The Illasi Valley

We would like to describe our environment a little bit closer.
As we already told you last time, we live in Selva di Progno, one of the last inhabited villages in the Illasi Valley.
In the piedmont part of this valley you can find vineyards, cherry trees and olive groves.

Cherry trees and fruit

Vineyards and olive groves by the Castle of Illasi
Other trees which grow here are for example:

- **downy oak**/Quercus pubescens/
  roverella
- **manna ash**/Fraxinus ornus/frassino
  orniello
- **hop hornbeam**/Ostrya carpinifolia/
  carpino nero
- **laurel**/Laurus nobilis/alloro
- **holm oak**/Quercus ilex/leccio.
Over 400 m you can find:

- **chestnut**/Castanea sativa/castagno
- **walnut**/Juglans regia/noce
- **elm**/Ulmus glabra/olmo.

Almost all trees have **Cimbrian names**, of course!

We can give you some examples:

- **oak**/Quercus/quercia/
  
  *de oache*/*Eiche*
- **limetree**/Tilia cordata/ tiglio
  
  *de linte*/*Linde*
- As you can see, it’s similar to current German.
Upper Lessinia

In Upper Lessinia there are pastures, rocky crests and “malghe” (which are stone huts used by herdsmen and livestock in the summer), conifer woods and broadleaf forests.
The most typical trees in the broadleaf forests (600-700 m and more) are:

- **beech**/Fagus sylvatica/faggio/
  *de puache*/Buche
- **maple**/Acer pseudoplatanus/acero/
  *in anhorn*/Ahorn
- **birch**/Betula/betulla/
  *de pilache*/Birke
- **elder**/Sambucus racemosa/sambuco montano/
  *in hoular*/Holler
- **rowan**/Sorbus aucuparia/sorbo dell’uccellatore/
  *in vaul-pome*/Vogelbeerbaum.
... and the conifer woods.

In the conifer woods you can find:

- **Norway spruce**/Picea abies o excelsa/abete rosso/
  *de roata tanne* or *de faicht*/Fichte
- **silver fir**/Abies alba/abete bianco/
  *de bilja tanne*/Tanne
- **larch**/Larix decidua/larice/
  *in lerck*/Lärche.
At an height over 1600 meters there are for example:

- **mugo pine or mountain pine**/Pinus mugo /pino mugo/ *de mughe*/*Latsche*
- **juniper**/Juniperus communis /ginepro/ *de zaneibe*/*Wacholder*. 

![Mugo pine](image1)

![Juniper](image2)
The Forest of Giazza

Most of these trees (especially silver firs, spruces, larches and beeches) are part of a clever reforestation project which began by the end of the 19th century.

Since 1287 the people who lived here had some rights granted by the Bishop of Verona Bartolomeo della Scala to use the land; but during the centuries, this usage had led to habitual unregulated cuttings and intensive grazing, so that no forest remained on the steep mountain slopes.
Streams rushed unchecked through the valley, causing severe erosion and big environmental problems. So, in the first decade of the 20th century, a new forest was literally "created" by far-sighted Italian foresters who, under difficult environmental conditions, did important engineering works for soil protection, water system and site preparation for reforestation. The Giazza forest, inaugurated on the 10th of August 1911, today part of the Lessinia Natural and Regional Park, is now a jewel worth visiting!
There is a rich and varied underwood with musk, delicate cyclamens (*iz leischarla*), ferns (*in singarua*) and various **mushrooms**.

The most famous ones are:

- **edible bolete mushrooms**/ porcini/
  *de sbailja-sbam*/ Steinpilz
- **honey mushrooms**/ chiodini/
  *in neiglja-sbam*/ Hallimasch
- **clavarias**/ manine/
  *de cetla*/ Keulenspilz
- **parasol mushrooms**/ mazza di tamburo/
  *in groas-huat*/ Schirmpilz
- **chanterelles**/ finferle/
  *in finfarle*/ Trompetenpfifferling
- **puffballs**/ vesce/
  *de slofe*/ Stäublinge.
Edible Bolete Mushrooms

Chanterelles

Parasol mushrooms

Clavarias (Ramaria flava)

Honey mushrooms

Puffballs
The Christmas Coronets

You can also find a lot of shrubs: one of these is the *Cornus sanguinea/sanguinella.*

Last December a friend of us taught us to recognize it on the slope behind our school; we cut its long and thin branches, intertwined them and we covered them with silver fir’s fronds to create pretty Christmas coronets, which we sold during the Christmas markets in Badia Calavena and Selva di Progno.
The Lessinia Natural and Regional Park is very important for its animals, too. There are some interesting mammals such as:

- **alpine Chamoises**/camoscio alpino/
de bilja goaz/ Gämse
- **roe deers**/capriolo/
de bilja goaz/ Reh
- **deers**/cervo/
  de bilja goaz/ Hirsch
- **foxes**/volpe/
in vucs/ Fuchs
- **hares**/lepre/
de hase/ Hase

and, as for the snakes, the very dangerous **vipers** (vipera/ de lipar/ Viper)!
Since a couple of years wolves (lupo/ in bolf/ Wolf) have reappeared, too, causing many problems to the livestock. Centuries ago bears (orso/ in per/ Bär) lived here.
There are a lot of birds too, nesting in spring or resting here during their migration. You can see:

- **golden eagle**/ aquila reale/ *in adalar*/ Adler
- **honey buzzard**/ falco/ *in bimpeghe*/ Falke
- **buzzard**/ poiana/ *de groaz bimpeghe*/ Mäusebussard
- **owl**/ civetta/ *iz aul*/ Kauz.
From a geological point of view, in the hills you can see *Eocene limestone*, which formed in “lagoon” seafloors about 30-40 million years ago, or the regular layers of *red scaglia* in lower-middle Lessinia sedimented during the Upper Cretaceous period, about 60 million years ago.

In Upper Lessinia, *red ammonite* rocks deposited about 100 million years ago on the bottom of open seas and its slabs became roofs, walls or the typical votive columns.

*Eocene Fish* fossil from the fossil site of Bolca (Verona)
Cimbrian traces...

In fact, there are many signs of the presence of the ancient Cimbrians: numerous place names still in use, personal names, the typical architecture of the mountain huts, the structure of the stone-built hamlets and the small votive capitals and columns in the hamlets and along the roads and paths.

Very famous is the “Madonna delle Lobbie”, a Pietà in Campofontana.