

EDGG Event

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Coming soon: 18th Eurasian Grassland Conference
“Conservation and management of grasslands in transforming landscapes”
Szarvas, Hungary, 25 September - 1 October 2023
<https://www.egc2023.hu/>



Autumn in the Hungarian ‘puszta’. Photo: A. Széll.

The 18th Eurasian Grassland Conference (EGC) will take place in Szarvas, Hungary, from 25th September to 1st October 2023. The conference is organized by the EDGG, the Seed Ecology Research Group at the Centre for Ecological Research and the Körös-Maros National Park Directorate. It is supported by the IAVS, the Centre for Ecological Research, the Körös-Maros National Park Directorate, and the Kiskunság National Park Directorate. The theme of the 18th EGC is ‘*Conservation and management of grasslands in transforming landscapes*’. The conference aims to improve our knowledge of the flora, fauna, diversity, management, and restoration of Palaeartic grasslands in changing landscapes.

This year's conference offers four keynote talks, an optional workshop and an optional post-conference excursion, in addition to the talk and poster sessions, mid-conference excursion and grassland party.

On 25th September, participants will have the opportunity to participate in the workshop ‘*Introduction to grassland-related spiders*’, led by Róbert Gallé, Nikolett Gallé-Szpisjak (Centre for Ecological Research, Hungary) and Tomáš Hamrík (Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic). We welcome Corrado Marcenò, Denys Vynokurov, Szabolcs Lengyel, and András Kelemen as our keynote speakers. The mid-conference excursion will take us to the famous Hungarian ‘puszta’ in the Körös-Maros National Park, and a three-day optional post-conference excursion will take place in the diverse and spectacular grasslands of the Kiskunság National Park (29th September – 1st October). Both excursions will be guided by botanist and zoologist experts and we will have the possibility to observe unique geomorphological features, endemic and rare plants and animals, best practices and challenges for conservation and restoration as well as field experimental sites. Below you will find the detailed programme.

Conference program

25 September (Monday) Workshop, registration, keynote lecture

- 10:00 – 12:00 Workshop: Introduction to grassland related spiders (indoor presentations) (Róbert Gallé, Nikolett Gallé-Szpisjak, and Tomás Hamrik)
- 12:00 – 13:00 Lunch break (for the participants of the workshop)
- 13:00 – 15:00 Workshop: Introduction to grassland related spiders (outdoor program)
- 13:00 – 19:00 Registration
- 15:00 – 17:30 Guided tour in the zoo of the National Park
- 17:45 – 18:30 Keynote lecture by András Kelemen
- 18:30 – 21:00 Welcome reception

26 September (Tuesday) Talks and poster session

- 08:00 – 09:00 Registration
- 09:00 – 09:15 Opening ceremony
- 09:15 – 10:00 Plenary talk by Corrado Marcenò
- 10:00 – 10:30 Talks
- 10:30 – 11:00 Coffee break
- 11:00 – 13:30 Talks
- 13:30 – 15:00 Lunch break
- 15:00 – 15:45 Plenary talk by Denys Vynokurov
- 15:45 – 17:00 Talks
- 17:00 – 17:30 Coffee break
- 17:30 – 19:00 Poster session

27 September (Wednesday) Mid-conference excursion, Grassland Party and Auction

- 08:30 – 18:00 Departure from Szarvas
- 18:00 – 22:00 Grassland party and auction at the visitor centre

28 September (Thursday) Talks and poster session

- 09:00 – 10:15 Talks
- 10:15 – 10:45 Coffee break
- 10:45 – 11:30 Plenary talk by Szabolcs Lengyel
- 11:30 – 13:30 Talks
- 13:30 – 15:00 Lunch break
- 15:00 – 16:00 Talks
- 16:00 – 17:00 Poster session
- 17:00 – 17:30 Coffee break
- 17:30 – 19:00 EDGG General Assembly and closing ceremony

29 September – 1 October (Friday-Sunday) Post-conference excursion

- 29 September 08:00 Departure from Szarvas
- 1 October 17:00 Arrival at Kecskemét



The visitor centre of the Körös-Maros National Park Directorate. Photos: A. Zsolt Bencsik and Z. Babák.



