



What is Threatening the Tor di Valle Tiber River?



Where is the Tor di Valle Tiber River and Why is it Important?

Over the last century, Italy's industrialization, agricultural intensification and urbanization caused a loss of wetlands by draining them for development. Urban wetlands hosting bird communities show higher species richness than rural wetlands, so it is important to preserve urban wetlands. Panuccio et al. discuss two years of data on wintering waterbirds in two urban wetlands in Rome, the largest town of Italy, in order to provide a broader perspective on the unique value of these sites, currently under threat.

Review of the Two Sites

The first site, Tor di Valle Tiber river, makes a meander and passes along a wide open and flat area where the building of a new stadium is planned together with many other buildings and infrastructures, before running out of town. The second site, Vallerano flooded quarry, extends on for about 22 hectares and is located a few hundred meters outside the Ring Road of Rome. It is a former flint quarry where mining stopped in 2012. In 2013 the quarry was flooded with aquifer water that now covers about 6 hectares.

Results of the Study

The two studied sites are by far the most important wetlands of the urban area of Rome for wintering waterbirds despite the human activity that has usually a negative effect on the behaviour of waterbirds. They suggest that remaining roman wetlands and surrounding agricultural areas in the urban context should be protected from further commercial and residential development for different reasons. First because communities of wintering waterbirds in these sites are of conservationist value. Second because opportunity to observe birds and other wildlife is already very limited in large towns like Rome and because flood control protection provided by the large open areas comprised in the Tiber river meander of Tor di Valle is likely to be of greatest value for the surrounding neighborhoods.



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