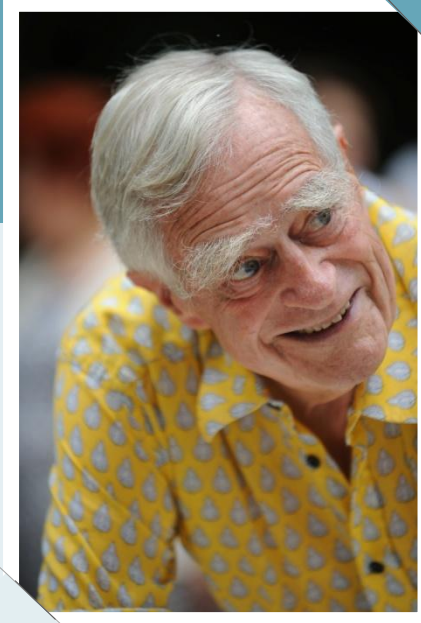


A word from the founder ...

LUC HOFFMANN



“ Is it possible to protect wetlands for their biodiversity, while at the same time improving the living conditions of the people who live there?

Our commitments and the results obtained over recent decades show very well that there is no incompatibility at all between nature conservation and development. Good management must take into account the range of human activities just as much as factors favouring the health of the ecosystems.

If this is successful, it can guarantee the support and promotion of biodiversity at the same time as sustainability of use. The point at issue lies in management for biodiversity which must go hand in hand with the inevitable development of human activities. This could involve the cessation of former practices in favour of the establishment of new methods.

The Tour du Valat has contributed to the conservation of species and ecosystems, both in the Camargue and around the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, this has not prevented us from being of assistance to landusers. Thus, the work which we have carried out within the framework of agri-environmental measures has helped to open up new prospects for farmers. With rice growers in particular we have explored alternative methods of cultivation which have the advantage of being more sustainable. Our participation in international waterbird research networks has contributed to a better understanding of their status for the rational management of their populations. We note for example the establishment in recent years at the Tour du Valat of a wintering population of Greylag Geese. Wildfowlers are to be counted among the principal beneficiaries of these developments.

The studies undertaken by the Tour du Valat on the life cycles of fish contribute to improved management of fresh waters, favouring not only the health of the ecosystem but also the well-being of the fishermen.

The case of the Prespa Lakes in Greece provides an example. The potential for opening wetlands to the public in the way we have initiated at the Marais du Vigueirat in the Camargue is also capable of contributing to the prosperity of the inhabitants of such sites, provided the arrangements are compatible with the healthy state of the ecosystems.

These examples, to which others could be added, demonstrate the potential for partnership offered by the collaboration between researchers and users of wetlands.

The potential is still poorly recognized at present by the users, despite the many contacts initiated by the Tour du Valat with professional associations, local authorities and Government departments. It is now a pivotal aspect of our work.

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