Plenary speakers

Corrado Marcenò, from the University of Perugia will present a talk entitled *“Data collected by amateur botanists: coupling an old tradition and citizen science offers new opportunities for habitat monitoring and conservation”*.

[Research Gate profile](#)



Denys Vynokurov, from the M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and the University of the Basque Country, will present a talk entitled *“New insights on the broad-scale classification of European dry grasslands and scrub vegetation”*.

[Research Gate profile](#)



Szabolcs Lengyel, from the Centre for Ecological Research will present a talk entitled *“Grassland restoration and management: a focus on animals”*.

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Keynote lecture

András Kelemen (Department of Ecology, University of Szeged) will open the conference with a keynote lecture on the current situation and challenges in grassland conservation and restoration focusing on the lowland sandy areas of Hungary, with a special outlook to the habitats that we will visit during the mid- and post-conference excursions.

[Research Gate profile](#)

Venue

The conference venue will be in Szarvas (Békés County, Hungary) which is located about 150 km far from Budapest. The town, with about 17,000 inhabitants, is the touristic centre of the region, as it is situated in a nice semi-natural landscape characterized by the oxbow of the river Körös and many grasslands. Although the town is small, it has many sights to see just like the manor of the Borza family, the Arboretum Pepi-garden ('Pepi-kert'), and the Visitor Centre of the Körös-Maros National Park.

The registration and conference sessions will be held in the Visitor Centre of the Körös-Maros National Park ([Körös-Maros National Park Directorate](#), Address: Anna-liget 1. Szarvas, H-5540). The exhibition at the Visitor Centre provides a nice introduction of the habitats and conservation activities of the KMNPD, and also offers the possibility to take a tour along the oxbow of the Körös and visit the zoo with many animal species that have inhabited this area both in present days and in historical times.

The conference will take place at the Visitor Centre which has a large lecture hall, and many other facilities for discussions and social events.

Details about recommended accommodation options and tips for travelling to Szarvas can be found on the [conference homepage](#).

Registration information

The registration for the conference has been closed and the conference has reached its full capacity. We have in total 98 registered participants from a total of 19 countries. The participants have submitted in total 67 abstracts.



Animals that are/were typical in the region (zoo at the Venue). Photos: A. Zsolt Bencsik and É. Urbancsik.

Workshop

On the first day of the conference we organize an optional workshop entitled 'Introduction to grassland related spiders'. This exciting interactive workshop will provide an overview on the most important spider taxa that are related to grasslands, their main functional groups, and an introduction to sampling methodology. The program includes a brief (indoor) lecture about the theoretical background, and also an outdoor part when the participants get a practical guide about the basic sampling methods (in the grassland that is just next to the venue). The workshop will be led by Róbert Gallé, Nikolett Gallé-Szpisjak (Centre for Ecological Research, Hungary) and Tomáš Hamřík (Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic) who are experts in arachnology and in grassland conservation.



Sampling of grassland-related spiders in Hungary. Photos: R. Gallé.

Mid-conference excursion

In the mid-conference excursion, we plan a unique 'puszta' experience: we will have an easy half-day walk in the endless grasslands in the 'Csanád puszták' protected area. We visit several types of pristine Pannonian alkali habitats in the Körös-Maros National Park. We have the opportunity to see the vertical vegetation gradient typical of alkali open landscapes. The gradient involves loess steppes (6250 Pannonic loess steppic grasslands) on the highest and alkali steppes and marshes on lower elevations (1530 Pannonic salt steppes and salt marshes). Due to the continental forest-steppe climate, during our excursion in autumn, hopefully we will be able to see many flowering grassland specialist plants typical to open alkali mud surfaces (*Heliotropium*

supinum), alkali steppes (*Limonium gmelinii* subsp. *hungaricum* and *Prospero paratethycum*) and loess steppes (*Sternbergia colchiciflora*). During the excursion we will also visit the White Lake ('Fehér-tó') in Kardoskút, which is one of the most beautiful white-water alkaline lakes of the Great Plain. In the basin of the lake, we can walk through the stands of *Suaeda pannonica*, *Puccinellia distans* subsp. *limosa* and *Tripolium pannonicum*. The mid-conference excursion will be guided by the excellent botanists Ábel Molnár and Judit Kapocsi.

