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Rédacteurs en chef

Camille Roux - camille.roux@uca.fr ; Gilles Thébaud - gilles.thebaud@uca.fr
UniVegE - Herbiers Universitaires CLF - 2 chemin des Bas Cézeaux 63170 Aubière - 0473407141

Auteurs

Camille Roux, Gilles Thébaud & Léa Brocard

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Plenary talk

Thierry Dutoit

**Session 1: Importance of
historical data for assessing
dynamic trends of vegetation
and landscape**

Will the human footprint ever disappear? Importance of historical data for assessing dynamic trends of vegetation in dry Mediterranean grasslands

Thierry Dutoit

Institut méditerranéen de biodiversité et d'écologie marine et continentale: Avignon, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, France

Former human land-uses are important factors determining dynamic trends of vegetation in Europe. Nevertheless, more information are still needed about the very long-term (several centuries to several millennia) influence of these impacts especially in dry Mediterranean grasslands submitted to important changes in land-uses in the 20th century and the present climate change influences. In the most species-rich French Mediterranean dry grassland (La Crau, Southern France), archaeological and historical surveys have revealed a dense network of ancient sheep stables dating from the Roman to Modern period times but also, during the documentary investigations, the existence of ancient botanical surveys dating from the second half of the 20th century. By analysing soil chemistry, soil wood charcoals, vegetation composition and revisiting old phytosociological surveys, we show a pertaining signature of location and exploitation of the Roman, ancient and modern enclosures on present day ecosystem features but also changes in the floristic composition of the whole steppe linking more to recent changes of pastoral practices. These results show that vegetation changes still continue two millennia after human impacts, and that even the small scale pastoral activities of sheep concentrations in enclosures during the Roman times have still sensible impacts on present day herbaceous plant communities composition and species-richness. Then, these results questions the relevance of global plant succession models and for application purposes, long term human legacies must be take into account in conservation and restoration plans of semi natural grasslands.

Talk Sessions

**Session 1: Importance of
historical data for assessing
dynamic trends of vegetation
and landscape**

Four decades of change in coastal dune vegetation: ecological guilds and emerging drivers along the central Adriatic coast

Maria Carla de Francesco, Maria Laura Carranza, Micaela Del Valle Rasino, Marco Varricchione & Angela Stanisci

EnviXLab, Department of Biosciences and Territory, University of Molise, Pesche and Termoli, Italy, maria.defrancesco@unimol.it

Long-term vegetation plot datasets, including historical records and repeated surveys, are essential tools for detecting and understanding spatial and temporal changes in plant community diversity, structure and functioning (1, 2). We built and compiled AdriaVeg Database (EU-IT-024) available in GIVD (3) which contains 1,000 published and unpublished georeferenced vegetation plots collected between 1985 and 2025 along the Italian sandy coast of Abruzzo, Molise and North Apulia, including both single and re-surveyed plots (4). From AdriaVeg DB, we selected 212 plots and defined two periods series: T1 (1985-2005; n=106) and T2 (2006-2025; n=106), equally distributed across three coastal dune vegetation zones: shifting dunes (EU habitats 1210, 2110, 2120; EUNIS habitats N12, N14), transition dunes (EU habitats 2130*, 2230; EUNIS habitat N16), and fixed dunes (EU habitats 2250*, 2260, 2270*, 9340; EUNIS habitats N1B, N1G, T21).

Species were classified into 4 ecological guilds: (1) typical species (diagnostic of the EU habitats analyzed - shifting, transition, fixed), typical species of other EU habitats, ruderal and (4) non-native species. In addition, Ecological Indicator Values for Europe - EIVs (5) and Disturbance Indicator Values - DIVs (6) were also assigned to each species.

For each dune zone, we compared species cover and richness within each ecological guild between T1 and T2, and calculated species turnover and beta diversity. Random Forest models were then applied to identify main drivers of temporal change.

From T1 to T2, the cover and richness of typical species significantly increased in the shifting and fixed dune habitats, while the transition dunes remained largely stable in terms of typical species richness and cover. In contrast, the fixed dunes showed a significant decline in the typical species richness, even if the typical species cover increased, accompanied by high species turnover.

Driver analysis implemented with Random Forest showed changes in the three dune zones: a) shifting dunes were associated with the increase in typical species of other habitats and a slightly increase in moisture and disturbance frequency indicators; b) no significant drivers emerged in transition dunes; c) in fixed dunes, the indicators of soil disturbance and disturbance frequency decreased.

Overall this study highlights the value of long-term vegetation databases for disentangling the drivers of ecosystem dynamics and provides insights of emerging drivers trajectories across coastal dune habitats.

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*Recovering historical vegetation plots: digitisation of Yurii Kleopov's century-old relevés from the south-western Donets Ridge, Ukraine

Dariia Borovyk¹, Denys Davydov¹, Fedir Gontsa², Svitlana Iemelianova^{1,3}, Oleh Prylutskyi⁴, Denys Vynokurov^{1,5} & Anna Kuzemko^{1,4}

¹Department of Geobotany and Ecology, M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine;

²Department of Fine and Decorative Arts, Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy, Cherkasy, Ukraine; ³Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Sciences, Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia; ⁴Falz-Fein Biosphere Reserve Askania Nova, National Academy of Agrarian Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine; ⁵Institute of Biology/Geobotany and Botanical Garden, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Halle, Germany.

Corresponding author: dariiaborovyk@gmail.com

Yurii D. Kleopov (1902-1943) was a prominent figure in 20th-century Ukrainian geobotany and floristics. He is regarded as a pioneer in the study of the origin and development of floristic complexes, and his most important work concerned forest and steppe vegetation in Eastern Europe. In the Soviet period, however, his name was suppressed for decades, and his works could not be freely cited or used in scientific literature. Only since the 1990s has his legacy gradually returned to the history of botany through the efforts of Ukrainian botanists. One of his most important regional studies, the 160-page monograph "Vegetation of the southwestern part of Donets Ridge" (1933), described the vegetation of the Donets Region (former Stalino District) in Eastern Ukraine. We digitised and georeferenced more than 250 vegetation plots from Kleopov's monograph and made them available for contemporary vegetation science. The workflow included AI-assisted transcription of relevés, followed by manual verification of digitised data, harmonisation of historical taxon names, standardisation of abundance and phenological records, and georeferencing based on historical toponyms and archival cartographic sources. We also assigned EUNIS habitat types and vegetation classes to most plots. The resulting dataset was prepared for inclusion in the Ukrainian National Phytosociological Database, publication as an open-access GBIF-dataset, and further reuse in vegetation analysis. Yurii Kleopov's records combine complete relevés with precise species identification, cover estimates, phenological information, and detailed notes on soil, relief, and geomorphological context. These features created a historical dataset of outstanding value, which covers a broad range of habitat types, including various grasslands (179 relevés), forests (38), scrubs (7), and wetlands (32). The Donets Ridge remains poorly represented in modern vegetation-plot databases, and much of the region has been inaccessible for field surveys since 2014 due to Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. Recovery of these historical data is therefore especially important for documenting past vegetation patterns, supporting national and pan-European studies, and enabling future analyses of long-term vegetation change. Our project also contributes to restoring the visibility of a scientist whose work was long suppressed and makes an important part of Ukrainian botanical heritage accessible for contemporary research.

*Do divergent landscape changes shape grassland plant species richness across the Czech-Austrian border?

Hana Skokanová¹, Martina Sychrová¹, Marie Vymazalová², Verena Haring², Petr Keil³, Gabriele Midolo³, Emma Shih Mendez⁴, Franz Essl⁴ & Adam Clark²

¹Landscape Research Institute, Kvetnove nam. 391, 252 43 Pruhonic, Czech Republic, hana.skokanova@vuk.gov.cz, martina.sychrova@vuk.gov.cz, marie.vymazalova@vuk.gov.cz; ²Institute for Biology, University of Graz, Holteigasse 6, 8010 Graz, Austria, adam.clark@uni-graz.at, verena.haring@uni-graz.at; ³Department of Applied Geoinformatics and Spatial Planning, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Kamýcká 129, 165 00 Praha, Czech Republic, keil@fzp.czu.cz, gabriele.midolo@gmail.com; ⁴Division of BioInvasions, Global Change & Macroecology, Department of Botany and Biodiversity Research, University of Vienna, Rennweg 14, 1030 Vienna, Austria, franz.essl@univie.ac.at, emma.shih.mendez@univie.ac.at

Changes in grassland plant species richness are often driven by changes in land use/cover (1). However, we should be aware that land use/cover gives us different information than landscape structure. While land use/cover data provide information about the landscape macrostructure/composition (i.e. how many different land use/cover types are in the landscape), landscape structure data provide information about microstructure/configuration (i.e. how patchy the landscape is, irrespective of land use/cover types). European landscapes, especially in Central Europe, experienced simplification of their structure over past decades. This pattern is especially pronounced in the Czech Republic (CZ) compared to Austria (AT), as seen from aerial photos. These differences are staggering considering that both countries shared common past until 1918 and are a result of different political regimes and connected policies (2). We therefore investigated the extent of these differences in landscape structure between both countries and their impact on plant species richness in the grasslands. We selected 30 sites along the Czech-Austrian border, establishing 1.5 km buffers around a historically sampled grassland plots provided by the EVA database. These plots were then resurveyed during the 2024-2025 season. Landscape structure data were derived from aerial photographs (both historical from the 1950s and present from the 2024 covering the CZ) and cadastral maps from the 19th century covering AT, using a combination of (semi)automatic classification and manual vectorization. Preliminary results indicate that while species richness significantly decreased at Austrian sites, no significant trend was observed at Czech sites. Nevertheless, landscape structure changed significantly in both countries between the mid-19th/20th century and present; number of patches in selected buffers decreased, while the average patch area increased. Crucially, we found a significant negative relationship between current species richness and the increase of average patch area over time. We conclude that landscape homogenization—manifested as increasing patch size—is associated with a decline in plant species richness.

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Descended from the mountains, following large changes in forestry methods in the 19th and 20th century- the *Epilobio-Digitalietum* in the Netherlands

Rense Haveman & Iris de Ronde

De Ronde & Haveman - Research and consultancy agency for geobotany and landscape, Kerkstraat 19, 6671 AP Zetten, Netherlands, rense.haveman@derondehaveman.nl, iris.deronde@derondehaveman.nl

The *Epilobio-Digitalietum* Schwickerath 1944 (*Carici piluliferae-Epilobion angustifolii*, *Epilobietea angustifoliae*) was described from the Hohe Venn in the High Ardennes in Belgium (1) and confirmed afterwards from mountain ranges in (Sub)Atlantic Europe. In literature, its limitation to the colline and montane zone is widely recognised. It was not included in the Dutch National Vegetation Classification (2), although it was suggested that the association might occur in the southeastern part of the Province Limburg bordering the Eifel and Ardennes. Only very few historical relevés of this association are known from the Netherlands though. Up the 1970's, the only character species of the *Epilobio-Digitalietum*, *Digitalis purpurea*, was very rare in the Netherlands, mostly confined to a more or less narrow zone along the border with Germany. From 1970 onwards, *Digitalis* increased widely throughout the Netherlands, including the Veluwe, the sand area in the central part of the country which mainly consists of glacial deposits from the Saalien Glaciation. This raises the question whether the *Epilobio-Digitalietum* also occurs in this lowland region, and, if so, what might explain this altitudinal shift of the association. To answer this question, we studied the *Digitalis* vegetation of woodland clearings, disturbed roadsides, and grass and heath sod dump sites. Phytosociological analysis of the relevés showed that the vegetation with *Digitalis purpurea* at the Veluwe for a large part can be assigned to the *Epilobio-Digitalietum*. Thus, the association is not, or better: no longer, constricted to the colline and montane zone, but established in the Northwest-European lowlands as well. Abduction leads to the conclusion that neither climate change nor nitrogen deposition can be considered as an explanation for this shift in the altitudinal preference of the association. The spread of *Digitalis purpurea* and the *Epilobio-Digitalietum* can, however, be attributed to large changes in the landscape after the introduction of coniferous forests in the so-called 'Hochwald' forestry system. At the beginning of the 20th century, most of the Veluwe landscape consisted of heathlands of the *Genisto-Callunetum*, but after the heath farming system collapsed, large areas were planted with *Pinus sylvestris*. In addition, the fallow heaths proved easy to be invaded with Pine seedlings. This created the conditions for the establishment of *Digitalis* and the spread of the *Epilobio-Digitalietum* from the collinear-montane zone to the lowlands, since *Digitalis purpurea* occurs optimally at litter of coniferous trees. Its increase can be attributed to the expansion of high forests and the large areas of conifers planted ... and felled in this system. Severe browsing by red deer on the Veluwe is the cause for the prolonged life of the *Epilobio-Digitalietum*, resulting in grassy and mossy stages.

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Using historical vegetation plot surveys, cadastral maps and satellite imagery to assess long-term vegetation trajectories: insights from wet grasslands in western France

Erwan Glémarec¹, Sébastien Rapinel², Gwenael Perrin³, Quentin Demarquet³, Laurence Hubert-Moy³, Bernard Clément⁴ & Frédéric Bioret¹

¹Laboratoire Géoarchitecture, Université de Bretagne Occidentale F-29200 Brest, France erwan.glemarec@univ-brest.fr, frederic.bioret@univ-brest.fr; ²Université Rennes 2 UMR 6554 LETG CNRS, F-35000 Rennes, France, sebastien.rapinel@univ-rennes2.fr;

³Consultant indépendant, F-29200 Brest, France, gwenael.perrin@gmail.com; ⁴Université de Rennes UMR 6553 ECOBIO CNRS, F-35000 Rennes, France, berniclement@gmail.com

In the context of global change and increasing anthropogenic pressures, long-term vegetation monitoring is essential for effective conservation and management. Several resurvey projects targeting historical vegetation plots are currently underway to address this need (1). In parallel, advances in historical data digitization and artificial intelligence open new avenues for analyzing historical datasets, including 19th-century cadastral maps (2) or archive satellite imagery (3), that can improve knowledge on vegetation dynamics. This study aims to assess the contribution of historical datasets to describe long-term vegetation trajectories. A case study is currently conducted in the countryside hedgerows landscape of the eastern Brittany (western France), a region subject to significant agricultural intensification and urban expansion. The multisource dataset comprises: (i) 91 vegetation plots collected in 1988 in wet grasslands (4); (ii) an optical Landsat satellite time series (30 m spatial resolution) spanning the period 1984-2025; and (iii) digitized Napoleonic cadastral maps, produced between 1810 and 1845 at a scale of 1:2,500, depicting land-use types across the study area. The methodological framework combines a floristic resurvey of the old phytosociological plots with a landscape-scale analysis of land-use trajectories derived from the Napoleonic cadastre and the Landsat time series. First results show vegetation evolutions between 1988 and 2026 in a context of land use changes such as afforestation, urbanization, or agricultural decline or intensification (Fig. 1).

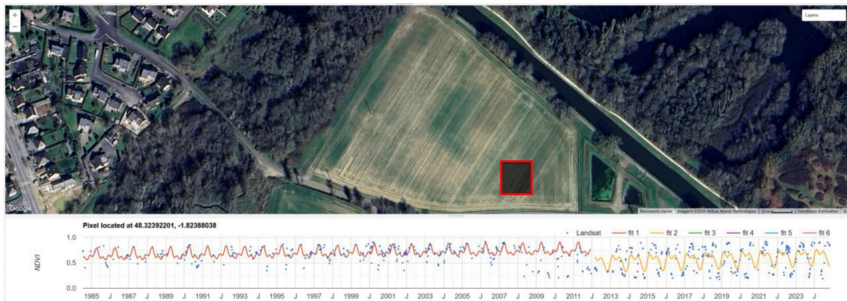


Figure 1. Example of a normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) time series for a pixel (red rectangle) derived from the Landsat archive (1985-2024) and located on a wet grassland phytosociological plots collected in 1988. Blue dots indicate available Landsat observations for the pixel. A colour change in the curve indicates a conversion of wet grasslands to agricultural land in 2012.

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The Santa Rita Experimental Range: 124 Years of Desert Grassland Dynamics in Southwestern North America

Alessandra Gorlier¹ & Mitchel P. McClaran²

School of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of Arizona, 1064 E Lowell St, 85721 Tucson, AZ, USA ¹agorlier@arizona.edu; ²mccclaran@arizona.edu

Established in 1902, the University of Arizona's 20,000-ha Santa Rita Experimental Range (SRER) is the longest continuously operating rangeland research site in the United States and one of the most thoroughly documented sites of vegetation change in the world. Its extensive long-term records of vegetation, precipitation, and livestock use, along with one of the world's largest and most accessible repeat-photography archives, have made the SRER an important site for research on the restoration, protection, and management of desert grasslands in the arid southwestern North America.

This remarkable record exists partly because key methods for measuring vegetation change, such as the line-intercept transect method (1), were developed at the SRER and applied widely and consistently. It also reflects more than 120 years of experiments and systematic observations conducted across elevation, precipitation, and soil gradients, as well as in grazed and ungrazed conditions. This collection provides the temporal and spatial scales for interpreting landscape and vegetation dynamics.

Specifically, the data include 119 photo stations (1902-present), 131 long-term transects (1953-present), 96 transects inside and outside livestock enclosures (2011-present), 24 rain stations (1922-present), and monthly livestock numbers for 35 pastures (1916-present). Together, they span annual, decadal, and centennial time scales across the SRER. These observations have revealed general trends, but their wide spatial distribution, from 900 to 1500 m in elevation and across 18 major soil types, has highlighted exceptions to those trends across environmental gradients and provided insight into the drivers of vegetation dynamics (2).

The most conspicuous long-term change is the steady expansion of the large shrub mesquite since 1902, when livestock dispersed seeds and the cessation of fire allowed it to establish in the grasslands. However, repeat photographs show that mesquite and other woody species were already common in the early 1900s but were largely confined to washes, where fire was less common. Interannual and interdecadal fluctuations in grass cover associated with dry and wet years confirm the role of precipitation in grass dynamics but also demonstrate the resilience of native grasses despite mesquite encroachment and the increasing dominance of the non-native Lehmann lovegrass since the 1970s (3). Similarly, repeated eruptions and declines of cacti and small shrubs exemplify patterns that are primarily driven by precipitation and plant longevity. However, these dynamics vary by elevation and soil type.

The SRER offers vast opportunities for future research, built on more than a century of observation and experimentation and supported by approximately 1,000 scientific publications and partnerships with national agencies such as the National Ecological Observatory Network and the US Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service. These opportunities rely on continued access to the long-term datasets and their regular updates (<https://santarita.arizona.edu>).

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What has happened to the understorey of thermophilous Pannonian oak woods over the past 70 years?

Karol Ujházy¹, Mariana Ujházyová², Marek Kotrík¹, Vlastimil Knopp² & Alexandra Scherhauserová¹

¹Department of Phytology, Technical University in Zvolen, Slovakia, karol.ujhazy@tuzvo.sk, marek.kotrik@tuzvo.sk, knopp@tuzvo.sk, xsuttoovaa@is.tuzvo.sk; ²Department of Applied Ecology, Technical University in Zvolen, Slovakia, ujhazyova@tuzvo.sk

Communities of subcontinental Pontic-pannonian oak forests on loess sediments of *Aceri tatarici-Quercion* Zólyomi 1957 were already documented in the 1950s by relevés in the Hungarian and Slovak part of the Pannonian region. Opened forest-steppe stands described as *Quercetum pubescenti-roboris* (Zólyomi 1957) Michalko et Džatko 1965 were species-rich, dominated by light demanding subxerophilous species, mainly grasses as *Poa nemoralis*, *Dactylis polygama*, *Brachypodium pinnatum* or *Festuca rupicola*. Closed forests of more mesic communities were classified as *Convallario-Quercetum roboris* Soó (1958) 1971 (1, 2). Both associations are currently extremely rare, and their diagnostic species are disappearing in the Pannonian lowlands. Degradation of original species composition was detected in resurveys of permanent and semipermanent plots located both in managed stands and unmanaged reserves. To verify whether the situation is similar also in the best-preserved sites and in the places not covered by permanent plots, we attempted to repeat sampling in one of the two most representative sites in the Slovak part of Pannonia. We subjectively selected plots in the best-developed patches of herb layer within the same area of the Dubník National Nature Reserve (165 ha) in 2023-5 where preferential sampling was realised in 1957-8 (1) and 2007-8. Significant change of species composition and diversity decrease was found already in 2007 and this trend continued in the latest decades. Mean species richness decreased from 43 to 19 and species pool of the reserve from 135 to 79 taxa. Original relevés from 1950s were clearly separated from the recent ones in the NMDS ordination space and formed a separate cluster in the modified Twinspan classification. We can conclude that species-rich forest-steppe communities of the *Quercetum pubescenti-roboris* no longer exist in the reserve area. They partly changed to more mesic communities and closed stands of the *Convallario-Quercetum roboris* which was considered as climax community (3), however, with limited species composition and richness. Other parts evolved into novel species-poor communities dominated by *Melica uniflora* or *Vinca minor* in the herb layer and *Acer campestre*, which filled the gaps between oaks in the tree layer and thus contributed to a decline in the number of light-demanding forest-steppe species. Preferential sampling in the locality considered as one of the best-preserved confirmed negative trends reported from permanent-plot resurveys. Vegetation of open oak forests and forest-steppes disappeared within several decades following the cessation of historical management, primarily due to the absence of large grazers that could have maintained such communities even before human land use began in the early millennia of the Holocene.

