



*"I am drawn towards wetlands
wherever I travel, and they make
me feel at home"*

*Andy J. Green - member of
the Ecosystem Services-SG*

The ecosystem services of mediterranean wetlands

The benefits provided by wetlands to
people are under pressure

The Mediterranean wetlands in particular have always been a critical source for biodiversity and human wellbeing. The freshwater they provide, the rich alluvial plains on which agricultural practices have long been carried out, the traditional fishing activities, and the protection against floods, are among the best known benefits provided by wetlands.

These benefits of nature are known as "Ecosystem Services (ES)" or "Nature's Contributions to People (NCP)".

Ecosystem services from wetlands also entail cultural values, such as place attachment, traditional recipes and handicrafts, which could be an added value for local sustainable development.

With the loss and degradation of Mediterranean wetlands, the ecosystem services that they provide are also increasingly coming under pressure. Conservation measures and sustainable management



Fisherman in the albufera of Valencia © Michelle Guamanzara

can ensure the long-term maintenance of wetland related ecosystem services in the Mediterranean region; however, important knowledge gaps remain to be addressed.

With the aim to identify and fill knowledge gaps related to decisions on the conservation of wetlands and their services, the Mediterranean Wetland Initiative (MedWet) has created, as part of its **Scientific and Technical Network (MedWet/STN)**, the **Ecosystem Services Specialist Group (MedWet/STN/SG/Ecosystem Services)**.

The Ecosystem Services Specialist Group (Ecosystem Services-SG)

The Ecosystem Services Specialist Group is one of the five Specialist Groups that makes up the MedWet/STN. It comprises experts who have in-depth knowledge and experience on wetlands and eco-system services topics.

The Ecosystem Services-SG works on syntheses of knowledge about Mediterranean wetland-related ecosystem services. Its aim is to increase awareness of the importance of these services with decision makers, the wider society, NGOs and site managers.

The group works towards identifying management recommendations to sustain the services provided by wetlands in the long term. For this, the Ecosystem Services-SG works closely with other SGs, especially the Water-SG.

To know more about the MedWet/STN and its Specialist Groups :

<http://bit.ly/MedWetSTN>

Contact :

Özge Balkız

Chair of the Ecosystem Services-SG
balkiz@gmail.com

Ilse Geijzenborffer

Co-chair of the Ecosystem Services-SG
geijzenborffer@tourduvalat.org

Flavio Monti

Manager of the MedWet/STN
monti@medwet.org

Members :

Özge Balkız, Evangéla Drakou,
Ilse Geijzenborffer, Andy J. Green,
Lena Hatziorfanou, Mariem Khalfoui,
Vania Statzu

Healthy wetlands make cities livable

Ecosystem Services are defined as the benefits provided by nature to people. According to the Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services (CICES) 2013, there are three types of ecosystem services: Provisioning, Regulating and Cultural. Some examples of ecosystem services provided by wetlands, given by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2018), are: providing freshwater for human consumption and agriculture (provisioning), protecting our shores and helping make cities and settlements safe and resilient, mitigating and adapting to climate change (regulating), and supporting a wide biodiversity for recreation and inspiration (cultural).



Recreational activities in Gediz Delta, Turkey. Photo: © Doga Archive

The benefits provided by wetlands are also essential in advancing towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, wetlands and the services they provide are threatened by unsustainable natural resource use and management practices. The ecosystem services approach permits us to take into the account the benefits provided by wetlands in management decisions, and it therefore provides a powerful tool to ensure wetland conservation. Yet little information exists on ecosystem services provided by wetlands and their trends. Filling this knowledge gap, and supporting the decision-making processes through gathering data and information on Ecosystem Services, is crucial for the Mediterranean region.

The role of the Ecosystem Services-SG

To support the conservation of wetlands in the region, the Ecosystem Services- SG works on (i) identifying positive futures for the biodiversity and ecosystem services of Mediterranean wetlands; (ii) assessing economic effects of land use change on ecosystem services and the trade-offs, (iii) identifying the critical role of Mediterranean wetland and their services in achieving the SDGs, and (iv) identifying key events to promote the importance of those ecosystem services.

In many part of Mediterranean areas, Ecosystem Services provide important cultural and economic values – losing our wetlands means losing our society.