Palaearctic Grasslands
ISSN 2627-9827
DOI 10.21570/EDGG.PG.58-59

_Palaearctic Grasslands_, formerly published under the names _Bulletin of the European Dry Grassland Group_ (Issues 1–26) and _Bulletin of the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group_ (Issues 27–36), is the journal of the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG). It appears in four issues per year. _Palaearctic Grasslands_ publishes news and announcements of EDGG, its projects, related organisations and its members. It also serves as an outlet for scientific articles and photo contributions.

_Palaearctic Grasslands_ is freely available at [https://edgg.org/publications/pg-journal](https://edgg.org/publications/pg-journal) and new issues are announced to all EDGG members. All content (text, photos, figures) is open access and available under the Creative Commons license CC-BY-SA 4.0 that allow re-use provided proper attribution is made to the originators ("BY") and the new item is licensed in the same way ("SA" = "share alike").

Submissions following the Author Guidelines are welcome by the deadlines of the four issues: 31 January, 30 April, 31 July and 31 October.

_Scientific articles_ (Research Articles, Reviews, Forum Articles, Scientific Reports) should be submitted to the Receiving Editor Jürgen Dengler (dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com) and will then undergo peer review, so publication in a certain issue cannot be guaranteed.

_All other text contributions_ (News, Announcements, Short Contributions, Book Reviews, Glimpses of a Grassland, Forthcoming Events) should be submitted to Idoia Biurrun (idoia.biurrun@ehu.es).

_Photo contributions_ (photos for general illustrative purposes with captions; Photo Stories) and contributions to the section "Recent Publications of our Members" should be submitted to Rocco Labadessa (rocco.labadessa@gmail.com).

_Contributions to Photo Competitions_ should be submitted to Edy Fantinato (edy.fantinato@unive.it).

_Palaearctic Grasslands_ is published by EDGG c/o Prof. Dr. Jürgen Dengler, Plant Ecology, BayCEER, University of Bayreuth, Universitätsstr. 30, 85447 Bayreuth, Germany.

_Palaearctic Grasslands_ on Google Scholar, vegsciblog.org

**Editorial Board**

CHIEF EDITOR: Rocco Labadessa

DEPUTY CHIEF EDITORS: Idoia Biurrun, Jürgen Dengler, Alireza Naqinezhad

SCIENTIFIC EDITORS: Alla Aleksanyan, Didem Ambarlı, Idoia Biurrun, Iwona Dembićz, Jürgen Dengler, Edy Fantinato, Riccardo Guarino, Frank Yonghong Li, Anna Kuzemko, Rocco Labadessa, James Moran, Alireza Naqinezhad, Jalil Noroozi, Arkadiusz Nowak, Salza Palpurina, Ricarda Pättsch, Nina Polchaninova, Solvita Rūsiņa, Laura Sutcliffe, Atushi Ushimaru, Orsolya Valkó, Stephen Venn, Denys Vynokurov

LINGUISTIC EDITORS: Dolores Byrne, Sean Cooch, Magdalena Firganek-Fulcher, Paul Goriup, Richard Jefferson, Ashley Lyons, Lorna Marcham, Jim Martin, James Moran, Hallie Seiler, Stuart Smith, Laura Sutcliffe, Stephen Venn

PHOTO EDITOR: Rocco Labadessa

PHOTO JURY: Edy Fantinato (Chair), Magdalena Firganek-Fulcher, Anna Kuzemko, Rocco Labadessa, Jim Martin, Jalil Noroozi

LAYOUT AND TYPESETTING: Rocco Labadessa

On front cover page: _Argiope lobate_ in a Mediterranean grassland. Photo: J. Dengler.
Dear readers,

The year 2023 is coming to an end, not without a considerable and variegated amount of concerns for the future. However, this year brought a breath of good news in the EDGG community, starting from an enthusiastic new Executive Committee and our extended team of resourceful active members, to whom we are truly grateful. Thanks to them, we are starting to boost our online activity through social media and we are launching calls for data contributions within the GrassPlot database. At the end of the year, we are also announcing new calls for financial donations, which will help supporting ongoing EDGG projects and events, also towards our for Ukrainian Scientists. Here, we are also highlighting the wide range of publication venues for grassland researchers, with four new EDGG-edited Special Features in international journals.

Among the most important events of this year, we were delighted with the very successful Field Workshop in South Tyrol, and the wonderfully organised Eurasian Grassland Conference in Szarvas, with a detailed report (and many photos!), in this issue on pp. 14-25. In this issue, you can also read about the upcoming events, with the winter edition of Talk Grasslands, next Field Workshop in the South-Western Alps and the 19th Eurasian Grassland Conference in Italy.

Here, we also congratulate the winners of the photo competition and we present a Photo Story, back to a summer journey in the Baltic landscapes. We really hope that you will spend peaceful moments while reading this year-end double issue, and we hope to meet you in a new year full of grasslands and discoveries.

With best wishes,

Rocco Labadessa
EDGG Social Media update

Many of you are already following the EDGG on a variety of social media (SOME). After the elections for the Executive Committee earlier this year, our SOME team has now expanded to two; Ellen De Vrieze and Stephen Venn, which has also enabled us to boost our online activity. In addition to our established accounts on Facebook, Twitter/X and YouTube, there was also an iNaturalist project entitled ‘Eurasian Grassland Conference 2023 Hungary’. Here you can currently find 794 records from the EGC conference and excursions. You can still add records of relevant observations, or add identifications of taxa you are sufficiently familiar with that maybe awaiting identification or confirmation.

We recently added Instagram to our SOME palette as well. On our Instagram page you can find reels, photos and stories (highlights >>> Post-EC2023 & #EDDG_EGC2023) related to the recent Eurasian Grassland Conference in Szarvas, Hungary. We would like to invite everyone to contribute and share your content, whether it pertains to grassland research, diverse grassland taxa, fieldwork adventures, or any other grassland-related passions! So, if you have nice material to share, please don’t forget to tag us using @grasslandeddg. This way, we can share our experiences with each other. Furthermore, we extend a special request to those planning to attend field workshops, or other events: “feel free to tag us on Instagram!”. This will enable those who cannot physically attend to partake in and enjoy these events and workshops from a distance.

Cheers!

Ellen De Vrieze, Ghent, Belgium
ellen.devrieze@ugent.be

Stephen Venn, Łódz, Poland
stephen.venn@biol.uni.lodz.pl
GrassPlot calls for new data

The EDGG vegetation-plot database GrassPlot (Dengler et al. 2018, 2020; Biurrun et al. 2019, 2021; Dembicz et al. 2021a, 2021b) calls for new data contributions. GrassPlot seeks carefully sampled plots of any types of grasslands and other open habitats (heathlands, mires, dunes, tall-forb communities, ...) in the whole Palaearctic biogeographic realm. Both nested-plot series (any grain size) and single-grain plots of one of our eight standard grain sizes (0.0001, 0.001, 0.01, 0.1, 1, 10, 100 and 1000 m²) are welcome. Treatment of bryophytes and lichens as well as measured environmental variables are particularly welcome, but not mandatory. For further specification of our requirements, see our website. Data contributors become members of the GrassPlot Consortium, with the option to opt-in as co-authors to emerging papers using their data as well as to propose own paper projects.