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Time-series on Central European grassland vegetation to study the impacts of country-level landscape dynamics on biodiversity

Verena Haring

University of Graz, Department of Biology, Holteigasse 6, 8010 Graz, Austria, verena.haring@uni-graz.at

Central European grasslands harbor high species diversity and are influenced by local management and land-use histories. These habitats often face shifts from regional management tradition to either abandonment or intensification of land use, which cause a decline in the quality and biodiversity of these habitats (1-2). In most countries of eastern Europe, these ecosystems were severely impacted by collectivization policies in the second half of the 20th century, which led initially similar landscapes to follow divergent trajectories, reshaping grassland cover size and structure (3). These land use changes turned border regions into a natural experiment for studying the impacts of landscape structure and management on grassland plant communities. Here, we provide 401 historical vegetation plots paired with their recent resurveys along the border region between Austria and the Czech Republic. The dataset spans 95 years (from 1930 to 2025), with the first surveys conducted between 1930-2020 (4) and resurveys conducted between 2024-2025. This timespan captures divergent grassland developments of initially similar landscapes, which were caused by socio-economic changes in the 20th century, leading to a land use change gradient ranging from a small habitat patchwork in the south to large, collectivized fields in the north. Our dataset also spans a longitudinal environmental gradient, running from wet uplands in the west to dry lowlands in the east. The resurvey design was structured to balance representations across both countries and to capture the broad longitudinal topoclimatic gradient of the region. The resulting vegetation-plot time series allows us to quantify biodiversity and community change, while testing for the effects of landscape dynamics. Our results show a higher present day species richness as well as lower evenness in the Czech and Slovak Republic in comparison to Austria. Moreover, plots in the Czech and Slovak Republic have higher numbers of gained species and are more often reported to be under conservation or abandoned with respect to the plots located in Austria. Our work aims to contribute to further research on Central European Grasslands and is a valuable addition to understand human-driven biodiversity changes. In summary, this dataset gives valuable insights into the development of initially similar grassland communities impacted by divergent country level landscape dynamics in Central Europe, which deepens our understanding of plant diversity change over the last century.

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Integrating vegetation survey data from diverse nationwide monitoring programmes in Germany - a worklog

Jana Bürger¹ & Florian Jansen²

¹Landscape Ecology, University of Rostock, J.-v.-Liebig-Weg 6, 18059 Rostock, Germany, jana.buerger@uni-rostock.de; ²Landscape Ecology, University of Rostock, J.-v.-Liebig-Weg 6, 18059 Rostock, Germany, flori-an.jansen@uni-rostock.de

Despite recent efforts to establish new programmes such as ecosystem monitoring and integrating some of the existing programmes across a set of over 1700 common sampling areas measuring 1km² each, a comprehensive biodiversity monitoring is still lacking in Germany. However, a data gap remains when it comes to analysing changes in biodiversity over the last decades, which has only partially been filled by collecting species occurrence or time series data from a wide range of sources. The heterogeneity of the data often requires extensive harmonisation before analysis. Another untapped source are therefore monitoring programmes on the status of landscapes and nature, (e.g. those according to the Fauna-Flora-Habitat Directive and the Water Framework Directive), which collect species data as part of their evaluation process, but only report the aggregated evaluation results.

Using plants as an example of an organismic group, we researched the vegetation data recorded in nine nationwide monitoring programmes in Germany. Our overall aim was to test the data's potential for analysing national biodiversity trends. To this end, we asked: 1) How accessible is the data?, 2) Which survey methods are used? and 3) What kind of biodiversity analysis is supported by this data?

The monitoring programmes that we investigated had a wide range of primary aims, such as evaluating the quality of water bodies or habitats (WFD, FFH), evaluating long-term changes in soil quality (BDF) or monitoring the effects of substance deposition in forest ecosystems (Level II). The only inclusion criterion was that the programme was executed throughout Germany using a standardised methodology. Here, we present our experience of the process, which involved gathering relevant information from the relevant authorities, requesting data samples - sometimes from each federal state separately - and conducting exploratory analysis of the data. Two programmes do not record vegetation data at all, or only record aggregated indicators. Three programmes use closed taxon checklists with relatively small (or even changing) taxon sets. Three programmes conduct full vegetation surveys on permanent plots. Some programmes have completed only one or two full monitoring cycles and are therefore not yet useful for trend or change analysis.

For the vegetation data samples three different strategies are being tested:

1) Time series analysis, in cases where a complete harmonised dataset with good spatial coverage already exists (e.g. WFD for rivers and Level II for forests); 2) Integrating the data into a larger, special-interest data collection, to broaden the spatial and taxonomic coverage (e.g. BDF and HNV for arable fields); 3) Engaging with data holders, to encourage them to make their data available in a broader context, in cases without previous harmonisation efforts and low spatial coverage. We mainly report on our efforts with the first two strategies.

Long-term processes, direct and indirect drivers behind changes of Natura 2000 grassland habitats

Marianna Biró^{1*}, Kinga Öllerer^{1,2}, Krisztina Molnár³, László Demeter¹, János Bölöni¹, Dániel Babai¹ & Zsolt Molnár¹

¹HUN-REN Centre for Ecological Research, Vácrátót, Alkotmány u. 2-4., Hungary, biro.marianna@ecolres.hu; ²Institute of Biology Bucharest, Romanian Academy, RO-060031 Bucharest, Romania; ³Festetics Doctoral School, Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Georgikon Campus, H-8360, Keszthely, Hungary; ⁴ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Ethnology, H-1079, Budapest, Hungary

Traditional management practices are essential for maintaining the biodiversity of many semi-natural grassland habitats. Abandonment of these practices is leading to shrub encroachment and a decline in biodiversity in many European regions. For this reason, understanding the social processes behind transforming traditional management practices and the subsequent habitat changes is currently a major focus of ecological research. We aimed to identify ecologically relevant indirect drivers (economic, demographic, institutional, cultural, and technological) impacting Natura 2000 grassland habitats since the mid-20th century in two neighbouring Central European post-communist countries, Hungary and Romania. Ecological memory on 21 semi-natural grassland localities was collected through 60 oral history interviews from knowledgeable locals. The studied localities were covered by semi-natural grasslands listed in the Habitats Directive, Annex I: 1.) Semi-natural dry grasslands (6210); 2.) Alluvial meadows of river valleys (6440); and 3.) Pannonic salt steppes and salt marshes (1530*). We asked about three time periods (before: 1950-1961, during: 1962-1989, and after socialist collective farming: 1990-2007). We identified 211 mentions of indirect drivers and categorised them into five main indirect driver categories. Economic drivers were the most often mentioned indirect driver categories for alluvial and saline habitats. Demographic drivers, such as ageing, labour shortage, and rural-urban migration, were highly intertwined and most pronounced for dry semi-natural grasslands. We found that the impacts of ecologically relevant social processes beginning in the 1960s-1970s became visible only decades later, reflected by delayed changes in grassland management and vegetation (e.g. shrub encroachment, spread of weeds and invasive species). Migration to cities was amplified by changing lifestyles and values, leading to a decrease in the village labour force and a consequent ageing of inhabitants, ultimately resulting in a major decline in livestock numbers and in traditional management practices. We argue that the decline of grassland management in the 1990s and 2000s was driven by long-term social processes that began in the 1960s. We argue, that appropriate subsidy schemes and governance models are essential to support surviving traditional farming practices, integrate biodiversity conservation with cultural heritage, and sustain innovative rural communities transitioning within Europe's marginalised agricultural landscapes. This research was supported by the NKFIH K 146526 "From long-term trajectories to short-term transitions: country-level analysis and modeling of grassland and wetland habitat changes" project.

Open vegetation data: an example of the Czech Vegetation Database

Milan Chytrý¹, Irena Axmanová¹, Jan Divíšek¹, Klára Friesová¹, Salza Palpurina², Marcela Řezníčková¹, Martin Večeřa¹ & Ilona Knollová¹

¹Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Kotlářská 2, Brno, Czech Republic, chytry@sci.muni.cz, axmanova@sci.muni.cz, divisekjan@sci.muni.cz, 474368@muni.cz, mar.reznickova@seznam.cz, veceramartin@mail.muni.cz, ikuzel@sci.muni.cz; ²National Museum of Natural History, Sofia, Bulgaria & GBIF ECA Support, salza.palpurina@gmail.com

Historical vegetation-plot data are a key source of information for assessing vegetation change. However, their full use is still hindered by limited accessibility in many European regions. To increase the visibility of these data, we launched the website EVA-MAP.eu, which displays the locations of historical vegetation plots and their metadata across Europe. Nevertheless, open publication of complete information from vegetation plots, including full species lists and cover-abundance data, would further enhance the study of vegetation change. Therefore, we developed a national pilot project in which the entire Czech Vegetation Database was published online, following the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) principles of open science. The data were simultaneously published on a dedicated website (czechveg.github.io), in the Zenodo repository of scientific data (doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18289905), and in the GBIF database (Global Biodiversity Information Facility, <https://doi.org/10.15468/94bfgd>). The published version of the database contains 117,739 vegetation plots sampled from 1922 to 2025. These plots contain 2,510,340 occurrence records of vascular plants. We also prepared a more representative, geographically and environmentally stratified subset of 61,282 plots with unified nomenclature, which can be used directly for analyses. A detailed description of the metadata is also provided. During the project, we prepared R code for data conversion between Turboveg and R, data handling and analysis, linking vegetation-plot data with plant trait data and indicator values, database stratification and resampling, and data export to GBIF. We aim to inspire custodians of other European vegetation-plot databases to follow our example and FAIRify their data. Therefore, we also published all the code we developed on the project website, along with data processing tutorials, and we offer courses and support in converting vegetation-plot data to open access.

Talk Sessions

**Session 2: Vegetation dynamics
knowledge for optimizing
biodiversity management and
restoration strategies**

Beyond Peacetime Standards: Evaluating Warfare Impacts on Bern Convention Resolution 4 Habitats in Ukraine

Anna Kuzemko^{1,2}, Andriy Tupikov^{2,3} & Oleksandr Khodosovsev^{1,4}

¹M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany NAS of Ukraine, 2, Tereshchenkivska str., 01601, Kyiv, Ukraine, anyameadow.ak@gmail.com;

²Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group, 40, Gogol str., 08600, Vasylykiv, Ukraine, a.i.tupikov@gmail.com; ³Society For Conservation GIS Ukraine, 4, Svobody Square, 61022, Kharkiv, Ukraine; ⁴Kherson State University, 14, Shevchenko str., 76018, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine, khodosovtsev@gmail.com

Military actions exert an exceptionally profound impact on wildlife. As weaponry advances, new and previously undocumented impacts emerge. These factors affect various types of ecosystems to differing degrees. Several attempts have been made to classify the direct and indirect impacts of warfare on natural ecosystems and landscapes, e.g. (1) (2). However, a unified and standardized classification of such impacts does not currently exist. Consequently, we utilized the standardized List of Pressures and Threats used for reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive (3) for this purpose. From this list, we selected only those pressures that can be directly or indirectly linked to military activities. We further analyzed the impact of these factors on the habitat types listed in Resolution 4 of the Bern Convention that are reported from Ukraine (4). To assess the magnitude of these impacts, a 3-point scale was applied, ranging from 1 (weak) to 3 (strong). The cumulative scores were then calculated for each pressure and each habitat type. Our analysis identified 24 distinct military-related pressures. The highest number of these belonged to the groups PE: Development and operation of transport systems (6 impacts) and PK: Mixed source pollution (5 impacts). The most significant impacts on ecosystems were identified as PK06: Non-chemical mixed source pollution (total score: 207) and PE08: Land, water, and air transport activities generating noise, light, and other forms of pollution (total score: 146). Of the 115 habitat types listed in Resolution 4 of the Bern Convention, 112 have been affected by the war in some extent, representing over 97% of the total. Complex habitats (group X) showed the highest average scores, followed by forests (group G) and grasslands (group E). The highest cumulative scores were recorded for G3.4G *Pinus sylvestris* forest on chalk in the steppe zone (27 points), followed by E1.9 Open non-Mediterranean dry acid and neutral grassland, including inland dune grassland, G1.7 Thermophilous deciduous woodland, and G3.4232 Sarmatic steppe *Pinus sylvestris* forests (24 points each). The results demonstrate that the current standardized classification of pressures and threats, developed for peacetime, fails to account for the full spectrum of warfare-related impacts (e.g., landmines or the disruption of migration routes by defensive engineering structures) and thus requires comprehensive revision and expansion. The adequacy or insufficiency of these classifications should be evaluated through pilot assessment projects within protected areas directly affected by military actions.

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Long-term assessment of vegetation and soil moisture changes after drainage blocking in two raised bogs of Western Latvia

Liene Auniņa¹ & Ainārs Auniņš²

¹Institute of Biology, Faculty of Medical and Life Sciences, University of Latvia, Jelgavas Street 1, Riga, Latvia, liene.aunina@lu.lv;

²Department of Ecology, Faculty of Medical and Life Sciences, University of Latvia, Jelgavas Street 1, Riga, Latvia, ainars.aunins@lu.lv

Many mire restoration projects include pre- and post-restoration monitoring of vegetation and groundwater levels. However, post-restoration datasets often cover only two to three years, limiting the assessment of long-term restoration outcomes. We re-surveyed permanent vegetation monitoring plots in two drainage-impacted raised bogs 18 years after ditch blocking using peat dams. To enable comparison, vegetation plots in two additional drainage-impacted raised bogs from the same region, where no restoration measures had been implemented, were also re-surveyed. In addition, we assessed changes in surface moisture across all four raised bogs using moisture and wetness indices (NDMI and NDWI) obtained from time-series of Landsat satellite images. Preliminary results indicate that nearly 20 years after ditch blocking, vegetation responses to hydrological stabilization differ among sites. The degree of drainage impact, vegetation structure and composition before restoration, post-restoration groundwater levels, and climatic conditions—particularly precipitation—are among the most likely factors explaining the observed differences in vegetation trajectories. We also detected shifts in bog vegetation in the central parts of the raised bogs, outside the areas directly affected by hydrological stabilization, as well as in the two non-restored bogs. In these areas, we observed an increase in the cover of lichens and *Calluna vulgaris*, accompanied by a decrease in bare peat or mud-bottom areas. Notably, the expansion of *Rhynchospora alba* was recorded in three of the four raised bogs. We will present preliminary results and discuss the most likely drivers of the observed vegetation and soil moisture changes.

Dynamic habitat connectivity modelling: Insights from riparian ecosystems in Slovakia

Mária Šibíková^{1,2}, Karol Mikula^{3,4}, Martin Ambróz², Aneta A. Ožvat^{1,3,4}, Michal Kollár^{3,4}, Martin Kelko¹, Marek Súľovský¹ & Jozef Šibík^{1,2}

¹Plant Science and Biodiversity Center, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Dúbravská cesta 9, Bratislava, Slovakia, E-mail: maria.sibikova@savba.sk; ²Geobotany Research Center, Karpatské námestie 10/A, Bratislava, Slovakia; ³Slovak University of Technology, Radlinského 11, Bratislava, Slovakia; ⁴Algoritmy:SK Research Company, Šulekova 6, Bratislava, Slovakia

Connected habitats are crucial for biodiversity, ecosystem functioning, and climate resilience. Corridors and stepping-stone habitats enable species to shift their ranges as climates change and link current habitats to future suitable ones. To describe how species can disperse in a landscape, landscape ecology employs a combination of patch, fragmentation, and connectivity metrics, often derived from land-cover maps. Vegetation communities or habitats are typically viewed as “patches” of varying quality; however, the spread of habitats is a much more complicated and slow process driven by natural succession. Rivers serve as corridors for the majority of riparian species and communities, which are among the most threatened habitats in Europe. Describing their potential connectivity or isolation is crucial for conservation efforts, including the prevention of invasive species spread.

Relevancy maps for six riparian habitats (91EO Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*; 91FO Riparian mixed forests of *Quercus robur*, *Ulmus laevis*, and *Ulmus minor*, along with *Fraxinus excelsior* or *Fraxinus angustifolia*; 6440 Alluvial meadows of river valleys of the *Cnidion dubii*; 3270 Rivers with muddy banks featuring *Chenopodium rubri* and *Bidentation* vegetation; 3230 Alpine rivers and their ligneous vegetation with *Myricaria germanica*; and 3240 Alpine rivers and their ligneous vegetation with *Salix elaeagnos*) in Slovakia were created using Sentinel-2 satellite data and the Natural Numerical Network (1) method implemented in NaturaSat software (2). The river network of Slovakia, a DTM model, prevailing wind direction, and obstacles that hinder dispersal—such as built-up areas or intensive agricultural land—were combined into an initial raster representing a vector field of varying speeds for potential habitat spread. In this raster environment, an evolving curve approach was applied to the habitat polygons previously computed by the Natural Numerical Network. The fastest intersections of the evolved curves were marked as corridors, resulting in a map of corridors for all studied habitats.

To test the effectiveness of the identified corridors, recent georeferenced phytosociological relevés of the studied habitats from the Slovak vegetation database (3) were selected. The lengths of the corridors between relevés were computed, and differences in species composition were compared with the distance along the corridor.

The habitat corridor computation tool has been integrated into NaturaSat software, enabling rapid corridor detection between any chosen habitat patches in the landscape and providing a new resource for effective conservation planning.

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Abandoned lime kilns influence environmental heterogeneity and plant diversity in karst landscapes

Kata Frei¹, András Vojtkó², Csaba Tölgyesi^{1,3}, Ádám Lőrincz¹, Zsófia Orbán¹ & Zoltán Bátori^{1,3}

¹Department of Ecology, University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary, frei.kata@szte.hu; ²Department of Botany and Plant Physiology, Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Eger, Hungary; ³MTA-SZTE 'Momentum' Applied Ecology Research Group, University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary

Karst landscapes are topographically complex areas that cover about 15% of the Earth's land surface. Their most dominant landforms are the bowl- or funnel-shaped topographic depressions called dolines. Due to the high environmental heterogeneity within dolines, they exhibit a distinct microclimate that is decoupled from the regional climate. Consequently, dolines may act as potential microrefugia for several climate change-sensitive plant species under ongoing global warming. Their ability to buffer against regional climatic changes increases the likelihood of species persistence by providing climatic stability during regional environmental changes; however, it might be affected by anthropogenic disturbances. In addition, little is known about the effects of anthropogenic disturbances on biodiversity in dolines. The Bükk Plateau in Hungary is characterized by a high number of dolines, many of which are covered by grasslands. In the past, lime kilns were established in the bottoms of several dolines, which remained in use until their abandonment in the second half of the 20th century. Traditionally, a large part of the kiln was built into the ground, with the excavated soil and rocks deposited beside the kilns as a relatively large mound, while some parts of the doline bottoms were left undisturbed. In our study, we addressed the following research question: how do abandoned lime kilns influence the plant species composition, the values and combinations of functional traits, and the functional diversity in the different doline microhabitats (abandoned kiln, mound and undisturbed bottom) and the surrounding plateau? We found that each microhabitat harbored compositionally different plant assemblages. The functional composition exhibited similar trends, with the only exception that the samples of the plateau did not differ from the samples of the mounds. In addition, the functional diversity expressed by MPD (mean pairwise distance) was lowest in the abandoned kilns and undisturbed bottoms. Based on our results, we can conclude that lime burning in doline bottoms led to the creation of two novel microhabitats within dolines, which differed significantly from the undisturbed doline bottoms in both taxonomic and functional composition. Consequently, former anthropogenic disturbances, such as lime burning, in doline bottoms can influence the plant species composition and functional diversity, and thus the capacity of doline microrefugia to support biodiversity. Therefore, the effects of such disturbances should be considered when planning and applying conservation strategies.

Alien flora of Ukraine: an updated national checklist

Vira V. Protopopova^{1,2}, Myroslav V. Shevera² & Svitlana Iemelianova^{3,4}

¹Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian University, 6, Kossuth Sq., Berehove, Zakarpattia Oblast, Ukraine; ²Department of Systematics and Floristics of Vascular Plants, M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, NAS of Ukraine, Tereshchenkivska 2, Kyiv, Ukraine, shevera.myroslav@ukr.net; ³Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Kamenice 753/5, Brno, Czech Republic, yemelianova.sv@gmail.com; ⁴Department of Geobotany and Ecology, M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, NAS of Ukraine, Tereshchenkivska 2, Kyiv, Ukraine

Alien plant invasions are among the most important drivers of human-induced global environmental change. The rapid intensification of globalization, increasing mobility of goods and people, and large-scale transformation of natural landscapes have substantially accelerated the spread of alien plant species across regions. As a result, alien plants increasingly contribute to profound transformations of native ecosystems, including shifts in floristic composition and changes in vegetation structure. Nearly 35 years have passed since the publication of the first catalogue of alien species of Ukraine (1), which summarized information on 646 species considered alien to the national flora. Since then, numerous floristic, ecological and vegetation studies have considerably expanded our knowledge of the diversity, distribution and ecological behaviour of alien plants within the country. In the present study we introduce the second updated national checklist of alien plant species of Ukraine, compiled on the basis of our own field investigations, a comprehensive analysis of published literature, examination of herbarium collections, observations derived from open databases, and personal communications with local experts. For each taxon, the checklist provides information on taxonomic position, geographic origin, residence time, pathways of introduction, the date of the first record in Ukraine (for neophytes) and invasion status. The updated checklist includes 1206 alien species, representing approximately 20% of the total vascular flora of Ukraine. We identified 166 species as archaeophytes, 1017 as neophytes, while 23 taxa exhibit a dual residence-time status. The alien flora of Ukraine is dominated by casual species (756 taxa), with 309 species fully naturalized, 134 showing a dual naturalization status. The considerable geographical extent of Ukraine, stretching across several biogeographical and bioclimatic zones, creates challenges in determining the alien status of certain species at the national scale. This is particularly evident in the pronounced biogeographical and climatic differences between continental Ukraine and the Crimean Peninsula. Consequently, some species that are native to continental regions may be considered alien within the flora of Crimea, and vice versa. Similar complications arise due to the presence of major natural barriers, such as mountain systems (e.g. the Ukrainian Carpathians) and large river valleys (e.g. the Dnipro River). As a result, several species may exhibit different statuses in different parts of Ukraine, being regarded as alien in some regions while remaining native in others. To account for these regional differences, in addition to the main checklist we provide a supplementary list of species that display contrasting native and alien statuses across different regions of the country. This approach allows a more accurate representation of spatial patterns of plant distribution and reflects the transitional biogeographical position of Ukraine.

