

The 12th European Dry Grassland Meeting in Mainz 2015



*Participants of the Middle Rhine Valley Excursion within the 12th European Dry Grassland Meeting in Mainz, Germany.
Photo: M. Janišová*

On 22-27 May 2015, the 12th European Dry Grassland Meeting took place in Mainz, Germany. This was the second time that the EDGG has held its annual meeting in Germany, after Halle in 2009. The meeting was organised by Dr. Ute Becker (Botanic Gardens, University of Mainz) and Dr. Thomas Becker (University of Trier), and hosted by the Universities of Mainz and Trier. The Local Organising Committee included Ute Becker (Mainz), Thomas Becker (Trier), Hans-Jürgen Dechent (Saulheim), Ralf Omlor (Mainz), Lisa Thill (Trier), and Christian Uhink (Mainz) while the Scientific Committee consisted of Thomas Becker (Germany), Ute Becker (Germany), Monika Janišová (Slovakia), and Laura Sutcliffe (Germany). The conference was supported by the Institut für Spezielle Botanik und Botanischer Garten of the University of Mainz, Botanic Garden of the University of Mainz, Friends of the Botanic Garden of the University of Mainz, International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS), Floristisch-soziologische Arbeitsgemeinschaft (FlorSoz), and Rheinische Naturforschende Gesellschaft (RNG).

The aims of the EDGM-2015 were to acquaint participants with the westernmost dry continental sandy grasslands and dry grasslands on acid rock containing relict plants from the Pleistocene. Another aim of the

conference was to gain knowledge of the biology of individual dry grassland species, both plants and animals.

The meeting consisted of two days of oral and poster presentations and two half-day excursions, one to the dry grassland replica sites of the Botanic Garden, and the other to the original Mainz Sand area at the city margin of Mainz. The south-Siberian steppe replica site in the Botanic Garden was created with seed material collected during the EDGG expeditions to Ukraine 2010 and Siberia 2013. During the two days of post-conference excursions to Rhine Hesse and the Middle Rhine valley, participants explored the dry grasslands of these areas.

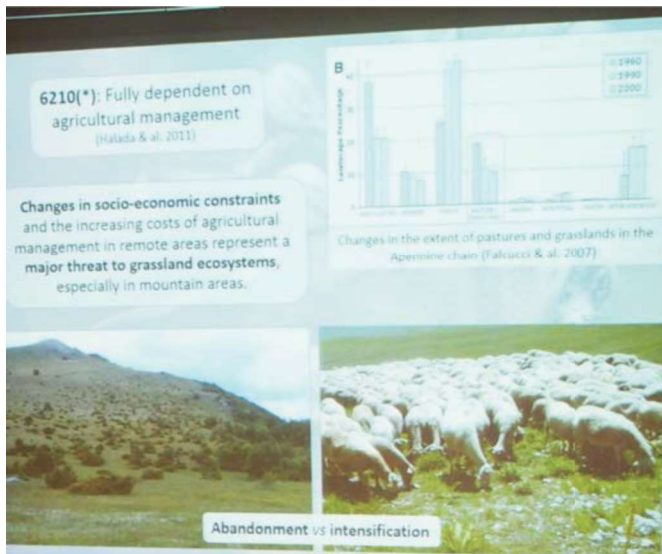
The conference consisted of 3 sessions:

1. Syntaxonomy and biodiversity of dry grasslands
2. Management and conservation of dry grasslands
3. Population biology of dry grassland species

In total, 50 participants from 15 countries (Algeria 4, Belgium 1, Germany 21, Hungary 8, Iran 3, Israel 1, Italy 3, Netherlands 1, Poland 1, Romania 1, Russia 1, Slovakia 1, Slovenia 1, Tunisia 1, and Ukraine 2) took part in the conference. There were two invited talks by Joachim W. Kadereit (Mainz) about “Biogeography of Rhine Gorge orophytes” and by Martin Diekmann



During the lectures. Photo: J. Dengler



Talk about vegetation changes in Apennine semi-natural grasslands by E. Giarrizzo. Photo: M. Janišová