Contributing data during the next few months (until mid-February 2024) is particularly attractive for two reasons:

- For data deliveries during this period, we can guarantee faster inclusion than usually because Iwona Dembicz employed in her GrassPlot Tandem project (Modelling scale-dependent alpha diversity across Palaearctic grasslands) Nadiia Skobel to help with data preparation, while usually this is done exclusively voluntarily by the GrassPlot Coordinating Board. Moreover, as a unique exception until mid-February, we can offer you that you do not have to prepare your data in the GrassPlot templates, but Nadiia will do this for you if you deliver your data in any well-structured and well-documented digital format.

- There are at least four more new paper projects apart from Iwona’s that are starting in the next months where you could become co-author if you contribute suitable data ASAP.

We are available for any question and look forward to your data contribution to be sent to the database manager Idoia Biurrun.

References


Jürgen Dengler, Wädenswil, Switzerland
dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com

Idoia Biurrun, Bilbao, Spain
idoia.biurrun@ehu.es

Iwona Dembicz, Warsaw, Poland
i.dembicz@gmail.com

Hotspots and coldspots of vascular plant diversity in open habitats of the Palaearctic at three grain sizes, based on data from GrassPlot (from Biurrun et al. 2021).
EDGG is deeply concerned about the ongoing crisis in Ukraine and the impact it has on our colleagues in the scientific community. The conflict has led to the cancellation of projects, cut salaries, and the inability to conduct fieldwork in many parts of the country. Additionally, many scientists have had to flee their homes and are struggling to continue their work in other countries. As a community, we want to support our Ukrainian colleagues and help them continue their scientific careers. Therefore, we are once again opening the EDGG Fund for Ukrainian Scientists and calling for donations, big or small, to support this cause. All donations should be paid to the account of our mother organization IAVS, from where the payments will be made to the recipients in accordance with the aims of the fund and the decision of the Funding Committee.

We urge all of our members and supporters to consider donating to this important cause. Let us come together as a community and show our support for our Ukrainian colleagues during this difficult time.

Aim and organisation of the fund:

- The EDGG Fund for Ukrainian Scientists is governed by the Funding Committee comprising Ellen De Vrieze, Alireza Naqinezhad, Denys Vynokurov, Idoia Biurrun, Jürgen Dengler, Rocco Labadessa and Stephen Venn, and takes all decisions on the Fund on the basis of a simple majority.
- Project ideas could either be proposed by EDGG or by the applicant. Projects should be outlined in a way that they can be conducted under prevalent conditions regarding the war.
- Currently, EDGG offers work opportunities in two such projects, namely in its regional vegetation-plot databases, for digitising and georeferencing plot data from the literature. Ukrainian members can propose their own project ideas, e.g. concerning the analysis of data or the writing of a manuscript.
- If EDGG members have project ideas which they wish to propose, they should contact the Funding Committee.
- Any Ukrainian member can apply to the Funding Committee to receive a grant.
- Decisions on the assignment of grants to applicants will be made by the Funding Committee whenever sufficient money and applications have accumulated.
- The decisions will normally comprise awards made in 500 EUR tranches, but smaller awards are possible if there are many applicants or only limited funds. If there is enough money available, the Funding Committee can assign another tranche to the same applicant for the continuation of the same project or for another project.
- For each project, the Funding Committee appoints at least one mentor from outside Ukraine whose task is to remain in contact with the grantee and support her/him in the project.
- For each tranche assigned to a grantee, a short, written document will be created that formulates the scientific task to be addressed and its specifications (e.g., in the case of plot databases: the number of plots to be digitised for the amount of money agreed). The grant is paid prior to the start of the project. After the completion of the project, the grantee and mentor together compile and send a short (1 paragraph) report on the achievements of the project.
- From time to time, the Funding Committee will provide summarizing reports on all running projects on the EDGG website and in *Palaearctic Grasslands*.

How to make donations:
You can make donations, large or small, to our fund either by credit card via our online form or by money transfer to IAVS account. It is crucial that you indicate the purpose of your payment precisely, as stated below, because otherwise the money might not reach EDGG’s Fund.

(A) With credit card via the online platform
You can make your payment here.
Please indicate whether you wish your name as donor to be publicized or not.
Fees: 0.20 USD per transaction

(B) With bank transfer to IAVS account
BIC/Swift code: SNS BNL 2A
IBAN: NL40 SNSB 0921 5290 23
Recipient: Internationale Vereniging voor Vegetatiekunde
Subject line: EDGG Donation Fund for Ukraine
Fees: 0.07 EUR per transaction.

If you consent to your name being listed as a donor, please send an e-mail with your name, date and amount of the donation to anaqinezhad@gmail.com and dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF UKRAINIAN SCIENTISTS IN NEED!

Alireza Naqinezhad, Mazandaran, Iran
anaqinezhad@gmail.com
Call for financial donations to EDGG

EDGG is a community of scientists dedicated to the study and conservation of palearctic grasslands. We rely on the support of our members and supporters to continue our work, which includes research, education, and outreach. We are grateful for any donations, big or small, that can help us achieve our mission.

Your donation will go towards supporting our ongoing projects, such as monitoring biodiversity, studying ecosystem processes, and developing conservation strategies. It will also help us organize events and conferences, publish scientific papers, and engage with the public.

How to make donations:

(A) With credit card via the online platform

You can make your payment here. Please indicate whether you wish your name as donor to be publicized or not.
Fees: 0.20 USD per transaction

(B) With bank transfer to IAVS account

BIC/Swift code: SNS BNL 2A
IBAN: NL40 SNSB 0921 5290 23
Recipient: Internationale Vereniging voor Vegetatiekunde
Subject line: EDGG General Donation Fund
Fees: 0.07 EUR per transaction.

If you consent to your name being listed as a donor, please send an e-mail with your name, date and amount of the donation to anaqinezhad@gmail.com and dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT TO EDGG!

Alireza Naqinezhad, Mazandaran, Iran
anaqinezhad@gmail.com

Phelipanche arenaria in the "Malopolski Przelom Wisly" Natura 2000 site, SE Poland. Photo: P. Chmielewski.
Since recently, ResearchGate has introduced a new section for journals in addition to the presentation of authors. Thus, you can find there the articles published in *Palaearctic Grasslands*, with citation/viewing performance and link to their authors. There are also statistics which authors published the most-cited contributions (among those available in ResearchGate) visible in the right sidebar. Some of our articles evidently are cited quite well.

Since ResearchGate only shows articles uploaded by their authors, we would like to invite all our authors to upload their contributions in *Palaearctic Grasslands*, labelled with the journal name, volume and page number to make our journal page in ResearchGate even more comprehensive and informative.

Additionally, there is also a journal page for PG’s predecessor *Bulletin of the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group*.

*Jürgen Dengler*, Wädenswil, Switzerland
juergen.dengler@gmail.com

Journal webpage of *Palaearctic Grasslands* in ResearchGate (accessed 28 October 2023).

Autumn fruits of *Paeonia mascula* in Central Puglia, Southern Italy. Photo: R. Labadessa.
Call for photos for
*Palaearctic Grasslands*

As usual, we are looking forward to your contributions to the Photo Story section, as well as your photographs for general illustrative purposes.

Submissions for the Photo Story section are always welcome. Photo Story is an open space where members can submit their own photo collection on a certain grassland-related topic of their choice. High-quality photos should be provided together with their captions (at least species names or landscape description), a brief text and possibly other graphical elements (like a map or a drawing). The selection of photos should fit within 4-15 (-20) pages and the contributors should propose a preliminary layout (in PDF or MS Word format), which will be finally typeset by Editors. As an example, you can look at the Photo Stories published in previous issues.

We would also like to encourage you to contribute to the Global Vegetation Project with your vegetation photographs. Please take a look at the project website for an overview of the global map and the data entry form.

