



## **Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG)**

*Report for the period from 9<sup>th</sup> June 2019 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020*

### **Members and organisation of the EDGG**

Since the last report in 2019, we revised the membership list and validated the contacts. The number of EDGG members is now 1,337 from 64 countries (June 2020). Membership in EDGG is free of charge and can be obtained by sending an e-mail to our membership administrator Idoia Biurrun ([idoia.biurrun@ehu.es](mailto:idoia.biurrun@ehu.es)). The current Executive Committee consists of Alla Aleksanyan (Armenia), Didem Ambarlı (Germany/Turkey), Idoia Biurrun (Spain), Iwona Dembicz (Poland), Jürgen Dengler (Switzerland/Gernany), Anna Kuzemko (Ukraine), Péter Török (Hungary), and Stephen Venn (Finland).

For further details, see article in *Palaearctic Grasslands* 46

### **EDGG events**

#### Past EDGG event

The 13th Field Workshop: “Grasslands of Armenia along an elevational gradient” was held between 26 June – 6 July 2019 in Armenia, organised by Alla Aleksanyan and team. The short description of this Field Workshop was missing from the last year’s report, thus, we publish it here. The main aims of the Field Workshop were: 1) to analyse the biodiversity patterns of the Armenian grasslands across spatial scales and multiple taxonomic groups (vascular plants, bryophytes, lichens, and orthopteroid insects), 2) to study the syntaxonomic position of these grasslands in a general European context. The field sampling was very successful: 19 participants from nine countries (Armenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain, Switzerland and Ukraine) recorded 29 EDGG Biodiversity Plots and 53 additional 10-m<sup>2</sup> plots. Data on orthopteroid insects were collected in 40 100-m<sup>2</sup> plots. Collected data show that Armenia is one of the Palaeractic hotposts of fine grain plant diversity. Moreover, determination of cryptogam specimens collected during the FW revealed two new species to Armenia: the moss *Syntrichia papilosissima* and the lichen *Aspicilia hispida*.

See further details in *Palaearctic Grasslands* 46 and at the Past Field Workshops page: [https:// https://edgg.org/fw/pastfw](https://edgg.org/fw/pastfw)

## Eurasian Grassland Conferences postponed

We scheduled to have our annual conference in September 2020 in Tolosa, Spain and announced the second call for the conference after the Covid-19 pandemic had begun. Due to the severity of the pandemic, the local organizing committee (Idoia Biurrun, Itziar García-Mijangos, Javier Loidi, Juan Antonio Campos, Isabel Salcedo, Peter B. Pearman, Asun Berastegi), in consultation with the EDGG Executive Committee decided to postpone the conference until 2021. There were two main reasons for our decision: Firstly, even if the pandemic will hopefully be over shortly, still travel limitations and risks related to the second wave are expected. We did not want to put our participants at risk by making them travel long distances and gathering several people around the Palearctic in one big event. Secondly, as of 20<sup>th</sup> June, there are still Corona-positive cases and losses; we realized that we may run out of time for the organization even if the pandemic would be over in July. Registered participants were informed immediately about the postponement and their fees repaid.

The conference will be held with the same theme, sessions and a similar schedule in 2021. Detailed information on dates and registration will be announced on the EDGG website, as well as in *Palaeartic Grasslands*, during autumn 2020. We hope that our keynote speakers and participants will be able to join us and we will welcome all of you in Tolosa. Consequently, the conference planned to be organized by Peter Török and his colleagues next year in Hungary, has been postponed to 2022.

## EDGG Field Workshops postponed

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the EDGG Executive Committee, in accordance with the local organizers, decided to postpone the 14<sup>th</sup> Field Workshop in Ukraine to 2021. Therefore, the schedule for next years' Field Workshop announced in PG 45 (p. 4) has been rearranged, after consultation with all the organizers:

- 15<sup>th</sup> EDGG Field Workshop in South Tyrol, Italy, hosted by Andreas Hilpold and team, has been postponed to summer 2022.
- 16<sup>th</sup> EDGG Field Workshop in Picos de Europa, Spain, hosted by Amparo Mora and team, has been postponed to summer 2023.

Exact dates of the 14<sup>th</sup> Field Workshop in Ukraine, organized by Denys Vynokurov and team, will be announced in early autumn, on our website, media and in *Palaeartic Grasslands*.

## Publication activities of EDGG

### Palaeartic Grasslands

Four issues of *Palaeartic Grasslands* ("PG"; former *Bulletin of the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group*) have been published during the period reported here, and a fifth is in the final stages of preparation: Nos. 42 to 46. While *Palaeartic Grasslands* continues to be the platform for official announcements of the EDGG Executive Committee to the members ("News", "EDGG Events"), for "Short Contributions" from members for members, "Book Reviews", overviews of "Recent Publications of our Members" related to grasslands and "Forthcoming Events", it now has two major new elements: (i) PG now publishes scientific

articles in four categories: “Research Article”, “Review”, “Forum Article” and “Scientific Report”. They are subject to editorial peer review, which ensures on the one hand scientific soundness, and on the other hand fast decisions. (ii) PG has a strong focus on excellent quality photography from Palaeartic grasslands, their flora and fauna and the people using them. The new format of “Photo Stories” allows submitting grassland articles of a couple of pages, consisting mainly of photos with brief texts, which celebrate the beauty of certain grasslands of some region and their rich biota.