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European Database of Alien Plants: Towards a Harmonised Resource for Plant Invasion Research

Irena Axmanová*, Veronika Kalusová, Barbora Klímová, Martin Večeřa, Jan Divíšek & local experts

Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, axmanova@sci.muni.cz, kalusova@sci.muni.cz, bklimova@mail.muni.cz, veceramartin@mail.muni.cz, divisek@sci.muni.cz

Although alien plants have been studied for decades, available data remain scattered and often inconsistent in taxonomy, classification schemes, and completeness. To overcome these limitations, we established the European Database of Alien Plants (EuDAP), a harmonised and comprehensive dataset designed to support the study of plant invasions across Europe. EuDAP compiles information on three key dimensions of alien plant status: (1) residence time (archaeophytes vs. neophytes), (2) invasion stage (casual, naturalised or invasive), and (3) geographic origin, primarily following the TDWG continental framework with additional biome-level refinements. Countries represent the basic spatial units of the database, while selected islands and regions are treated separately. Compared with previous datasets, EuDAP explicitly considers geographical context and the distribution of species in neighbouring countries when assigning invasion status. In parallel, patterns in native floras were analysed to identify potential gaps and biases in the available data. The database integrates information from more than 150 sources, including national checklists, scientific publications and major international resources such as Euro+Med PlantBase, GloNAF and Plants Of the World Online. Furthermore, nearly 50 regional experts critically evaluated the taxon-region records (acknowledged in our presentation). EuDAP will be regularly updated and made openly available through the FloraVeg.EU platform. Here, we introduce the structure and content of EuDAP and compare it with other major alien plant databases. We present spatial patterns in both absolute and relative (in relation to native floras) numbers of alien species, identify hot- and coldspots, and examine differences among alien plant categories together with the main drivers shaping these patterns. We expect EuDAP to provide an important resource for research in plant biogeography and invasion ecology, while also supporting biodiversity conservation and ecological restoration initiatives.

The story of hemiparasitic plants, declining keystone component of the European vegetation

Jakub Těšitel

Masaryk University, Kotlářská 2, CZ-611 37, Brno, Czech Republic, tesitel@sci.muni.cz

Parasitic plants are often regarded as just botanical curiosities. However, they represent a specialised functional group with a unique trophic strategy in the plant realm. Among them, hemiparasitic plants, which combine autotrophy and heterotrophy, are most abundant in vegetation and have been recognised for their effects on ecosystems and communities. Hemiparasites suppress the growth of their hosts and impact on the competitive balance in the community. Thus, they decrease the dominance in plant communities, including also preventing or even reversing encroachment by competitive grasses and shrubs. Recent research has demonstrated their ability to strongly suppress some noxious invasive plants. Beyond direct parasitism, they accelerate nutrient cycling through litter effects and create gaps in communities, thereby facilitating seedling establishment. Nutrient availability and cycling may be further supported by a special, partly mutualistic interaction between hemiparasites and nitrogen-fixing legumes, and, unexpectedly, by increasing nutrient concentrations in host leaf tissues. Besides vegetation, hemiparasitic plants affect higher trophic levels through cascading effects. Reduction of grasses and supporting forbs also supports forb-feeding insects and pollinators. Reduction of sward density and the resulting gaps create habitats for heliophilous arthropods. On a large scale, (hemi)parasitic plant occurrence is associated with high vegetation species richness, reflecting their multifaceted ecological roles. The impacts of hemiparasitic plants on communities and ecosystems are similar (and partly complementary) to those of large herbivores, which are recognised for their keystone ecosystem-engineering roles. Unlike them, hemiparasitic plants are still a ubiquitous component of European biota, though some have recently been identified among the most declining plant species at the large landscape scale. Considering hemiparasitic plants in nature conservation and ecological restoration schemes may enhance their effectiveness and thus facilitate biodiversity maintenance and ecosystem resilience.

Internal colonization of traditional knowledge and its holders since the Enlightenment and its consequences for understanding and managing vegetation dynamics

Zsolt Molnár

HUN-REN Centre for Ecological Research, Vácrátót, Alkotmány u. 2-4., Hungary, molnar.zsolt@ecolres.hu

The management of high nature-value grasslands in Europe needs complex ecological and practical knowledge. Much of this knowledge, however, is being lost with the disappearance of traditional herders and herding across Europe. We review the historical trends and discuss the potential future of traditional knowledge (TK) and practices, relevant for understanding vegetation dynamics and planning conservation, developed and maintained by traditional herders, through a colonization lens. We understand the term "internal colonization" as the process by which a dominant group, often the urban elite or a central government, exerts control and exploitation over peripheral or marginalized lands and human populations within its own country borders. We used the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework to identify lost and missing rights of TK holders in Europe, relevant for vegetational knowledge. We found that internal colonization of TK holders, specifically traditional herders, by urban elites and governments since the 18th century influenced land rights, grazing mobility, knowledge generation and adaptation mostly negatively, and led to non-adequate agricultural and other regulations and substantial knowledge loss and abandonment of land-use practices relevant for biodiversity conservation. We argue that redressing lost and missing rights and securing and innovation of conservation-relevant traditional ecological knowledge and practices are highly needed to achieve more sustainable conservation and food production, for the successful adaptation to increased climate variability, but also in a potential post-crisis era when transportation and energy is expected to be limited, while the local use of local spontaneous biomass will be vital again in Europe. The International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (UN IYRP) in 2026 could provide a great opportunity to reconcile injustices and strengthen knowledge co-production with traditional herders and other TK holders in Europe - and beyond.

*Barbary Thuja dominated communities of North-West Africa

Giovanni Terranova¹, Milan Chytrý², Irena Axmanová², Claudia Angiolini^{1,3}, Francesco Candini^{1,3}, Dario Ciamarella¹, Joshua Erkelenz² & Gianmaria Bonari^{1,3}

¹Department of Life Sciences, University of Siena, Siena, Italy; ²Department of Botany and Zoology, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic; ³National Biodiversity Future Center (NBFC), Palermo, Italy

The Barbary Thuja (*Tetraclinis articulata*) is a resinous, thermo-xerophilous tree endemic to the south-western Mediterranean basin. It exhibits a Euro-Mediterranean range, with core populations located in North-West Africa (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) and smaller relict populations in south-eastern Spain and Malta. Given its biogeographical significance and threatened status, a comprehensive characterisation of the communities dominated by this species is required to understand its ecological niche fully and plan effective protection measures. This study aims to define the floristic composition and ecological drivers of *T. articulata*-dominated communities across their entire distribution range. We compiled a comprehensive dataset of 2,030 vegetation relevés derived from 18 published papers and 6 PhD theses, standardising the taxonomic nomenclature according to the Euro+Med PlantBase. To ensure a robust analysis of communities specifically dominated by this species, we applied systematic data cleaning steps. We retained only relevés with a *Tetraclinis* cover $\geq 13\%$ (corresponding to Braun-Blanquet class 2) and excluded plots where other tree species exerted higher cover values. The final dataset consisted of 654 relevés comprising 285 taxa. Using Partitioning Around Medoids (PAM) clustering based on Bray-Curtis dissimilarity and validated using the Average Silhouette Width, we identified four distinct vegetation groups reflecting different ecological conditions. These were characterised by Indicator Species Analysis as: (1) widespread, thermophilic, semi-arid open woodlands degraded by grazing, defined by a high frequency of therophytes (e.g., *Valerianella discoidea*) and woody species such as *Olea europaea* and *Phillyrea latifolia*; (2) mesic, dense Mediterranean maquis concentrated along coastal areas at lower elevations, indicated by *Ampelodesmos mauritanicus*, *Quercus coccifera*, and *Pinus halepensis*; (3) semi-arid continental steppes found at higher elevations, dominated by *Macrochloa tenacissima*; and (4) warm, xerophilic garrigues characterised by *Thymus saturejoides* and *Lavandula dentata*. Furthermore, Principal Coordinate Analysis (PCoA) demonstrated that the floristic differentiation among these communities is primarily driven by gradients of moisture and continentality, as well as canopy cover structure. These results highlight the adaptability of the species across different environmental gradients, ranging from coastal mesic sites to inland continental steppes. This study will contribute to the understanding of the ecology of *T. articulata*-dominated communities and support their conservation in the Mediterranean region.

*Combined effects of root hemiparasite and mowing can suppress the expansion of *Calamagrostis epigejos* in grassland dolines

Alida Anna Hábcenyus¹, Kata Frei², Zsófia Borbély², Zsófia Krivács², Judit Sonkoly^{3,4}, Zoltán Bátori² & Csaba Tölgyesi¹

¹MTA-SZTE 'Momentum' Applied Ecology Research Group, University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary, habcenyus.alida.anna@szte.hu;

²Department of Ecology, University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary; ³Department of Ecology, University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Hungary;

⁴HUN-REN-UD Functional and Restoration Ecology Research Group, Debrecen, Hungary

Dolines harbour high microhabitat diversity and maintain microclimatic conditions that are partly decoupled from regional climate trends. Consequently, these topographic depressions are of high conservation value, particularly in the context of ongoing climate change. However, habitat degradation can reduce their conservation potential. In grassland dolines, the expansive spread of *Calamagrostis epigejos* poses a serious threat. Although the negative effects of *Calamagrostis* expansion on grassland biodiversity are well documented, carrying out conventional management options in doline grasslands runs up against technical issues. In a three-year field experiment, we tested four management approaches targeting *Calamagrostis*-dominated stands in three grassland dolines. These included the introduction of the hemiparasitic forb *Rhinanthus minor* as a potential biocontrol agent by sowing its seeds, mowing, a combination of sowing and mowing, and additional hay transfer from adjacent reference grasslands. We evaluated the effects these management options on vegetation diversity and productivity. Measurements of *Rhinanthus* biomass confirmed that mowing facilitates the establishment of the hemiparasite: *Rhinanthus* produced significantly higher biomass in the mown+sown plots (with or without hay transfer) than in plots where it was sown alone. Thus, sowing *Rhinanthus* alone did not increase either species richness or functional diversity in the doline grasslands. In contrast, mowing significantly enhanced both taxonomic and functional diversity, even without additional treatments. The highest diversity was observed in plots where mowing was combined with *Rhinanthus* sowing (i.e. mown+sown plots), while hay transfer did not further increase diversity. Plant species other than *Calamagrostis* reached their highest abundance in plots where mowing and *Rhinanthus* sowing were combined with hay transfer, although their abundance remained lower than in reference grasslands. Similarly, *Calamagrostis* biomass and abundance were lowest in the mown+sown plots, though the species was not completely suppressed. Litter biomass was lowest in the mown and mown+sown plots, where total biomass production was even lower than in the reference grasslands. Hay transfer partly mitigated this effect, resulting in biomass levels comparable to those of the reference sites. Our results indicate that sowing *Rhinanthus* without additional intervention is insufficient to suppress dense *Calamagrostis* stands in doline grasslands. Mowing improved all examined vegetation characteristics and reduced the dominance of *Calamagrostis*, while the combination of mowing and *Rhinanthus* introduction proved to be the most effective management strategy. Although hay transfer provided some additional benefits, it also increased litter accumulation, which may hinder *Rhinanthus* establishment. For long-term management, repeated sowing of *Rhinanthus* combined with mowing is recommended to promote the regeneration of diverse doline grassland vegetation.

Talk Sessions

**Session 3: Vegetation
monitoring and resurvey for
biodiversity conservation in a
global change context**

The project WetFlorVegChange, an unusual resurvey project

Flavia Landucci¹, Irena Axmanová¹, Michal Hajek¹, Petra Hajková¹, Svitlana Iemelianova^{1,2}, Barbora Klímová¹, Tomáš Peterka¹, Zdenka Preislerová¹, Kateřina Šumberová³, Lubomir Tichý¹ & Friedemann von Lampe⁴

¹Department of Botany and Zoology, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, flavia.landucci@gmail.com; ²Department of Geobotany and Ecology, M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany NAS, Kyiv, Ukraine; ³Institute of Botany, Czech Academy of Sciences, Brno, Czech Republic; ⁴Vegetation Ecology & Biodiversity Research Group, Georg-August University Göttingen, Germany

Wetlands are among the most threatened ecosystems in Europe, yet long term, continent wide evidence of floristic and vegetation change remains fragmented, geographically biased, and taxonomically uneven. Despite decades of concern over wetland degradation (1; 2) and numerous local case studies (3), comprehensive assessments of vegetation change across European wetlands are still lacking. Although the use of permanent plots and vegetation resurveys has expanded rapidly in recent decades (4; 5; 6), wetland habitats remain markedly underrepresented in continental scale databases such as ReSurveyEurope (7). *WetFlorVegChange* is a new project aimed at mobilizing and collecting new resurvey data and assessing short- and long-term floristic and vegetation changes in European wetlands. Wetland vegetation poses unique methodological challenges compared to terrestrial or forest systems. Many communities exhibit strong hydrological dependence, high interannual variability, and pronounced spatial instability (8; 9). Aquatic macrophyte assemblages shift with water-level fluctuations and management regimes, while annual amphibious communities (e.g., *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*, *Littorelletea*, *Bidentetea*) occur only within narrow hydrological windows and change across microtopographic gradients (10). These dynamics make exact plot relocation often impossible or ecologically meaningless. To address these challenges, we developed a dedicated wetland resurvey protocol that ensures methodological comparability while respecting the ecological realities of wetland systems. The protocol emphasizes ecological matching over strict geographic relocation, guiding surveyors to prioritize habitat conditions, hydrological phases, and vegetation structure when the original plot cannot be meaningfully re-established. It introduces standardized relocation confidence classes (A-D) following best practices for resurvey uncertainty (4; 11) and provides practical guidance for sampling in open water, drawdown zones, and fragmented amphibious habitats. Recommendations include shoreline based sampling, hydrological timing adjustments, and the use of multiple small plots when habitat patches are spatially discontinuous.

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Patterns of grassland and forest plant diversity in the Czech Republic revealed by integrated preferential and random stratified sampling

Veronika Kalusová¹, Barbora Klímová¹, Martin Večeřa¹, Irena Axmanová¹, Dariia Borovyk^{1,2}, Pavel Dřevojan¹, Ilona Knollová¹, Lubomír Tichý¹, Milan Chytrý¹ & Jan Divíšek^{1,3}

¹Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Sciences, Masaryk University, Kotlarska 2, 611 37 Brno, Czechia, kalusova@sci.muni.cz, divisekjan@sci.muni.cz; ²Department of Geobotany and Ecology, M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Tereshchenkivska st. 2, 01601 Kyiv, Ukraine; ³Department of Geography, Faculty of Sciences, Masaryk University, Kotlarska 2, 611 37 Brno, Czechia

Large vegetation-plot databases are increasingly used to model and map plant species richness across landscapes. However, these databases typically compile records from diverse projects that differ in sampling periods, objectives, and often use preferential sampling designs. As a result, vegetation plots in such databases are unevenly distributed across geographical and environmental space. Attractive protected areas with well-preserved or species-rich vegetation types and easily accessible areas near cities tend to be oversampled, while common, species-poor, or degraded vegetation types remain underrepresented. Such biases can substantially affect modelling and mapping results in large-scale assessments of local plant richness, especially in landscapes undergoing rapid environmental change driven by land abandonment, woody encroachment, and the spread of generalist and invasive species. To improve estimates of plant species richness in forests and grasslands across Czech landscapes, we integrated vegetation-plot records from existing databases with systematic random stratified sampling. For grasslands, we combined plots from the Czech Vegetation Database (CVD) with a random-stratified grassland survey conducted over the past five years (DivLand Project; 696 of 801 random-stratified plots sampled). For forests, we supplemented the CVD data with stratified National Forest Inventory (NFI) plots (1,756) provided by the Czech Forest Institute. Using these datasets, we produced maps of plant diversity for various forest (e.g., alluvial, beech, and dry pine forests) and grassland types (e.g., dry, mesic, and submontane to montane *Nardus* grasslands) and species groups (i.e., all species, threatened species, habitat specialists, and alien species). This enabled us to identify regional patterns of species richness hotspots specific to each vegetation type. Our results highlight the importance of systematic sampling strategies in reducing data bias and providing more accurate, ecologically realistic estimates of local plant species richness in fragmented, human-influenced landscapes.

Equine allies: The role of Polish Primitive Horse (Konik) in small-scale rewilding for habitat revitalization

Jozef Šibík^{1,2} & Mária Šibíková^{1,2}

¹Plant Science and Biodiversity Center, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Dúbravská cesta 9, Bratislava, Slovakia, jozef.sibik@savba.sk;

²Geobotany Research Center, Karpatské námestie 10/A, Bratislava, Slovakia, jozef.sibik@geobotany.sk

The Polish Primitive Horse (PPH or Polish Konik horse) is a primitive breed that is morphologically similar to the extinct Tarpan, although it shares no genetic connections. This breed is characterized by its low food requirements and excellent adaptability to challenging environmental conditions. The Polish Konik has been utilized for various revitalization and rewilding initiatives, not only in Poland but also across Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, and other countries.

This study documents the first introduction of the Polish Konik horse to Slovakia, initiated with a herd sourced from Austria in 2019. To further enhance genetic diversity and overall herd health, a stallion was subsequently imported from the original breeding station near Białowieża National Park (Kalitnik) in Poland.

The research area is situated in the southeastern part of the Štiavnické vrchy Mountains (Central Slovakia), bordering the Krupinská Planina, within a protected landscape area on volcanic bedrock. The site features a mosaic of forest and non-forest plant communities, ranging from closed canopy forests to scrublands, as well as open grassland habitats, including mesophilous and xerophilous dry grasslands, and moist to wet meadows.

Our research involved establishing permanent plots prior to the introduction of the horses, that were resampled every year. Data loggers were arranged for monitoring temperature and soil moisture, recording acoustic diversity throughout the rewilding process, and employing UAVs to monitor landscape changes influenced by the horses. GNSS device with 1cm accuracy was used for sampling individuals of protected species. In addition, insect populations were monitored before and during the experiment.

After five years of grazing, significant changes in landscape structure were observed, including the retreat of grasses such as *Calamagrostis epigejos*, and shrubs like *Crataegus monogyna*, *Prunus spinosa*, and *Rosa canina*, in previously overgrown pastures. Notably, there was a marked decrease in the abundance of grasses and sedges relative to dicots, alongside a substantial increase in orchid populations, specifically *Anacamptis morio*, which surged to hundreds of individuals.

The expansion of dry grasslands has become evident, alongside an increase in biodiversity due to the opening of dry *Quercus cerris* forests and the continuous, albeit low-intensity, disturbance from trampling by horse hooves. This grazing activity has led to a decrease in invasive, non-native species such as *Aster lanceolatus* and *Coryza canadensis*. Additionally, the horses have been effective in suppressing the encroachment of non-native *Robinia pseudoacacia* trees by consuming young sprouts, despite their proclaimed toxicity for horses. Notably, no adverse effects on animal health have been observed.

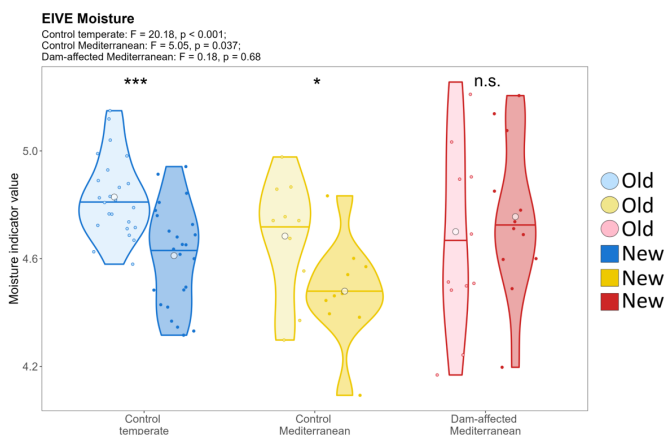
In conclusion, PPH demonstrate significant potential for revitalizing various types of plant communities, enhancing their ecological quality due to their low resource requirements, cost-effectiveness, and substantial benefits. Furthermore, their well-behaved nature and ability to live freely in herds year-round make them easily trainable for riding purposes. These attributes create a vast, yet underutilized potential for revitalization and rewilding efforts.

Temporal changes in riparian forests vegetation: unexpected responses to streamflow alteration under climate change

Irati Sanz-Zubizarreta¹, Milan Chytrý², Patricia María Rodríguez-González², Nere Amaia Laskurain⁴, Gabriele Midolo⁵, Idoia Biurrun¹

¹Department of Plant Biology and Ecology, Faculty of Science and Technology, University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU, Bilbao, Spain, irati.sanz@ehu.eus (Irati Sanz-Zubizarreta), idoia.biurrun@ehu.eus (Idoia Biurrun); ²Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, chytry@sci.muni.cz; ³Forest Research Centre, Associate Laboratory TERRA, School of Agriculture, University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal, patri@isa.ulisboa.pt; ⁴Bergara, Spain; nereamaia@gmail.com; ⁵Department of Spatial Sciences, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Prague-Suchbát, Czech Republic; midolo@fzp.czu.cz

Riparian forests are highly dynamic and species-rich ecosystems, although they face multiple pressures. Recent vegetation-resurvey studies revealed mixed effects of river regulation on riparian forests, but the impacts of increased minimum flows remain understudied. We resurveyed historical plots to assess the ecological impact of a dam on the Irati River in northern Spain, located in a temperate-Mediterranean ecotone. This dam regulated the Irati River by altering flow peaks, reducing winter flow and increasing summer average discharge. We investigated how flow alteration and climate change affected riparian vegetation composition between Old (1997–2003) and New (2022–2023) plots, with a particular focus on moisture-demanding, alien and ruderal species. The plots were divided into three sections: (1) the temperate control, (2) the Mediterranean control, and (3) the Mediterranean dam-affected. A shift in species composition was observed in the studied forests, each section displaying a distinct pattern of change. We associated the changes in plant species composition to climate change and river regulation. Both control sections exhibited increases in thermophilous species and a decline in moisture-demanding riparian species. Conversely, the dam appears to support riparian species by maintaining summer flows, mitigating climate-induced drought impacts. Additionally, ruderal species increased in both Mediterranean sections, suggesting that their spread was more likely facilitated by industrial and agricultural development rather than by the dam. We conclude that dam-induced summer flows may partially buffer climate change effects on riparian forests, providing guidance for flow management prescriptions and highlighting the need for long-term, multifactorial assessments of river regulation.



