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**EDGG Event**



## 20<sup>th</sup> Eurasian Grassland Conference

### Broadening the horizons of grassland science for the Anthropocene

Oulu, Finland, 7-10<sup>th</sup> July 2025

#### First call

Semi-natural grasslands have developed into valuable bio-diverse habitats, mainly as a consequence of anthropogenic activity, such as extensive agriculture. In that respect, they are inextricably linked to the Anthropocene period. In Finland, as in much or the Palaeartic Region, the amount of semi-natural grassland habitat (meadow) peaked during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the late 1800s, a large-scale transition was already underway, with grasslands being converted into fields for the production of arable crops. Nowadays, only small remnants remain of formerly extensive grasslands, and several grassland types, as well as many of the plant and insect species associated with them, are categorized as highly endangered. Today these habitats are completely dependent on conservation work by Parks and Wildlife Finland, regional Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) and a number of NGOs.

For the historical 20<sup>th</sup> Eurasian Grassland Conference, we wanted to bring participants to a location that will be novel and exotic for the majority of EDGG members. To fulfil that goal, we are happy to offer you the opportunity to attend the first EGC conference in the Nordic region, even taking you to within a stone’s throw of the Arctic Circle. The venue for the conference will be Oulu University, where we will be hosted by the [Biodiverse Anthropocenes programme](#), led by Professor Marko Mutanen. The programme of the event will include all of the familiar elements, such as diverse workshops in which you can learn new skills, an ice-breaker event, Grassland Party, charity auction, and a diverse range of inspiring plenary presentations from internationally acknowledged experts.



Map of Finland and neighbouring countries showing the location of Oulu and Hailuoto (Wikipedia).



Map of the Oulanka National Park, the main venue for the post conference excursion (© Parks and Wildlife Finland).

Finally, the traditional post-conference excursion will take us to the northeast of Finland, to the dramatic landscapes of the Oulanka National Park. Being so close to the Arctic Circle in early July means that you will experience the Midnight sun. Above the arctic circle, the sun does not go below the horizon during mid-summer. In Oulu, it does briefly disappear but it never really gets dark and this can be difficult to get used to and may make it difficult for you to get to sleep at night.

### Registration

We aim to open registration for the conference in early April. Please refer to the [conference web-site](#) for all the latest information about the conference. As per previous years, there will be favourable rates for students and IAVS members. There will also be an early-bird option for those who wish to take advantage of favourable rates for participation in the conference. For any queries regarding the conference, please contact [stephen.venn@biol.uni.lodz.pl](mailto:stephen.venn@biol.uni.lodz.pl).

### Venue

The city of Oulu (Swedish: Uleåborg) is located at the mouth of the Oulu River to the Bay of Bothnia of the Baltic Sea. It has a population of 216,000 people (2021). It was established by the Swedish King Karl IX in 1605. The city is located at 65°01'N, 25°28'E. The city centre was destroyed in a fire in 1822, after which the architect Johan Carl Ludvig Engel prepared a new city plan in the Empire style, of which several buildings remain, such as the City Hall. The city is cycle friendly and is recognisable from the Market square policeman statue, which was designed by the sculptor, Kaarlo Mikkonen.

The University of Oulu was founded in 1958. Currently the university has a staff of 3,400 and a population of 13,500 students (statistics for 2021). The conference will take place at the Linnanmaa Campus, where the Botanical Gardens and University Library are also located. Oulu is also renowned as a major technology hub, with a modern Technology Park located adjacent to the Airport.



The city is crossed by a river of the same name, Oulujoki. Photo: M. Peregrym.



The town hall is one of the architectural gems of the city of Oulu. The botanical garden will provide the venue for some activities during the conference. Photo: M. Peregrym.



**Accommodation**

Reasonably priced accommodation will be available on the university campus. There is a diverse range of hotel accommodation available within easy reach of the Linnanmaa Campus of the university. Further details and recommendations regarding accommodation will be published soon on the conference web-page.

**Travel**

Oulu has an international airport located approximately 20 km from the Linnanmaa Campus. It is served by a number of international connections and there are also around 10 flights per day from Helsinki-Vantaa airport. Within Finland, trains are a good option, though the distance from Helsinki, for instance, is 600 km, which takes 9.5 h by train. Flixbus has been operating a route between Krakow and Oulu since 2024, which means economical and low-carbon connections with many parts of Europe. We encourage all participants to favour low-carbon options for their travel. For most visitors, there are few viable options to air travel, but it can be an option to divide the journey into sections, and choosing a combination of flights and overland travel. There are a number of websites that help to plan overland travel.