In addition, in issue 46 the new article type “A Glimpse of a Grassland” will be introduced. It is aimed at presenting short stories and nice photos of grassland types or grassland sites particularly beloved by the author. The firsts 12 “Glimpses” will appear in issue 46 and have been motivated by the confinement of most of us during spring 2020.

Completed Special Features and book chapters organised by EDGG

Further, EDGG continued its long-standing tradition of Special Issues/Features in international journals. In the reporting period, EDGG organised three special issues during the reported period. There were two regular issues organised in the journals *Hacquetia* and *Tuexenia* and one issue in progress in *Flora*:

- The 14<sup>th</sup> EDGG Special Feature in *Tuexenia* (entitled: “Restoration, monitoring, conservation and phytosociology of semi-natural and natural grasslands in Central Europe”) was published in October 2019, edited by Balázs Deák, Thomas Becker, Steffen Boch, Jürgen Dengler and Viktoria Wagner. This SF focused on the restoration, monitoring, conservation and phytosociology of Central European grasslands. Altogether 40 authors from seven countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Romania and Switzerland) were involved in the six published articles. The Special Feature highlights many aspects of grasslands involving different study organisms and scales. The publications are all open access and freely available from the journal website at [https://www.zobodat.at/publikation\\_volumes.php?id=62149](https://www.zobodat.at/publikation_volumes.php?id=62149).
- The 5<sup>th</sup> EDGG-edited Special Feature in *Hacquetia* was published in December 2019 (*Hacquetia* 18-2), edited by O. Valkó, S. Venn, R. Labadessa, S. Palpurina, S. Burrascano and A. Ushimaru. The papers in this special issue cover a wide range of grassland ecosystems from mountain dry grasslands to lowland loess grasslands, feathergrass steppes and wet grasslands, and focus on the biodiversity values and conservation issues of Palaeartic grasslands. It also includes a report on EDGG activities in 2018-2019.
- A further Special Issue organised by EDGG was guest edited by Péter Török, Barbara Neuffer, Karl-Georg Bernhardt and Karsten Wesche in the journal *Flora*. This Special Issue is devoted to the ecology and evolution of steppe biodiversity and forms a nice addition to the formerly published issues and papers on the topic. In the issue. The special issue contains 12 papers with an editorial and will likely be published in the autumn 2020.
- After having contributed about half of the content of the book *Grasslands of the world: diversity, management and conservation* (eds. Squires, V.R., Dengler, J., Feng, H. & Hua, L.) in 2018, EDGG again contributed the Palaeartic chapters to a major reference work in 2019/2020, the *Encyclopedia of the World's Biomes*

published by Elsevier. Jürgen Dengler & Péter Török managed to organise and edit 12 regional chapters, which together cover the grasslands and shrublands of the whole Palaearctic comprehensively and consistently. A synthesis chapter by J. Dengler, I. Biurrun, S. Boch, I. Dembicz & P. Török summarizes the findings across the whole biogeographic realm. While the individual chapters were available online since end of 2019/early 2020, the paginated multi-volume book was released on 18 June 2020.

### Ongoing Special Features

- Following the previous, a new Special Feature is already in progress in *Tuexenia*: the 15<sup>th</sup> edited by EDGG, with the title “Sustainability of Central European semi-natural grasslands –traditional land use, management and biodiversity”, edited by S. Boch, T. Becker, B. Deák, J. Dengler and V. Wagner. It is scheduled to be published in 2020.
- Following the previous, a new special issue has been initiated in *Hacquetia* (6<sup>th</sup> EDGG SF), with the working title: “Fauna, flora, vegetation and conservation of Palaearctic natural and semi-natural grasslands”. The issue welcomes manuscripts about natural and semi-natural grasslands, on all taxa and from any region in the Palaearctic realm (Europe; West, Central and North Asia; North Africa). This Special Issue will appear as the first issue of 2021, to be published approximately in January 2021, with about 150–250 pages reserved for our articles. It will also contain a report on the EDGG activities in the previous year.
- Currently a call is open for a Special Feature “Classification of grasslands and other open vegetation types in the Palaearctic” in the new IAVS journal *Vegetation Classification and Survey*. Editors are Idoia Biurrun, Jürgen Dengler, Monika Janišová and Arkadiusz Novak. Submissions of abstracts to [juergen.dengler@uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:juergen.dengler@uni-bayreuth.de) is possible until 31 July 2020 (extended deadline).