If you want to contribute to Photo Stories, or if you simply want to help us with enriching this aspect of the journal, please submit your photos together with the required information to Rocco (rocco.labadessa@gmail.com).

Deadline for photo submissions is 31 January 2024.

---

*Carлина акаульс, Switzerland. Photo: J. Dengler.*

**Call for new members of the Photo Competition Jury**

We are looking for new members for the jury of the *Palaearctic Grasslands* Photo Competition! Do you like naturalistic photography? Do you have aesthetic or technical skills in judging photos? Would you like to become a member of the international jury that selects the best photos for the journal? Send your application to Edy (edy.fantinato@unive.it) and Rocco (rocco.labadessa@gmail.com) by 31 January 2024.

---

**Call for Photo Competition “Threatened Grasslands”**

The theme of the Photo Competition is "Threatened Grasslands". Palaearctic grasslands are known for their high biodiversity. However, in the last century, Palaearctic grasslands have suffered a dramatic loss of area and biodiversity. The loss of grasslands through conversion to cropland, quarries or settlements and infrastructure, as well as the double threat of intensification and abandonment, seriously threaten this wealth of conservation value. The challenge we have set ourselves with this photo competition is to depict the state of threat to Palaearctic grasslands in a single photo. Would you take up this challenge?

You are invited to send up to three high-quality photographs within the competition theme (full size JPEG or TIFF images, at least 300 dpi) together with captions giving a short title or description and information on the subject (species name, date, place name). The Photo Jury (see imprint) will select the best photographs. The three best shots will be awarded with full space in the next issue, but we reserve the right to use other submitted materials for illustrative purposes in other parts of the issue. If you want to take part in the competition, please submit your photos together with required information to Edy (edy.fantinato@unive.it) by 31 January 2024.

---

*Edy Fantinato*, Venice, Italy
edy.fantinato@unive.it

---

*Rocco Labadessa*, Bari, Italy
rocco.labadessa@gmail.com
Our Talk Grasslands series of online presentations will continue this winter in its familiar format.

- **Biodiversity-functioning relationships in grasslands and elsewhere**
  Santiago Soliveres Codina
  Tuesday 16th January 2024, 14:00 cet

- **Mediterranean coastal dunes: threats and trends**
  Alicia Acosta
  Tuesday 6th February 2024, 14:00 cet

- **A long-term perspective on European vegetation and implications for nature management,**
  Jens-Christian Svenning
  Tuesday 12th March 2024, 14:00 cet

As previously, we will present a diverse range of topics related to grasslands, and from diverse regions. The talks will be broadcast via Zoom (Meeting ID: 635 8214 7567 Passcode: 828547). Each talk will have a duration of approximately 45 mins followed by discussion. You will be able to find updated information about the talks from EDGG’s Talks web page, where you will also be able to find the links for the talks, and to access video recordings of previous talks, which are accessible via our YouTube channel. The January and February Talks are confirmed and details of the March Talk will be announced on the web-page as soon as it has been confirmed.

Please contact the organiser if you have any questions: stephen.venn@biol.uni.lodz.pl

---

**EDGG Event**

**Talk Grasslands Winter 2023-2024**

**Santiago Soliveres Codina** is leader of the CODINA LAB COMmunity assembly, biological DIversity and multifun-cioNAlity in a global change context at the University of Alicante. He has a range of interests in community ecology from diversity-ecosystem functioning relationships, the effect of grazing pressure, climate or land use on plant diversity, shrub encroachment, restoration of roadsides and mine sites, or the ecology of biological soil crusts. However, most of my research so far has focused on plant-plant interactions, their biotic and abiotic drivers, and their consequences for plant community assembly.

**Biodiversity-functioning relationships in grasslands and elsewhere**

Most of the research on the positive relationships between high levels of biodiversity and higher levels of the services an ecosystem provides to humans comes from grasslands, and it has provided strong research support to the need for conserving our biodiversity if we want to preserve our well-being. Despite this research effort, there are still exciting and important questions to be solved, such as how well do these biodiversity-functioning relationships extend to other ecosystem-types, or what is the relative importance of this local biodiversity changes regarding other biotic alterations occurring at larger (landscape) scales. In addition, climatic conditions are changing even more rapidly than expected, and to better understand how can we enhance the resilience of our grasslands to such changes is pivotal to maintain these key ecosystems. To aid advancing our knowledge in these pressing issues and (hopefully) inspire further research in the EDGG community, I will present recent work focusing both on temperate grasslands and in Mediterranean ecosystems.
The 18th EDGG Field Workshop is scheduled to take place in two countries, Italy and France, from June 1 to June 11, 2024. The workshop’s primary aim is to sample various dry grasslands within the three main dry valleys of the South-Western Alps, specifically in Aosta and Susa in Italy, and Durance in France. This Field Workshop is the final one in a series of Field Workshops conducted in inneralpine dry valleys following the trails of Josias Braun-Blanquet (1961), whose seminal work covered the inneralpine xerothermic vegetation of the entire Alpine arch.

The series started in 2018 in Austria during the 11th EDGG Field Workshop, where 15 nested-plot series (“EDGG Biodiversity Plots”, Dengler et al. 2016) and 37 additional 10-m² normal plots were sampled in the Styrian Mur Valley, Virgen Valley, Upper Inn Valley in the Austrian Eastern Alps, and in Griffen in Carinthia (Magnes et al. 2020, 2021). In 2019, the 12th Field Workshop took place in the Swiss inneralpine dry valleys (Rhône, Rhine, and Inn), and resulted in the collection of 30 nested-plot series and 82 10-m² normal plots (Dengler et al. 2020; Bergauer et al. 2022). In 2023, the 17th Field Workshop (Hilpold et al. 2023) was conducted in Northeast Italy and adjacent parts of Switzerland (Adige/Etsch, Vinschgau/Val Venosta, Val Müstair, and Valtellina), leading to the acquisition of 26 nested-plot series and 107
normal plots. With the expected data from the 18th Field Workshop, plus additional data sampled with the same methodology by EDGG members, we will have about 100 nested-plot series and approximately 600 standardized 10-m² plots from the dry grasslands of all the major valleys of the Alps, allowing for comprehensive biodiversity analysis and a modern revision of the complicated classification of the Festuco-Brometea and Sedo-Scleranthetea of the Alps.

The starting and ending point of the Field Workshop will be Torino, Italy. We expect up to 18 participants. Detailed information, including costs, accommodation, itinerary, and the sampling plan, will be provided in the following issue of Palaearctic Grasslands.

References


Local organizers:
Sylvain Abdulhak, s.abdulhak@cbn-alpin.fr
Michele Lonati, Michele.lonati@unito.it
Andrea Mainetti, andrea.mainetti@pnpa.it
Giacomo Marengo, giacomo.marengo@unito.it
Ginevra Nota, ginevranota@unito.it

EDGG organizers:
Jürgen Dengler, dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com
Denys Vynokurov, denys.vynokurov@gmail.com

*Mesobromion* in Susa Valley (Salbertrand). Photo: M. Lonati.
As was announced in Szarvas, the 19th Eurasian Grassland Conference will be held in Bolzano (Bozen) in South Tyrol (Trentino-Alto Adige region). So after the lowlands of the Great Plain of Hungary, we will lift ourselves to the Alpine region. The theme of the event will be ‘Grasslands as biodiversity hotspots’ and it will take place from 26th August until the 1st September 2024. The venue for the conference sessions will be the EURAC research headquarters. The conference excursions will bring us to the nearby inner-alpine dry grasslands and to Alpine meadows and pastures of the Dolomites. Please make note of the dates and theme already now so that you can begin making preparations for your participation.