Violin plot of unweighted mean indicator values (EIVE) for moisture for old and new plots within each section. Circles represent means and the horizontal lines represent the medians. Statistical significance within each section between old and new plots was assessed using permutation tests, with results displayed at the top of the figure.

Nitrophilization and Shrubification Vary Across Alpine Plant Communities: Evidence from the Central Apennines

Marco Varricchione, Federica Pontieri, Pereyra Almena Martín, Maria Laura Carranza & Angela Stanisci

University of Molise, C.da Fonte Lappone, 86090 Pesche (IS), Italy. marco.varricchione@unimol.it; f.pontieri@studenti.unimol.it; m.pereyraalmena@studenti.unimol.it; carranza@unimol.it; stanisci@unimol.it

High-mountain ecosystems are widely recognized as biodiversity hotspots, hosting high plant species richness and large proportion of endemic and rare taxa (1), while being particularly vulnerable to climate and land use changes (2).

In this context, we evaluated floristic, ecological and structural changes over time in alpine and sub-alpine grasslands and *Pinus mugo* thickets in the central Apennines (Italy). We analysed 66 georeferenced phytosociological relevés (4x4 m) from the VIOLA database (3), originally sampled in the years 1992/2003 (T1), and resurveyed in 2017/2021 (T2). The dataset encompasses 4 plant community types: Apennine stripped grasslands (*Sesleria juncifolia* community, EUNIS Habitat R4532), wind edge swards (*Carex myosuroides* community, EUNIS Habitat R4521), snowbeds (*Trifolium thalii* community, EUNIS Habitat R41) and *Pinus mugo* thickets (EUNIS Habitat S264).

Temporal dynamics were assessed by calculating taxonomic turnover (Bray-Curtis distance to centroid) and analysing community homogenization and temporal trajectories via Non-metric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS). Ecological and structural dynamics over time were analysed through Community Weighted Mean (CWM) for growth forms and Ecological Indicator Values for Europe (EIVE 1.0) (4).

The results showed a clear, but community-specific changes over time. Taxonomic turnover was highest in Apennine stripped grasslands and lowest in *P. mugo* thickets.

All communities displayed directional compositional shifts between T1 and T2. *P. mugo* thickets showed a pronounced shift associated with the increase in nitrogen-demanding species and scapose hemicryptophytes, such as *Hypericum richeri* subsp. *richeri*, *Valeriana montana*, *Helianthemum nummularium* subsp. *grandiflorum* and *Poa alpina*, offset by a decline in *Juniperus communis* and *Salix retusa*. In contrast, the grasslands communities exhibited more divergent trajectories. Wind edge swards shifted toward more mesic and nitrogen demanding species, accompanied by a decrease in alpine taxa such as *Festuca violacea* subsp. *italica* and *Oxytropis campestris*, and early signs of shrubification driven by the expansion of fruticose chamaephytes like *Salix retusa*. Conversely, Apennine stripped grasslands followed a divergent trajectory, shifting toward more xeric and nitrogen-poor demanding species, with a marked decline in alpine specialists such as *Plantago atrata* subsp. *atrata*, *Festuca violacea* subsp. *italica* and *Poa alpina*. The snowbeds, instead, appear to be the most stable community.

Overall, our results demonstrated significant but contrasting trajectories in the alpine and sub-alpine vegetation of the central Apennines. While general trends of nitrophilization and shrubification observed in European high-mountain ecosystems are confirmed (5, 6), these processes are neither universal nor uniform across all alpine plant communities. Notably, Apennine stripped grassland on steep slopes with rendzina soils, followed a divergent trajectory, exhibiting a marked decrease in these indicators.

Finally, the divergence in vegetation change trajectories underscores the importance of community-level monitoring and analysis for improving predictions of alpine biodiversity dynamics in Mediterranean mountain ranges.

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Effects of grazing management and temperature anomalies on stability of grassland production and CO₂ fluxes, does the plant community drift progressively, or fluctuate around a stable state?

Katja Klumpp & Olivier Darsonville

Université Clermont Auvergne, INRAE, VetAgro Sup, UMR Ecosystème Prairial, 63000 Clermont-Ferrand, France; katja.klumpp@inrae.fr, olivier.darsonville@inrae.fr

Temperature anomalies, including heatwaves, cold spells, and seasonal shifts, are becoming increasingly frequent and pose major challenges for ecosystem functioning, carbon sequestration, and land management. Although temperature anomalies are known to influence large-scale carbon flux patterns, their fine-scale effects, particularly in interaction with agricultural management, remain poorly understood.

This study, conducted within the ACBB-ANAE-ICOS observatory, investigates the impact of air temperature anomalies on CO₂ fluxes in an upland (1040 m a.s.l.) mesic grassland under two contrasting grazing regimes: low cattle grazing intensity (LG) and high cattle grazing intensity combined with fertilisation (HG). Using 18 years (2003-2022) of CO₂ flux and climate data, we assessed net ecosystem exchange (NEE) responses to cold, warm, and extreme temperature anomalies, while accounting for standing biomass production, potential production, and senescent material (litter production).

The study site experienced on average about 40 anomalous temperature days per year, including approximately 10 extreme events. CO₂ fluxes were most sensitive to temperature anomalies during the early growing season. Warm anomalies generally enhanced CO₂ uptake in spring but reduced it during summer and autumn, particularly during extreme warm events lasting more than six days.

In spring, NEE indicated a stronger carbon sink under HG (0.760 Mg C/ha) than under LG (+24%). This enhanced sink strength was mainly associated with lower senescent material under HG (-23%), while biomass production remained similar between grazing regimes. During summer and autumn, responses diverged more strongly between treatments. Under HG conditions, NEE remained close to neutral or represented a small carbon sink (0.08 Mg C / ha), reflecting a balance between production and vegetation mortality. In contrast, under LG conditions, NEE became positive, indicating net carbon release and suggesting different vegetation thresholds under increasing temperatures. This response was accompanied by higher levels of senescent material combined with relatively low production (-49%), indicating that biomass loss and associated ecosystem respiration dominated carbon dynamics under high thermal conditions.

At the same time, the stability (mean/standard deviation) of standing biomass and potential production was higher under HG than under LG, indicating smaller fluctuations relative to the average level and related to climate in the HG treatment. This suggests that the plant community may be better adapted to the climate-grazing equilibrium under higher grazing-fertilisation intensity.

Overall, our findings highlight the importance of management-climate interactions in shaping CO₂ flux and production responses and underline the value of long-term field observations for understanding grassland carbon sink resilience under increasing temperature extremes.

Freshwater ecosystems under pressure: modelling the future of riparian vegetation in a protected Alpine landscape

Camilla Wellstein^{1,2} & Gianmarco Tavilla²

¹Faculty of Agricultural, Environmental and Food Sciences, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Piazza Università 5, Italy, camilla.wellstein@unibz.it; ²Competence Center for Sustainability, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, via Cassa di Risparmio 21, Italy, gianmarco.tavilla@unibz.it

Among the world's most threatened ecosystems, aquatic habitats have suffered dramatic losses, with roughly 87% of natural wetlands disappearing since the early 18th century (1). Additionally, over three quarters of river and riparian habitat types listed under the EU Habitats Directive remain in unfavourable conservation status (2). Within freshwater ecosystems, riparian vegetation acts as a key interface between aquatic and terrestrial environments, supporting high biodiversity and stabilizing riverbanks. In South Tyrol (autonomous province of Bolzano, Italy), the channelization of the Adige River and its tributaries have reduced riparian vegetation. This vegetation includes habitat types of high conservation concern, notably 3220, 3240, and the priority habitat 91E0*. Within the interdisciplinary research project FLASH (Flash floods prediction and impact in protected mountain areas), which investigates the interactions between extreme hydrological events and riparian ecosystems in protected areas of South Tyrol, we performed a Bayesian additive regression trees (BART) model aimed at mapping the potential distribution of riparian vegetation under current and future climatic conditions within parks in South Tyrol. Following a sensitivity analysis to optimize the sampling design, the model was projected under multiple emission scenarios and time horizons (mid and late 21st century) using an ensemble of global climate models, and the results were intersected with the existing network of eight protected areas. Climatic variables related to temperature seasonality and precipitation regimes emerged as the most influential predictors, followed by topographic and hydrological factors. Under baseline conditions (1981-2010), suitable areas covered approximately one fifth of the provincial territory, concentrated along valley floors and watercourse networks. Within the protected area network, habitat suitability varied markedly among individual reserves: the Stelvio National Park showed the highest proportion of suitable riparian habitat, covering approximately 20% of its territory. Future projections consistently indicated a substantial contraction of suitable habitat, with losses intensifying under higher emission pathways and toward the end of the century. The Stelvio National Park, despite holding the largest baseline suitable area, was also among the most severely affected reserves, with projected suitable habitat declining to less than 1% of its territory under mid-to-high emission scenarios by 2071-2100 (SSP370). Within the protected area network, the extent of suitable riparian habitat declined markedly under most future scenarios, with pronounced variation among individual reserves. These findings highlight the vulnerability of Alpine riparian ecosystems to climate change and suggest that the current protected area network may be insufficient to safeguard these habitats in the long term. By providing spatially explicit projections of habitat suitability change, this work offers a quantitative basis for identifying priority areas for riparian vegetation restoration and for reassessing the adequacy of existing conservation designations within the broader effort to protect freshwater ecosystems in mountain regions.

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Database of Permanent Monitoring Plots in the Czech Republic: 18 years of experience

Lubomír Tichý¹, Pavel Dřevojan¹, Iva Hönigová² & Ondřej Popelka²

¹Dept. of Botany and Zoology, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, tichy@sci.muni.cz; ²Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic, Prague, Czech Republic

A Database of Permanent Monitoring Plots was established in 2009 by the Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic to document the status and long-term changes of important botanical sites mostly in nature protected areas. The database covers well-preserved forest and non-forest vegetation types across the entire Czech Republic. In its current form, it includes 1,358 permanently monitored plots of terrestrial vegetation, with a total of 3,089 vegetation relevés recorded by 2024. Each plot has been surveyed at least twice (75% of plots), some three times (24%), and a small proportion more frequently (<1%). This makes the dataset one of the largest consistently re-surveyed databases in Europe, characterized by systematic plot selection, relatively even spatial distribution within a single country, and a unified sampling methodology. The collection of such an extensive dataset over 18 years has involved several tens of contributors. The dataset provides a robust basis for analyzing the impacts of climate change on species composition and vegetation structure in natural and semi-natural habitats, assessing degradation across different habitat types, identifying indicator species and communities sensitive to environmental change, calibrating remote sensing approaches, and linking vegetation data with environmental variables such as climate, soil properties, nitrogen deposition, and management. In addition to its analytical potential, the dataset represents a valuable methodological resource for evaluating factors that influence the interpretation of temporal changes but are not directly related to actual vegetation dynamics. These include observer-related differences, phenological variability, taxonomic concepts, variation in the recording quality of the bryophyte layer, and the consistency of cover estimates for both dominant and rare species. Because the dataset contains repeated observations of the same plots, these sources of variation can be quantified and partially separated from true ecological changes. This allows for a more accurate interpretation of vegetation dynamics and contributes to improving the methodological framework of re-survey studies.

Long-term landscape dynamics and protected areas shape plant biodiversity change of Central European grasslands.

Gabriele Midolo¹, Verena Haring², Adam T. Clark², Emma Shi Mendez³, Hana Skokanová⁴, Martina Sychrová⁴, Franz Essl⁵, Milan Chytrý⁵, Wolfgang Willner^{6,7}, Stefan Dullinger⁸ & Petr Keil¹

¹Department of Spatial Sciences, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Praha-Suchbát, Czech Republic, midolo@fzp.czu.cz, keil@fzp.czu.cz; ²Department of Biology, University of Graz, Graz, Austria, verena.haring@uni-graz.at, adam.clark@uni-graz.at; ³Division of BioInvasions, Global Change & Macroecology, Department of Botany and Biodiversity Research, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria, emma.shi.mendez@univie.ac.at, franz.essl@univie.ac.at; ⁴Landscape Research Institute, Průhonice, Czech Republic, hana.skokanova@vuk.gov.cz, sychrova.martina@gmail.com; ⁵Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, chytry@sci.muni.cz; ⁶Department of Botany and Biodiversity Research, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria; ⁷Vienna Institute for Nature Conservation & Analyses (VINCA), Vienna, Austria, wolfgang.willner@univie.ac.at; ⁸Division of Biodiversity Dynamics and Conservation, Department of Botany and Biodiversity Research, University Vienna, Vienna, Austria, stefan.dullinger@univie.ac.at

Central European grasslands are biodiversity hotspots threatened by multiple anthropogenic impacts. While biodiversity declines are well-documented, the relative roles of long-term landscape dynamics, climatic conditions, and protected areas in shaping these changes over century-long timescales remain poorly studied. We utilized a multi-decadal natural experiment based on 411 pairs of survey-resurvey plot observations located in the borderland of two countries with diverging land-use histories (Austria and the Czech Republic). We modeled both community-level changes (species richness and species composition) and species-level dynamics (local extinction risk and colonization probability) as functions of elevation, protected area status, and landscape changes derived by comparing historical (~1870) to contemporary maps (2023). We found overall no net gain or loss in species richness but large composition shifts. Species richness declines were significantly higher at sites where landscapes transitioned toward higher aggregation index values (i.e., larger and more compact grassland patches) over the last century, with larger effects over longer survey intervals. Species-level models explained these richness patterns through a significant imbalance between extinction and colonization: higher landscape aggregation was associated with an increased extinction risk for historical resident species and a reduced probability of colonization. In addition, we found that protected areas and higher elevations significantly slowed turnover rates (Jaccard dissimilarity). Specifically, plots within protected sites exhibited about half of the temporal turnover rate of unprotected sites and 30% lower odds of local extinction for resident species. Overall, extinction risk was highest among specialists and moisture-demanding species, while colonizing species were predominantly generalists adapted to high nutrient availability and drier conditions. While European grasslands have largely undergone fragmentation over the last century, we demonstrate that plant biodiversity losses are paradoxically concentrated in landscapes that remained more connected over time. This finding could reflect a higher sensitivity to contemporary drivers (e.g., eutrophication and drainage) in historically diverse and connected landscapes, which may now be paying an extinction debt accumulated over the last few decades. In contrast, historically fragmented sites may have already experienced more losses earlier. Our study reveals the importance of long-term landscape change in shaping biodiversity trends and highlights the importance of protected areas in buffering large biodiversity declines of grassland vegetation.

Vegetation change in dry grasslands in Bulgaria: Preliminary results of a 15-year resurvey

Salza Palpurina¹, Milan Chytrý², Rossen Tzonev^{1,3}, Nadejda Apostolova-Stoyanova¹, Irina Gerasimova¹, Rossen Vassilev^{1,4}, Georgi Kunev^{1,4}, Irena Axmanová², Jiří Danihelka², Todor Karakiev¹ & Mário Duchon²

¹National Museum of Natural History, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, blvd. Tsar Osvoboditel 1, Sofia, palpurina@nmnhs.com, tzonev@uni-sofia.bg, apostolova_nadejda@abv.bg, lizards2007@gmail.com, rossen.vassilev@biodiversity.bg, gikunev@uni-sofia.bg;

²Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Kotlářská 2, Brno, Czech Republic, chytry@sci.muni.cz, axmanova@sci.muni.cz, danihelka@sci.muni.cz, mario.duchon@gmail.com; ³Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Department of Ecology and Environmental Protection, blvd. Dragan Tsankov 8, Sofia, Bulgaria; ⁴Department of Botany, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", blvd. Dragan Tsankov 8, Sofia, Bulgaria

Resurveys of historical vegetation plots are essential for detecting vegetation dynamics under land use and climate change. In 2010-2012, a comprehensive vegetation survey of dry and semi-dry grasslands was undertaken across Bulgaria, as part of the first author's PhD research at the Vegetation Science Group at Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia. In total, 181 georeferenced vegetation plots were sampled using a nested plot design, resulting in over 369 plot records published in 2025 openly on GBIF¹. Patterns of species richness in a subset of the data were analysed separately². Here, we present preliminary results of a resurvey campaign carried out in northern Bulgaria by resampling the original plot locations 15 years later using identical methodology, with few plots from southern Bulgaria revisited a year earlier. Future plans include resampling the rest of the plots in southern Bulgaria in 2027. This contribution outlines the methodological framework, plot relocation strategy, and presents preliminary results on shifts in species composition and richness. Once the data from the entire resurvey become available, the study will evaluate temporal shifts in species richness, diversity and composition, and vegetation structure, in relation to potential drivers such as changes in land use and climate. The resurvey will also contribute to regional and European initiatives on monitoring long term vegetation change.

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Impacts of observation error on estimates of vegetation dynamics and biodiversity

Adam Thomas Clark

University of Graz, Institute of Biology, Holteigasse 6, 8010 Graz, Austria, adam.clark@uni-graz.at

Observation error is known to be high in vegetation surveys, leading to inaccurate estimates of community composition and species abundances. These errors also limit our ability to accurately assess rates of biodiversity change across space and time. As part of the GRASSland Communities Experiment (GRACE) (1,2), we set out to quantify, and ameliorate, the impacts of these errors on estimates of biodiversity change drawn from vegetation resurvey data. To do so, we conducted a multi-site test of observation error rates in herbaceous vegetation surveys, spanning 25 locations and three continents from the Nutrient Network globally distributed experiment. In each site, plots were resurveyed repeatedly within a single growing season, either by the same surveyor, or multiple different surveyors. We then quantified error rates for estimates of cover and species identity, applied these error rate estimates to simulate hypothetical scenarios of species loss and species gain, and computed the resulting biases in estimates of diversity change and turnover (i.e. alpha diversity change and temporal beta diversity). Results showed that observation error rates were much higher for rare species, and generally higher when measurements were conducted by multiple different surveyors, and for graminoids relative to other species groups. Error was generally high for species-level statistics (e.g. upwards of 20% for both cover and species identity), but tended to be lower for abundant species, and for aggregate statistics (e.g. diversity, community-level cover). In the simulations of species gains and losses, corresponding biases in estimates of alpha diversity change were small, but increased somewhat at higher rates of simulated biodiversity change. In contrast, biases in estimates of turnover were high (5-15%) regardless of simulated rates of biodiversity change, and were maximised in scenarios where no actual biodiversity change took place. Jointly, these findings indicate that certain metrics (in particular, aggregate estimates of community-level cover, diversity, and alpha diversity change) are likely robust to even high rates of observation error, whereas others (e.g. species-level cover, presence of individual rare species, and temporal turnover) are likely to be biased even by moderate observation error. We note that these biases could at least partially explain why many studies of local-scale biodiversity change fail to find significant average directional trends, despite high reported turnover. Our results also demonstrate how maximum likelihood techniques could be applied to quantify and ameliorate these biases future analyses.

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Floreal 2.2: a tool linking plant functional traits to agroecological indicators for grassland assessment

François Prud'homme¹ & Jean-Pierre Theau²

¹Conservatoire botanique national des Pyrénées et de Midi-Pyrénées, Vallon de Salut 65200 Bagnères de Bigorre, France. francois.prudhomme@cbnmp.fr; ²INRAE, UMR AGIR, F-31320 Auzeville, France. theau.jeanpierre31@gmail.com

Natural grasslands represent a major conservation priority in France and across Europe, as they host high levels of biodiversity while providing multiple ecosystem services essential for livestock farming and rural landscapes. Addressing the challenges of conserving these habitats requires stronger dialogue between ecologists, agronomists, and farmers, as well as tools capable of translating ecological knowledge into operational indicators for grassland management and policy evaluation (1). In this context, the Floreal tool was developed in 2021 to bridge plant ecology and agroecological assessment. Floreal is based on phytosociological vegetation surveys and uses a plant functional trait database (FlorealData) (2) to compute agroecological indicators (FlorealIndices) (3) describing the ecological and agronomic properties of grassland plant communities. The new version, Floreal 2.2 (2026), is a free and open-access tool that substantially improves the robustness and analytical capabilities of the initial version. This new version also considerably expands the geographical scope of the tool. The FlorealData database currently includes 34 functional traits documented for 990 plant species, compiled from the scientific literature. These traits are used to generate 30 agroecological indicators that characterize key ecosystem services provided by grasslands, including species diversity, ecological specialization, ecological indicator values, productivity, management flexibility, forage phenology, attractiveness to pollinators and butterflies, and landscape and cultural value. Two user-friendly interfaces allow the operational use of Floreal 2.2 for both field diagnosis and large-scale ecological assessments. The first is a smartphone-based application designed to support in-field diagnosis of grasslands together with farmers or agricultural advisors (floreal.cbnmp.fr). The second is an online platform enabling the computation of agroecological indicators for large vegetation datasets (floreal.desktop.cbnmp.fr). The tool can be applied to grassland diagnosis and monitoring at multiple spatial scales, ranging from individual fields and farms to territories or public policy frameworks. Floreal is currently used to support farmer-advisor dialogue, to assess agri-environmental schemes, and to monitor the conservation status and restoration of habitats of European interest, including within Natura 2000 sites and in the context of the European Nature Restoration Law. By linking vegetation surveys, functional trait data, and agroecological indicators, Floreal provides an operational framework for integrating plant community ecology into grassland management, biodiversity conservation, and environmental policy evaluation across France and potentially throughout Europe.

