

## THE PEAT BOG OF CAVAGNANO

We have now the opportunity to visit a very interesting wetland area inserted in the landscape of the Valceresio: the Cavagnano peat bog.

This peat bog is located in a flat area, on the edge of the village of Cavagnano, in the municipality of Cuasso al Monte, and it has developed on a plateau overlooking the Cavallizza Valley.

The hamlet of Cavagnano is located in a position of considerable environmental and landscape interest: as we can see, in fact, the mountainous reliefs present are characterized by forest and heath slopes alternating with areas intended for agricultural activities.

The main peculiarity of the area, however, is the vast peat bog.

But what is a peat bog?

Peat bogs derive from lakes or ponds that have filled up over the course of centuries or millennia due to the gradual accumulation of peat. Peat is a material that originates from the progressive deposit of the dead parts of plants that grow in an area where water prevails and stagnates, such as marshes, ponds and lakes. Stagnant water and the consequent lack of oxygen prevent the complete decomposition of the plant tissues that accumulate on the bottom, progressively decreasing the depth of the basin. In this way the plants of the banks can be pushed further in, reducing the surface of the pond until it disappears completely. Therefore, in a peat bog the remains of plants that have accumulated over time are present and still clearly recognizable, such as mosses, leaves, wooden fragments, and by sampling and classifying them it is possible for naturalists and geologists to know the vegetation present in the past and, if different from the current one, to reconstruct the environment or environments where it grew and developed.

Therefore peat bogs are valuable archives of environmental and climatic changes that have occurred over time in an area. Especially the peat bog of Cavagnano represents an area of considerable naturalistic importance due to the presence of not very widespread peat bog habitats, considered relics of the postglacial microthermal phases, whose reconstitution in the current climatic conditions is difficult or impossible!

It is an area where vegetation inherited from the past grows and has managed to survive here and reach us!

An excellent example of these post glacial microthermal relics are the depressions attributable to the Rhynchosporion, both for the degree of conservation and for the considerable extension, not common in the province of Varese. The term "Rhynchosporion" refers to a small perennial heliophilous herbaceous vegetation, with plants of the Cyperaceae family and of the Rhynchospora genus, which is accompanied by carnivorous plants of the Drosera genus.

The discovery of this vegetation in the Cavagnano area is therefore of great interest to botanists and naturalists and has supported the inclusion of the area in the Natura 2000 network, making it a Site of Community Importance. The SIC is called "Peat bog of Cavagnano" or in Italian "Torbiera di Cavagnano" and is identified by the code IT2010020. In addition to being SCI for the fauna and flora present, this area is also identified as a SAC or Special Area of Conservation. We are therefore close to an area of great interest, from the floristic point of view since it is rich in micro-thermal species, and from the faunal point of view since it houses two species of great importance: the Latate Frog and the Southern Crested Newt. In addition to these species there are salamanders, other varieties of frogs and newts, the green woodpecker, the buzzard and different types of bats. Finally, although the site is not part of a park or protected area, it is currently in an excellent state of conservation!