Poster presentation by Karina Wiczovek on aphids in dry grasslands. Photo: J. Dengler



Poster session lead by Laura Sutcliffe. Photo: J. Dengler

(Bremen) about “Long-term changes in the vegetation of dry calcareous grasslands – evidence from community and population ecology”. In total, 23 talks and 18 posters were presented during the sessions. The poster and oral sessions were led by members of the EDGG Executive Committee (Monika Janišová, Péter Török) and other active EDGG members (Laura Sutcliffe, Michael Jeschke). The sessions ended on 24th of May with the award ceremony for the Young Investigator Prizes and the EDGG General Assembly. The Young Investigator Prizes were handed to the best oral and poster contributors (below 34 years in age). The winners were as follows: Best oral presentation contributors were Eleonora Giarrizzo (Italy) together with S. Burrascano, L. Facioni, L. Zavattero, and C. Blasi as collaborators with her talk entitled “Causes and outcomes of change in species composition of the Apennine semi-natural grasslands in the last fifty years”, and Lisa Thill (Germany) with O. Kienberg and T. Becker as collaborators who gave a talk about “Compensating extinction by reintroducing *Scorzonera purpurea* into steppe grasslands of Central Germany”. Best poster presentation contributors were Dávid D. Nagy (with T. Magura, R. Horváth, C. Szinetár, J. Eichardt, V. Ködöböcz and B. Tóthmérész as collaborators) with a poster entitled “The effects of fragment size and isolation on ground-dwelling arthropod assemblages in dry sandy grassland fragments” and Jianshuang Wu (with C. Zeng, X. Zhang, Z. Shen and S. Wurst as collaborators) with a poster entitled “Effects of grazing exclusion on above- vs. below-ground biomass allocation in three zonal alpine grassland types on the Northern Tibetan Plateau”.

After the ceremony, the General Assembly (GA) of the EDGG chaired by four present EDGG Executive Committee members: Jürgen Dengler, Monika Janišová, Anna Kuzemko, and Péter Török. The GA was followed by the Grassland Party in the Green School in the Botanic Garden with a vegetarian buffet and locally produced white wine.

During the conference the participants were involved in cultural programme including a walk through the historic city centre of Mainz. During the Dry Grassland Picnic in Rhine Hesse, participants could enjoy local food in the surroundings of a dry grassland.

The half-day excursion led to the Mainz Sand area at the edge of the city. Here, participants could visit the westernmost dry continental sand grasslands of the alliance *Koelerion glaucae* (association *Jurineo-Koelerietum*) and stands of the *Festucion*



Visit to the dry grassland replica sites in the Mainz Botanic Garden, guided by Ute Becker. Photo: J. Dengler (upper picture) and T. Becker (lower picture)



Visit to the dry grassland replica sites in the Mainz Botanic Garden. The picture shows the south-Siberian steppe replica site which was created with seed material collected during the EDGG expeditions to Ukraine 2010 and Siberia 2013. Photo: T. Becker



Joachim W. Kadereit (Mainz) and Martin Diekmann (Bremen) were the two invited speakers. Photo: J. Dengler



*Dry sandy grasslands of the *Koelerion glaucae* with *Helichrysum arenarium* and *Gypsophila fastigiata* in the Mainz Sand area. Photo: T. Becker*



*Summer aspect of a steppe grassland of the *Festucion valesiacae* on sandy soil with *Stipa capillata* and *Dianthus carthusianorum* in the Mainz Sand area. Photo: T. Becker*



*Semi-dry grasslands of the *Cirsio-Brachypodium* with *Adonis vernalis* in the Mainz Sand area. Photo: T. Becker*



valesiaca (*Allio-Stipetum*) on sandy soil. In a natural pine forest of the *Cytiso-Pinion* (*Pyrolo-Pinetum*), semi-dry grasslands of the *Cirsio-Brachypodion* (*Adonido-Brachypodietum*) were visible, and on disturbed open sites, annual vegetation of the *Sileno conicae-Cerastion semidecandri* (*Bromo tectorum-Phleetum arenaria*, and *Sileno conicae-Cerastietum semidecandri*) were inspected. The area is the only location of *Onosma arenaria* in Germany which we saw during the excursion. During our excursion through the area, we focussed on plants and vegetation (guided by T. Becker, U. Becker, H.-J. Dechent, C. Lehr and A. Schönberger), animals (mainly insects; guided by N. Chalwatzis, V. Hohenberg and A. Westenberger). Furthermore, we discussed the challenges and opportunities for conservation.