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*Leveraging the European Vegetation Archive to Resolve Visual Ambiguity in Automated Biodiversity Monitoring

Giulio Martellucci^{1,*}, Hervé Goëau², Fabrice Vinatier¹, Pierre Bonnet², Charlotte Tibi², Jean-Christophe Lombardo³, Milan Chytrý⁴, Olivier Argagnon¹², Idoia Biurrun¹⁴, Andraž Čarni^{7,8}, Jürgen Dengler^{22,23}, Juliette Ducretet¹², Franz Essl¹⁵, Xavier Fortuny¹², Valentin Golub²⁰, Behlül Güler¹³, Ute Jandt^{9,10}, Florian Jansen¹⁷, Maria Lebedeva²¹, Jesper Erenskjold Moeslund⁴, Jozef Šibík²⁴, Zvezdana Stančić⁶, Grzegorz Swacha¹⁶, Domas Uogintas¹⁸, Kiril Vassilev¹⁹, Sergey Yamalov²¹ & Alexis Joly³

¹INRAE, UMR LISAH, Montpellier, France; ²AMAP lab, Montpellier University, CIRAD, CNRS, INRAE, IRD, Montpellier, France; ³Inria, LIRMM, Montpellier University, CNRS, Montpellier, France; ⁴Department of Ecoscience, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark; ⁵Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic; ⁶Faculty of Geotechnical Engineering, University of Zagreb, Varaždin, Croatia; ⁷Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Jovan Hadži Institute of Biology, Ljubljana, Slovenia; ⁸School for Viticulture and Enology, University of Nova Gorica, Nova Gorica, Slovenia; ⁹Institute of Biology/Geobotany and Botanical Garden, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Halle, Germany; ¹⁰German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research Halle-Jena-Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany; ¹¹ADENA, Réserve Naturelle Nationale du Bagnas, Agde, France; ¹²Conservatoire Botanique National Méditerranéen, Hyères, France; ¹³Biology Education, Dokuz Eylül University, Buca, Izmir, Türkiye; ¹⁴Department of Plant Biology and Ecology, University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU, Bilbao, Spain; ¹⁵Division of BioInvasions, Global Change and Macroecology, University Vienna, Vienna, Austria; ¹⁶Botanical Garden, University of Wrocław, Wrocław, Poland; ¹⁷Faculty of Agriculture, Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Rostock, Rostock, Germany; ¹⁸State Scientific Research Institution, Nature Research Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania; ¹⁹Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Sofia, Bulgaria; ²⁰Institute of Ecology of the Volga River Basin of Russian Academy of Sciences, Togliatti, Russia; ²¹South-Ural botanical garden-institute, Ufa Federal research centre, Russian Academy Science; ²²Vegetation Ecology Research Group, Institute of Natural Resource Sciences (IUNR), Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), Wädenswil, Switzerland; ²³Bayreuth Center of Ecology and Environmental Research (BayCEER), University of Bayreuth, Bayreuth; ²⁴Plant Science & Biodiversity Center SAS, Slovakia; *giulio.martellucci@inrae.fr

The accurate identification of plant species within their natural communities is a critical aspect of vegetation science, yet it remains a major challenge for large-scale biodiversity monitoring. While deep learning models have achieved remarkable success in single-specimen identification, their performance is still often poor when applied to complex plant community images. In these contexts, high taxonomic diversity, visual occlusion, and the presence of visually similar (cryptic) taxa introduce significant bias. This study presents a novel framework that disentangles visual morphology from ecological structure to enhance the automated identification of plant species across an entire national flora of 8,000 species. To bridge this gap, we developed a probabilistic approach that combines computer vision with macroecological data. Visual ambiguity is quantified using interspecific ambiguity probabilities estimated from large-scale single species image data, while species co-occurrence is derived from co-occurrence probabilities computed from the European Vegetation Archive (EVA). By integrating ecological co-occurrence priors, into a multi-label visual identification framework, we demonstrate that such a model can help to resolve taxonomic ambiguities that are impossible to settle through visual data alone. In this framework, the visual model generates a set of candidate taxa, which are then refined by an ecological prior that assesses the statistical likelihood of those species co-existing within a specific habitat or environmental context. The effectiveness of this method was rigorously validated across a diverse range of European ecosystems using a comprehensive dataset of in-situ plot image. Crucially, we show that these performance gains are robust across both categorical and continuous environmental gradients. The framework maintains its corrective power regardless of habitat type, from dense forests to open grasslands, and remains invariant to abiotic stressors such as light availability, temperature, and soil moisture. By demonstrating that ecological structure can act as a corrective layer for visual ambiguity, this work provides new insights into the relationship between plant traits and species coexistence. This framework offers a scalable, robust solution for non-destructive vegetation sampling, enabling researchers to monitor complex plant communities at a taxonomic resolution and geographic scale previously inaccessible with traditional computer vision methods. Ultimately, this integration of phytosociological data with deep learning provides a more ecologically grounded approach to automated biodiversity assessment.

***Deriving CSR Values from Traits: A Proof of Concept for the German Flora**

Noa Terracina¹, Gabriella Damasceno^{1,2} & Helge Bruelheide^{1,2}

¹Institute of Biology/Geobotany and Botanical Garden, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Halle, Germany, noa.terracina@gmail.com; ²German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv) Halle-Jena-Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany

The CSR framework proposed by Grime is widely used to describe plant ecological strategies along the axes of competitiveness, stress tolerance and ruderality, and it remains an important tool in vegetation science for interpreting species composition, community assembly and ecological responses to environmental conditions. At the same time, trait-based approaches now make it possible to calculate CSR values from measurable plant traits, providing a more standardized and reproducible alternative to empirical strategy assignments. However, the relationship between empirical CSR values and trait-based CSR values has not yet been sufficiently explored across a broad set of European plant species. This study compares empirical and trait-based CSR values for European plant species in order to assess the degree of agreement between both approaches. Empirical CSR values are compiled from published sources, while trait-based CSR values are calculated from available trait data following established methods. Particular attention is given to the question of whether trait-based CSR estimates reproduce the main ecological patterns represented in empirical classifications, or whether certain parts of the CSR spectrum are more sensitive to the method of assignment. This is highly relevant because CSR-based classifications are widely used in vegetation analyses, but their comparability across data sources and methodological approaches is rarely evaluated explicitly. By clarifying the relationship between empirical and trait-based CSR values, the project will contribute to a more critical use of CSR classifications in European vegetation science and may support future large-scale analyses of plant strategies across floras, vegetation datasets and environmental gradients. Although still ongoing, the study is expected to provide a first methodological basis for assessing the consistency and transferability of CSR assignments.

Secondary succession on islands coupled with species richness decrease: first insights from resurveying vegetation plots on small Mediterranean islands

Francesco Santi^{1,2}, Riccardo Testolin^{1,2}, Julian Schrader³, Michele Di Musciano^{4,1}, Frédéric Médail¹, Mark Westoby³, Data Contributors, Alessandro Chiarucci²

¹Institut of Mediterranean Biodiversity and Ecology, Aix-Marseille University, France; ²University of Bologna, Italy; ³Macquarie University, Australia; ⁴University of L'Aquila, Italy

Email: francesco.santi@imbe.fr

Resurvey studies are increasingly considered by ecologists, given the excellent opportunity to study temporal dynamics of plant communities. European science community is particularly active on this side, with numerous studies carried out in the continent, but with few investigating plant dynamics on island ecosystems. With this contribution we aimed to provide the first insights on how small Mediterranean islands are responding to ongoing global phenomena (e.g., human driven land use change, alien species spread). We selected small Mediterranean islands (0.01-1 km²) with vegetation plot data recorded at least 10 years ago. After relocation of historic plots, we resurveyed them, adopting the same technique and surface area as in original surveys. We obtained a dataset of 183 historic and resurveyed plots, belonging to 47 islands distributed on five countries (Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, and Spain). We investigated patterns of change at species, plot, and island scales, focusing on positive or negative shifts in plot species richness and in cover abundance of single species. We found a significant reduction in island species diversity, coupled with an increase in cover of shrub species (*Myrtus communis*, *Phillyrea latifolia*, *Pistacia lentiscus*). These patterns combined suggested ongoing secondary succession on the islands. We also found a slight increase of ruderal species (e.g., *Hordeum murinum*, *Malva arborea*, *Solanum nigrum*) presumably linked with seagulls' presence on the islands and suggesting habitat degradation. Integrating our resurvey dataset with repeated floristic inventories at island scale will give a better view on the processes occurring on small Mediterranean islands and will aid conceiving sound conservation policies.

Talk Sessions

**Session 4: Vegetation
classification: a tool for better
understanding and improving
management of European
habitats**

Coastal *Juncetea maritimi* in southeastern France

Olivier Argagnon¹, Laure Sirvent², Louise Turpin³, Hugo Fontes⁴ & Maëlle Le Berre⁵

¹Conservatoire botanique national méditerranéen, 1000 avenue Agropolis - 34090 Montpellier, France, o.argagnon@cbnmed.fr;

²Conservatoire botanique national méditerranéen, 1000 avenue Agropolis - 34090 Montpellier, France; ³Conservatoire botanique

national méditerranéen, 1000 avenue Agropolis - 34090 Montpellier, France, lturpin@cbnmed.fr; ⁴Tour du Valat, Le Sambuc - 13200 Arles, France, fontes@tourduvalat.org; ⁵Conservatoire botanique national méditerranéen, 90 chemin Raymond - 06160 Antibes,

France, m.leberre@cbnmed.fr

Juncetea maritimi Braun-Blanquet in Braun-Blanquet, Roussine & Nègre 1952 cover perennial grasslands and herb-rich vegetation of saltmarshes. In southeastern France, this class occurs mostly in a coastal context that will be the focus of our study. This type of vegetation is very sensitive to the water quality and to the hydrological functioning of the surrounding area. The coastal context involves high anthropic pressure directly on the vegetation and indirectly through the use of water resources. Consequently, *Juncetea maritimi* communities are regularly on the top of conservation lists. In order to better understand how *Juncetea maritimi* function and to communicate about them more effectively we need clearly delineated vegetation units and well-defined distinguishing criteria. The study begins with an extensive bibliographical review of *Juncetea maritimi* relevés, followed by their digitization. The validity of previously published names is then assessed in accordance with the latest edition of the International Code of Phytosociological Nomenclature. More than 700 vegetation relevés - both published and unpublished - have been analyzed using k-means clustering, based on a hierarchical classification performed with the Wards method. Dissimilarity was computed using the Bray-Curtis index. The resulting clusters are compared with previously published syntaxa to see if they fit concept-wise or if they contain a nomenclatural type. The distinctive floristic features of each syntaxon are identified and structured into a determination key inspired by the hierarchical classification. The vegetation relevés cluster in two main groups corresponding to the *Juncion maritimi* Braun-Blanquet ex Horvatić 1934 and to the *Plantaginion crassifoliae* Braun-Blanquet, Roussine & Nègre 1952. Inside these clusters the structure of the data is less clear with many relevés, mainly recent ones (from the 1970's onwards), being very species-poor. While the status of these species-poor subclusters deserves to be discussed, some "classical" associations can still be recognized. These results will be translated into identification tools that will be used for data collecting, ecological monitoring, natural areas management and new conservation programs.

*Classification of European aquatic vegetation (*Lemnetea* and *Potamogetonetea*) to the association level

Friedemann von Lampe¹, Erwin Bergmeier¹, Kateřina Šumberová², Aurelie Boissezon³, Rossano Bolpagni⁴, Victor Chepinoga⁵, Milan Chytrý⁶, Renata Čušterevská⁷, Michele De Sanctis⁸, Tetiana Dziuba⁹, Lyubov Felbaba-Klushyna¹⁰, Emmanuel Garbolino¹¹, Valentin Golub¹², Behlül Güler¹³, Richard Hrivnák¹⁴, Svitlana Iemeljanova¹⁵, Ute Jandt^{15,16}, Dragana Jenačković Gocić¹⁷, Liucija Kamaitytė-Bukeckienė¹⁸, Stanisław Klosowski¹⁹, Lukas Petrulaitis¹⁸, Monika Podgórska²⁰, Zofja Sinkevichienė¹⁸, Zvezdana Stančić²¹, Grzegorz Swacha²², Marcello Tomaselli⁴, Kiril Vassilev²³, Wolfgang Willner^{24,25} & Flavia Landucci⁶

¹Department of Vegetation & Phytodiversity Analysis, University of Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany, fvonlampe@uni-goettingen.de, ebergme@gwdg.de; ²Department of Vegetation Ecology, Institute of Botany, Czech Academy of Sciences, Brno, Czech Republic, katerina.sumberova@ibot.cas.cz; ³HES-SO University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland, Geneva, Switzerland, aurelie.boissezon@hesge.ch; ⁴Department of Chemistry, Life Sciences and Environmental Sustainability, University of Parma, Parma, Italy, rossano.bolpagni@unipr.it, marcello.tomaselli2@gmail.com; ⁵Geobotany Section, Institute of Earth System Sciences, Leibniz University of Hannover, Hannover, Germany, chepinoga@geobotanik.uni-hannover.de; ⁶Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, chytr@sci.muni.cz, yemeljanova.sv@gmail.com, flavia.landucci@gmail.com; ⁷Institute of Biology, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, North Macedonia, nateatpmf@yahoo.com; ⁸Department of Environmental Biology, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy, michele.desanctis@uniroma1.it; ⁹Department of Geobotany and Ecology, M.G. Khodolny Institute of Botany, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine, ttdziuba2014@gmail.com, yemeljanova.sv@gmail.com; ¹⁰Department of Botany, Uzhhorod National University, Uzhhorod, Ukraine, lyubov.felbaba-klushyna@uzhnu.edu.ua; ¹¹Higher Institute of Engineering and Environmental Management (ISIGE), Mines Paris PSL, Fontainebleau, France, emmanuel.garbolino@minesparis.psl.eu; ¹²Togliatti, Russia, vbgolub2000@mail.ru; ¹³Biology Education, Dokuz Eylül University, Buca, Izmir, Türkiye, behlul.guler2@gmail.com; ¹⁴Institute of Botany, Plant Science and Biodiversity Center, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia, richard.hrivnak@savba.sk; ¹⁵Institute of Biology, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Halle, Germany, ute.jandt@botanik.uni-halle.de; ¹⁶German Center for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv), Leipzig, Germany; ¹⁷Department of Biology and Ecology, Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics, University of Niš, Niš, Serbia, dragana.jenackovic@pmf.edu.rs; ¹⁸Laboratory of Flora and Geobotany, State Scientific Research Institute Nature Research Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania, kamaityte.l@gmail.com, lukaspetraitis@gmail.com, zofjasin@gmail.com; ¹⁹Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences, Institute of Biology, Jan Kochanowski University, Kielce, Poland, s.klosowski@uw.edu.pl; ²⁰Department of Environmental Biology, Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences, Institute of Biology, Jan Kochanowski University, Kielce, Poland, monika.podgorska@ujk.edu.pl; ²¹Faculty of Geotechnical Engineering, University of Zagreb, Varaždin, Croatia, zvstan@gfz.hr; ²²Botanical Garden, University of Wrocław, Wrocław, Poland, grzegorz.swacha@uw.edu.pl; ²³Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Science, Sofia, Bulgaria, kiril5914@abv.bg; ²⁴Department of Botany and Biodiversity Research, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria, wolfgang.willner@univie.ac.at; ²⁵Vienna Institute for Nature Conservation & Analyses (VINCA), Vienna, Austria

Traditional classification systems for aquatic plant communities often lack methodological consistency, resulting in divergent interpretations and limited applicability at the European scale. To overcome these inconsistencies, we developed a comprehensive, consistent and unequivocal phytosociological classification of European free-floating (*Lemnetea*) and rooted (*Potamogetonetea*) aquatic vegetation to the association level. We analysed a European dataset comprising 125,029 vegetation plots and applied heterogeneity-constrained random resampling to derive representative subsets. Associations were delimited using explicitly defined classification attributes and transparent floristic criteria. Overlaps among vertically stratified aquatic communities were resolved through the application of a growth-form hierarchy. Percentage similarity calculations were used to define association groups. Formal expert-system definitions were established for all associations, alliances and orders of the classes. Compositional relationships were explored using ISOMAP ordination, and communities were ecologically characterised based on measured environmental parameters (pH, electrical conductivity and water depth), ecological indicator values for Europe, and a targeted literature review. In total, we recognised 15 associations within five alliances and one order of *Lemnetea*, and 59 associations within seven alliances and three orders of *Potamogetonetea*. The resulting expert system provides formal and reproducible assignment rules. Ordination analyses show that alliances and associations are primarily differentiated along nutrient and reaction gradients; however, hydrological factors (e.g., water depth and flow velocity) are of comparable importance, while overall ecological ranges remain broad. Most associations exhibit wide geographic distributions, with the highest diversity recorded in central to western Europe. By contrast, several associations are restricted to boreal regions and are of particular conservation concern in the context of ongoing eutrophication and climate change. This classification represents the first pan-European, association-level, protocol-based synthesis of aquatic vegetation, providing reproducible and field-applicable definitions. Although largely consistent with established syntaxonomic concepts, it proposes selected modifications to the EuroVegChecklist and demonstrates that the applied protocol is well suited for species-poor aquatic plant communities.

Bryophyte communities in Switzerland: a proposal for a list of alliances and microhabitat typology

Julie Steffen

School of Engineering, Architecture and Landscape (HEPIA), University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO), 150 route de Presinge, 1254 Jussy, Switzerland, Julie.steffen@hesge.ch

Some habitats, whether urban or natural, are characterized by the dominance of bryophytes. In rocky habitats like natural cliffs or urban walls, these organisms form specific communities, depending on the type, exposure, and context of these stony substrates. In forests, bryophyte microhabitats play a crucial role for the equilibrium of these ecosystems. Used as bioindicators for water quality assessment, bryophytes are essential to understanding and managing wetlands and running watercourses. Several studies have contributed to our knowledge of the communities and microhabitats harboring mosses in Europe. In Switzerland there is a reference guide for natural habitats which includes mostly vascular plant communities and only four moss communities. There isn't a reference document for Swiss bryophyte communities yet. Paying particular attention to these communities would help to refine management proposals in these habitats. The objectives of this study are: 1) to propose a syntaxonomic system of alliances for bryophyte communities in Switzerland; 2) to develop a typology of bryophyte microhabitats; 3) to propose the inclusion of some new large bryophyte-dominant communities for the national habitat guide. The syntaxonomic system of bryophyte communities present in Switzerland will be elaborated according to the ecological and nomenclatural choices recognized in Europe (1). The units present in Switzerland will be identified and briefly described using data in the literature and personal observations for lesser-known communities. Based on bryophyte syntaxa descriptions, the microhabitats occurring in Switzerland will be cataloged. The Swiss bryophyte syntaxonomic system is comprised of four classes including 15 alliances of bryophytes growing on the soil (epigeic vegetation), 16 alliances of communities growing on mineral substrates (epilithic vegetation) and 20 alliances associated with various substrates (epiphytic and epixylic vegetation). Microhabitat typology was organized hierarchically according to the substrate type (tree, soil, stone, dead wood). Thus, they will not necessarily correspond to the same hierarchical levels structuring the bryophyte syntaxonomic system. Regarding the Swiss guide of habitats, 12 bryophyte alliances were proposed: *Brachythecion rivularis* (calcareous fast flowing rivulets and rivers at low altitudes), *Racomitriton acicularis* (cool and acidic running waters in mountainous regions), *Pellion endiviifoliae* (base-rich spring water), *Pellion epiphyllae* (acidic spring water), *Physcomitrellion patentis* (silty loam in the supralittoral of lakes), *Grimaldion fragrantis* (alluvial soils and rooftops), *Racomitriton lanuginosi* (moraines), *Grimmion tergestina* (exposed limestone rocks and screes), *Andreaeion petrophilae* (exposed siliceous screes and cliffs), *Andreion nivalis* (shady siliceous screes and cliffs), *Fissidention taxifolii* (disturbed soils) and *Phascion cuspidati* (agricultural fields). Overall, this work fills an important gap in Swiss habitat classification by formally recognizing bryophyte-dominated communities. By integrating syntaxonomy and microhabitat typology, it provides a clearer ecological framework that will support biodiversity conservation, ecological monitoring, and more precise habitat management strategies in Switzerland.

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Look on alpine willow communities: from lowland alluvial forests to dwarf thickets of the subalpine zone

Patrice Prunier & Laurent Huber

School of Engineering, Architecture and Landscape of Geneva (HEPIA), HES-SO - University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland; patrice.prunier@hesge.ch

Alpine willow forests have already been the subject of reviews (1,2), but some of their units remain poorly understood. This paper aims to present a new classification of these willow groves, i.e. plant communities dominated by willows as shrubs, small trees or large trees across an altitudinal gradient ranging from lowland to alpine zones (from 200 to 2,400 m above sea level). It is based on biotic and abiotic data collected during recent fieldwork (2009 to 2020), as well as on unpublished data and data from the literature. The geographical area covered extends across the northern and central Alps, mainly in Switzerland and France, but plots have also been characterized in Italy and Austria. In total, 407 vegetation surveys were collected within the study area, drawn from various successive projects conducted in the Arc region, the subalpine zones of the French and Swiss Alps, the Upper Rhône, the Fribourg Pre-Alps, and various other preliminary studies. 94 published reference vegetation surveys were included. The surveys were classified using Ward's hierarchical clustering. The resulting groups were validated using statistical methods and characterized by species composition ranked according to fidelity and other variables (physiognomy, altitude, phytoindicators). Statistical comparisons were carried out to explain the differentiation of the units. Our results identify 18 associations falling within 9 different alliances. They corroborate the European classification proposed by Mucina *et al.* (3), comprising three alliances for the Alps within the order *Alnetalia viridis* (*Alnion viridis*, *Salicion pentandrae*, *Salicion helveticae*), but suggest the recognition of additional entities dominated and characterised by *Salix hastata* and *S. foetida* or *Salix appendiculata*. In addition to the work of Kalníková *et al.* (4), we also propose recognizing two autonomous alliances: a pre-forest tree vegetation dominated by *Salix elaeagnos* in hilly and mountainous areas and by *Salix daphnoides* in the subalpine zone, which form an intermediate stage in the succession between the shrubs of gravel banks and white alder forests. This communication will present the diversity of structure, composition, geographical and ecological determinants, and dynamic links between this different associations.

