

## IN THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

High rock faces rise above dense forests, enclosing the karstified plateaus of Fanes and Sennes/Senes. Wide alpine pastures and colourful, species-rich mountain meadows on Armentara and Platzwiese/Prato Piazza enrich the area. The various habitats are home to a diverse animal world.

### Geology and karstification

The deposition of the rocks of the Dolomites began around 250 million years ago. These oldest layers of rock come to light in the northern part of the nature park.

The Fanes, Sennes/Senes and Fosses plateaus are surrounded by mountains with steeply sloping external faces, like an arena. The rocks on these plateaus are around 225 to 190 million years old. They begin with the Dolomia Principale type of rock, on top of which lie the Dachstein limestone and grey limestone, that decisively contribute to the landscape appearance.

Remnants of younger rocks are also preserved in some places. Worth mentioning is a conglomerate at Col Bechei, which - uniquely in the Dolomites - sedimented only 23 million years ago, when the Alpine folding was already underway.



*Megachirella wachtleri*, the "mother of all lizards", a small reptile that lived around 240 million years ago. This animal seems to be the most ancient scaly reptile, and its discovery has completely changed theories about the evolution of these animals.

Photo: Benno Baumgarten, South Tyrol Museum of Nature



Almost all the classic elements of karstification can be observed in the nature park: 'Rinnenkarren' and 'Kluftkarren' (large and vertical grooves), crevices, shafts, sinkholes, in which lakes are formed, often only periodically.

Photo: Nature Park Office



The 'Parliament of marmots' on Kleinfanes/Fanes Piccola testifies to the uniqueness of the landscape and the geological and morphological richness that characterises the entire nature park area.

Photo: Alfred Erardi

Fanes, Sennes/Senes and Fosses are characterised by karst phenomena like no other area of the Dolomites. The carbonic acid dissolved in the water has attacked and dissolved the Dachstein limestone and grey limestone in particular, but also the Dolomia Principale rock.

Hundreds of caves have been discovered on the plateaus of the Ampezzo Dolomites. The most famous are the Cenote Abyss and the Conturines Cave, the highest place in the world where the remains of the cave lion and cave bear *Ursus ladini-cus* have been found. The remains of these two extinct species from the Ice Age provide important information on climate history.

With a total depth of 300 metres, the Cenote Cave is currently the deepest cave in South Tyrol. The huge chamber at the end of the cave has a floor area roughly the size of a football pitch and is 165 metres high.

Photo: Alessio Romeo



### Habitats, animals and plants

The Fanes-Sennes-Prags/Fanes-Senes-Braies Nature Park is home to many different habitats: mixed coniferous forests, dwarf shrub heathlands, mountain pine fields, scree slopes, impassable glacial cirques, steep cliffs, stony plateaus, moorlands, streams and lakes as well as traditionally farmed alpine pastures. The diversity of habitats is matched by an equally diverse flora and fauna.

### The forests

Around a quarter of the nature park is covered with forests. Spruce forest accounts for the largest proportion, followed by larch and Swiss pine forest and Scots pine forest. The cone-shaped mounds of the red wood ant can often be seen in the undergrowth near clearings. Ants have a highly developed social structure, they control the populations of other insects and in turn are an important food source for numerous animal species. The treetops are often alive with noisy flocks of coal tits, crested tits, willow tits and tree creepers.

The almost untouched forests of the nature park are home to the capercaillie, a rare representative of the grouse family, which performs its magnificent courtship songs in spring.

Photo: Norbert Scantamburlo



The Great horned owl makes its nests in egg-shaped entrance holes that have been hollowed out by the black woodpecker, a species mainly found in mature pine forest stands.

Photo: Manuel Platkeuer



A typical inhabitant of Swiss pine forests is the Northern nutcracker, a small corvid that feeds mainly on Swiss pine nuts and contributes significantly to the spread of this tree species.

Photo: Nature Park Office



Lady's-slipper is the largest and most conspicuous native orchid species. It is only found in forests with calcareous subsoil.

Photo: Sepp Hackhofer



The 'Krummholz' belt is typically populated with Hairy Rhododendron, Bilberry, Cowberry, Alpine Bearberry and mountain pine species. Due to its wealth of different ecological niches, it is a habitat for many plant and animal species.

Photo: Alfred Erardi

### Tree line

The areas around the tree line between 2000 and 2200 metres above sea level that have not been cleared by humans to create pastureland transition into a dwarf shrub heathland or a 'Krummholz' belt.

Despite the harsh climatic conditions, the 'Krummholz' belt is also a habitat for some amphibians and reptiles. Among the species found here are the grass frog, the Alpine newt, the Alpine salamander and the adder.