During the one-day excursion to Rhine-Hesse we visited dry grasslands and heathlands on volcanic soil. The area is the *locus classicus* of *Koelerio-Phleion* communities with a peculiar species combination including xerothermic relict species. Excursion sites were the Martinsberg site and Höll site near Siefersheim, and the Mühlberg site and Horn site near Neu-Bamberg. Vegetation types shown during the excursion included the *Gageo-Veronicetum dillenii* (*Sedo-Veronicion dillenii*), *Cerastietum pumili* (*Alysso-Sedion albi*), *Allio-Stipetum* (*Festucion valesiaca*), *Genistello-Phleetum* (*Koelerio-Phleion*) and *Calluno-Genistetum* (*Genistion pilosae*).

Finally, an excursion led to the Middle Rhine Valley with slopes covered by xerothermic vegetation complexes containing dry grasslands and *Acer monspessulanum* forests. The area is one of the classic tourist locations of Germany and an important place for German ancient history.

The Local Organizing Committee would like to thank all participants, the EDGG Executive Committee, sponsors and supporters and many other people and organisations who made this conference possible, especially H.-J. Dechent for organizing the field guides and I. Metz, M. Scheer, E. Entenmann and L. Thill for organizing food during conference and grassland picnic together with many other people.

*Ute Becker and Thomas Becker
Mainz and Trier, Germany*

Moments during the Grassland party. Photo: J. Dengler



Steppe-like grasslands on volcanic soil at the Höll site in Rhine Hesse. *Stipa pulcherrima* is flowering; in the background the Martinsberg is visible. Photo: T. Becker



Dry grasslands on volcanic soil of the Koelerio-Phleion at the excursion site Höll in Rhine Hesse with flowering *Genista sagittale* and *Rumex acetosella*. Photo: T. Becker



Pulsatilla vulgaris at the excursion site Höllberg in Rhine Hesse. Photo: T. Becker (taken earlier in the year)



Exploring rocky grasslands on acidic soil (Koelerio-Phleion) at the Höll site in the Rhine Hesse region. Photo: T. Becker



Investigations of dry grassland biota during the excursion to Rhine-Hesse. Photo: J. Dengler



A break during the excursion to the Middle Rhine Valley. Photo: T. Becker



Dry Grassland Picnic during the post-conference excursion to Rhine Hesse. Photo: M. Janišová



Peter Török and his group enjoying the Grassland Party. Photo: M. Janišová



During the walk through the historic town of Mainz. Photo: J. Dengler



Michael Jeschke, Laura Sutcliffe and Ute Becker in the Mainz Sand area. Photo: J. Dengler



Introduction to the Lepidoptera fauna in the Mainz Sand area. Photo: J. Dengler



Studying a semi-natural dry grassland during the excursion to the Middle Rhine Valley. Photo: M. Janišová



Local experts provided detailed information for participants during the excursion to Rhine-Hesse. Photo: J. Dengler



After a dry spring the visited grasslands were rather dessicated, however, still very interesting for grassland specialists. Photo: J. Dengler



Jaime Kigel, Michael Jeschke and Martin Diekmann during the coffee break, Photo: J. Dengler



Sabina Burrascano, Thomas Becker, Eleonora Giarizzo and Emanuela Carli during the coffee break, Photo: J. Dengler



Picture left: Thomas Becker during the one-day excursion to the Middle Rhine Valley. Photo: A. Kuzemko



Patches of rocky grasslands over the Middle Rhine Valley. Photo: A. Kuzemko