**Themes of the scientific programme**

The main theme of the conference will be “**Broadening the Horizons of Grassland Science for the Anthropocene**”. This includes both biogeographical and ecological horizons. The programme will include presentations from regions and grassland systems that will hopefully be unfamiliar to many

of you. We hope to receive many submissions that challenge our current perceptions and boundaries of grassland science, as well as the later advances in familiar disciplines. The topics of the conference sessions are still under discussion, but they will include sessions on Boreal Grasslands, Grassland Ecology, Citizen Science and Genomics. In addition to the more scientific sessions, we will also include sessions on practical aspects of grassland management and conservation, aimed at stakeholders, conservation organizations and other relevant organizations.

- 6<sup>th</sup> July Workshops, Icebreaker event
- 7<sup>th</sup> July Registration, Opening ceremony, Day 1 of scientific programme
- 8<sup>th</sup> July Day 2 of scientific programme
- 9<sup>th</sup> July Mid-conference excursion to Hailuoto, Grassland Party
- 10<sup>th</sup> July Day 3 of scientific programme, General Assembly of EDGG, Prizes, Closing ceremony
- 11-13<sup>th</sup> July Post-conference excursion to Oulanka National Park

**Plenary presentations**

Three plenary speakers have already been confirmed and we hope to provide details of two more shortly.

**Shanker R. Barsila**, Agriculture and Forestry University, Bharatpur, Nepal

**Sara Cousins**, Stockholm University, Sweden

**Sally-Ann Spence**, Oxford University Museum of Natural History



Oulu is a bicycle-friendly city. This is a parking lot near the University. And the statue is the Market Square Policeman.

### Mid-conference excursion

The mid-conference excursion will take us to the island of Hailuoto, which lies in the Gulf of Bothnia at a distance of 53 km from the city of Oulu. The island has an area of 205 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 922 (in 2024). The whole region of Ostrobothnia is relatively flat and low-lying, and the land is still rising from post-glacial rebound, so that the land is continuously rising above the sea-level and expanding. The island of Hailuoto includes some notable wetlands, including Kirkkosalmi, which is renowned as a valuable birding sites. The island has been permanently settled since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Landmarks of Hailuoto include the Marjaniemi Lighthouse and the Keskiniemi Pooki.

The soil of Hailuoto is mainly sandy and clay-sandstone. The highest point of the island, at 31 m a.s.l., is situated on a 15 km long esker ridge that runs across the island, which also has some parabolic dunes. The most diverse habitats on Hailuoto are coastal meadows and dry heath forests, some of which are dominated by lichens.

Transportation to Hailuoto will be via coach and a ferry connection to the island itself. At the end of the afternoon, transportation will be provided to the venue of the Grassland Party. Further details about that will be provided in the Second Call.



The Marjaniemi Lighthouse and the Keskiniemi Pooki. Photo: M. Peregrym.



Sandy shore on Hailuoto. Photo: M. Peregrym.



### Post-conference excursion

The post-conference excursion will take us to the Oulanka National Park, which is located near the town of Kuusamo, in Kainuu, NE Finland. We will stay at Oulu University's Oulanka Research Station and visit a diverse range of grassland habitats, as well as bog meadows, which are peat-bogs that have been managed for hay production. In the evening, there will be an opportunity to enjoy a relaxing sauna and a refreshing dip in the river. There will also be an opportunity to visit the nearby Visitors Centre of the park. The National Park is located along the Oulanka and Kitka river valleys, and it is well-known for the Bear's Round (Karhunkierros) hiking trail, which will take us to sites along the river. There will also be a possibility of canoeing to some of the sites.

The landscape here is dramatically different from that in the Oulu region, being rugged and rocky, with dramatic hills and canyons. The river valleys are partly sandy, and there are a variety of wet and dry riparian flood meadows along the meandering rivers. The river valleys are typically bounded by rocky outcrops, which can rise to as much as 380 m a.s.l. There are a number of dramatic canyons and rapids along the River Oulanka in particular. In addition to wet and dry riparian flood meadows, there are also bog meadows and mineral meadows. The area is also renowned for its orchids, including the Venus's slipper (*Calypso bulbosa*) and the Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus*). The meadows of this region are generally dominated by globeflower (*Trollius europaeus*). Other typical plant species include *Dianthus superbis*, *Silene tatarica*, *Erigeron acris* subsp. *decoloratus*, and *Elymus alaskanus*, as well as various species of moonwort (Ophioglossaceae).

#### Local organizers:

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The Kiutaköngäs canyon and rapids are located close to the Oulanka Research station and National Park Visitor's Centre. Photo: S. Venn



A meandering stretch of the Oulanka river, downstream from the research station with overgrown meadow habitat. Photo: S. Venn.



A managed riparian flood meadow at Isoniemi, upstream along the Oulanka river from the research station, with globeflowers (*Trollius europaeus*) just coming into bloom, and a hay barn in the background. Photo: S. Venn.