One species that lives in the 'Krummholz' belt is the Alpine snow hare, whose grey-brown summer coat, pure white winter coat and paws that are particularly well adapted to the snow cover make it ideal for alpine living conditions. Actually, its long, wide-spreading toes with stiff hairs allow it to move optimally in the snow.

Photo: Hugo Wassermann



The adder is the most common snake species in the nature park. It is characterised by its grey or reddish-brown base colour and the black zigzag band on its back, but can also be completely black. It is a venomous snake and not very dangerous for a healthy adult; however, you should seek medical help in the event of a bite.

Photo: Nature Park Office



## Alpine limestone grasslands and rocky regions

Above the 'Krummholz' belt, alpine grasslands interspersed with scree slopes and rocky ridges extend across the park's extensive limestone plateaus. Particular representatives of this habitat are the Edelweiss, various Gentian species, *Nigritella rhellicani*, Alpine Sun-roses, Moss Campion and various species of Saxifrage.

Scree slopes and rock piles are habitats with extreme conditions: nutrient-poor soil, lack of water, strong sunlight, exposure to wind and high temperature fluctuations. Only highly specialised organisms can survive here, such as the round-leaved alpine *Thlaspi alpinum*, the bright yellow *Papaver aurantiacum*, the Ground Cistus and, on the rocks, the *Physoplexis comosa*.



The Ground Cistus grows as an ornamental, evergreen dwarf shrub in sunny locations on rocky outcrops and scree. Its flowers can be admired between May and June. The shrubs of this endemic species of the Eastern Alps can live up to 40 years.

Photo: Nature Park Office



The marmot, which is widespread on the Fanes, Sennes/Senes and Platzwiese/Prato Piazza plateaus, plays an important role in Ladin legends. Its main enemies are the fox and the golden eagle.

Photo: Claudio Sfera



The mighty Hohe Gaisl/Croda Rossa d'Ampezzo massif (3,146 m) with its imposing glacial cirques and gravel fields, dominates the area around Platzwiese/Prato Piazza.

Photo: Sepp Hackhofer

Fodara Vedla is perhaps one of the places where the ancient Ladin legends were born among the shepherds during the long summer nights in front of the campfire. Passed down from generation to generation, they tell of kingdoms that have long since disappeared. They have strongly influenced the culture of these valleys.

Photo: Nature Park Office



### Man and nature

The Fanes-Sennes-Prags/Fanes-Senes-Braies Nature Park is very unspoilt and has unique landscapes. Nevertheless, the influence of man can be felt and seen in many places. In order to feed the livestock, the mountain pastures and meadows have been repeatedly expanded over the centuries at the expense of the mountain forest. Extensively farmed - as is the case almost everywhere in the nature park - they prove to be areas of great scenic value with a considerable diversity of species. Equally fascinating are the mountain pastures on the limestone plateaus of Fanes, Sennes/Senes, Fodara Vedla and Fojedõra that have been used as summer grazing grounds for cattle for centuries. Here, there are still small alpine villages consisting of ancient shepherd huts and barns made of limestone and wood.

## Natura 2000

Natura 2000 is a European nature conservation project. It aims to create a network of protected areas for the long-term protection of natural and semi-natural habitats as well as for wild animals and plants in order to safeguard biodiversity. All South Tyrolean nature parks are part of the Natura 2000 network and their designation is based on two European directives: the Flora-Fauna-Habitat-Directive and the Birds Directive. Other Natura 2000 areas lie outside the boundaries of the nature parks. The Armentara alpine meadows, for example, are located in Gadertal/Val Badia.

The Armentara meadows are a particularly valuable example of alpine mountain meadows that harbour communities of organisms of great naturalistic importance. In the background the Kreuzkofel/Sasso della Croce mountain, part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Photo: Sepp Hackhofer



## Dolomites UNESCO World Heritage Site

In 2009, the Dolomites, and with them the Fanes-Sennes-Prags/Fanes-Senes-Braies Nature Park, were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List due to their scenic beauty and their geomorphological and geological significance. After careful selection, this list includes globally outstanding and unique natural and cultural assets whose preservation is of particular importance to the international community. This honour also means a special obligation and responsibility with regard to the protection and sustainable development of this extraordinary mountain region!

Prato Piazza, Prato Piazza, Lavarella  
Photo: Andrea Franz



Photo: Sepp Hackhofer

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Free admission!



