



La Pélite

The red gorge shows up in your mailbox when you least expect it.

Discovering...

Insects

The insect world is huge and complex: They colonize every environment and make up two thirds of the animal kingdom! Insects are part of the arthropod phylum, which means their body is segmented in three parts (head, thorax, abdomen). The arthropod phylum is divided in many different orders: coleoptera, diptera, lepidoptera (and other orders with names ending with "-ptera"...)

If bugs are not always welcome among us, humans, you might take a fresh look at them by reading the following scientific anecdotes:

Oedipoda (a type of grasshoppers) use their vivid wings to create a diversion when flying. When they take off, the colours will draw attention; when they land, the sudden lack of bright colours will give the impression they have abruptly vanished. If they feel threatened, they discreetly flap their wings one more time and land a bit further.

In the nature reserve, you can find **red-winged grasshoppers**, concealing their wine-coloured body by imitating the red pelites.

To prevent their abdomens from overheating, the lower part of **wasps'** thoraces are narrow, hence the expression "wasp waist". Being narrow-waisted allows good body heat regulation.

To efficiently find nectar, **butterflies** leave their smell on the flowers they have already foraged. And if you catch them feeding on rocks, they are simply taking in mineral salts.

In the reserve you might see Apollos, poplar admirals, Spanish festoons or large blues.



Spanish festoon' © J. Ben-Said

Meeting...

An entomologist

Entomology is the study of insects. Entomologist **François Destré's** first contact with insects was an aesthetic shock; coming face to face with a golden ground beetle, the then ten-year old stood in awe at the colourful bug. His very first documentation was the three-volume magazine for children, "Les Coléoptères", published by Boubée.

Later, he took an interest in butterflies after meeting renowned lepidopterist Francis Dujardin, and increased his knowledge with the Naturalist Association of Nice and Alpes-Maritimes and the Natural Science Society of Western France. He took part in the making of the Regional Entomological Atlas (Nantes), a major project which resulted in a book called "Biohistory of butterflies".

Today, in the reserve, François Destré approaches entomology from the biodiversity, behaviour, and, aesthetic angles. He was also in charge of training local institutions.

Upcoming...

RNF Geology commission

On **14th and 15th November**, specialists and partners of the reserve will meet in Valberg and on the reserve to hold a geology commission on French Nature Reserves.

Did you know...?

The Spanish festoon (*Zerynthia rumina*)

In May, this lovely colourful butterfly flutters around the reserve's dry and sunny slopes in search of its host plant, *Aristolochia pistolochia*, where the female lays eggs. Indeed, the caterpillars are closely linked to that plant which is essential to their survival.

The Spanish festoon's distribution goes from Southern France to Northern Africa, through the Iberian Peninsula. In France, it is an uncommon and protected species.

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