

TREES AND COUNTRYSIDE: PRESERVING BEAUTY



Riccardo Groppali

former Lecturer Department of Natural Sciences
University of Pavia

The beauty of a productive landscape is the exclusive responsibility of those who manage it, but unfortunately almost never of those who benefit in another way. This is particularly true in the plain countryside, increasingly trivialised in its huge fields whose margins have been eliminated rows of trees, hedges and even grassed belts.

The countryside, however, should maintain its important role in the preservation of biodiversity, as well as of important historical testimonies: the Roman Centuriation, now almost everywhere obliterated, dates back to the same era as extraordinary monuments that no one would think of eliminating, and some fountains are almost a thousand years old.

Among other things, a not insignificant part of the EU budget goes to agriculture, which should therefore respect the collective environmental heritage more, even in the cultivated countryside. Which today is very different from what it was only a few decades ago, when it was home to an extraordinary fauna in terms

of richness and variety, now expelled by monocultures spread over huge spaces without any continuity.

In Europe, flying insect species have declined by 75 % over the past thirty years, especially in the countryside, and in fields in the central Po Valley, there are more than thirteen times as many birds in areas rich in trees at the edge of fields as in fields without such endowments, and include species that are disappearing. Such as swallows that lose 5% of their populations every year, skylarks that have almost disappeared as nesters, and sparrows and starlings that have become threatened in several European countries from being very common.

Conserving the trees, even in the countryside where they could be validly placed in the current monoculture landscape, is, therefore, an urgent need. To improve the climate and absorb carbon dioxide, to increase fauna and flora even in cultivated areas, and to offer everyone a beautiful landscape to see and walk through. Because one must never give up beauty and biodiversity.

Saviola Talks