After the mid-conference excursion, we will organise the Grassland Party at the Conference Venue. We serve traditional Hungarian delicacies and introduce some parts of the Hungarian folk art to the participants. We will also continue the nice tradition of the Grassland Auction: we ask participants to bring some grassland-related items from their home countries, and we organise an auction from these items.

Post Conference Excursion

After the conference, we organize a three-day-long post-conference excursion to explore the natural beauties and conservation challenges of the grasslands in the [Kiskunság National Park](#).

During the excursion, we explore a wide range of grassland habitats:

- alkaline grasslands with flowering *Limonium gmelinii* subsp. *hungaricum*, *Tripolium pannonicum*, and *Prospero paratethycum*
- sandy forest steppe, habitat of the strictly protected *Di-anthus diutinus* and several other rare species
- spontaneously recovered dry and wet grasslands on former sand mines, with several rare species such as *Cyperus pannonicus*, *Blackstonia perfoliata* subsp. *serotina*, and *Suaeda pannonica*
- loess grasslands with large stands of *Colchicum arenarium*
- moving sand dunes - the Hungarian 'desert'
- long term rainfall exclusion experiment in the Kiskun LTER site of the Centre for Ecological Research
- well preserved large stands of lowland sandy forest, and species-rich meadow steppes in the Peszér-Adacs area
- a large alkali steppe with impressive geomorphology in Mikla puszta
- birdwatching, with a good chance to see Eurasian Cranes, migrating waterfowl, Great Bustards and several other bird species

Technical information

The excursion departs from Szarvas on 29th September, early in the morning, and we finish at the railway station at Kecskemét railway on the afternoon of 1st October. From Kecskemét, there is a direct train connection to Budapest Airport. For those departing on Monday, we recommend booking an accommodation in Kecskemét for Sunday night as it is a very nice city worth exploring.

This is an all-inclusive excursion: the fee includes transportation by bus, all meals, accommodation and a wine-tasting event. The maximum number of participants is limited to 40 persons (to match the capacity of the bus and the available accommodation).

In case of any questions related to the post-conference excursion, you can contact the local organizers (organizers.egc2023@gmail.com) and/or András Kelemen (kelemen.andras12@gmail.com), the chief organizer of the excursion.

Financial support

Thanks to the IAVS, we can support a number of participants with travel grants. Travel grants will be awarded according to the IAVS criteria, based on income level and country of origin. They will preferentially be given to early-career and other financially constrained scientists. The support usually covers only part of the participant's costs, according to the number of successful applications.



Alkali and loess grasslands of the Körös-Maros National Park. Photos: Á. Molnár.

Eligibility and requirements:

The applicants should be IAVS members. To qualify for a travel grant, active participation at the conference (oral presentation or poster) is required. Only the presenter of the contribution will be supported so each applicant should apply with a separate talk or poster and she/he will be the presenter. After the conference, grantees must provide a short report of the event, and some photos that can be used in *Palaeartic Grasslands*. Travel grants can be applied for during online registration, including a short motivation letter. Information about the results of the travel grant applications will be given at the latest by 30th July.

IAVS support for Ukrainian scientists

On top of the travel grants, participation by Ukrainian IAVS members is completely free (no conference fee) - the respective fees are directly paid by IAVS to the local organising committee. Additionally, Ukrainian participants can apply for travel grants to cover the costs of their journey.

Young investigator prize

As in previous years, prizes will be awarded to young scientists for excellent presentation of their research (orally or in poster form). For these purposes, early career scientists (less than 35-year-old) will be asked during registration if they wish to participate in the contest. An applicant can apply for one category (best talk or poster) in one conference. During her/his presentation, the applicant needs to explain clearly her/his contribution to the work.

Organisers

Seed Ecology Research Group, Centre for Ecological Research

Körös-Maros National Park Directorate

Local Organising Committee

Balázs Deák, Orsolya Valkó, András Kelemen, Judit Kapocsi, Rita Engel, Réka Fekete, Laura Godó, Orsolya Kiss, Réka Kiss, Eszter Korom, Katalin Lukács.

Contact

Do you have any questions? Please don't hesitate to contact the conference organizers about any details, we are happy to help!

Our email address is: organizers.egc2023@gmail.com.

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Open landscapes and grassland species of the Kiskunság National Park. Photos: A. Kelemen.