Andreas Hilpold, Bolzano, Italy
andreas.hilpold@eurac.edu

Stephen Venn, Łodz, Poland
stephen.venn@biol.uni.lodz.pl
Introduction

The 18th Eurasian Grassland Conference (EGC) was organised in Hungary this year by the ‘Lendület’ Seed Ecology Research Group (Centre for Ecological Research) and the Körös-Maros National Park Directorate. The topic of the conference was ‘Conservation and management of grasslands in transforming landscapes’. The Conference took place from 25 to 28 September 2023, and was followed by a three-day long post conference excursion in the Kiskunság National Park. The Venue was the ‘Körösvölgyi Állatpark’, which is the Visitor Centre of the Körös-Maros National Park Directorate that is located in the town of Szarvas in the floodplain of the Körös River. The conference had altogether 98 participants from 20 countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan).

Grazing Hungarian Grey cattle in alkali grasslands. Photo: S. Borza.
Workshop on grassland-related spiders

On the first day of the conference Róbert Gallé, Nikolett Gallé-Szpisiak (Centre for Ecological Research) and Tomáš Hamřík (Mendel University in Brno) experts in animal ecology, arachnology and grassland conservation led a workshop entitled ‘Introduction to grassland-related spiders’. The participants of the workshop got an exciting interactive overview on the most important grassland related spider taxa, their main functional groups, and also an introduction to field sampling methodology. The program included several lectures about the theoretical background, and also an outdoor part where the participants had the opportunity to try basic sampling methods.
Talks and poster sessions
The conference included 38 oral and 32 poster presentations focusing on grassland plant and animal ecology, systematics, the effect of climate change on grassland habitats, invasive species and grassland management and restoration. The presented studies provided a deep insight into the flora, fauna, diversity, management, and restoration of Palaearctic grasslands in changing modern landscapes. The talks were organized in a total of six sessions. The hard copies of the posters were displayed in the corridors of the visitor centre during the whole conference, and the electronic version of the posters were briefly presented in the lecture hall during the two thematic poster sessions.

Plenary talks
During the conference there were three plenary and one keynote talks revealing different aspects of grassland management, restoration and conservation. Corrado Marcenò, from the University of Perugia presented a talk entitled "Data collected by amateur botanists: coupling an old tradition and citizen science offers new opportunities for habitat monitoring and conservation". Denys Vynokurov, from M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and the University of the Basque Country, provided new insights on the broad-scale classification of European dry grasslands and scrub vegetation. Szabolcs Lengyel, from Centre for Ecological Research revealed the aspects of grassland restoration and management with a special focus on animal taxa. András Kelemen (Department of Ecology, University of Szeged and Centre for Ecological Research) gave a keynote lecture on the current situation and challenges in grassland conservation and restoration in the Kiskunság region of Hungary.
Mid-conference excursion

In the mid-conference excursion, the participants could get an overview of the unique 'puszta' experience. Before the departure of buses, Ábel Molnár (Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences) and Péter Bánfi (Körös-Maros National Park Directorate) delivered introductory talks about the vegetation and flora of the region, as well as about the mission and goals of the National Park. The mid-conference excursion was guided by Ábel Molnár, Péter Bánfi and Judit Kapocsi (Körös-Maros National Park Directorate) who showed us a great variety of protected grassland areas in the Körös-Maros National Park. The trip started in the floodplain of the River Maros, where the participants visited an ancient burial mound (so called Bekai-kurgan) covered by species-rich forest steppe vegetation on the north-, and steppe-like vegetation on the southern slope. These grasslands and the related species (such as Phlomis tuberosa, Thalictrum minus and Agropyron cristatum) have become extremely rare in the landscape due to intensive agricultural activities. Then the excursion continued in the 'Csanád puszták' protected area. Before exploring the endless grasslands, we were hosted by the Körös-Maros National Park Directorate in the Dália-major where they waited for the group with coffee, beverages and traditional sweets. After this nice refreshment, we explored the several types of pristine Pannonian alkali habitats and the vertical vegetation zonation gradient typical of alkali open landscapes, which are preserved at the site in an excellent condition. The gradient involved loess grasslands on the highest and alkali grasslands and marshes on lower elevations. Many grassland specialist plants typical to open alkali mud surfaces (Myosurus minimus), alkali grasslands (Limonium gmelinii subsp. hungaricum) and loess grasslands (Sternbergia colchiciflora) were flowering or in fruit. The last stop of the excursion was at the White Lake ('Fehér-tó') in Kardoskút, which is one of the most beautiful white-water alkaline lakes of the Great Plain. We first enjoyed the spectacular views of the lake from the observation tower and also had a nice refreshment thanks to the National Park. This walk was a unique experience: in the basin of the lake, it was possible to walk through the stands of Suaeda pannonica, Puccinellia distans subsp. limosa and Tripolium pannonicum.
Réka Kiss was responsible for keeping the group together – with a traditional herder instrument called ‘kolomp’. Photo: T. Hamřík.

*Lycosa singoriensis* is the largest spider species in Hungary. Photo: T. Hamřík.

Presentation during the mid-conference excursion by Ábel Molnár. Photo: D. Vynokurov.

Little rest during the excursion. Photo: I. Rabyk.

Group photo during the mid-conference excursion. Photo: A. Kelemen.
Social events
In the first day of the conference participants could take part in an exciting guided tour in the zoological garden at the Visitor Centre of the National Park. The guide of the tour was Krisztina Körömi, the director of the Visitor Centre, who told several exciting and less known facts and stories about the animals that once inhabited this part of the Carpathian Basin. Participants could have a close encounter with the inhabitants of the zoo. After that, during the welcome reception people had the possibility to meet each other while tasting local food and drinks.

After the mid-conference excursion, the participants could take part in a Hungarian folklore program and also learnt some traditional Hungarian dances. The night continued with a dinner consisting traditional Hungarian ‘outdoor’ meals (beef goulash stew and mushroom stew) prepared on open fire, then with the lead of Martin Magnes, the Auction began. In the Auction grassland-related items (such as cheese, wine, paintings, photographs, herbs, and decorations made of wildflowers) kindly provided by the participants from many countries were auctioned. Altogether 765 euros were collected that will be used for supporting grassland science with the coordination of the EDGG EC.
General Assembly and Closing Ceremony

At the end of the last conference day, the EDGG General Assembly was held. During the Assembly, chairs of the EDGG Executive Committee informed the participants about past, current and future activities, including conferences, field workshops, special features and databases. One of the most important news was the announcement about the 19th Eurasian Grassland Conference that will be held in Bolzano in 2024, organised by Andreas Hilpold (Eurac Research, Institute for Alpine Environment).

The announcement of the winners of the Young Investigator Prizes (YIP, in the categories of talks and posters for researchers under the age of 35 years) was the final highlight of the Closing Ceremony. The winners of the YIP at the 18th EGC were:

Oral presentations:
1. Ábel Péter Molnár: The Flora Continuity Hypothesis: massive potential survival of the flora since before the Last Glacial Maximum in the Carpatho-Pannonian region.
2. Szymon Czyżewski: Niche of plant species native to the temperate forest biome in Europe matches a heterogeneous natural vegetation shaped by megaherbivores.
3. Gantuya Batgelder: Traditional ecological and herding knowledge in the forest steppe region in Mongolia.

Poster presentations:
2. Gergő Rák: Effects of grazing pressure and phytomass productivity on the density of the hungarian meadow viper (Vipera ursinii rakosiensis) in Kiskunság.