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WALTER - An R package to plot worldwide climate diagrams and issue multiple bioclimate and biome classifications

Jorge Capelo

INIAV, IP. - The National Institute of Agrarian and Veterinarian Research, Oeiras/ Associação BIOPOLIS-CIBIO, Universidade do Porto, Portugal, jorge.capelo@iniav.pt

Climate diagrams, especially that of Walter and Lieth (1967), are graphical depictions of average monthly pattern of soil water availability to plants. These came to be of paramount importance in vegetation science, in all spatial scales, from community to biome. Several worldwide bioclimatic classifications have been produced, namely those of Köppen & Geiger (1936), Holdridge (1947) and the latest of Rivas-Martínez (2011). Such systems correlate the climatic resultant, that is relevant to plants, to ecosystem spatial distribution. Thus, given climatic parameters, these systems yield bioclimatic diagnoses from thresholds corresponding to ecosystem borders. The referred bioclimatic systems vary in their explicit definition of ecological units. Moreover, some authors developed biome systems that are strongly defined by bioclimate. We may cite Walter's zonobiomes (Walter & Box, 1976), Loidi *et al.* (2022) and Mucina (2023). We present the prototype of an 'R' - language package 'WALTER', that plots the Walter & Lieth climate diagram for any location in the World, by input of its toponymy, and approaches with great accuracy the correspondent bioclimatic, or biome classification, in the systems of Köppen; World Bioclimate Classification System of S. Rivas-Martínez; the bioclimate-biome system of J. Loidi *et al.*; and L. Mucina's Global Hierarchical Biome System. The script is based on geocoding the coordinates in OpenStreetMap (Haklay & Weber, 2008), to retrieve climatic parameters in WorldClim (Fick & Hijmans, 2017), which then follow probabilistic keys incorporating the authors bioclimate or biome definitions. The acronym is an homage to H. Walter (1898-1989).

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***cocktail*: fast and reproducible Cocktail clustering for vegetation classification**

Denys Vynokurov^{1,2,3} & Helge Bruehlheide^{1,2}

¹Institute of Biology/Geobotany and Botanical Garden, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Am Kirchtor 1, 06108 Halle, Germany, denys.vynokurov@botanik.uni-halle.de, helge.bruehlheide@botanik.uni-halle.de; ²German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv) Halle-Jena-Leipzig, Puschstraße 4, 04103 Leipzig, Germany; ³Department of Geobotany and Ecology, M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, NAS of Ukraine, Tereshchenkivska 2, 01601 Kyiv, Ukraine

The Cocktail method is a valuable approach for vegetation classification because it identifies hierarchically structured groups of co-occurring species and translates them into explicit membership rules. However, its broader application to large vegetation datasets has been limited by computational and methodological constraints. We present *cocktail*, a new open-source R package that implements Cocktail clustering in a fast, reproducible and transparent way. The package uses efficient sparse-matrix operations and deterministic tie handling, making it suitable for large datasets. In addition to constructing the Cocktail hierarchy, *cocktail* provides tools for selecting strong clusters, exploring species-cluster relationships through ϕ profiles, comparing clusters based on plot co-membership, and assigning relevés to vegetation units using alternative scoring strategies based on species presence, cover and ϕ -weighted information. We demonstrate the workflow on regional grassland datasets from Europe, showing how the package can support formalized vegetation classification and reproducible relevé assignment. *cocktail* thus bridges the gap between diagnostic species-group detection and practical classification workflows and provides a flexible framework for vegetation classification in R.

Why Regionalization Matters in the EUNIS Habitat Classification

Borja Jiménez-Alfaro^{1,2}, Jorge González Le Barbier^{1,2}, Luis Carlón^{1,2}, Eduardo Fernández-Pascual^{1,2}, Víctor González-García^{1,2}, Jose Manuel Álvarez Martínez^{1,2}, Clara Espinosa del Alba^{1,2}, Adrián Lázaro-Lobo^{1,2}, Glenda Mendieta-Leiva^{1,2} & José Valentín Rocas-Díaz^{1,2}

¹Department of Organismal and Systems Biology, University of Oviedo, Oviedo, Spain; ²Biodiversity Research Institute (IMIB), University of Oviedo-CSIC-Principality of Asturias, Mieres, Spain. jimenezalfaro@uniovi.es

This presentation demonstrates how a regionalization framework for the EUNIS habitat classification may advance biodiversity conservation in Europe. Using the Ibero-Atlantic region in NW Iberian Peninsula as a case study, we develop and implement a regionalization framework using vegetation plot data (Figure 1). Our approach combines the use of the expert system at European scale for higher EUNIS levels with a nested numerical classification to define lower hierarchical units optimized to regional habitats. We found that the European expert system successfully classified 91% of plots at EUNIS level 1, but only 55% were classified at level 2, with major assignment problems detected for heathlands. Using a semi-supervised classification to accommodate overlooked regional habitats with vegetation data, we defined a total of 99 habitats at EUNIS level 4, of which 36% were absent from or described at other levels in the official EUNIS habitat list. 64 out of 99 habitats were assigned to the Annex I of the Habitats Directive, with 87% of them showing univocal one-to-one conceptual relationships. All EUNIS level 4 habitats showed a high number of indicator species and clear environmental differentiation, with detailed descriptions available at <https://iberoatlantica.eu/>. Our results indicate that the regionalization of European EUNIS classification is a necessary step to develop meaningful regional descriptions, providing strong links with phytosociological classifications and Annex I habitats. A regionalization of EUNIS is also essential for developing the next generation of high-resolution habitat maps for regional and continental ecosystem accounting.

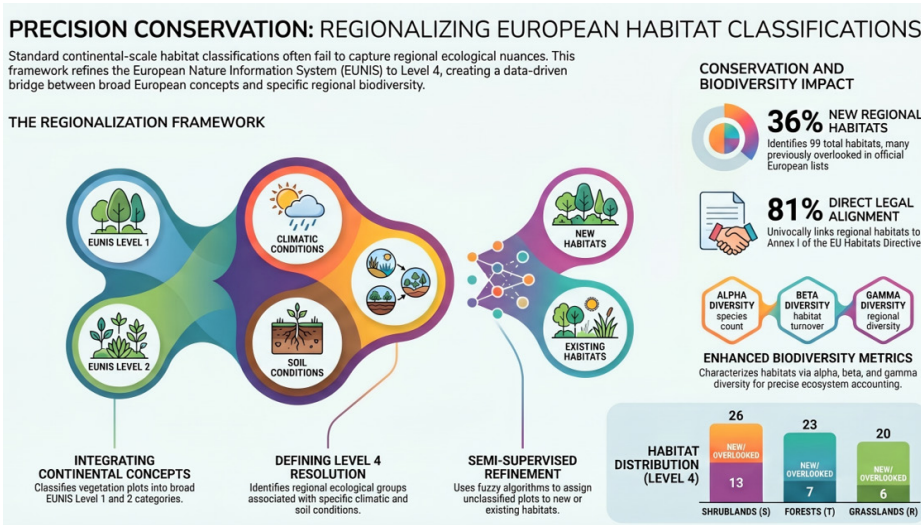


Figure 1. Synthesis of the conceptual framework developed for regionalization of EUNIS classification.

Unlocking the potential of diverse grasslands: typology and diagnostic tools for grassland livestock farming in the Massif central

Jean-Noël Galliot¹, Pierre-Marie Le Hénaff² & Pascal Carrère³

¹INRAE Herpibôle, 63820 Laqueuille, France, jean-noel.galliot@inrae.fr; ²Conservatoire botanique national du Massif central, 43230 Chavaniac-Lafayette, France, pierre-marie.lehenaff@cbnmc.fr; ³UCA-INRAE-VetAgro-Sup - UMR Ecosystème Prairial, 63000 Clermont-Ferrand, France, pascal.carrere@inrae.fr

In upland areas, grasslands form the basis of ruminant livestock farming systems. The French Massif Central, considered to be Europe's largest grassland, is a prime example. The grassland ecosystem, which accounts for more than 60% of the agricultural area, has attained an exceptional level of biodiversity through the interaction between diverse soil and climate conditions and a wide range of agricultural practices. However, this natural wealth is often perceived by farmers as a constraint rather than a lever for strengthening agroecological potential or a relevant option for adapting systems to climate change. To raise awareness among local stakeholders regarding grassland diversity, and thus recognize their full potential, several interdisciplinary, multi-stakeholder projects have been conducted to better understand the multifunctionality of these areas. Using an approach combining ecology, phytosociology, agronomy, and animal husbandry, a network of 143 grasslands spread across 70 farms was studied. The floristic, agronomic, and pedological data, supplemented by information on farming practices, made it possible to identify 60 distinct types of grassland. This grassland diversity has been structured into a typology in book form (1) featuring an intuitive identification key that provides direct access to descriptive sheets for each type. Each sheet offers an accessible description of the plant communities and assesses both agronomic potential and ecosystem services, as well as their contribution to the quality of animal products (dairy and meat). The typology is further enhanced by an expert assessment that highlights critical species and habitat conservation points, while proposing potential succession trajectories resulting from management changes, such as increased fertilization or land-use shifts. The partners' expertise has enabled the development of a diagnostic tool (DIAM2) that assesses the coherence of livestock farming systems regarding the use of on-farm grasslands. It highlights the balance between production, environmental services, and product quality - for instance, by determining the proportion of milk production derived from grass. These tools are now widely used by agricultural advisory and conservation organizations. Understanding the agroecological properties of different types of grassland facilitates constructive dialogue with farmers about the specific characteristics of their land, while raising their awareness of the broader ecosystem services provided to society. Furthermore, it demonstrates that certain practices, such as over-fertilization, can compromise grassland multifunctionality, enabling farmers to align their practices with the actual needs of the vegetation. By empowering farmers as key players in the management of their grassland areas, these tools foster dialogue and the emergence of collective projects that promote the sustainable management of grassland biodiversity.

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Ecosystem services characterisation of phytosociological associations of permanent mid-mountain grasslands of the Chaîne des Puys (Auvergne)

Benjamin Allard¹ & Anne Bonis²

¹UMR 6042 GEOLAB, UCA, CNRS, 4 rue Ledru, Clermont-Ferrand, France, benjamin.allard2@doctorant.uca.fr; ²UMR 6042 GEOLAB, UCA, CNRS, 4 rue Ledru, Clermont-Ferrand, France, anne.bonis@uca.fr

Knowledge of ecosystem services (ES) is a key point in understanding ecosystem multifunctionality within a territory (1). Phytosociology enables a detailed characterisation of ecosystems (2, 3), such as grassland communities. Studying the ES provided by phytosociological associations opens up the possibility of gaining a detailed understanding of the multifunctionality of a territory, facilitating the reconciliation of uses and the improvement of sustainable environmental management (4, 5). The Chaîne des Puys is a UNESCO World Heritage and a Natura 2000 labelled area, where diverse expectations and uses of multiple stakeholders intersect. On the grasslands, breeders—who are involved in the management of these ecosystems—may encounter tourists and locals, who hike and admire the landscape for example. The objectives of this work are (i) to measure selected ecosystem services provided by a wide range of grasslands that have been characterised using a phytosociological approach, and (ii) to investigate synergies and trade-offs between these ES. Ultimately, this work aims to provide foundational knowledge to support improved management and the reconciliation of uses across the territory. The study site comprises 27 semi-natural grasslands spread across the Chaîne des Puys, representing nine phytosociological associations. Eighteen of these are permanent grasslands managed by breeders and shepherds, while the remaining nine are located within an experimental research station. First, the assignment of grasslands to a phytosociological association has been performed using a fuzzy classification of field vegetation surveys projected onto a multidimensional space (DCA) (6), constructed with phytosociological reference surveys (7, 8). Expert opinions have then been used to account for local conditions and management practices (9). For each grassland, measurements have been taken to evaluate six ecosystem services: fodder provision, provision of medicinal and edible plants, soil carbon stock, pollination, grassland aesthetics, and grassland heritage. The capacities of each ES for each phytosociological association have been characterised, and the relationships between them have been investigated. Among the associations under scrutiny, the *Festuco rubrae*-*Genistetum sagittalis* strongly supports the ES Heritage, while the *Knautia arvensensis*-*Arrhenatheretum elatioris* supports the ES Pollination. Overall, oligotrophic and mesotrophic habitats appear to be more multifunctional than eutrophic ones. The distribution and intensity of ES capacities are related to the studied environmental variables, such as floristic composition, altitude, and agropastoral management practices. Four ES bundles have been identified and linked to the beneficiaries' preferences, as collected through field surveys (63 respondents). The analysis of these preferences highlights potential synergies and trade-offs, particularly between fodder production needs and the conservation objectives of agropastoral habitats. In perspective, these results provide a valuable foundation for implementing an integrated and sustainable management approach to the grasslands of this territory.

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Effects of climate, land use and connectivity on native and alien urban floras: Insights from local and continental scales

Martin Večeřa¹, Jan Divišek^{1,2}, Irena Axmanová¹, Petr Dobrovolný², Pavel Dřevojan¹, Ondřej Hájek¹, Zdeněk Janků^{3,4}, Veronika Kalusová¹, Petr Pyšek^{5,6}, Lubomír Tichý¹ & Zdeňka Lososová¹

¹Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Kotlářská 2, 611 37, Brno, Czech Republic, martinvec@seznam.cz, axmanova@sci.muni.cz, Pavel.Drevojan@seznam.cz, ohajek@sci.muni.cz, kalusova@sci.muni.cz, tichy@sci.muni.cz, lososova@sci.muni.cz; ²Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Kotlářská 2, 611 37, Brno, Czech Republic, divisekjan@sci.muni.cz; ³Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, Palacký University, 17. listopadu 12, 771 46, Olomouc, Czech Republic, zdenek.janku01@email.cz; ⁴Global Change Research Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences, Bělidla 4a, 603 00, Brno, Czech Republic; ⁵Institute of Botany, Czech Academy of Sciences, Zámek 1, 252 43, Průhonice, Czech Republic, petr.pysek@ibot.cas.cz; ⁶Department of Ecology, Faculty of Science, Charles University, Albertov 6, 128 00, Praha, Czech Republic

Cities are the fastest-growing ecosystems globally, rich in native plant species and hubs for the introduction, establishment, and spread of alien plants. Urban floras are shaped by interacting processes that operate at local and regional scales and differentially affect native and alien species. Here we present results combining data from two spatial scales to examine how urban characteristics, climate, and inter-city connectivity shape plant diversity and species compositional patterns. At the local scale, we analysed floristic mapping in the city of Brno, Czech Republic (population of 402,000; divided into 102 grid cells of 1.5 km × 1.3 km, 1,458 vascular plant species recorded, presence/absence data) using ten predictors describing land use and local climate. Random Forest models explained 8.5-27.1% of variation in species counts across selected species groups and indicated that native species richness was mainly associated with land-use factors - especially forests, larger urban greenspaces and higher land-use diversity, whereas alien species richness correlated primarily with higher local temperature and with residential areas. Neophytes and naturalized species showed overlapping responses, archaeophytes were poorly predicted, and invasive species were relatively more linked to residential, riparian and industrial zones. Ordination analysis (db-RDA, $R^2_{\text{adj}} = 16.5\%$) mirrored these patterns. It separated highly urbanized vs forested parts of the city and distinguished marginal agricultural areas from zones dominated by residential/grey infrastructure (increasing invasive species) or diverse urban greenspaces (increasing native species), with riparian sites showing distinct assemblages and higher affinity for invasives. To understand how results from one city transfer to others, we ran analyses on the continental scale. Using species lists from 60 European cities, we quantified pairwise compositional similarity for native and alien floras and tested effects of geographic, climatic, and socioeconomic distance, and transport connectivity. Our first results suggest that all distance measures reduce similarity, but geographic and climatic distance affect native floras more than alien ones. In contrast, transport connectivity increases similarity among alien species more than among natives, suggesting human-mediated links help aliens overcome geographic barriers. Our results indicate scale-dependent drivers: local land use and greenspace structure primarily support native diversity, urban climate promotes alien diversity within cities (at least in the Central European context), and inter-city connectivity drives homogenization of alien floras across the continent. This highlights the need for scale-aware biodiversity policies that would combine targeted habitat management (including valuable human-made habitats and ecological restoration) with measures to prevent introductions and limit the spread of alien species. Further research on the roles and dynamics of different habitats in promoting urban flora across biogeographic contexts is needed.

Synonyms and syntaxonomic crosswalks: a pitfall for natural habitat management

Sébastien Rapinel¹ & Jan-Bernard Bouzillé²

¹University Rennes 2, CNRS, LETG, 35000 Rennes, France, sebastien.rapinel@univ-rennes2.fr; ²University of Rennes, CNRS, ECOBIO, 35000 Rennes, France, jbbouzille@gmail.com

Numerous classification systems are available to land managers, but they do not all address the same objectives. Some classification systems designed to characterize habitats (e.g., EUNIS, Habitats Directive Annex I) are primarily intended to meet policy and reporting requirements. In France, other classification systems describe vegetation at different spatial scales: European (1), national (2,3), and regional (catalogues developed by the National Botanical Conservatories). These phytosociological classification systems support the assessment of habitat conservation status and guide management actions through a detailed description of plant communities. However, these phytosociological classification systems are not easily interoperable, which makes syntaxonomic identification, and therefore the implementation of appropriate conservation measures, challenging for managers. To facilitate the work of managers, some reports, such as habitat handbooks in France (4), provide synonymies and establish crosswalks between different classification schemes. However, as these crosswalks are often based on expert judgement, they may lead to inappropriate management practices. It is precisely this type of synonymy, such as the one established between *Alopecuro bulbosi-Juncetum gerardii* and *Carici divisa-Lolietum perennis*, which are assigned in the habitat handbooks to the same Annex I habitat type (1410-Mediterranean salt meadows) despite distinct ecological drivers, that should be examined through the implementation of an experimental phytosociological approach. In this perspective, expert judgement should be considered as a hypothesis to be evaluated using experimental designs aimed at assessing its validity. Ensuring the validity of management choices may benefit from linking classification systems with experimentally validated syndynamic knowledge. These questions were investigated in the Natura 2000 Poitevin marsh site (France) using long-term experimental plots under different grazing regimes over approximately twenty years to study its impact on vegetation dynamics. Experimental results indicate that *Alopecuro bulbosi-Juncetum gerardii* and *Carici divisa-Lolietum perennis* are not synonymous syntaxa but represent distinct stages within a vegetation dynamic, with the former tending to develop into the latter when grazing pressure decreases. This dynamic perspective provides the basis for management aimed at achieving a favourable conservation status of the habitat.

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PhytoS, an online database of plant community names: current status

Jean-Paul Theurillat^{1,2}, Michel Uiterwijk³, Andraž Čarni^{4,5,6}, Federico Fernández-González⁷, Stephan Hennekens⁸, Flavia Landucci⁹ & Massimo Terzi¹⁰

¹Department of Plant Science, University of Geneva, Case postale 71, 1292 Chambésy, Switzerland, jean-paul.theurillat@unige.ch;

²Fondation J.-M. Aubert, 1938 Champex-Lac, Switzerland, jean-paul.theurillat@flore-alpe.ch; ³Multisoftware, Schippersweg 3, 7055

BW Heelweg, The Netherlands, michel.uiterwijk@gmail.com; ⁴Institute of Biology, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of

Sciences and Arts, Novi trg 2, SI-1000, Ljubljana, Slovenia, andraz.carni.si@gmail.com; ⁵Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts,

Krste Misirkov 2, MK-1000 Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia; ⁶University of Nova Gorica, School for Viticulture and Enology,

Vipavska 13, SI-5000 Nova Gorica, Slovenia; ⁷Institute of Environmental Sciences, University of Castilla-La Mancha, Avenida Carlos

III S/N, 45071 Toledo, Spain, Federico.Fdez@uclm.es; ⁸Wageningen Environmental Research, P.O. Box 47, 6700 AA Wageningen,

The Netherlands, Stephan.Hennekens@wur.nl; ⁹Department of Botany and Zoology, Masaryk University, Kotlářská 2, 611 37 Brno,

Czech Republic, flavia.landucci@gmail.com; ¹⁰Institute of Bioscience and Bioresources (IBBR), National Council of Research (CNR), via

Amendola 165/A, IT-70126, Bari, Italy, massimo.terzi@cnr.it

PhytoS is an online nomenclatural database developed between 2023 and 2026 with financial support from IAVS (1). Its purpose is to register the names of plant communities, particularly those of the Braun-Blanquet school, at the rank of association and above. However, PhytoS is not limited to specific schools: names of plant communities at any rank (e.g. subassociation or variant), or without a rank (e.g. plant community type), can also be registered. This presentation will demonstrate the main functionalities of PhytoS, such as registering a name of a new syntaxon, a change of rank, a replacement name, the mutation, inversion, correction and the type of a name, and also the registration of a publication and authors' names.

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Interpretation of EU habitats: a never-ending story

Wolfgang Willner^{1,2}

¹Vienna Institute for Nature Conservation & Analyses (VINCA), Giessergasse 6/7, 1090 Vienna, Austria, wolfgang.willner@vinca.at;

²Department of Botany and Biodiversity Research, University of Vienna, Rennweg 14, 1030 Vienna, Austria

The European Union Habitats Directive is a key instrument in European nature conservation. Member states are required to map and monitor the habitats listed in Annex I of the directive on a regular basis and ensure a good conservation status of these habitats. However, some habitat types are not well defined, and their interpretation is inconsistent among EU member states. The preparation of a determination key for the EU habitats occurring in the state of Lower Austria (Niederösterreich) in Eastern Austria provided an opportunity to revisit some of these interpretation problems and to propose new solutions. In my talk, I will discuss a few examples that are relevant beyond the boundaries of Austria: habitat type 2340 (Pannonic inland dunes), erroneously restricted to acidic sand grasslands of the *Corynephorion* alliance (1); 3130 (Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*), which seems to exclude a large portion of the eponymous class *Isoëto-Nanojuncetea*, in particular those occurring along running water (however, most of these stands can be included in another habitat type); 3150 (Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation), which might include more than just the two eponymous alliances; 6430 (Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels), which better not includes some of the syntaxa mentioned in the Interpretation Manual; and 91M0 (Pannonian-Balkan turkey oak-sessile oak forests), which includes two associations assigned to other habitat types or no habitat types at all in some member states. Finally, I suggest that the European Vegetation Survey working group takes a more active role in the interpretation and harmonisation of EU habitats.

