



The power of the sea near river deltas hinders the fluvial transport of fine particles and encourages the accumulation of large amounts of sediments, giving rise to long bars of sand and silt parallel to the coastline. These sandbanks lead to the formation of coastal lakes and ponds. But they are unstable barriers, which are constantly being formed and washed away, each time creating, protecting or destroying coastal wetlands - true environments "poised" between land and sea.

Although their complexity makes them extremely interesting nature-wise, coastal wetlands are harsh, selective, even extreme habitats for the animals and plants living there, which are only able to survive with specific physiological adaptations. However, these areas are also regularly visited by many species which are attracted by the food and shelter they offer. Of these, birds are certainly the most evocative, best-known and more widely appreciated.

The huge drainage programmes aimed at eradicating malaria and obtaining more land for farming radically altered the Italian coastal landscape. Unfortunately, although this mass reclamation has long since ceased, coastal wetlands are still being destroyed by the continuing expansion of towns and industry, and the recent exploitation of the coasts for tourism. They are now reduced to extremely restricted and severely endangered stretches around the Italian peninsula.



Brackish coastal lakes

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