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In the animal kingdom

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FANES-SENNES-BRAIES  
NATURE PARK**  
In the animal kingdom



Chamois  
Photo: Sappi/Hackler



**Alpine rescue signal**

- 1 Within 1 minute, emit 6 acoustic or visual signals (at 10 second intervals)
- 2 Pause for 1 minute
- 3 Repeat the signal (until response arrives)
- 4 Response: 3 signals within 1 minute

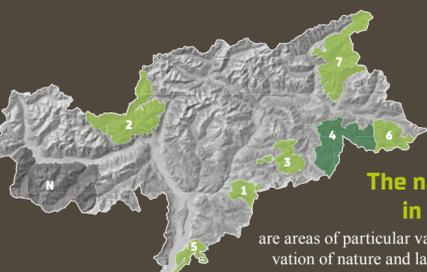


**Key**

- Nature park boundary
- Marked hiking trail
- Natura 2000 site – Armentara Wiesen/ Prati d'Armentara
- Difficult trail
- Regional border
- Via ferrata
- Access road
- Mountain pass
- Closed road
- Water body
- Car park
- Inn/Rest area
- Ascent system
- Mountain hut
- Nature Park Visitors' Centre
- Camping

**Rules of behaviour**

- Don't pick
- No vehicles
- Dog on a leash
- No fire
- Don't camp
- No drones
- Don't trash
- No noise
- Don't destroy



**The nature parks in South Tyrol**

are areas of particular value for the conservation of nature and landscape, research, awareness-raising and environmental education. They offer numerous opportunities for direct and respectful interaction with nature.

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|---|--|
| <p><b>1</b> Schlern-Rosengarten<br/>Sciliar-Catinaccio<br/>7,288 ha<br/>2,156 m<br/>★ 1974</p>  | <p><b>5</b> Trudner Horn<br/>Monte Corno<br/>6,873 ha<br/>1,571 m<br/>★ 1980</p>                                     |
| <p><b>2</b> Texelgruppe<br/>Gruppo di Tessa<br/>31,407 ha<br/>2,857 m<br/>★ 1976</p>            | <p><b>6</b> Drei Zinnen<br/>Tre Cime<br/>11,878 ha<br/>1,961 m<br/>★ 1981</p>  |
| <p><b>3</b> Puez-Geisler<br/>Puez-Dolles<br/>10,729 ha<br/>1,499 m<br/>★ 1978</p>               | <p><b>7</b> Rieserferner-Ahrn<br/>Vedrette di Ries-Aurina<br/>31,334 ha<br/>2,610 m<br/>★ 1988</p>                   |
| <p><b>4</b> Fanes-Sennes-Prags<br/>Fanes-Sennes-Braies<br/>25,485 ha<br/>1,929 m<br/>★ 1980</p> | <p><b>N</b> Nationalpark<br/>Stilfserjoch<br/>Parco nazionale dello Stelvio<br/>53,447 ha<br/>3,255 m<br/>★ 1935</p> |

**The Fanes-Sennes-Prags/Fanes-Sennes-Braies Nature Park in a nutshell**

The Fanes-Sennes-Prags/Fanes-Sennes-Braies Nature Park is bordered to the west by Gadertal/Val Badia and to the east by Hohensteintal/Valle di Landro. The mountain slopes facing Pustertal/Val Pusteria form the northern boundary of the park, which extends to the regional border in the south. From Pragser Tal/Valle di Braies one can reach Plätzwiese/Prato Piazza, and the Fanes and Sennes/Senes summer meadows can be reached from St. Kassian/San Cassiano and from St. Vigil/San Vigilio. These plateaus are characterised by barren karst landscapes, mountain lakes shimmering in sinkholes, rock towers, huge rock boulders and a colourful world of flowers in between. The Pragser Wildsee/Lago di Braies, nestled in a hollow between the rocks, is considered the most picturesque lake in the Dolomites. Like Toblacher See/Lago di Dobbiaco, it was formed by huge landslides.

**The nature park's municipalities**

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|--|---|
| <p><b>Toblach/Dobbiaco</b><br/>Nature park's share 2,816 ha<br/>Tourist office Ph +39 0474 972132<br/>www.toblach.info</p> | <p><b>Abtei/Badia</b><br/>Nature park's share 1,924 ha<br/>Tourist office Ph +39 0474 847037<br/>www.altabadi.org</p>         |
| <p><b>Prags/Braies</b><br/>Nature park's share 6,916 ha<br/>Tourist office Ph +39 0474 748660<br/>www.pragsertal.info</p>  | <p><b>Enneberg/Marebbe</b><br/>Nature park's share 10,861 ha<br/>Tourist office Ph +39 0474 501037<br/>www.sanvigilio.com</p> |
| <p><b>Olang/Valdaora</b><br/>Nature park's share 1,593 ha<br/>Tourist office Ph +39 0474 496277<br/>www.olang.info</p>     | <p><b>Wengen/La Valle</b><br/>Nature park's share 1,343 ha<br/>Tourist office Ph +39 0471 843072<br/>www.altabadi.org</p>     |