The ceremony ended with the organizing team on the stage: Orsolya Valkó, Balázs Deák, András Kelemen (chairs of the organising committee), Rita Engel, Réka Fekete, Laura Godó, Orsolya Kiss, Réka Kiss, Eszter Korom, Abdubakir Kusbakhov, Katalin Lukács, József Nagy, Ágnes Tóth ('Lendület’ Seed Ecology Research Group, Institute of Ecology and Botany, Centre for Ecological Research), Péter Bárfi, Judit Kapocsi, Krisztina Körömi, Judit Lestyan-Goda (Körös-Maros National Park Directorate).

Winners of the Young Investigator Prizes. From left to right: Dariia Borovyk, Gergő Rák, Svenja Wanke, Gantuya Batgelder, Szymon Czyżewski, Ábel Péter Molnár, and Katalin Lukács. Photo: D. Vynokurov.
Post-conference excursion

The purpose of the post-conference excursion was to provide participants with a broad overview of the habitats and conservation efforts in a characteristic part of the Great Hungarian Plain, the Danube-Tisza Interfluve. The excursion was led by András Kelemen, who designed the program to show the large-scale vegetation zonation of the landscape. In the middle of the region lies the Danube-Tisza Interfluve sand ridge, primarily comprising sandy grasslands and forest steppes. Moving towards the two big rivers (Danube and Tisza), the sand ridge is followed by the Turjánvidék, characterized by meadow habitats. The groundwater flowing from the direction of the sand ridge emerges to the surface (or comes close to the surface) in this area. Following this, as we move towards the rivers, we can see extensive saline habitats.

Our first stop was a solonetz saline grassland in the Tisza Valley. Orsolya Kiss and András Kelemen introduced the area, and explained that some parts of the visited grassland are secondary habitats, formerly used as fishponds until the early 2000s. But now in these areas, various types of saline grasslands have regenerated well. The dikes of the fishponds were removed in 2019 as part of the Roller Life project. The traces of the dikes are still visible four years after the soil works, but open saline communities colonized the linear landscape scars and became very similar to natural ones. Among the characteristic endemic species of open saline grasslands, *Suaeda pannonica* (Pannonian endemism) and *Plantago schwarzenbergiana* (Dacic-Pannonian endemism) occur here. After exploring the grasslands, we went up to the observation tower near the Roller Visitor Centre, from where we could overlook Lake Fehér which is a fishpond system and a famous birdwatching place.

The next program was special not only because we had to walk a considerable distance to reach our destination, but also because we visited a secondary habitat that most participants had not encountered before. It was a large (more than 30 hectares) abandoned sand quarry. The northern part of the area was excavated deeper than the southern part. Consequently, in the northern section they reached the more compact soil layer with higher salinity under the sand, which led to the formation of saline habitats after the abandonment. The recovered habitat has communities very similar to the natural alkali pans. The country’s largest population of *Cyperus pannonicus* can be found here. In the shallower part, meadow habitats had regenerated, with many orchid species, which were not in their most spectacular state in the autumn. However, we observed numerous specimens of *Blackstonia acuminata*, which are highly endangered plant species in this drying landscape and aban-
Doned sand quarries can serve as anthropogenic refuges for them.

After the “mining” and “walking”, to the delight of everyone, we stopped for some ice cream and coffee. As the last program of the day, we visited a typical stand of sandy forest steppe near Tázlár, where we saw Dianthus diutinus, considered an endemic species in the Danube-Tisza Interfluve sand ridge. After this long day, our chefs prepared a delicious BBQ dinner for us.

On the second day, we visited the sand dunes near Fülöpháza. Here, György Kröel-Dulay (Centre for Ecological Research) introduced us his climate manipulation experiment. He gave a comprehensive and very interesting introduction to the drivers of vegetation dynamics of the sandy grasslands. We got to know the functional traits of species, which have adapted to the abiotic environmental conditions, and which also determine the interactions between species in this harsh environment. Following this, the ExDrain experimental site was introduced, one interesting aspect of which was that the extreme drought treatment applied at the beginning of the experiment actually occurred in the surrounding grasslands as well, due to the exceptionally dry weather in the past year. After that, we took a walk in this sandy area covered by juniper-poplar forest-steppe, led by Ferenc Pálszabó, a ranger from the Kiskunság National Park Directorate. He provided detailed information about the wildlife of the area, its history, management, conservation issues, and applied conservation practices. The unique landscape was further enhanced by the colourful, spherical-shaped thumbleweeds of the Corispermum nitidum, which is a protected plant in Hungary. The mass appearance of
this species in undisturbed sand grasslands is a rare phenomenon, occurring especially after dry years or following wildfires.

Our next point was an area invaded by the prickly pear cactus (Opuntia humifusa). Here, we discussed the causes and consequences of cactus invasions. Many were surprised to
hear about the extensive populations of naturalized cacti in the Great Hungarian Plain, which is why it was beneficial for them to see one with their own eyes.

On Saturday afternoon, we headed to the area near Kunpeszér, where we had the opportunity to witness vast mosaic grasslands consisting of wet meadows, meadow steppes, and sandy steppe meadows. Additionally, we gained insights into the dynamics of broad-leaved deciduous forest-steppes. Csaba Vadász, a ranger from the Kiskunság National Park Directorate, presented the results of their research on the regeneration of forest-steppes, highlighting the roles of abiotic processes, consumers, pathogens, and structural elements of vegetation in the dynamics of the forest-steppes.

During the day, we walked a lot and, on several occasions, we had to hurry to ensure there was time for the evening program, which was a wine tasting. During this, we were given a glimpse of the best wines from the Danube-Tisza Interfluve, guided by our expert, Roland Tengőlics. The wine tasting set the tone for the rest of the evening to be filled with a great atmosphere.

On the last day, we explored the loess dune used as a sacred place (cemetery) and closed sandy grasslands around our accommodation, where we saw the blooming of the rare and endangered *Colchicum arenarium*.

Our last destination was the alkali habitats of Mikla-puszta, which is the most beautiful alkali landscape along the Danube Valley, with a complete set of alkali habitat types represented in this area. Here, the excursion's organizer spoke about their research conducted in the area, which revealed the dual effect of cattle grazing on this alkali habitat complex. Grazing has a positive effect on the vegetation of the lowest and highest parts of this mosaic landscape. In the lowest parts, it can control the spread of reeds, while in the higher elevations, in the loess plateaus, it can increase vege-
tation diversity and the number of orchids by reducing living biomass and litter. However, on the slopes of the plateaus, it has an adverse effect because of the accelerated erosion. As a surprise, the staff from the Dunatáj Foundation (responsible for managing the area) welcomed us with a small snack, and so, as a farewell gesture, we watched the grazing flock of sheep while enjoying donkey sausage.

Acknowledgments

We are especially indebted to the Körös-Maros National Park Directorate who kindly provided the venue, organized the mid-conference excursion, and supported the conference in all possible ways. We thank the colleagues of the Centre for Ecological Research for the essential help in managing many administration issues and transportation before, during and after the conference. We are grateful for the Kiskunság National Park Directorate for supporting the professional program of the post-conference excursion. Big thanks to György Kröel-Dulay (Centre for Ecological Research), Csaba Vadász, Ferenc Pálszabó (Kiskunság National Park Directorate) and Rozália Kustár (Dunatáj Foundation) for being our professional guides during the post-conference excursion. We really enjoyed and appreciated the services of the BBQ Heroes Restaurant and the Kiskunság Betyár Kúria. We are also grateful to the IAVS for their financial support provided for Ukrainian scientists and young scientists from many countries. Many thanks for the BirdLife Hungary for sponsoring the event. We were delighted that, through the coordinated efforts of the conference’s main organizers, additional organizers, and numerous colleagues and service providers, everything ran smoothly. And last but not least we are grateful for the participants of the conference for presenting great science, and sharing memorable moments during scientific discussions, social events and during the exploration of the grasslands in the Hungarian lowlands. We appreciate the participants for being so cheerful and curious!

