mouth of Val Caronella, and Bondone, at the opening of its namesake valley, are the high mountain villages that developed the most in the past; the first is also placed for excellent views of the surrounding territory. Mountain fauna is well represented in this area and the sizable population of ungulates is managed by the wildlife hunting reserve of Val Bondone-Val Malgina.



The Bondone stream in the vicinity of Baita Cantarena

The largest of the Cantarena lakes



HAMLETS AND RURAL HOMES

The principal villages in this part of the Orobie are Castello dell'Acqua and Carona. Bondone, situated at the head of the namesake valley, also contains many houses, barns and grain stores, amongst which stands the tall steeple of the Chiesa dell'Assunta. While Castello dell'Acqua and many of its hamlets are still inhabited all year round, Carona and Bondone now comprise only summer residences. Furthermore, the main villages are all surrounded by numerous small hamlets spread over wide territories. This is indicative of the flourishing agro-silvo-pastoral activity and iron mining that used to fill these valleys, encouraged by the abundant presence of water. Even though many of these rural homes have been turned into summer houses over the years, a large number of them have yet to be touched by the changes of society.



Chiesa dell'Assunta in Bondone

Walking the paths and agro-silvo-pastoral roads that spread through the woods you can discover many traces of past rural life, such as mountain huts, shrines, terraces and the like. In the area of Castello dell'Acqua you can see the remains of the dell'Acqua family castle, as well as many other architectural traits typical of the old dwelling places that used to have ovens for bread making and grat for drying chestnuts. Amongst these ancient buildings you can also see bait, drystone bothies generally used to store milk; water mills, used to grind grain and work the trip hammers for shelling chestnuts; smithies, for forging tools; oil mills, where oil was extracted from walnuts and used for food and light. For an introduction to this rural history, you can follow the ethnographic trail set up by the Comunità Montana Valtellina di Sondrio. This is an easy walk through the hamlets of Castello dell'Acqua, an area of gristmills, with a rise of only 300m. Its best to visit it between march and October.

CHESTNUT

Although the lower altitudes occupied by the chestnut trees are outside the Park's territories, the great importance that these trees had for the local economy up until a few decades ago has left a lasting impact that cannot be overlooked.

These chestnut woods, that used to be looked after like gardens, have become uneconomical to maintain and have disappeared over the last twenty years, also due to ink disease and other maladies that have killed all the oldest trees. The forests have very quickly taken over these territories. Despite all this, there are still a few families in Castello dell'Acqua that carry on the traditional cultivation of chestnut trees.

The fruit of the chestnut has fed generations in Valtellina; their wood has been used for poles and planks, especially in the vineyards; for timber in the making of barrels; for firewood, for smoking food and warmth. Their leaves were collected after autumn and used for litter in stables. No part of this tree was left to waste, peasant culture had a use for every part of the plant.



Chestnuts spread out on a grat for drying in Castello dell'Acqua

Grat and triphammers

To this day families from Castello dell'Acqua still leave their chestnuts to dry in grat, also known as metato in other areas: this is a two storied building with a fireplace at the center of the bottom floor and a grill ceiling above it over which chestnuts are spread and then left to be slowly smoked over the course of the winter.

The next step is to remove the dry husks with a machine similar to a triphammer, made of large wooden trunks powered by a water mill. One of these has been restored by the Comunità Montana Valtellina di Sondrio and is still in use today. Traces left by the various activities of chestnuts cultivation can be seen in many other parts of Orobie and in the rest of Valtellina.

Chamois



Mountain fauna

Most of the land between Val Caronella and Val Bondone, as well as in the neighboring Val Belviso, is managed by wildlife hunting reserves that oversee a large population of Ungulates. Chamois is the most abundant species, but there are also many red deer and roe deer, as well as ibex on the higher ridges, a species that had to be reintroduced in the Orobie some decades ago.

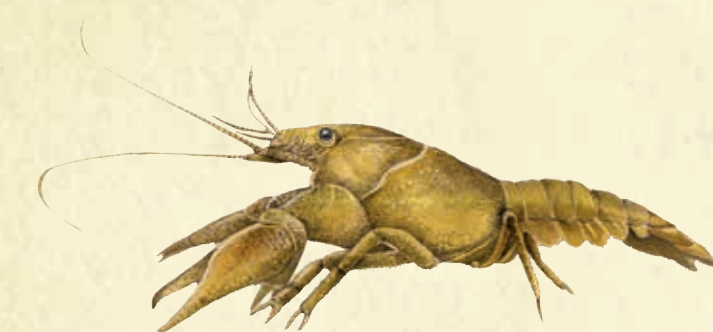
The extensive woodland is home birds of the Phasianidae family, such as the rare capercaillie and the elusive hazel grouse. The higher fringes of forest are ideal habitat for black grouse, hard to spot outside of May and June during the mating season, when males challenge each other in designated arenas called lek. Their insistent cackling is audible from a long way away and can also be heard in the mists of summer and autumn.

Val Caronella



White-clawed crayfish

Up until the 80s the *Austropotamobius pallipes*, or white-clawed crayfish, was commonly found in the waterways of Valtellina. Its backwards movement could even occasionally be seen around the banks of the Adda. However, the drastic increase of canals following a flood in 1987 has caused its numbers to dwindle drastically. In recent years small populations of these crustaceans have been found around the feet of the Orobie Alps. The presence of the species is an important indicator of the level of health of these environments, as it testifies that the waters are still sufficiently healthy and there is still enough biodiversity for survival.



