

The E. Burnat / C. Bicknell Nature Reserve in the Marguareis Natural Park

By Graham Avery

Clarence Bicknell visited regularly the alpine valley of Valle di Pesio, north-east of Tende, which was also a base for the botanical campaigns of his friend the Swiss botanist Emile Burnat. In Italy's Marguareis Natural Park (Parco naturale del Marguareis) is a nature reserve that commemorates the work of both men.

The Park has two high-altitude botanical reserves: 'E. Burnat / C. Bicknell' at Pian del Lupo and 'Danilo Re' at Laghetto del Marguareis.

These reserves, in well-defined areas accessible to the public, conserve the most important species of the botanical geography of the Ligurian and Maritime Alps. Cultivation of seedlings takes place in beds that reproduce as far as possible the conditions of the original locations, so as to prevent alteration and erosion of the genetic heritage. To avoid the risk of genetic pollution and the spread of species that are not local, the spread of other species of the surrounding valleys by means of sexual reproduction (seeds) or vegetal reproduction is prevented. Both stations are designed according to the most modern and rigorous conservation models of alpine botanical gardens and represent one of the few examples of this kind in Europe.

The reserve 'E. Burnat/ C. Bicknell', dedicated to two famous explorer-botanists, is located at Pian del Lupo between 1970 m. and 2000 m, and occupies an area of approximately 1 hectare. It conserves rare and threatened habitats and the most significant high-altitude species of the Ligurian and Maritime Alps. It currently hosts various rare or endemic plants. Among the species present are the endemics *Senecio persoonii*, *Silene cordifolia*, *Saxifraga florulenta*, *Fritillaria tubaeformis* subsp. *Moggridi* and *Veronica allioni*. In the wetland area are the insectivorous species *Drosera rotundifolia* and *Pinguicula vulgaris*.

Source: Translation by Graham Avery of relevant passages of the document of the Marguareis Natural Park published at

http://www.parcomarguareis.it/WebContents/POI/POI_9/testo%20per%20sito%20parco%20e%20riserve_15.doc

Further information

For more on Clarence Bicknell's work as a botanist see

http://www.clarencebicknell.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7&Itemid=145&lang=en

In that document the section 'Botanical Friends' explains his friendship with Emile Burnat, and the section 'Alpine Gardens' includes images of the botanical reserve named after them.

More photographs of the botanical reserve can be seen at

http://www.parcomarguareis.it/Da_non_perdere/Le_stazioni_botaniche_alpine/139/page.aspx

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