Balázs Deák, Vácrátót, Hungary, debalazs@gmail.com
Orsolya Valkó, Vácrátót, Hungary, valkoorsi@gmail.com
András Kelemen, Szeged, Hungary, kelemen.andras12@gmail.com
EDGG offers a wide range of publication venues for its members and other grassland researchers. Currently, there are four open Special Features in international journals plus the option to publish scientific articles our own journal, *Palaearctic Grasslands*. Thus, there is a good option available in our portfolio for nearly any study on Palaearctic grasslands. Publishing in our Special Features is particularly attractive compared to publishing regularly in a journal — because on average the rejection rates in Special Features are much lower and the citation rates of published articles significantly higher than for regular journal articles.

Below you find an overview of our current options, from the most demanding to the least demanding. Most of them are even diamond open access, i.e. your article will be freely accessible to everybody, without you having to pay an article processing charge (APC).

**EDGG Special Feature in Biological Conservation**

**Topic:** Conservation of Palaearctic grasslands.

**Guest Editors:** Orsolya Valkó (chair, HU), Leonardo Ancillotto (IT), Jürgen Dengler (CH) & Johannes Kamp (DE)

**Journal Impact Factor:** 5.9

**Cite Score:** 11.6 (Tracker: 9.5)

**Publication type:** Subscription journal with hybrid option, i.e. no fees for authors unless they opt for open access.

**Suited for:** High-end papers that are addressed to a broad international readership.

**Deadlines:** Abstract submission until 15 February 2024 to valkoorsi@gmail.com; submission of invited full articles until 31 October 2024.

**Submissions:** Via journal website and ONLY for invited articles; inquiries: valkoorsi@gmail.com.

**Further details:** See p. 28 of this issue.

**Special Collection in Vegetation Classification and Survey**

**Topic:** Grasslands of Asia.

**Guest Editors:** Jürgen Dengler (chair, CH), Idoia Biurrun (ES), Victor Chepinoga (DE), Alireza Naqinezhad (IR) & Arkadiusz Nowak (PL)

**Journal Impact Factor:** NA

**Cite Score:** 2.0 (Tracker: 2.4)

**Publication type:** Gold open access journal, but with very low article processing charges (APCs) for those who do not have access to APC funding (“virtual diamond open access”): IAVS members get 85–100% reduction in article processing charges (APCs).

**Suited for:** Papers developing or using a vegetation classification/typology for grasslands in Asia.

**Deadlines:** Submissions within the scope of the Special Collection possible until ca. January/February 2024 (even if not invited).

**Submissions:** Via journal website (please indicate Special Collection); inquiries: dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com.

**Further details:** Accepted papers benefit from free linguistic editing by one of our Linguistic Editors. More information at VCS EDGG collection.
EDGG Annual Special Feature in *Tuexenia*

**Topic:** Vegetation ecology and geobotany of grasslands in nemoral Europe and adjacent regions.

**Guest Editors:** Steffen Boch (chair, CH), Jürgen Dengler (CH) and further editors to be appointed.

**Journal Impact Factor:** 1.2; **Cite Score:** 2.4 (Tracker: 2.6)

**Publication type:** Diamond open access, i.e. free for authors and for readers.

**Suited for:** Regional to national studies in vegetation ecology from grasslands in the nemoral biome in Europe (plus adjacent regions).

**Deadlines:** Submissions are possible anytime.

Submissions and inquiries: steffen.boch@wsl.ch.

**Further details:** The printed version of *Tuexenia* is published once a year, but the journal publishes all articles “online first” shortly after acceptance. The EDGG Special Features have a tradition starting in 2005. After two years of interruption due to a lack of submissions, it is already clear that 2024 we will have a thick Special Feature again.

---

EDGG Special Feature in *Hacquetia*

**Topic:** Biodiversity and conservation of Palaearctic grasslands.

**Guest Editors:** Rocco Labadessa (Chair, IT), Orsolya Valkó (HU), Stephen Venn (PL/FI) & Denys Vynokurov (DE/UA)

**Journal Impact Factor:** 0.5; **Cite Score:** 1.6 (Tracker: 1.3)

**Publication type:** Diamond open access, i.e. free for authors and for readers.

**Suited for:** Any regional to national articles within the scope of EDGG, i.e. any study dealing with grasslands s.l. throughout the Palaearctic biogeographic realm (fauna, flora, vegetation, ecology, conservation).

**Deadlines:** Abstract submission until 15 February 2024 to rocco.labadessa@gmail.com; submission of invited full articles until 31 October 2024.

Submissions and inquiries: rocco.labadessa@gmail.com.

**Further details:** See p. 29 of this issue.
Call for contributions to the new
EDGG Special Feature in *Biological Conservation*

This is the first call for the submission of manuscripts for the EDGG-edited special feature (SF) in *Biological Conservation*. The title of the special issue is “Conservation of Palaearctic steppes and semi-natural grasslands: challenges and solutions”. This SF will aim to highlight the most pressing conservation challenges that Palaearctic grasslands face and possibly provide evidence-based solutions for these problems. Presenters at the 18th Eurasian Grassland Conference (EGC) are especially welcome to submit papers related to their presentations, but the SF is open not only to participants of the EGC, but any scientist dealing with grassland conservation in the Palaearctic realm.

*Biological Conservation* is a leading international journal in conservation science, published by Elsevier. It has a Journal Impact Factor of 5.9 (2022) and a Scopus Cite Score of 11.6. The journal is ranked as 5/199 in the subject area ‘Nature and landscape conservation’ in the Scimago ranking. The journal publishes high-quality studies that push forward our knowledge on the conservation of species, habitats, ecosystems or landscapes. *Biological Conservation* is a hybrid journal that publishes both open access and subscription articles.

In the SF, studies on any taxon and any Palaearctic grassland habitat (including steppes, arctic-alpine grasslands, semi-natural grasslands) are welcome as long as they meet the following criteria:

- the article should be of sufficient novelty, and should be broadly generalizable beyond the studied system or the studied species
- the article should have direct implications for the conservation of Palaearctic grasslands (either theoretical, practical, or policy-related implications)
- the article should be based on robust analyses and results (in case of original research articles and meta-analyses)

Various article types (original research articles, review papers, short communications, and perspectives) are welcome to the SF. We are especially looking forward to multi-taxon studies or research that addresses broad-scale conservation issues, including reviews, and perspective papers. For detailed author guidelines please consult the journal homepage.

**Procedure and deadlines**

The details of the call for submissions will be published at the end of 2023.

We plan the following schedule for the special feature. If you plan to contribute, you are invited to send an abstract to the managing guest editor, Orsolya Valkó, by 15 February 2024 (more details about the abstract submission will be communicated later in 2023). Based on these abstracts, the guest editor team will decide which papers to invite and will inform the authors by 31 March 2024. The deadline for full-text submission is planned to 31 October 2024 and manuscripts will undergo the normal peer-review process. We plan to open the submission portal for the invited contributions by 1 May 2024. Accepted papers will appear online shortly after acceptance and will receive final page numbers when the whole SF is completed.