### Other EDGG media

EDGG is continuously improving its media tools to provide updated and accessible information to the visitors of its homepage. Publication menu of the EDGG homepage was updated to include two new pages devoted to the special features of EDGG: Ongoing Special Features (<https://edgg.org/publ/ongoingsfeatures>) and Past Special Features (<https://edgg.org/publ/pastsfeatures>). The purpose of the first one is to attract attention to the planned special features and provide detailed information about the planned journal, editors, outline, submission information and the deadlines. In the Past Special Features page, we checked and updated all paper links. Finally, we also moved Publications from our Members page (<https://edgg.org/publ/publmembers>) to the submenu of the Publications. In this page, the publication information sent by our members are listed under different topics and then chronically. We are still working to make this page as complete as possible.

### Database activities of EDGG

In our last report, we informed the IAVS about the re-launch of the EDGG managed GrassPlot database, based on the former Database Species-Area Relationships in

Palaeartic Grasslands. GrassPlot stores multi-scale richness, composition and environmental data from precisely delimited plots of grasslands and other open habitats of the Palaeartic Realm. Since its formal establishment during an international workshop in March 2017, with 87 datasets, 27,355 plots and 1,144 nested-plot series of at least four grain sizes, the database has increased its content and functionalities. The GrassPlot version 2.0. reported by Biurrun et al. (2020, PG44: 26-47) contains 190,673 plots and 4,654 nested-plot series with at least four different grain-sizes, from 184 datasets. Since the publication of this report in December 2019, the structure of the database was further improved, and its content augmented.

A first analytical paper was published in January 2020:

Dengler, J., Matthews, T.J., Steinbauer, M.J., Wolfrum, S., Boch, S., Chiarucci, A., Conradi, T., Dembicz, I., Marcenò, C., García-Mijangos, I., Nowak, A., Storch, D., Ulrich, W., Campos, J.A., Cancellieri, L., Carboni, M., Ciaschetti, G., De Frenne, P., Dolezal, J., Dolnik, C., Essl, F., Fantinato, E., Filibeck, G., Grytnes, J.-A., Guarino, R., Güler, B., Janišová, M., Klichowska, E., Kozub, Ł., Kuzemko, A., Manthey, M., Mimet, A., Naqinezhad, A., Pedersen, C., Peet, R.K., Pellissier, V., Pielech, R., Potenza, G., Rosati, L., Terzi, M., Valkó, O., Vynokurov, D., White, H., Winkler, M. & Biurrun, I. 2020. Species-area relationships in continuous vegetation: Evidence from Palaeartic grasslands. *Journal of Biogeography* 60: 72–86.

Another paper, partly based on GrassPlot data has just been submitted, while six more paper projects are on the way. Any data contributor can propose paper projects based on GrassPlot data, and non-contributing scientists with good ideas just need to join up with a data contributor to get access to the full content of this unique database.

A new Governing Board of GrassPlot was elected in February 2019. Jürgen Dengler, Idoia Biurrun, Iwona Dembicz and Riccardo Guarino continue from the former Governing Board, and Jutta Kapfer, Sabina Burrascano and Remigiusz Pielech are new members for the period 2019-2021.

A menu devoted to Databases will be constructed in EDGG homepage. It will include separate pages for Introduction to vegetation databases, Grassplot, Grassplot Online and Regional Databases. And many other pages providing information about methods, meetings etc. GrassPlot representatives and EDGG chairs held a meeting and decided on the structure and functionalities of the pages. Now the content of the pages (methods, separate databases, publications, photos) are being updated. The menu will be launched before the end of 2020.

### **Financial issues**

The main financial support of EDGG occurs via IAVS. The IAVS provided travel grants for the EDGG Field Workshops and EGC in total of 7500 €. IAVS also provides honorarium (1000 €) to one EDGG representative to attend the annual IAVS Symposium to Bremen. The support is greatly acknowledged by the EDGG. We also used 1612.1 € from our own savings to support the attendance of colleagues at the Field Workshops. In addition in 2019 and 2020, IAVS provided an annual baseline support (500 €).

EDGG received from IAVS an additional 3700 € project funding for 2019 for supporting chairs to attend the EDGG conference in Graz (up to 3000 €), and for covering costs of linguistic editing of non-native authors in the EDGG special features in *Hacquetia* and *Tuexenia* (in total of 700 €). We used from this support 1882.90 € for supporting EDGG

Chairs to attend the EDGG conference, and the sum of 700 € was reserved for EDGG to use it in the next calendar year (256.62 € paid to the linguistic editor, Aiko Huckauff, 443.38 € remained for 2020). This year, at the second time we organised a campaign to raise funds for the EDGG. By charity donations. From these donations this year we supported EDGG Field Workshops. The EDGG has also received from FlorSoz a language editing support for *Tuexenia* (500 €). All support is greatly acknowledged.

We cordially invite you to join EDGG, its events and activities!

***Péter Török (on behalf of the Executive Committee of the EDGG)***