

Cultural aspects of Mediterranean wetlands and their potential contribution to the sustainable use of wetland resources

Aspectos culturales de los humedales mediterráneos y su contribución potencial al uso sostenible de los recursos naturales



Purple Gallinule, *Porphyrio porphyrio*. Roman mosaic in Conimbriga, near of Coimbra (Portugal)
Photo: Conselleria de Medio Ambiente (Valencia, Spain)

As it is usual in MedWetCom meetings, one of the sessions was devoted to the relevant aspects of the Mediterranean wetlands from a scientific and technical point of view. Aim of this exercise is to direct the future guidelines towards a sustainable management of wetlands. On the third meeting the issue was "Cultural aspects of Mediterranean wetlands and their potential contribution to the sustainable use of wetlands resources". Mr. Enrique Pérez Cañamares, director of the museum network of the Diputación de Valencia and Mr. Bernard Picon, researcher of the CESMID-CNRS, introduced the subject. Subsequently the members of the Committee made their own contributions.

The Committee debated through different working sessions about the specificities of Mediterranean wetlands. One particular characteristic of them is their high cultural heritage. Different peoples living around Mediterranean wetlands during thousand of years have used wisely their resources and taken advantage of their functions. This long-standing and harmonic relationship has

produced an impressive amount of constructions, artefacts and folklore, which forms a rich and varied cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, in modern times traditional practices have been abandoned and resources have been overexploited. The result of this trend has been the oblivion and sometimes the disdain of cultural heritage. Thus, natural and cultural resources have suffered the same destiny.

The recognition of the value of cultural aspects is an issue with a bigger scope than the Mediterranean Basin. Recognising this fact, Ramsar COP8 (Spain, 2002) will give special attention to this subject.

The MedWet/Com3 technical workshop established a number of guiding principles and specific actions to attain a better implementation of the MedWet Initiative. The guiding principles stress the necessity to link the survival of Mediterranean wetlands and the cultural aspects in order to ensure the sustainable management of wetlands.

In this context, the first task is to achieve recognition of the value of cultural heritage through legislative, educational and public awareness measures. The specific actions to reach this aim are:

- Inventory of the cultural elements related to Mediterranean wetlands (artefacts, constructions, oral and written traditions, art, folklore, traditional cultural landscapes etc.).
- Applied research on cultural heritage of wetlands and projects on cultural and social aspects of Mediterranean wetlands.
- Promotion of publications on cultural and social aspects of Mediterranean wetlands.

Summarising the spirit of the meeting and the importance given to the cultural aspects, the Committee resolved to prepare guidelines and a supporting draft decision for endorsement by Ramsar COP8 (Spain, 2002) on integrating social and cultural aspects in the wise use of wetlands.

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