

Special Protection Area of Viadana, Portiolo, San Benedetto Po, Ostiglia

“Main embankments, sandy areas, oxbow lakes, flood plains and woods: the tale of the Po river”

Managing institution: Province of Mantua

Established in: 2005

Area: 7,055 hectares

Protection status: Special Protection Area of

Year of joining Mantuan Oltrepò Parks System: 2007

Information

Province of Mantua - Environmental Section • T 0376 401402/03

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— Cycling/walking paths



The “Viadana, Portiolo, San Benedetto Po, Ostiglia” Special Protection Area is divided into four large areas – of which only a portion falls within the Oltrepò – and belongs to the Natura 2000 European ecological network. At over **7,000 hectares** it is the largest wilderness area in the **Mantuan Oltrepò Parks System** and contains all the natural **(a)** (**flowing water, sandy areas, oxbow lakes, “bugni”, riparian woodlands**) and man-made features (poplar woods, plantations, sand and clay pits, flood defences, river docks **(b)**), settlements, and civil and industrial infrastructure) typical of the lower course of the Po which, with its flood plains, represents the **largest natural area** in the Mantua area and the **Po Plain** in general. The richness of wildlife in the Special Protection Area (SPA) is therefore not surprising, above all as regards birdlife (**over 200 species**), including the **black kite**, the **osprey**, the **harrier**, the **bee-eater**, the **little ringed plover**, the **common tern**, the **little tern**, the **woodcock** and the **golden oriole**. As far as the mammals go, besides the **hedgehog**, the **hare**, the **weasel** and the numerous species of small rodents, you can find **badgers** and **roe deer**; the amphibians and reptiles include the **smooth** and **crested newt**, the **green frog**, the **tree frog**, and the **common** and **European green toad**, as well as the **green lizard**, the **coluber** and the **grass snake**. Finally, the fish include the increasingly rare **sturgeon**, the **grey mullet**, the **eel**, the **twait shad**, the **carp** and the **wels catfish** (a species from the Danube which can exceed 2 metres in length and which is creating no shortage of problems for the local ichthyofauna). The areas near the river offer evocative views and can be reached, compatibly with the water levels at the time, through an extensive network of (mainly dirt) service roads. These also include some sections of **tow path (c)**: roads alongside the banks once used to tow boats and ferries against the current.

Access to motor vehicles is permitted only where indicated by specific signage.

The four sections of the SPA are connected together by the **Eurovelo EV8** paths and the **Province of Mantua cycle routes 2d and 2s**, and to the wilderness areas of the Mantuan Oltrepò Parks System by the **Parks Cycle Route**.