

Workshop : “Linking pond management to scientific knowledge”

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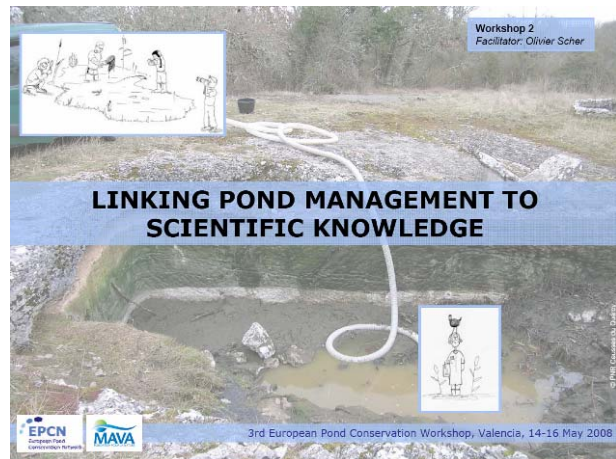
Main ideas, questions and proposals addressed during the Workshop

Introduction

The aim of the workshop was to create a better link between scientists and practitioners to improve the evidence base for pond conservation and management.

Much knowledge on pond management is held by practitioners working "on the ground" and this is not often published or available for others to learn from. On the other hand, there is relatively little scientific research on pond management, or monitoring to assess the result of management activities.

Scientists and practitioners would both benefit from sharing best practice experiences and knowledge. In this workshop, we discussed the key issues to develop pond management practices based on a sound scientific basis.



One of the main questions investigated during this workshop was:

"How is it possible to improve the flow of information between management and research?"

State of the Art

Practitioners and scientists don't tend to work together although some examples of collaboration can be found. This lack of collaboration is directly linked to their different objectives: practitioners work on the *management* and *conservation* of ecosystems or species, while scientists work on the *understanding* of ecosystem functioning (involved mechanisms at different spatial scales and from different angles, etc.). *Timescales* are not always the same either: for example scientists may need time to work on the ecosystem as a whole, whereas practitioners often need specific management issues to be addressed on a short timescale. It can be difficult to find practitioners (institutions) ready to get involved in a long term research program as it is time consuming and tends to be expensive.

A question of culture was also highlighted: scientists have a *writing culture* (scientific or technical publications, bibliographical reviews, reports) while practitioners have a *practical* and *empirical* culture that is not often published or readily accessible.

A lot of data are produced by practitioners (technical reports, monitoring studies, etc.), which are not easily accessible or easy for a scientist to find. On the other hand, the cost of scientific publications is often prohibitive for those outside academic institutions and the information in scientific publications are not always easy to apply to practical problems or management issues..

What are the needs of...

<i>practitioners</i>	<i>scientists</i>
assess management or conservation measures	identify practitioner needs
experimental designs	original and suitable data
standardised methods	access to existing data
simple management and assessment tools	long timescales
to be "listened" to	
money not only for management but also for baseline assessment and the evaluation of management measures	
Communication: joint meeting "on the ground" to share experiences and point out questions	
people to provide a link between practitioners and scientists	



Practitioners clearly highlighted the importance of developing methods to evaluate management measures using a scientific approach (standardisation). Scientific evidence on conservation practices would help to identify and disseminate best management practices as well as collecting data for a scientific purpose (win-win strategy).

Practitioners are not being listened to enough by scientists when they meet problems “on the ground”. Practical applications of scientific research are not developed enough by scientists, who could benefit from a wider field of experimentations by working with practitioners.

Which leads to follow?

One of the main goals would be to improve the *communication* between practitioners and scientists by, for example:

- Meeting more often in the field and producing case studies.
- Involving practitioners in the development of tools.
- Make scientific literature more accessible. The EPCN could have the role of “digesting” this information and translating it into a more user-friendly format. This highlights the importance of results dissemination.
- Creating a practitioner-focused journal.



The development of indices such as IBEM in Switzerland could be a good opportunity to improve communication between scientists and practitioners. However, it needs to be a bottom-up approach. The culture of networking, experience sharing and discussion is widely present in practitioner’s culture whereas it appears to be less developed in the scientific culture (with the exception of events such as conferences). This point could be easily improved through the EPCN network.

The experience gathered so far from the three EPCN conferences show that only local practitioners attend such events, so it appears that it is very difficult to mobilize practitioners more widely. The meeting format could be modified in order to offer more activities linking practitioners and scientists using different approaches. It is also important to define how far a scientist should commit to the conservation of a study site, because this may have an impact on their objectivity.