1) W. Willner, T. Schernhammer (2024) BCBEA, 8(1): 55-60.

Identifying and characterizing weed and ruderal species. Case study from Slovenia

Filip Kůzmič¹, Urban Šilc² & Taja Skrt Kristan³

¹ZRC SAZU, Novi trg 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia, filip.kuzmic@zrc-sazu.si; ²ZRC SAZU, Novi trg 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia, urban.silc@zrc-sazu.si; ³ZRC SAZU, Novi trg 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia, taja.skrt-kristan@zrc-sazu.si

Arable land and ruderal sites represent some of the most disturbed and dynamic habitats. Their plant communities are highly diverse, both in species composition and in the environmental factors influencing their structure, ranging from natural to strongly anthropogenic drivers. Weed species of arable land are of major concern for agriculture and nature conservation, while ruderal species are receiving increasing attention in remediation and invasion ecology. The aim of this study was to identify and characterize the most typical plant species of arable land (with a further distinction between cereal and row crops) and ruderal sites in Slovenia. We used the Vegetation Database of Slovenia (1), a stratified dataset comprising approximately 19,000 relevés and 3,000 species. Relevés were grouped in two ways: i) arable land, ruderal sites, and all other vegetation types; and ii) cereal fields, row crop fields, and all other vegetation types. For each group, species fidelity was calculated using the phi coefficient (Tichý & Chytrý, 2006). Ecological indicator values and disturbance indicator values were then plotted against phi values to characterize the species groups. Higher phi values were recorded for arable fields compared to ruderal sites, and for cereal fields compared to row crop fields. No overlap in species composition was found between arable land and ruderal sites, and only minimal overlap between cereal and row crop fields when considering the 15 highest-ranking species. Arable weed species showed higher tolerance to soil disturbance than ruderal species with high fidelity, while weeds of row crops were more nitrophilous than those of cereal fields. Several other ecological indicators showed similar correlative patterns when compared across groups. By identifying species of arable land and ruderal sites against the background of all vegetation types, our approach provides species lists with increased robustness, although they are region-specific. The results can contribute to i) improving national habitat typologies, ii) monitoring temporal changes in vegetation cover, iii) optimized planning of agrotechnical practices, iv) archaeological interpretations based on archaeobotanical remains, and v) informing nature conservation policy and restoration planning.

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*Data-driven habitat-based bioregionalisation of the Alps for conservation assessment

Francesco Candini¹, Milan Chytrý², Jan Divíšek³, Kryštof Chytrý⁴ & Gianmaria Bonari⁵

¹University of Siena, Via P.A. Mattioli 4 Siena, Italy, francesco.candini75@gmail.com; ²Masaryk University, Kamenice 753/5 Brno, Czech Republic, chytry@sci.muni.cz; ³Masaryk University, Kamenice 753/5 Brno, Czech Republic, divisekjan@sci.muni.cz; ⁴University of Vienna, Rennweg 14 Vienna, Austria, krystof.chytry@gmail.com; ⁵University of Siena, Via P.A. Mattioli 4 Siena, Italy, gianmaria.bonari@unisi.it

The establishment of protected areas is recognised as one of the most efficient ways to address the biodiversity crisis; nevertheless, countries rarely protect a representative portion of their national biodiversity, as reported in the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Their targets are the protection of at least 30% of land and the strict protection of one third of it (IUCN categories Ia, Ib or II; 1). To assess whether the European protected area network represents the habitat diversity of the Alps, we developed a new regionalisation. We then evaluated whether the European targets in the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 have been achieved in all the resulting bioregions. We performed a spatially constrained hierarchical cluster analysis based on the structural similarity of Natura 2000 habitat types, as collected from the reports of Article 17 of the Habitats Directive. Following the identification of six bioregions, we then characterised them using the phi coefficient of association and five environmental variables (temperature, precipitation, elevation, slope, and terrain ruggedness). Each bioregion represents a section of the Alps and has associated habitats that are coherent with the environmental variables. To assess the biodiversity representativeness of the European protected area network, we overlaid the protected areas (all, strict, only non-strict, Natura 2000 sites) with the bioregions. One bioregion is covered by less than 30% of all protected area types, thereby failing to meet the first target of the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. However, only one bioregion in the core area of the Alps is covered by more than 10% of strict protected areas. Additionally, to examine the importance of the Natura 2000 network in the context of bioregions, we analysed the ratio of the Natura 2000 sites not covered by other protected areas to the total protected area within each bioregion. The results demonstrate the varying contributions of the Natura 2000 network to the protection of the bioregions. Specifically, the proportion of land area encompassed exclusively by Natura 2000 sites ranges from 9.5% to 51.7% of the total bioregion surface protected. Finally, to assess the ecological uniqueness of the cells, we calculated the Local Contribution to Beta Diversity (LCBD) for all cells in the study area and examined its relationship with habitat richness. Other than the cells located within the transition zones of the Alps (i.e., the borders), high values of LCBD are correlated with low habitat richness. This new habitat data-driven regionalisation of the Alps is reproducible across other mountain environments, allowing for a new comprehension of the biodiversity distribution of such areas.

1) N. Dudley (2008) Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. x + 86pp.6

An overview of habitat patterns in Italy

Gianmaria Bonari¹, Simonetta Bagella², Francesco Candini¹, Dario Comunello¹, Daniela Gigante³, SISV and ISPRA members^{4,5*}

¹Department of Life Sciences, University of Siena, Siena, Italy; ²Department of Chemical, Physical, Mathematical and Natural Sciences, University of Sassari, Sassari, Italy; ³Department of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences, University of Perugia, Perugia, Italy;

⁴Italian Society of Vegetation Science, Pavia, Italy; ⁵Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research, Rome, Italy

*Acosta A., Allegrezza M., Angiolini C., Assini S., Buffa G., Caccianiga M., Caria M.C., Farris E., Frattaroli A.R., Gianguzzi L., Giusso del Galdo G., Malavasi M., Spampinato G., Viciani D., Barcella M., de Simone L., di Cecco V., Galdenzi D., Gennai M., La Mantia A., Lorenzato L., Maneli F., Miraglia G., Morabito A., Riveccio G., Selvaggi A., Sini A., Sperandii M.G., Tesei G., Bacchetta G., Bacilliere G., Bazan G., Bolpagni R., Brancaleoni L., Cannucci S., Castello M., Ciaschetti G., Ciccarelli D., Copiz R., Cutini M., D'Agostino M., Dalle Fratte M., Denaro A., di Martino L., Fanfarillo E., Fantinato E., Fascetti S., Fiaschi T., Filesì L., Foggi B., Forte L., Gerdol R., Guarino R., La Bella G., Lasen C., Marcenò C., Mariotti M., Mascia F., Mei G., Merloni N., Musarella C.M., Oriolo G., Patera G., Perrino E.V., Petraglia A., Petriccione B., Postiglione N., Puglisi M., Sciandrello S., Stanisci A., Stinca A., Strumia S., Tomaselli V., Valle B., Venanzoni R., Villani M., Zangari G., Angelini P., Carli E., Casella L., Pretto F.

Habitat diversity in Italy is remarkable; however, its spatial organisation remains insufficiently understood, and a comprehensive analysis of habitat distribution patterns is still lacking. Here, by leveraging habitat occurrence data, we provide an overview of patterns of habitat richness and diversity. A dedicated working group of thematic and territorial experts from the Italian Association of Vegetation Science (SISV) collected and validated habitat distribution data supplied by the Italian Administrative Regions and Autonomous Provinces and compiled by the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) within the framework of the fifth report under the Habitats Directive, covering the period 2019-2024. The dataset consists of a grid of 3,725 cells (10 km × 10 km) including 124 types of terrestrial and inland water habitats. We mapped habitat richness per cell for all habitats combined and for nine macrohabitats, according to the first hierarchical level of the Natura 2000 habitat classification. Furthermore, to divide Italy into ecologically homogeneous regions, we performed a hierarchical cluster analysis based on the beta similarity index. The optimal number of clusters was selected using Mantel statistics with the Pearson correlation coefficient. Results show the highest habitat richness in the Eastern Alps and the Northern Apennines, while the lowest richness is observed in the Po Plain and in the inner areas of the Italian Peninsula. When the database is partitioned by macrohabitats, distinct spatial patterns emerge for all habitat types. In terms of similarity, the analysis suggests an optimal solution of five clusters, broadly corresponding to the Alpine region; the Po Plain and Eastern Alps; the coastal areas; Peninsular Italy; and, finally, Sicily, Sardinia, and Apulia grouped together. These findings, in addition to their relevance for Article 17 reporting, help to identify key areas of high ecological heterogeneity and can inform future conservation strategies by highlighting territories characterised by high habitat co-occurrence.

Vegetation classification: a tool for better understanding and improving management of European habitats. *Pinus heldreichii* and *Pinus peuce* forest communities in Pirin Mountains of Bulgaria

Rossen Tzonev^{1,2}, Veradina Nacheva¹, Gianmaria Bonari^{3,4}, Kalina Pachedjieva¹, Vladimir Vulchev⁵, Chavdar Gussev⁵, Veselin Shivarov⁵ & Anna Ganeva⁵

¹Department of Ecology and Environmental Protection, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Biology, Sofia, Bulgaria; tzonev@uni-sofia.bg; vrnacheva@uni-sofia.bg; ²National Museum of Natural History, BAS, Bulgaria; tzonev@uni-sofia.bg; ³Department of Life Sciences, University of Siena, Siena, Italy, gianmaria.bonari@unisi.it; ⁴NBFC, National Biodiversity Future Center, Palermo, Italy gianmaria.bonari@unisi.it; ⁵Department of Plant and Fungal Diversity and Resources, Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria; vladomura@gmail.com; chgussev@gmail.com; annaganeva8@gmail.com; v.shivarov@abv.bg.

The *Pinus peuce* Griseb. (Macedonian pine) and the *Pinus heldreichii* Christ. (Bosnian pine) are Tertiary relicts, with the first species being endemic to the Balkan Peninsula and the second one also found, albeit to a limited extent, in the Southern Apennines. These two species do not form communities everywhere within their range, but the Pirin Mts. in Bulgaria, are the only place in the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula, where there are extensive communities of both species. These communities in the Pirin Mts., were investigated in this study using the Braun-Blanquet's methodology, based on both- previously published relevés and collected new ones. The results of analysis emphasizes that the *Pinus heldreichii* communities are part of ass. *Festuco penzesii-Pinetum heldreichii* with two subassociations: *typicum* and *seslerietosum coerulantis*. They are characterized by their distribution at high elevations, on marbles, and are distinctly oromediterranean. By contrast, the *Pinus peuce* communities in the Pirin Mts. were left at the community level - *Festuca valida-Pinus peuce* community. They are also distributed at high elevations, but on silicate terrains and, in terms of their ecological characteristics and floristic composition, are oroboreal. These results are also based on the comparison with the previously studied and published syntaxa of these species in neighboring countries, mostly Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and N. Macedonia, but also Greece and Italy. The associations of *Pinus heldreichii* have a limited range, but due to the openness of their forests and their location on limestone and serpentine terrains, many regional and even local endemics penetrated in them. Although the communities of *Pinus peuce* are also divided into geographically isolated associations, the presence of a group of species characteristic of oroboreal forests with high constancy practically everywhere puts this approach into question. However, this will be resolved after a comprehensive revision of the *Pinus peuce* forests within its range. Both species are sensitive relicts with a very limited range mainly in the Balkans. Currently, the most representative forest communities of *Pinus peuce* and *P. heldreichii* are included within the boundaries of "Pirin" National Park and the "Bayuvi Dupki-Dzhindzhirtsia" Reserve, as well as being protected as a natural habitat 95A0 High oro-Mediterranean pine forests in the Natura 2000 site of the same name. However, the peculiarities of their ecology, as well as their location in the upper forest boundary, which is highly sensitive to the climate changes, make their future conservation a scientific and practical challenge.

Hotspot in a hotspot - Caucasian extremely species-rich plant communities in the Eurasian context

Pavel Novák¹, Pavel Dřevojan¹, Jana Ekhvaia^{2,3}, George Fayvush⁴, Valérie Hanušová¹, Petr Hubatka¹, Natália Janišová¹, Tamar Jolokhava^{2,5}, Veronika Kalníková⁶, Svatava Kubešová², Pavel Lustyk⁸, Zdenka Preislerová¹, Jaroslav Rohel¹, Vojtěch Sedláček⁹, Daniel Szokala¹, Vojtěch Táraška⁷ & Milan Chytrý¹

¹Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia, pavenow@seznam.cz, pavel.drevojan@seznam.cz, 541000@mail.muni.cz, hubatka@sci.muni.cz, janisova@sci.muni.cz, zpreislerova@gmail.com, jarek.rohel@gmail.com, szokala@sci.muni.cz, chytry@sci.muni.cz; ²Institute of Ecology, Faculty of Biodiversity and Medicine, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia, zhana.ekhvaia@iliauni.edu.ge; ³Botanical Institute, Department of Reproductive Biology, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia; ⁴Department of Geobotany and Ecological Physiology, Institute of Botany after A.L. Takhtajyan, Yerevan, Armenia, gfayvush@yahoo.com; ⁵Science-Research Center of Agriculture, Soil Fertility Division, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia, tamar.jolokhava.1@iliauni.edu.ge; ⁶Beskydy Protected Landscape Area Administration, Rožnov pod Radhoštěm, Czechia, V.Kalnikova@seznam.cz; ⁷Department of Botany, Moravian Museum, Brno, Czechia, svata.kubesova@gmail.com, vtaraska@mzm.cz; ⁸Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, Praha, Czechia, pavel-lustyk@seznam.cz; ⁹Moravská Třebová, Czechia, vojosed@seznam.cz

The Caucasus, a mountainous region on the boundary of Europe and Asia, is recognised as one of the world's top biodiversity hotspots and centres of vascular plant endemism (1). Here, we review the most species-rich Caucasian non-forest and forest plant communities based on mostly unpublished vegetation-plot data sampled in the field during the last several vegetation seasons. They were supplemented by data from the literature stored in the Transcaucasian Vegetation Database (2). The most species-rich non-forest plot was sampled in a xeromesophilous grassland (order *Brachypodietalia pinnati*) in northern Armenia (90 species/10 m² and 104 species/25 m²). The most species-rich forest plots contained 127 species/100 m² (*Carpinus orientalis* forest, northern Armenia) and 83 species/200 m² (*Alnus incana* forest, central Georgia). Regarding further extremely species-diverse forest plots (>70 species of rooted vascular plants), their most frequent dominants were *Carpinus orientalis*, *Pinus sylvestris*, and *Quercus macranthera* (phytosociological classes *Quercetea pubescentis* and *Erico-Pinetea*). All these species are relatively light-demanding and often form an open canopy layer (average cover 63%). The most common understory species encompassed *Clinopodium vulgare*, *Campanula rapunculoides*, *Primula veris* subsp. *macrocalyx*, *Origanum vulgare*, *Poa nemoralis*, *Viola alba*, *Veronica peduncularis*, *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, *Trifolium canescens*, *Cruciata laevipes*, *Polygonatum glaberrimum*, *Teucrium chamaedrys* and *Silene italica* (sorted by decreasing frequency). These species-rich forests predominantly occupied neutral to alkaline soils, with an average measured pH of 6.6. They mostly thrived in the temperate continental bioclimate with submediterranean features and considerable seasonality in both temperature and precipitation. The plots were characterised by a mean annual temperature of 6.7 °C, mean annual precipitation of 913 mm, and relatively harsh winters. The determinants of the exceptionally high species richness were diverse and interconnected. They included local (e.g. soil properties, traditional management practises), landscape (e.g. fine-scale mosaic of habitats and management regimes), and regional factors (e.g. species-rich flora). Final results will be presented during the meeting.

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Poster Sessions

**Session 1: Importance of
historical data for assessing
dynamic trends of vegetation
and landscape**

Long-term vegetation changes in the high-altitude grasslands of the Maiella Massif: a 53-year resampling study

Francesca Buffi¹, Giuliano Fanelli¹, Angela Stanisci², Marco Varricchione², Martin Pereyra Almendra², Luciano Di Martino³, Ludovica Sparro¹, Fabio Attorre¹ & Michele De Sanctis¹

¹Sapienza University of Rome, Piazzale Aldo Moro 5 - 00185 Rome (RM), Italy; ²University of Molise, Via Hertz - 86090 Pesche (IS), Italy;

³Maiella Seed Bank, Maiella National Park, Sulmona, Italy; francesca.buffi@uniroma1.it; giuliano.fanelli@uniroma1.it; stanisci@unimol.it; marco.varricchione@unimol.it; m.pereyraalmendra@studenti.unimol.it; luciano.dimartino@parcomajella.it; sparro.1765454@studenti.uniroma1.it; fabio.attorre@uniroma1.it; michele.desanctis@uniroma1.it

High mountain vegetation is widely recognized as one of the ecosystems most affected by the ongoing global change. Although temporal analyses of mountain and alpine communities have increasingly become a key tool for detecting their responses to environmental transformations, most studies (e.g., (1); (2)) rely on a simple two-point comparison (historical vs. recent data), which can obscure non-linear trends or recent accelerations in vegetation dynamics. In this study we present a three-point time series analysis to detect consistent trends of grassland communities on the Maiella Massif (central Apennines) providing a robust assessment of long-term vegetation trajectories. In 2025, we resampled 28 semi-permanent phytosociological relevés originally surveyed in 1972 by Feoli and Feoli-Chiapella (3) and again in 2014 by Evangelista *et al.* (4). To comprehensively highlight community trends over time, we analyzed shifts in both taxonomic (alpha and beta-diversity) and functional diversity, and in ecological indicators. Hill indices (species richness, $\exp(\text{Shannon})$, $1/\text{Simpson}$) and Evenness were computed at plot level to account for shifts in alpha-diversity. Beta-diversity was quantified as the multivariate dispersion (PERMDISP) and compositional turnover (PERMANOVA) among sampling years, based on Bray-Curtis dissimilarity. For what concerns functional diversity, Grime's CSR strategies were computed using the StrateFy tool based on three leaf functional traits (leaf area, specific leaf area, and leaf dry matter content) derived from the FUNViola database (5) and integrated with field measurements. Community-weighted mean values (CWM) for Grime's strategies were then calculated per each plot. To infer underlying environmental drivers, for each relevés we computed the mean Ellenberg indicators (EIVs) for light, temperature, moisture, continentality, reaction, and nutrients. Temporal similarities of plot composition and their relationship with the community-level attributes (CSR and EIVs) were visualized through multivariate ordination techniques based on Bray-Curtis dissimilarity. To test for significant temporal trends in diversity indices, Grime's strategies, and mean EIVs, we ran hierarchical models (GLMMs) including plot as a random effect to account for repeated measurements. To jointly analyze species compositional changes and their relationship with species strategies and environmental drivers, we used Hierarchical Modelling of Species Communities (HMSC) in a Bayesian framework. This approach allowed us to estimate species-specific changes across time and, through variance partitioning, assess how species CSR strategies and Ellenberg indicator values shape these trends, providing insights into the resilience and trajectory of high-altitude grassland communities in the central Apennines.

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Mobilising vegetation data from arable fields in Germany for biodiversity trend analysis

Jana Bürger¹, Christoph von Redwitz², Péter Batáry³, Tobias W. Donath⁴, Ines Heyer^{5,6}, Franziska Mayer⁷, Benito Schöpke⁸, Lena Ulber², Alexander Wietzke⁹ & Florian Jansen¹

¹University of Rostock, Justus-v.-Liebig-Weg 6, 18059 Rostock, Germany, jana.buerger@uni-rostock.de; ²Julius Kühn Institute (JKI) - Federal Research Centre for Cultivated Plants, Institute for Plant Protection in Field Crops and Grassland, Messeweg 11-1, 38104 Braunschweig, Germany, christoph.redwitz@julius-kuehn.de, lena.ulber@julius-kuehn.de; ³2163 Vácrátót, Alkotmány u. 2-4, Hungary, batary.peter@ecolres.hu; ⁴Dept. of Landscape Ecology, Institute for Natural Resource Conservation, Kiel University, Kiel, Germany, tdonath@ecology.uni-kiel.de; ⁵Leibniz-Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (Zalf), Eberswalder Straße 84, 15374 Müncheberg, Germany, Ines.Heyer@zalf.de; ⁶Thünen Institute, Institute of Climate-Smart Agriculture, Bundesallee 50, 38116 Braunschweig, Germany; ⁷Bavarian State Institute for Agriculture, Lange Point 12, 85354 Freising, Germany, Franziska.Mayer@lfl.bayern.de; ⁸University of Hildesheim, Universitätsplatz 1, 31141 Hildesheim, Germany, schoepke@uni-hildesheim.de; ⁹Ministry for Energy Transition, Climate Protection, Environment and Nature of the State of Schleswig-Holstein, Kiel, Germany, alexander.wietzke@mekun.landsh.de

Arable fields have seen strong biodiversity losses since the 1950s due to intensive agriculture. They take up a large part of German landscapes, but analysing the long term changes on a nationwide scale is hampered by a missing data collection. Due to missing scientific interest, historical records of arable vegetation have been less digitised and included in vegetation data bases than records from other habitats. Data on the vegetation of arable fields is recorded and held in Germany by various disciplines ranging from botany and vegetation science to agricultural sciences, especially weed science. This data is published in scientific publications, project reports, and graduation theses. But arable field vegetation is also part of official monitoring programmes of the federal states, particularly in the context of longterm soil observation, and high nature value farmland assessment. A third source of data includes organisations involved in nature protection and land management, often supported by volunteers. A new network between organisations collecting datasets on arable vegetation in Germany has been initiated aiming to establish a comprehensive national collection and to analyse the diversity, community composition, changes over time and conservation status of arable vegetation, especially with inclusion of viewpoints of different stakeholders. In a first step, the collection concentrated on data which is already available in digital form. Nearly 60 datasets have been contributed so far, spanning the time mainly between 1980 and 2025, with some going back to 1916. The research questions addressed by the data originally include: inventory of weed species in a certain crop, elucidating main factors influencing taxonomical and functional diversity, monitoring purposes, inventories of a region, phytosociological efforts, and monitoring of rare species. Most datasets comprise vegetation plot data (~ 28.000 relevés), with various abundance scales or presence-absence information. A small proportion of the datasets involves occurrence data, i.e. without complete species lists. The vegetation plot data were harmonised to percent-cover and taxonomically aligned according to GermanSL 1.5. Many datasets include information on field management, at least regarding crops and cropping system (i.e. organic vs. conventional farming). Crucial information on the position of the survey plots in the field (margin, edge and field center) is included as these field parts represent different habitats. We will present the harmonised dataset with preliminary results regarding arable plant diversity development between 1980 and 2025. Of particular interest are the differentiations between crop types and the different field positions.