White-clawed crayfish

Evening light in Val Bondone



RECOMMENDED ROUTES

1 - Piàzzola - Baita Pesciola

DIFFICULTY Average	STARTING POINT Piàzzola, loc. La Croce, 1139 m
ALTITUDE GAIN 865 m	RECOMMENDED SEASON June - October
TIME OF ASCENT 2,30 h	

After having paid the access fee to the agro-silvo-pastoral road at the town hall of Castello dell'Acqua or in one of the local bars, you can reach Piàzzola. From here you go to La Croce and take the path through the woods that takes you to the ridge separating Val Malgina from Val d'Arigna. You follow the crest as far as the tree line, around La Motta headland. As you walk on through rocks and pastures you can easily reach Rifugio Pesciola. Along the last stretch you can see both the steep slopes of Val Malgina, with Pizzo del Diavolo, and the much higher rock bastions of Val d'Arigna, with Pizzo Coca.

2 - Bondone - Laghi di Cantarena

DIFFICULTY Average	STARTING POINT Bondone, 1217 m
ALTITUDE GAIN 1043 m	RECOMMENDED SEASON June - October
TIME OF ASCENT 3.00 h	

You leave your car in the village of Bondone, marked by the imposing Chiesa dell'Assunta, and climb along the easy forest road, through the woods and pastures, until you reach Baita Monte Basso. From here you take a track that zigzags up 500m, through a mixed vegetation of trees and bushes. Having reached Baita Cantarena, you climb a little further through rocky pastures, to the beautiful lakes set in a ring of peaks.

Holiday farm

- Restaurant or rest stop
- Rooms
- Parking
- Only authorized parking

* Access to all roads closed to regular traffic is regulated/controlled by local authorities. For further information/ further updates:
Com. di Castello dell'Acqua 0342 482206
Comune di Teglio 0342 789011

* The roads requiring authorization are generally dirt tracks, a 4x4 vehicle is recommended.



MOUNTAIN HUTS/BIVOUAC

- **Rifugio Alpe Caronella** (Consorzio Alpe Caronella) self-catering, contact Oreste Bruga - 340 6663047 for booking and keys
- **Rifugio Baita Pesciola** (Com. di Ponte in Valtellina) left open - 20 beds, keys on demand: Ivan Simonini tel 340 5638511 info@rifugiopesciola.it
- **Bivacco Baita Streppaseghel** (Com. di Teglio) - left open, 3 beds Near the ridge separating the valleys of Malgina and Bondone
- **Bivacco Resnati** (C.A.I.) left open - 8 beds near Vedretta di Marovin
- **Bivacco Corti** (CAI) near Ghiacciaio del Lupo left open - 6 beds 0342 214300 Tuesdays and Fridays after 21:00 pm
- **Bivacco Baita La Petta** località La Petta (Com. di Castello dell'Acqua) - left open - 5 beds tel 0342 482206
- **Bivacco Baita Pian della Valle** località Pian della Valle (Comune di Castello dell'Acqua) left open - 4 beds tel 0342 482206
- **Rifugio Coca** (CAI) Silvana Rodigari tel 0346 44035 cell 348 7316427 - 347 0867062 www.caibergamo.it
- **Rifugio Barbellino** (private) - Località Lago del Barbellino superiore (Bg) cell 328 9078105 - cell 347 2904768 www.rifugiobarbellino.com

RECOMMENDED ROUTES

3 - Carona - Malga Caronella - Malga Dosso

DIFFICULTY Average	STARTING POINT Carona, 1145 m
ALTITUDE GAIN 713 m	RECOMMENDED SEASON June - October
TIME OF ASCENT 3.00 h	

Leave your car at Carona and follow the dirt track almost as far as Pian della Valle, then use the bridge to cross the stream close by the wide fallow. From here carry on along the path until you reach the Caronno waterfall, at its fullest towards the end of spring. From this point go towards the pastures of Malga Caronella where you join up to the Gran Via delle Orobic as it runs along the northwest side of Monte Lavazza. Follow it as far as Malga Dosso, a beautiful meadow amidst the conifer woods with a panoramic vista of Valtellina. From Malga Dosso you can take an easy road down through the conifers back to Pra' di Gianni. If you have time and energy, or you intend to reach Malga Dosso directly from Pra' di Gianni, there is also a path that from Malga Dosso crosses into Val Belviso and goes as far as the Laghi di Torena, one of the most enchanting nooks in the entire mountain chain.



Waterfall in Val Caronella

Useful contacts

- **Consorzio Turistico Valtellina Terziere Superiore** Via M. Quadrio 11 - Tirano - tel 0342 705 568 info@valtellinatourismo.com - www.valtellinatourismo.com
- **Ufficio Turistico di Aprica** - Corso Roma 150 - Aprica tel 0342 746113 - info@apricaonline.com - www.apricaonline.com
- **Consorzio Turistico Sondrio e Valmalenco** - Via Tonale 13 - Sondrio tel 0342 219246 - info@sondriovalmalenco.it, www.sondriovalmalenco.it

For further and more detailed information we recommend you read "Guida al Parco Regionale delle Orobic Valtellinesi" by Mario Vannuccini, Lysis publishers; "Alpi Orobic Valtellinesi", curated by Guido Combi, Fondazione L. Bombardieri (books only in Italian); Parco delle Orobic Valtellinesi, coffee-table book curated by Elio Della Ferrera, Bonazzi Grafica (Italian/English).

GUIDED TOURS WITHIN THE PARK

• **Alpine guides and medium mountain Guides.** Are official Guides of the Parco delle Orobic Valtellinesi. Groups and individuals wishing for guided tours and hikes may contact the Park Center at 0342 211236. Web page: www.parcorobievalt.com

A view of the Valtellina Orobic Alps



www.parcorobievalt.com

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