**Guest Editor Team:**

Orsolya Valkó, Hungary, [Google Scholar]
Jürgen Dengler, Switzerland, [Google Scholar]
Leonardo Ancillotto, Italy, [Google Scholar]
Johannes Kamp, Germany, [Google Scholar]

**Contact for questions and submission of manuscripts**

(Managing Guest Editor): Orsolya Valkó, valkoorsi@gmail.com
Call for contributions to the new EDGG Special Feature in Hacquetia

This is the first call for the submission of manuscripts for the new EDGG Special Feature in Hacquetia. We welcome manuscripts about biodiversity and conservation of natural and semi-natural grasslands, including studies on all taxa and from any region in the Palaearctic realm (Europe; West, Central and North Asia; North Africa). Presenters at the 18th Eurasian Grassland Conference (EGC) are especially welcome to submit papers related to their presentations, but we welcome any study dealing with grassland studies in the Palaearctic realm.

Hacquetia is the international journal of the Biological Branch of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences. It appears in two issues per year, both in print and online. Through offering longer articles, open access publication and free reproduction of colour figures, it is a very attractive publication venue. The journal is indexed in the Scopus and Web of Science literature databases, and it now has a Journal Impact Factor of 0.5 and a Scopus Cite Score of 1.6.

This Special Feature will be the 8th EDGG-edited Special Issue in Hacquetia, following seven previous editions since 2014. This Special Feature will appear as the first issue of 2025, with about 150–250 pages reserved for our articles. EDGG is also considering the opportunity of providing linguistic editing support for accepted manuscripts.

Procedure and deadlines: If you plan to contribute, you are invited to send an abstract to the managing guest editor (see below) by 15 February 2024. The guest editor team will select papers to invite by 31 March 2024. The deadline for full-text submission is planned to 31 October 2024 and manuscripts will undergo the normal peer-review process. Accepted papers will appear online approximately in June 2025. Author guidelines can be found at Hacquetia homepage.

Guest Editor Team:
Rocco Labadessa, Italy, Google Scholar
Orsolya Valkó, Hungary, Google Scholar
Stephen Venn, Poland, Google Scholar
Denys Vynokurov, Ukraine, Google Scholar

Contact for questions and abstract submission (Chair of the Guest Editors):
Rocco Labadessa, rocco.labadessa@gmail.com

Poplar tree in typical steppe in the Orenburg Province, Russia. Photo: I. Smelansky.
EDGG chapters in the Encyclopedia of the World’s Biomes are highly cited

In 2020, EDGG edited 13 chapters in the 3500-page volume Encyclopedia of the World’s Biomes (Goldstein et al. 2020; see presentation by Dengler & Török 2020). These chapters are harmonised treatises of the grasslands and shrublands of the whole Palaearctic biogeographic realm, accompanied with a synthesis chapter (Dengler et al. 2020).

Usually, it is hard to assess how well book chapters are perceived and used by the scientific community in relation to journal articles. Luckily, this has changed as one of the two main global bibliometric databases, Scopus, now also covers major books and book series. Using this opportunity yielded the following results (as of 28 October 2023), which underline an outstanding impact of the joint publication efforts within EDGG. The synthesis paper (Dengler et al. 2020) is with hitherto 46 citations the by far most cited among 556 chapters in the Encyclopedia. However, also some of the regional chapters perform quite well, with Grasslands of Western Europe (Boch et al. 2020) on rank 4 (14 citations), Grasslands of Eastern Europe (Török et al. 2020) on rank 5 (13 citations), Grasslands of China (Li et al. 2020) and Grasslands and shrublands of the Mediterranean region (Guerino et al. 2020) jointly on rank 11 (11 citations each) and Grasslands and shrublands of Mongolia (Pfeiffer et al. 2020) on rank 22 (9 citations). Congratulations to all authors!

This underlines the value of the EDGG-edited chapters as major reference works for research on Palaearctic grasslands and shrublands. We thus invite you (EDGG members and beyond) to take advantage of these modern and comprehensive treatises by EDGG-experts. You find the full list of all EDGG-edited chapters in Dengler & Török (2020). In case your university does not provide access to the content of the Encyclopedia, Dengler & Török (2020) list the e-mails of the lead authors of each chapter, whom you can ask for a pdf (or you can do it via Research Gate).

References


Jürgen Dengler, Wädenswil, Switzerland
dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com

Cover of the five-volume series Encyclopedia of the World’s Biomes.
Here are the three winners of the EDGG Photo Competition dedicated to “The colour blue in grasslands”. The Jury for the Photo Competition was composed of Edy Fantinato (Chair), Anna Kuzemko, Rocco Labadessa and Jim Martin.

1st place:

*Echinops ritro* subsp. *ruthenicus* in the dry grasslands of Măcin Mountains, Romania, September 2022.

*Roxana Nicoară*, Bucharest, Romania, roxanaion85@gmail.com

**Reviews from the Jury:**

“The Echinops plants here as if offer a blue anchor among the yellow straws of the dry grasslands.”

“The globe thistle heads standing out on the contrasting dry background wonderfully capture the sense of blue as a special colour in grasslands.”

“The colour complementarity in this photo between the yellow of the dry grasses and the blue of the Echinops emphasises the contrast and results in a wonderful portrait of the Echinops.”
2nd place:

The Staffelstein is a butte hill with a large nutrient poor grassland plateau surrounded by rocky slopes with huge stands of *Linum austriacum*. Bad Staffelstein, Germany, Bavaria. May 2022.

*Andreas Zehm*, Weilheim, Germany, andreas.zehm@on-our-way.de

**Reviews from the Jury:**

“I guess I’m just a bit obsessed with the delicate violet-blue flowers of the flax, which here remind me of a flowing river.”

“I really like the composition of this photo, with the sharply focused blue flowers in the foreground turning to an impressionist style mixture of blue, yellow and green in the background.”

“The diagonal composition of the photo makes the composition particularly dynamic, and the blue flowers become a single flowing body.”
Mass occurrence of Hyacinthella leucophaea in alternate moist/dry, grazed grassland near Buško Jezero, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Robin Nikolei, Darmstadt, Germany, robin.nikolei@web.de

Reviews from the Jury:
“Colour blue fill this photo creating a beautiful pattern.”
“The blue of Hyacinthella makes the composition wonderfully light and soft.”
Inspired by the captivating photo story published in the last year December issue of Palaeartic Grasslands (Dengler & Dembicz, 2022), we have decided to continue talking about islands of the Baltic Sea. In today's narrative, our focus turns to Hailuoto, the expansive gem of the Bothnian Bay, belonging to Finland, spanning 200.53 km². We were able to visit this unique territory three times in summer 2023, because of our fellowships in the University of Oulu within a special support of Ukrainian researchers in the time of the Russian invasion in Ukraine from the Biodiverse Anthropocenes research programme.

Hailuoto is located approximately 53 km opposite one of the largest cities of Finland, Oulu, which also names the capital of Northern Scandinavia. It is possible to reach by local public buses or private vehicles crossing the water area by free ferry. While the island took shape as a singular landmass only in the last century, numerous smaller islands that now form part of it emerged from the sea approximately 1850-1950 years ago, owing to the continuous and elevate process from post-glacial rebound. Notably, Hailuoto's land area continues to expand, with projections suggesting an eventual connection with the mainland.

