BIODIVERSITY, SPECIES AND HABITATS AROUND US

Biodiversity is simply the **variety of living organisms**. This is a consequence of the environment sin which they live, which must be managed and conserved with awareness. Biodiversity provides human society with **goods and services** both directly (food, construction materials, fuel medicines...) and indirectly (absorption of agricultural and industrial pollutants, sequestration of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases...). . Biodiversity is part of **our natural heritage**, not only does it enrich our lives but it enables them.
Below are some local examples for you to discover.


Parco delle Orobie Bergamasche (BG)

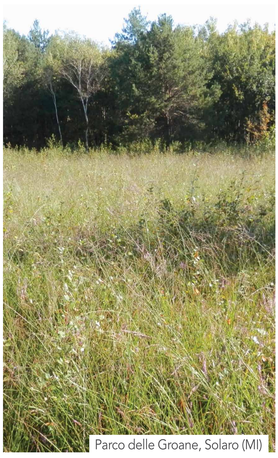
Alpine grasslands

Alpine grasslands are maintained by **grazing**, which limits colonisation by trees and shrubs, permitting the growth of **numerous herbaceous species**, which many animals depend on. For example, many pollinators can be found there, such as butterflies of the genus.

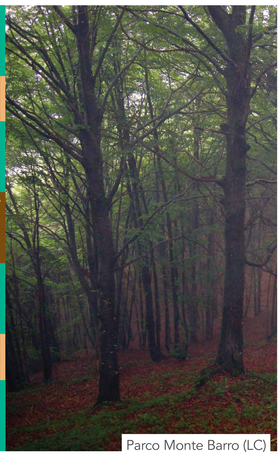

Erebia aethiops

Heathlands

Heathlands and humid grasslands occupy acid soils, at low altitude, in areas where fires and grazing have hindered invasion by woody plants, which over time tend to form woodland that replaces the heathland. The dominant plant is **heather** (*Calluna vulgaris*), accompanied by other species, both shrubs and herbs, some of which are particularly rare, such as the **marsh gentian** (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*) and the rosemary leaved willow (*Salix rosmarinifolia*).


Parco delle Groane, Solaro (MI)


Gentiana pneumonanthe


Parco Monte Barro (LC)


Beech wood understorey


Astraeus hygrometricus

Beech wood

A beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) wood generally hosts a smaller number of herbaceous species with respect to grasslands. These are woodland species, which require shade, and are very different from species that live in open habitats. Herbs and shrubs form an open understorey, leaving the soil exposed, where leaves, branches and organic detritus accumulate, decomposing to allow **micro-organisms** and **fungi** to survive, contributing to biodiversity. The "rays" of the barometer fungus (Astraeus hygrometricus) open out during damp weather and close when it is dry.

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