

# 8th European Dry Grassland Meeting

The 8<sup>th</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting was held in Uman' and Kherson (Ukraine) from 13 to 17 June 2011. This meeting is the first on the territory of former USSR and the second outside Germany.

The National Dendrological Park "Sofiyvka" of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine was the main organizer of the Meeting from Ukrainian side. Co-organizers were M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany of Ukraine of the NAS of Ukraine (Kyiv), Kherson State pedagogical University, National Natural Park "Buz'ky Gard", and Biosphere Reserve "Askania-Nova".

The scientific program of the Meeting was held in the world-famous Dendrological Park "Sofiyvka" – a real pearl of gardening of the late 18<sup>th</sup> - early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and research institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Altogether 80 participants from 18 countries (Austria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Turkey, and, of course, Ukraine) took part in the Meeting.

The main topics discussed at the Meeting were biodiversity, classification, conservation and management of the dry grassland in Europe. Such problems are very urgent for Ukraine with high diversity of dry grassland and extraordinary level of environmental transformation coupled with imperfect nature protection legislation.

In the opening ceremony the participants were welcomed by Anna Kuzemko (National Dendrological Park "Sofiyvka" of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and European Dry Grassland Group), Ivan Kosenko (Director of the National Dendrological Park "Sofiyvka" of the NAS of Ukraine), Jürgen Dengler (University of Hamburg and European Dry Grassland Group), Sergei Mosyakin (Director of M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany of the NAS of Ukraine), and Yakiv Didukh (M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany of the NAS of Ukraine).

In total, 20 talks and 33 posters were presented during the Meeting. They dealt with many theoretical and practical issues of dry grassland research, as well as problems of practical conservation and restoration of these highly vulnerable ecosystems. Oral presentations were divided into four sessions.



*Participants of 8th EDGG Meeting in National Dendrological Park "Sofiyvka" NAS of Ukraine. Photo: G. Sivko.*





*Registration and session 5. Photo: G. Sivko.*



*Audience during the oral presentations. Photo: G. Sivko.*



*General Assembly of EDGG. Photo: G. Sivko.*

The first session, chaired by Stephen Venn, was focused on problems of dry grassland conservation. It included 4 talks by Piotr Chmielewski, Ivan Parnikoza, Mykyta Peregryn and Olexiy Burkovs'kyy. The second session chaired by Monika Janišová focussed on restoration of dry grassland and included 4 talks by Anna Szabó, Péter Török (two presentations), and Orsolya Valkó. In the third session, which was chaired by M. Vrahnakis, different aspects of dry grassland diversity were considered. The 7 talks were presented by Stephen Venn, Jürgen Dengler, Monika Janišová, Solvita Rusina, Sergey Znamenskiy, Georg Bieringer with Norbert Sauberer, and Triin Reitalu. The fourth and last session dealt with the consideration of structure, dynamics and ecological peculiarities of dry grasslands. These topics were outlined in 5 presentations by Wolfgang Willner, Iryna Korotchenko, Iryna Kovtun, Zeki Acar, and Anna Kuzemko.

The two poster sessions also followed these broad themes.

The fourth General Assembly chaired by Jürgen Dengler took place after the first day's oral presentations.

During the meeting, a competition for the best oral and poster presentation among young scientists has become traditional. The results of the competition were announced at the Grassland Party which was held in the Scientists House. The winners were Péter Török with his talk on "Techniques and costs of grassland restoration on former croplands", Triin Reitalu with a talk on "Responses of grassland species richness to local and landscape factors depend on spatial scale and habitat specialisation", Anikó Csecserits with the poster "Factors affecting the diversity and stability of dry grassland developed in oldfields" and Orsolya Valkó with the poster "Resampling plastic beads, a tool to model seed bank development and propagule dispersal in dry grasslands". They were awarded with the books "Flora, vegetation and nature conservation from Schleswig-Holstein to South America - Festschrift for Klaus Dierßen on occasion of his 60th birthday" edited by J. Dengler et al. and "Grassland vegetation of Slovak Republic — electronic expert system for identification of syntaxa" edited by M. Janišová.

The excursion program, including the most interesting areas of dry grassland in southern Ukraine, began after the scientific program was completed.

