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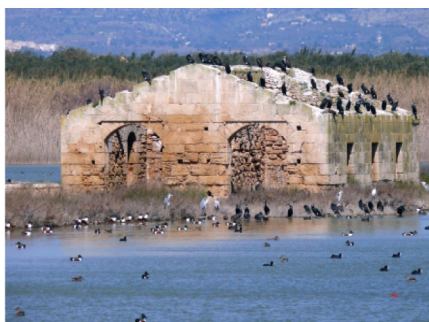
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FOR NATURALISTIC RESEARCH
AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES



Himantopus himantopus Linnaeus, 1758 - Italy, Sicily, Vendicari



Nature Reserve of Vendicari (Italy, Sicily), landscape (photo by G. Iuvara).



Pendolino, *Remiz pendulinus* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Seidlitz, 1896) on the nest (photo by G. Iuvara). Cover: photo by Iuvara.

The Vendicari Nature Reserve (Italy, Sicily). The Oriented Natural Reserve (O.N.R.) “Oasi faunistica di Vendicari”, in the territory of Noto (Sicily, Italy), UNESCO World Heritage City, was established in March 14th 1984. Despite its small size (total of 1335.62 acres), within the reserve there is a concentration of environments hardly observable in other parts of Sicily. In particular, there have been identified as habitats of interest to the European Community: Intermittently flowing Mediterranean rivers of the *Paspalo-Agrostidion* (Habitat code 3290); Vegetated sea cliffs of the Mediterranean coasts with endemic *Limonium* spp. (code 1240); Endemic phryganas of the *Euphorbio-Verbascion* (code 5430); Thermo-Mediterranean and pre-desert scrubs (code 5330); embryonic shifting dunes (code 2110); Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes) (code 2120); Coastal dunes with *Juniperus* spp. (code 2250, priority habitat); Coastal lagoons (code 1150, priority habitat); Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (*Sarcocornetia fruticosi*) (code 1420); *Salicornia* and other annuals colonizing mud and sand (code 1310); Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*) (code 1410). A highly rich biodiversity was therefore already reported for the reserve: data are contained in a compendium published in 2010 [Petràlia A. (a cura di) 2010. *L'area protetta di Vendicari*. ©Ente Fauna Siciliana, Noto, Italy (www.entefaunasiciliana.it)]. The plant list includes 486 species (48.4% therophytes, 22.0% hemicryptophytes, 13.7% geophytes, 6.2% chamaephytes, 6.0% phanerophytes, 2.7% nanophanerophytes, 0.8% hydrophytes). There are 7 species of mammals, 251 bird species (79 of which are included in the Directive 2009/147/EEC), 4 species of Amphibians, and 10 of Reptiles; moreover, after decades of absence, in 2013 and 2014, *Caretta caretta* returned to the reserve for nesting. 237 are the species of Macrolepidoptera present (24.0% of the species known for Sicily, 10.82% for Italy). Among orthopteroids there are 32 species (including the Ensifer *Brachytrupes megacephalus*, species of Community interest). As concerns the fauna of the marshes of the reserve, 22 species of molluscs, 3 of crustaceans, 2 of bristleworms (Polychaetes) and 7 of fish have been reported. More generally, further faunistic data may be derived from a larger survey [Pilato et al., 2007. *La fauna della regione iblea*. In “L'uomo negli Iblei” (a cura di A. Petralia). ©Ente Fauna Siciliana, Noto, Italy (www.entefaunasiciliana.it)] that lists 2914 species and subspecies referring to the entire iblean area including Vendicari; of course the knowledge of fauna is periodically refreshed by new acquisitions such as the recent discovery of the presence of the relevant beetle *Buprestis cupressi* (Buprestidae). Finally, a project for the establishment of the Protected Marine Area of Vendicari aims to extend protection also to the sea off the reserve, with its seabed equally rich in biodiversity.

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