Despite its flat terrain, with its highest point reaching 31 meters above sea level, Hailuoto boasts an array of diverse habitats, including sandy shores, coastal meadows, pine forests, inland dunes, dry pine barrens, sphagnum bogs, and lakes, among others. With a modest population of about 950 inhabitants, the island maintains an incredibly low population density of 4.73 people/km². However, Hailuoto is attractive a place for tourists, especially during the summer months, because of its long sand beaches and natural wonders, though there are some interesting phenomena in other seasons too, for example, the autumn migration of swans or accumulating thousands of "egg-shaped" sea ice on the shore.

While a comprehensive inventory of vascular plants specific to Hailuoto is yet to be compiled, there are 281 species known for the northernmost islands of Gulf of Bothnia for a whole, not including several hybrids of Alnus Mill., Carex L., Equisetum L., Galium L., Rubus L. and Salix L. genera, previously noted here. According to data gathered from iNaturalist (https://www.inaturalist.org), Hailuoto is confirmed to host 140 species of vascular plants. On October 16, 2023 the most popular plants were Lathyrus japonicus Willd. with 43 observations, Honckenya peploides (L.) Ehrh. (25 observations), Leymus arenarius (L.) Hochst. (20 observations), and...
Empetrum nigrum L. (18 observations). Other species have been recorded with seven observations or fewer.

A swift survey of Hailuoto through Google Maps satellite imagery reveals extensive tracts of managed forests, some of which have been recently cleared. As a result, one gets the impression that nature here has been completely transformed and nothing interesting may be found there. However, this is not absolutely true, because many small plots of different kinds of natural and semi-natural vegetation remain in their relevantly unchanged state. We saw this during our three one-day trips on June 29, July 11 and August 18, 2023, when we visited eastern, southern and northern parts of the island respectively.

Hailuoto is home to five Nature 2000 areas, spanning a total of 7068 hectares. Four of these areas are protected under both Birds and Habitats Directives (FI1100201, FI1100202, FI1100203, FI1100204), and one territory - only under the Habitats Directive (FI1100206). These areas boast an array of unique habitats, including Baltic esker islands with sandy, rocky and shingle beach vegeta-

Typical buildings in the middle of natural ecosystems, which are mainly used for recreation in summer and weekends.
The elements of the recreation and education infrastructure.

Hailuoto has practically abandoned livestock farming, but horses are kept in small numbers.
Further Reading:


Small areas of meadows, especially near settlements, are systematically mown, because grazing is absent on the island.

Dunes and heaths, very rare and threatened habitats in Finland, were restored in some places by clearing away trees and bushes, cutting the rootstock of common reeds and other species.
Littoral habitats of the Hailuoto island.

Coastal dunes mostly with *Leymus arenarius* communities.
Pine, birch and willow saplings are slowly spreading on coastal dunes.

Heaths of Hailuoto.

A typical pine forest with domination of *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* L. and *V. myrtillus* L.

Diverse meadows.
A few examples of Hailuoto’s bogs, mires and fens.

*Lathyrus japonicus* Willd., the most impressive plant of the coastal dunes in June.

*Honckenya peploides* (L.) Ehrh., a small spreading plant, forming patches on sand beaches and coastal dunes.
Silene uniflora Roth.  

Cornus suecica L., a rhizomatous herbaceous perennial of heaths and forests.

Eriophorum angustifolium Honck. and its community.  

Linnaea borealis L.
Recent Publications of our Members

In this section, the contents of which will also be made available via our homepage, we want to facilitate an overview of grassland-related publications throughout Eurasia and to improve their accessibility. You are invited to send lists of such papers from the last three years following the format below to Rocco Labadessa, rocco.labadessa@gmail.com. We will include your e-mail address so that readers can request a pdf.

Biodiversity and Ecology


Venn, S., Teerikangas, J. & Paukkunen, J. 2023. Bees and pollination in grassland habitats in Helsinki (Finland) are diverse but dominated by polylectic species. Basic and Applied Ecology 69: 1–12. doi.org/10.1016/j.baae.2023.03.003

Conservation and Restoration


Methodology, classification, databases

Dengler, J. 2023. Priorities in journal selection for authors, reviewers, editors, librarians and science funders. Vegetation Classification and Survey 4: 219–229. doi.org/10.3897/VCS.110296

Contact persons:

András István Csathó: csatho@verge.hu
Jürgen Dengler: dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com
Rocco Labadessa: rocco.labadessa@gmail.com
Stephen Venn: stephen.venn@biol.uni.lodz.pl

Schwantenau mire complex in Switzerland. Photo: J. Dengler.
Forthcoming Events

**Talk Grasslands January 2024**
Tuesday 16 January 2024, 14:00 cet
See details at pp. 10.

**Talk Grasslands February 2024**
Tuesday 6 February 2024, 14:00 cet
See details at pp. 10.

**Talk Grasslands March 2024**
Tuesday 12 March 2024, 14:00 cet
See details at pp. 10.

**7th European Congress of Conservation Biology (ECCB)**
17-21 June 2024, Bologna, Italy
Conference website: [https://eccb2024.eu/](https://eccb2024.eu/)

**18th EDGG Field Workshop**
1-11 June 2024, SW Alps, Italy and France
See details at pp. 11-12.

**19th Eurasian Dry Grassland Conference 2024**
26 August – 1 September 2024, Bolzano/Bozen, Italy
See details at p. 13.

**Joint IAVS/EVS Conference**
16-21 September 2024, Funchal, Madeira, Portugal.

*Ephippiger zelleri* in the Province of Rome, Italy. Photo: L. Ancillotto.
The Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG), founded in 2008, is a working group of the International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS) and member of the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP). On 30 November 2023, it had 1422 members from 65 countries.

The **Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG)** is a network of researchers and conservationists interested in any type of Palaearctic natural and semi-natural grasslands. It is an official Working Group of IAVS ([http://www.iavs.org](http://www.iavs.org)) but one can join our group without being an IAVS member. We live from the activities of our members. Everybody can join the EDGG without any fee or other obligation.


### EDGG Executive Committee and responsibilities of its members

**Idoia Biurrun**, Spain, [idoia.biurrun@ehu.es](mailto:idoia.biurrun@ehu.es)
Membership Administrator; Deputy Chief Editor of *Palaearctic Grasslands*

**Jürgen Dengler**, Switzerland, [dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com](mailto:dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com)
Secretary-General; Deputy Treasurer and Representative to IAVS; Special Feature Coordinator; Deputy Chief Editor of *Palaearctic Grasslands*; Deputy Field Workshop Coordinator

**Ellen DeVrieze**, Belgium, [ellen.devrieze@ugent.be](mailto:ellen.devrieze@ugent.be)
Social Media Administrator; Deputy Editor of Website; Deputy Secretary-General

**Rocco Labadessa**, Italy, [rocco.labadessa@gmail.com](mailto:rocco.labadessa@gmail.com)
Chief Editor of *Palaearctic Grasslands*

**AliReza Naqinezhad**, Iran, [anaqinezhad@gmail.com](mailto:anaqinezhad@gmail.com)
Treasurer and Representative to IAVS; Deputy Chief Editor of *Palaearctic Grasslands*

**Stephen Venn**, Poland, [stephen.venn@biol.uni.lodz.pl](mailto:stephen.venn@biol.uni.lodz.pl)
Website Editor; Conference Coordinator; Deputy Social Media Administrator

**Denys Vynokurov**, [denys.vynokurov@gmail.com](mailto:denys.vynokurov@gmail.com)
Field Workshop Coordinator

*Stipa capillata* and *Stipa zalesskii* steppe in the Altai Territory, Russia. Photo: I. Smelansky.