In the National Natural Park "Buz'ky Gard" (excursion guided by Galina Drabyniuk, Viacheslav Artamonov and Ivan Moysienko) the conference participants visited granite rocks in South Buh River valley near the well-known island Gard, which is connected with history of the Ukrainian Cossacks. Granite outcrops of the territory have a really unique plant and animal communities. Here the conference participants were able to see a locality of

the narrow-local South-Buh endemics *Dianthus hypanicus* Andr., *Moehringia hypanica* Gryn. & Klov., and *Silene hypanica* Klov., and discussed the problems of Ukrainian and European floras endemism. In the Ingul River valley (excursion guided by Ivan Moysienko) the conference participants visited the rich flora and vegetation of the limestone steppe slopes. In the Biosphere Reserve "Askania-Nova" (excursion guided by Viktor Shapoval and Orysia Gofman) they had opportunity to see a huge (in the European context) area of virgin steppe, to estimate the influence of different internal and external factors on its dynamics and to visit a famous Chaplinsky pod — the biggest depression at the Reserve territory, where the herds of grazing animals (Przhevalsky horses, bison, antelopes, zebras) are grazing in conditions closed to natural. In the National Natural Park "Oleshkivs'ki Sands" (excursion guided by Ivan Moysienko) which is the youngest in Ukraine and was established in 2010, the conference participants visited Ukrainian desert which developed at Kozeche-Lagera Lower-Dnieper arena due to excessive grazing by sheep after the Second World War. Later, a military area was established here and moving sand dunes were planted with pine to stabilise them. Not far from this area in the botanical reserve "Sagi" the conference participants saw the typical Near-Black-Sea sandy steppe. This site was of great interest to the European scientists, as it enabled them to compare Pontic sandy steppes with Pannonian, widespread in Central Europe, and also to discuss issues of their syntaxonomic position and dynamics.

Undoubtedly, this forum has been a significant event in the scientific life of Ukraine and all Europe. During the week, ideas of potential international projects in the areas of research, conservation and restoration of dry grasslands were repeatedly raised. It is possible to consider as a main achievement of this meeting, bringing the attention of European scientists to the problems of nature conservation in Ukraine and in particular to one of its most vulnerable components — dry grasslands.

Finally we would like to express sincere thanks to all conference participants for their valuable scientific contributions, friendly atmosphere during the whole of meeting and excursion in spite of high temperatures and burning sun. I am grateful to the members of the local organizer's team Inna Didenko, Galina Sivko, Mykyta Peregryn, Svitlana Emelianova, Olesya Bezsmertna, Andriy Chernenko, Vitaliy Adamenko, Nadia Sergienko, Ivan Moysienko, Alexander Khodosovtsev, Ruslana Melnyk for intensive help before and during the meeting. I thank Galina Drabyniuk, Viacheslav Artamonov, Viktor Shapoval, Orysia Gofman, Brian Kuns, and Sergey Znamenskiy for help in guiding excursions. We are grateful to the heads of National Dendrological Park "Sofiyvka", National Academy of Sciences, especially Ivan Kosenko, Vladimir Grabovyy and Alexandr Potapov and M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, especially Yakiv Didukh and Sergey





*Excursion in the dendrological park "Sofiyvka". Photo: G. Sivko, M. Janišová.*



*Poster Session. Photo: G. Sivko.*



Tatiana Solomakha (Publishing house “Phytosociocentre”) and Gennadii Marushevskiy (Wetlands International, Ukraine) for a grant for printing products. Also I am very grateful for EDGG co-chairs for their thorough help, support and inexhaustible ideas about the conference improvement at all stages of its preparation and carrying out.

The pdf versions of the talks and poster presentations for which the authors agreed to publish their electronic version will be available at [http://www.edgg.org/edgg\\_meeting\\_2011.html](http://www.edgg.org/edgg_meeting_2011.html). On this web page you can also find the conference proceedings and the photo gallery from the meeting.

*Anna Kuzemko, Uman', Ukraine*



*Centaurea orientalis. Photo K. Hegedúšová.*

## Minutes from the General Assembly of the EDGG at the 8th European Dry Grassland Meeting, Uman', Ukraine, 13 June 2011

*These notes were kept by Michael Vrahnakis – if there are points that participants wanted to be presented here and they are not please do not hesitate to make a conduct with Michael at [mvrahnak@teilar.gr](mailto:mvrahnak@teilar.gr) and additional material of the G.A. maybe presented in the next 12th Bulletin.*

The General Assembly (G.A.) of the EDGG during the 8th European Dry Grassland Meeting in Uman' took place after the first day's oral presentations (13/06/2011), starting at 17:00 hrs. All five members of the Executive Committee, namely Jürgen Dengler, Monika Janisova, Solvita Rusina, Michael Vrahnakis and Stephen Venn were present. A general structure of the agenda was pre-scheduled by all chairs of the EC, after personal conversations and e-mail exchanges. Five major topics were discussed during the G.A. chaired by Jürgen Dengler.

