

Poster

Ethnobiology of Castilla-La Mancha Wetlands

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Introduction. Located in Central Spain, Castilla-La Mancha presents a varied topography with a large central plain surrounded by mountains. Within the plain wetlands are important habitats for numerous species of flora and fauna protected by EEC directives, national and/regional laws. Several of the most important Iberian rivers (e.g. Tajo, Júcar and Guadiana) are born in small streams and wetlands in the mountain ranges of Castilla-La Mancha. Since prehistoric times, these places have been an important source of natural resources. During the Bronze Age, the “Motillas” (small hills) culture (combining hunting, gathering and small scale farming) developed around these wetland areas.

Objectives. In the past twenty years, over eighty percent of the wetlands of Castilla-La Mancha disappeared. The remainder are threatened primarily by intense demand for water and to a lesser extent also by pollution. The TKS (Traditional Knowledge System) which developed in close association with the wetland habitats is also abruptly fading. With the aim of preserving this knowledge and culture, we worked extensively during twenty years recording the TKS associated with these areas. Our research focus is in the study of ethnopharmacological resources including medicinal plants, minerals, mud, mineral waters and even the medicinal use of some animals.

Methods. We selected the most important wetlands in this region. Some of them are now almost dry, like Tablas de Daimiel, whilst others such as Ruidera lagoons, remain flooded. In each area, we interviewed elder people using an interview-guide which records the different fields of Ethnobiological Knowledge.

Results. We have found a rich ethnobiological heritage demonstrated in a wide variety of uses (local foods, handicrafts, traditional buildings). For health and healing, the people use a high proportion of medicinal plants for a number of different purposes, followed in a lesser rank by medicinal water and mud, and animals, such as the use of snake-skins. These practices are quickly disappearing.

Conclusion. The Castilla-La Mancha wetlands were a very important habitat to gather medicinal resources, often unique to these ecosystems. The loss of the wetlands means the loss of these natural resources and the TKS linked with them.

Keywords: medicinal resources, Traditional Knowledge

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