



THE VANISHED LAGOON

The reclamation of the **Valle del Mezzano**, begun in 1957, was finished less than 10 years later: the Valle was a large inland saltwater lagoon, that had formed after subsidence in the 16th century, when river and sea water flooded an oak forest.

Today the Mezzano is an area completely adapted to intensive agriculture with almost no houses, where first corn and then the cultivation of asparagus, tomatoes, squash, melon and fruit trees was introduced.

Narrow strips of the lagoon were not touched by the reclamation: these are the Anse Vallive di Ostellato, Oasi di Bando, and di Porto, though these are all now fresh rather than salt water.

The **Anse Vallive di Ostellato**, an area of 200 hectares, include a series of lagoon basins with wetland vegetation and hydrophilous woodlands, stretching between the Canale Circondariale and the Canale Navigabile.

The trail inside the reserve begins in the visitor centre (Centro Visita) and goes as far as Valle San Zagno, the most protected of the lagoons. the trail is about 4.5 km long and can be done in circle on foot or by bike: in the first part is the aviary with white storks; in the basins that follow can be seen anatids (ducks, swans, etc.), white egrets, grebes, and the Black-winged Stilt.



The area is well provided with visitor viewpoints with places to stop, refreshment, excursions, sporting activities, horse-riding trips and an astronomical observatory.

After visiting the lagoons, the route goes onto the FE414 cycleway alongside the reclaimed land of the Mezzano, passing pumping stations, and reaches another point of great natural interest.

The **Bando reserve** and the **Anse Vallive di Porto**, extending for 50 hectares, are formed by a basin of fresh water and cane brakes and are a place of fundamental importance for the conservation of water birds. The vegetation on the banks is dominated by tamarisk and cane. The area is laid out with paths that circle the basins, part of which are accessible to disabled persons with assistance, and with hides for birdwatching and nature photography.

After the Oasi Trava go towards Argenta, pass through the hamlet of La Fiorana heading for the centre of the town.

In **Argenta** you can follow an artistic/historic trail which visits the Oratorio of Santa Croce,



The Anse Vallive di Ostellato reserve

The Town Museum (Museo Civico), housed in the former church of San Domenico and including a picture gallery and an archaeological section, the former Capuchin Monastery, and the the Santuario della Celletta just outside the centre.

For information on the Lagoon Museum and on the nature reserves, see **route n° 4**, p. 46.

Anse Vallive di Porto