The first one was about some introductory notes, like **membership development, relationships with other organizations and EC expansion**. According to the data presented by Jürgen Dengler the membership of the EDGG reaches more than 600 members from 49 countries. A general conclusion was that despite the rapid expansion, there are still European countries missing or with rather low representativeness in EDGG. Some short comments were made concerning the participation of some members of the EDGG to the candidacy list for the IAVS Council. The election of Jürgen Dengler in the IAVS Council was briefly mentioned. Afterwards, the

four older members of the EC publicly welcomed Stephen Venn as the new, fifth member, of the EC and an open call for additional chair (the sixth), was addressed to the audience and membership as well. The EC thoughts for a Western Europe oriented sixth chair was expressed, i.e. originated from England, France, Spain, etc, for a balanced geographical representation.

Secondly, a short **report from the present members of the E.C.** was devoted to the activities related to their responsibilities. Monika (for EDGG Bulletin) and Solvita (for web page) presented their activities. A short introduction was made for the responsibilities allocated to the new member of the EC (Stephen) to support Solvita in editing the EDGG homepage and to deal with zoological issues. In his short talk Stephen expressed his strong willingness to help with the undertaken responsibilities by using wiki, facebook and other facilities. In addition, the new responsibilities of Michael, tackling with policy matters were presented to the audience.

In his **policy-related** report, Michael made a brief introduction about the status of the EDGG Bylaws, which are found in their latest condition prior to be published and

approved by membership. These Bylaws are consistent with the IAVS ones; the latter used as the basis of the former. The basics of the Bylaws, already packed into the conference material, were outlined and the notification that the completed version of the Bylaws will be sent soon to the General Membership for approval was addressed to the audience. Michael also presented some slides about the status of the Smolenice Grassland Declaration (SGD). In his talk he introduced the audience into the general frame of a Declaration, while he showed some other Grassland Declarations presented either in national or international level. He also showed the grassland related actions mentioned at the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Biodiversity Strategy which served as the reference to build the Convention for Grassland Conservation in Europe. Finally, Mike presented his thoughts about the next for the SGD that include: a) efforts for further communication of the SGD text to local, national or international fora, b) the construction of a strong and comprehensive Convention, c) promotion of the Convention in EC organs, and d) further efforts to put Convention into practice. Michael asked from the attendants to sign the SGD, in case they have not already done it, and it was agreed that the deadline for signature collections will be extended up to the last day of the 54th IAVS Symposium that is to be held in Lyon (24 of June 2012). The possibility of the establishment of a Policy Committee inside EDGG was notified.

In the fourth session, Jürgen outlined the present status of some **publication-related issues**. *Tuexenia* 31 (2011) with a Dry Grassland Special Feature guest-edited by a team of EDGG members is presently in press. Also, some a special feature of *Plant Biosystems* devoted to the Smolenice meeting is pending to be published soon.

Future venues that may host **next EDGG's conferences and research expeditions** were presented and discussed in the last session. Michael presented some slides about the Prespa's candidacy to undertake the next, 9<sup>th</sup> EDGG Meeting. The Meeting will be organized by EDGG and the Hellenic Rangeland and Pasture Society (HERPAS, [www.elet.gr](http://www.elet.gr)). The GA approved the HERPAS' proposal to host the meeting of 2012 in Prespa. Michael, in consultation with the EC and HERPAS, will take care of publishing a First Circular in the next months to be sent to all EDGG members. Finally, Jürgen presented the series of future activities of the EDGG. More specifically, he commented the 3rd SEEDGG Research Expedition that is to be held in Bulgaria in 14 - 24 August 2011 (more information: EDGG Bulletins No. 9 and 10) and invite all attendants to take part in it, since there are still some empty seats. Future potential meeting venues and research expeditions in Poland, Italy (Sicily), Russia were further commented.



*Investigations on kurgan. Photo K. Hegedúšová.*





*Moments of Grassland Party. Photo: G. Šivko, M. Janišová.*