Do European protected areas make a difference for plant species conservation? Evidence from long-term vegetation plot data

Emma Shih Mendez^{1,2}, Gabriele Midolo³, Michael Glaser¹, Gabriel Roberto Ortega Solís³, Marta Gaia Sperandii⁴, Stefan Dullinger⁵ & Franz Essl¹

¹Division of BioInvasions, Global Change & Macroecology, Department of Botany and Biodiversity Research, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria, emma.shih.mendez@univie.ac.at, michael.glaser@univie.ac.at, franz.essl@univie.ac.at; ²Vienna Doctoral School of Ecology and Evolution, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria; ³Department of Spatial Sciences, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Praha-Suchbát, Czech Republic, gabriele.midolo@gmail.com, ortega_solis@fzp.czu.cz; ⁴Department of Science, University of Roma Tre, Rome, Italy, mg.sperandii@gmail.com; ⁵Division of Biodiversity Dynamics and Conservation, Department of Botany and Biodiversity Research, University Vienna, Vienna, Austria, stefan.dullinger@univie.ac.at

Protected areas are key elements in conservation efforts designed to preserve biodiversity and mitigate the adverse impacts of anthropogenic activities on ecosystems, yet their effectiveness is still under debate (1). We combine a temporal vegetation plot database (ReSurveyEurope, 2) with the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA, 3) to study the effects of protected areas on temporal vegetation dynamics across Europe. By intersecting plot locations with WDPA polygons, we identify vegetation plots located inside and outside protected areas. To account for uncertainties in plot location accuracy, we implement a probabilistic assignment of protection status by buffering plot coordinates and calculating the proportion of protected area coverage within each buffer, thereby estimating the likelihood that plots fall within protected areas. The compiled dataset comprises over 30,000 re-surveyed vegetation plots spanning more than 80 years and covering a broad range of European biogeographic regions and environmental conditions. Using this large dataset, we quantify several dimensions of temporal vegetation changes including species richness and community composition; and assess how these responses vary among habitats (EUNIS level 1 habitat types) and IUCN protection categories. Specifically, we study i) whether vegetation composition changes in protected areas differ from unprotected re-surveyed plots, ii) whether different protection status categories are reflected in different trajectories of vegetation composition changes, iii) whether the time elapsed since establishing protected areas affects vegetation dynamics, and iv) if vegetation dynamics differs between major habitat types (e.g., grasslands, forests, wetlands). The results will provide important insights into the effectiveness of the European protected area network in mitigating biodiversity loss and evaluate how effectiveness varies among IUCN Protected Areas categories and habitat types. These findings will inform future conservation planning by guiding prioritization within the expanding protected area network; and support evidence-based policy aimed at achieving biodiversity targets.

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The fate of the alkaline fen vegetation (H7230) in a small Dutch nature reserve - Natura 2000's loss might be nature conservation's gain

Iris de Ronde & Rense Haveman

De Ronde & Haveman Research and Consultancy Agency for Geobotany and Landscape, Kerkstraat 19, 6671 AP Zetten, the Netherlands, info@derondehaveman.nl

The "Put van Bullee" is a very small nature reserve which is part of the Natura 2000 network in the Dutch province of Gelderland. It is the type location of the *Equiseto variegati-Salicetum repentis* Westhoff & Schaminée 1994 (*Caricion davallianae*) (1), which qualifies for habitat type H7230 (calcareous fen). The future prospects for this habitat type here are uncertain though, because the uncertain developments in ground water quality and quantity. Anecdotal observations let believe that the species numbers of the vegetation decline over the last few years. We analysed historical vegetation relevés from the location with the question what the vegetation development could learn us about the future prospects of the calcareous fen habitat type. Our analysis shows a succession of the *Equiseto-Salicetum* in the pioneer situation towards *Calthion palustris* meadows. Analysis of data from a pq in the original area from which the *Equiseto-Salicetum* was described, shows a similar development, with a clear change in vegetation structure, from an open pioneer vegetation towards grassland. This development was missed before because of failing analyses. The number of species in the pq rose slightly between 1983 and 1999, and sharply until 2018. Since 2019, the number of species has fallen sharply again. The site conditions for the *Equiseto-Salicetum* appear to be suitable for this vegetation type over large areas in the Put, and recent research shows that over decades there are no significant changes in groundwater levels and quality that could explain the changes in vegetation. Based on a comparison of the *Equiseto-Salicetum* and the closely related *Junco baltici-Schoenetum nigricantis* of primary dune valleys, it can be deduced that the changes in vegetation in the Put van Bullee are caused by autonomous succession, influenced by an initial soil development (formation of a humus profile) and controlled by hay meadow management. The prospects for the sustainable conservation of the calcareous fen habitat type in the Put van Bullee are unfavourable. The development towards (also qualifying) *Cirsio-Molinietum* meadows is questionable, and *Calthion* meadows do not qualify for the desired habitat type. However, such hay meadows can be very species-rich, especially in places under influence of calcareous seepage, and it may arguably be possible to maintain sustainable populations of currently occurring rare and endangered species in such grasslands, like *Epipactis palustris* and *Dactylorhiza incarnata*. From a nature conservation point of view, this development is to be welcomed. Sod cutting as a measure to 'reset' succession and restore the *Equiseto-Salicetum* leads to changes in the relative groundwater level, which ultimately will result in a vegetation that is different from the targeted one. A close examination of historical relevés gave us a better understanding of the vegetation processes and the possible management measures at the location.

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Towards a quantitative validation of Swiss peatland syntaxonomy within the PhytoSuisse framework

Elliot Gobet

ETH Zurich (Rämistrasse 101, 8092 Zurich) & HEPIA Geneva (Route de Presinge 150, 1254 Jussy), Switzerland, egobet@ethz.student.ch

Peatlands host some of the most specialized, conservation-relevant and ecologically distinctive plant communities in Switzerland, yet their syntaxonomical delimitation remains difficult when expert-based classifications are confronted with large and heterogeneous phytosociological datasets. This master's thesis, conducted at ETH Zürich in collaboration with HEPIA Geneva within the PhytoSuisse framework, addresses that challenge by developing a reproducible, data-driven assessment of peatland vegetation units at the national scale. PhytoSuisse was developed as a Swiss phytosociological reference system to provide a unified synthesis of phytosociological typology, and this study contributes to that effort by focusing specifically on peatland vegetation and on the formal evaluation of the units retained by the PhytoSuisse expert committee. The central objective is to test whether peatland associations recognized by expert knowledge can be recovered as floristically coherent, statistically supported and ecologically meaningful groups when analysed with a large integrated vegetation-plot database. More broadly, the project seeks to bridge traditional syntaxonomy and modern numerical vegetation science by combining hierarchical classification, diagnostic-species analysis, expert interpretation, reference relevés and literature-based comparison. This strategy is aligned with current methodological discussions in broad-scale vegetation classification, which emphasize transparent protocols, explicit criteria for defining vegetation types, and rigorous evaluation of classification outcomes. The analytical framework is designed to move from broad delimitation of peatland vegetation to progressively finer syntaxonomical interpretation, while accounting for key sources of variation such as taxonomic harmonization, plot comparability and the treatment of bryophytes. A major strength of the project lies in its explicit validation strategy: candidate vegetation units are not only assessed for internal floristic coherence, fidelity and stability, but also evaluated against external ecological evidence, including environmental differentiation, spatial structure and consistency with published syntaxonomical concepts. Particular attention is given to the challenge of linking data-driven clusters to historically described peatland associations. By quantitatively testing expert-defined units on a large national dataset, this work aims to strengthen the scientific basis, reproducibility and ecological interpretability of Swiss peatland syntaxonomy, and thereby to support future integration of robust peatland vegetation units into the PhytoSuisse reference system.

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Poster Sessions

**Session 2: Vegetation dynamics
knowledge for optimizing
biodiversity management and
restoration strategies**

Establishment of sown semi-natural grassland plant species in an urban grassland restoration experiment

Ieva Akmane¹, Lauma Keire¹ & Solvita Rūsiņa²

¹University of Latvia Botanical Garden, Jāņa Šteinhausera street 2, Riga, LV-1083, Latvia, ieva.akmane@lu.lv; ¹University of Latvia Botanical Garden, Jāņa Šteinhausera street 2, Riga, LV-1083, Latvia, lauma.keire@lu.lv; ²University of Latvia, Department of Geography, Faculty of Science and Technology, Jelgavas street 1, Riga, LV-1004, Latvia, solvita.rusina@lu.lv

Urban grasslands provide important ecological functions, including habitat provision, pollinator support and microclimate regulation. Although they have the potential to support high biodiversity, many remain species-poor due to intensive mowing and limited seed banks. As urban areas seek to enhance ecological value, effective grassland restoration approaches are increasingly needed to counteract declining biodiversity and promote the establishment of target species. The grassland restoration experiment is located in Riga, University of Latvia Botanical Garden. The experiment was launched in 2021 and vegetation monitoring was carried out every growing season until 2025. The experiment included six management options for urban lawns, combining mowing regimes and various lawn restoration methods. Three treatments consisted of unsown plots managed under different mowing regimes, while the remaining three involved sowing of semi-natural grassland plant species; turf removal was used in two of these, and only one combined turf removal with meadow soil addition. A total of 119 vascular plant species were identified. Across the entire experimental period, sown species showed pronounced differences in establishment success: some became widespread across plots, while others remained rare. Several semi-natural grassland species established successfully, with the highest establishment rates in treatments with turf removal and added meadow soil. Among the 21 sown target species, *Leucanthemum vulgare*, *Rhinanthus minor* and *Leontodon hispidus* reached the highest frequencies, whereas species such as *Filipendula vulgaris*, *Briza media* and *Knautia arvensis* established only moderately, and a few occurred only sporadically. Two species - *Rhinanthus angustifolius* and *Trifolium montanum* - did not establish. Species addition significantly promoted the introduction of target grassland species and increased overall diversity in the plots, especially in the treatment with turf removal. These results confirm that active habitat restoration, combining management with targeted species introduction, is an effective method for improving the quality of urban grassland.

Contrasted responses of vegetation diversity to agricultural practices in space and time: lessons from a long-term grassland experiment

Frédérique Louault, Julien Pottier, Juliette Bloor, Nicolas Gross & Katja Klumpp

Université Clermont Auvergne, INRAE, VetAgro Sup, UREP 5 Chemin de Beaulieu 63000 Clermont-Ferrand, France, frederique.louault@inrae.fr

Biodiversity is recognized to support the multiple ecosystem services provided by temperate permanent grasslands. Maintaining or restoring those services requires thus to select appropriate agricultural practices promoting vegetation diversity. Numerous studies have reported strong effects of grassland management regimes on different facets of diversity. However, the variability of these effects in space and time is still scarcely acknowledge. In this study, we examine how taxonomic and functional diversity have responded to changes in grazing intensity and nutrient availability in a long-term experiment (AnaEE-ACBB-Theix). We specifically report on the variability of management effect along the course of the experiment (temporal variability) and between repetitions of the same treatments (spatial variability). Over twenty years, vegetation dynamics were monitored in 24 experimental plots located in a productive upland grassland in the Massif central. Management treatments separated changes in grazing intensity (from abandonment to high grazing pressure) and changes in fertilization regimes under mowing (from no to high nutrient inputs). Each treatment is applied on four plots replicated in two distinct blocks showing slight differences in soil characteristics. Botanical surveys were conducted annually and key plant functional traits -height, leaf dry matter content, specific leaf area- were measured within each plot during two campaigns, 10 years apart. Taxonomic responses were analyzed using Principal Response Curves (PRC), while functional responses were assessed through temporal changes in community-weighted mean (CWM) trait values and functional diversity indices (FD). Grazing abandonment produced clear ecological shifts. Species richness and evenness declined significantly since the beginning and plant communities converged functionally toward taller species with higher LDMC. Functional differences between low and high grazing pressure were unclear over the course of the experiment. However, taxonomic diversity fluctuated considerably between years, at the beginning, and then diverged so that species richness became higher under low than under high grazing pressure. Responses to nutrient availability in the fertilization regimes were more complex and differed strongly in space between the grasslands plots replicates. At the beginning, species richness remained relatively stable, while species evenness decreased under high nutrient inputs, but only in the most productive block. Over time, species richness gradually increased in the least fertilized plots. Under NPK fertilization, species assemblages converged toward taller plants while SLA diverged, but mainly in the most productive block. Taken together, the results show that the response of grassland diversity to changes in agricultural management cannot be anticipated unequivocally. The strongest shifts occurred under extreme management modifications, but the magnitude and direction of the effects varied in time, according to the facet of diversity considered, and in space according to - even weak- differences the initial productivity, vegetation composition and soil properties. We discuss how to deal with such effect variability for optimizing biodiversity management in temperate permanent grasslands.

Patterns of species richness in high-mountain vegetation of Montenegro

Daniel Szokala¹, Branislav Vrábel¹, Kristýna Ratajová¹, Alexandra Smolková¹, Milan Chytrý¹, Dariia Borovyk², Nina Fahs¹, Matyáš Dezort¹, Branislav Kopčan¹, Hana Hrdličková¹, Tadeáš Nečas³, Danijela Stešević⁴, Barbora Klímová¹ & Zdeňka Lososová¹

¹Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Kotlářská 2, 61137 Brno, Czech Republic; ²Department of Geobotany and Ecology, M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Tereshchenkivska 2, 01601 Kyiv, Ukraine; ³Institute of Vertebrate Biology, Czech Academy of Sciences, Květná 8, 603 00 Brno, Czech Republic; ⁴Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, University of Montenegro, Bulevar Džordža Vašingtona, 810 00 Podgorica, Montenegro

Montenegro hosts a diverse landscape with extensive subalpine and alpine vegetation, situated at the transition between temperate and Mediterranean climatic zones. Despite this diversity, the high-mountain vegetation and the factors driving its species richness remain poorly understood. To address this gap, we sampled over 360 vegetation plots (16 m²) across elevations of 1236–2427 m a.s.l., covering carbonate and siliceous bedrocks throughout Montenegro's alpine and subalpine belts between 2022 and 2025. Vascular plants, bryophytes, and lichens were recorded in each plot, along with soil pH, electrical conductivity, and environmental variables derived from digital elevation models (TWI, WEI, HLI, TPI, VRI), Sentinel-2 satellite imagery (NMDI), and Chelsa models (mean annual temperature, mean annual precipitation). Using generalized additive models (GAMs) and model selection based on Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC), we assessed the influence of environmental factors on species richness. Results reveal distinct drivers for vascular plants and cryptogams, reflecting different ecological responses to environmental gradients. Notably, vascular plant richness was higher on carbonate substrates compared to siliceous substrates.

Drivers of vegetation composition change in subalpine grasslands after extreme weather events: The role of soil chemistry and microbial activity

Marie Vymazalová¹, Martina Fabšičová², Martin Brtnický^{1,3}, Radim Hédli^{2,4} & Marie Mrázková^{5,6}

¹Department of Landscape Ecology, Landscape Research Institute, Lidická 25/27, CZ-602 00, Brno, Czech Republic, marie.vymazalova@vuk.gov.cz; martin.brtnicky@vuk.gov.cz; ²Department of Vegetation Ecology, Institute of Botany of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Lidická 25/27, CZ-602 00 Brno, Czech Republic, martina.fabsicova@ibot.cas.cz; radim.hedli@ibot.cas.cz; ³Department of Agrochemistry, Soil Science, Microbiology and Plant Nutrition, Faculty of AgriSciences, Mendel University in Brno, Zemedelska 1, CZ-613 00, Brno, Czech Republic; ⁴Department of Botany, Faculty of Science, Palacký University in Olomouc, Šlechtitelů 27, CZ-783 71 Olomouc, Czech Republic; ⁵Agrovýzkum Rapotín Ltd., Zemědělská 2520/16, CZ-787 01 Šumperk, Czech Republic, m.stybnarova@seznam.cz; ⁶Agritec Plant Research Ltd., Zemědělská 2520/16, CZ-787 01 Šumperk, Czech Republic

Extreme climatic events are becoming more frequent as a consequence of ongoing climate change. Total vegetation diebacks, previously reported mainly from dry grasslands and semi-arid ecosystems, were recently observed even in mountain habitats, including subalpine grasslands above the upper treeline. Recently, large-scale diebacks associated with extreme heat and drought waves have affected extensive areas of subalpine grasslands in the Jeseníky Mountains (Eastern Sudetes). While the impact of drought on vegetation have been documented, the role of soil processes and microbial activity in shaping post-disturbance vegetation dynamics remains completely unexplored.

We investigated how soil chemistry and microbial parameters influence vegetation composition in subalpine grasslands affected by recent large-diebacks. Specifically, we used distance-based redundancy analysis (dbRDA) to analyze vegetation shifts and structural equation modelling (SEM) to explore causal links between dieback, soil stoichiometry, and microbial activity.

Our results indicate that vegetation composition was highly associated with soil nutrient stoichiometry, particularly the soil C:N ratio. Structural equation modelling revealed that grassland dieback had a strong indirect effect on vegetation composition by influencing soil C:N ratio. Notably, we found that grassland dieback triggered a significant increase in microbial phosphodiesterase activity. However, instead of enhancing phosphorus availability for plants, this activity led to rapid phosphorus immobilization within the microbial biomass. This microbial "sink" effect, evidenced by the positive correlation between enzyme activity and microbial biomass, decoupled the link between soil nutrient release and plant uptake.

Overall, our findings suggest that vegetation changes following climate-induced dieback in subalpine grasslands are largely mediated by altered nutrient balance and microbial resource hoarding. The results highlight that extreme climatic events do not only stress plants directly but also shift soil-microbial feedbacks toward nutrient sequestration, potentially hindering rapid vegetation recovery. Understanding the feedbacks between soil, microbial and plant communities is essential for predicting future trajectories of subalpine grassland ecosystems under increasing climatic severity.

*Invasion of *Mahonia aquifolium* in the city of Brno

Vojtěch Sobotka & Milan Chytrý

Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Kotlářská 2, 611 37 Brno, Czechia, sobotka.v@sci.muni.cz

The escape of non-native plant species from gardens is a frequent pathway of plant invasions. One species spreading this way is *Mahonia aquifolium*, an evergreen shrub native to North America, which has been cultivated as an ornamental plant in the Czech Republic since the 19th century. In recent decades, it has begun to spread significantly into semi-natural and natural habitats. Its invasion is a manifestation of the laurophyllization of Central European deciduous forests, a process partially linked to climate warming. Although the invasion of *M. aquifolium* has been documented in several European countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, etc.), the role of cultivated populations as a source of propagule pressure has received limited research attention. Our objective was to document the current occurrence of *M. aquifolium* within the city of Brno and to describe the habitats it invades. During the 2020 and 2021 growing seasons, a field survey was conducted in selected forest complexes and adjacent landscapes in Brno, located near garden areas and residential districts. The survey mapped individual occurrences of *M. aquifolium*, recording 2,708 individuals along a 144 km route. Vegetation plots were recorded to represent the primary vegetation types occupied by the species. Using the gathered data, distribution maps were created to show the relationship between *M. aquifolium* occurrence and the distance to the nearest garden. The results indicate that the probability of occurrence of *Mahonia* in the immediate vicinity of gardens was 6.5%. As the distance increased, this probability decreased, and approximately 450 m or more from the gardens, the probability of the occurrence of *Mahonia* was almost 0%. The species spreads into partly abandoned mesic hay meadows (*Arrhenatherion elatioris*), oak-hornbeam forests (*Carpinion betuli*), mesic and xeric scrub (*Berberidion vulgaris*), nitrophilous ruderal scrub (*Aegopodio podagrariae-Sambucion nigrae*), acidophilous thermophilous oak forests (*Quercion petraeae*), black locust stands (*Chelidonio majoris-Robinion pseudoacaciae*), pine plantations, and abandoned gardens. Observed habitat characteristics suggest that *M. aquifolium* lacks specialized ecological requirements in the study area and can occupy diverse ecological niches. These findings contribute to understanding the invasion dynamics of *Mahonia aquifolium* and its relationship to cultivated source populations.

Diversity and abundance of nitrophilous species as proxies of grazing pressure across wet and dry high-mountain grasslands in the central Apennines (Italy)

Martín Pereyra Almena, Marco Varricchione, Maria Laura Carranza & Angela Stanisci

University of Molise, C. Fonte Lappone, 86090 Pesche (IS), Italy. m.pereyraalmena@studenti.unimol.it; marco.varricchione@unimol.it; carranza@unimol.it; stanisci@unimol.it

High-mountain grasslands host a high biodiversity and provide essential ecosystem services, but they are increasingly affected by changes in land use, grazing regimes, and climate conditions (1). In Mediterranean mountain systems, the interaction between grazing regime and climate change can strongly influence vegetation structure and composition (2,3). As part of the Biodiversa+ project PRESINMED (PREserving the SINGularity of MEDiterranean High mountain biodiversity hotspots: a NbS Approach), encompassing five high-mountain areas across four Mediterranean countries (Spain, Portugal, Morocco, and Italy), we are currently evaluating the effects of grazing, tourism, and climate change on Mediterranean cooler high-altitude grasslands. Here, we present the preliminary results of a vegetation survey aimed at assessing the diversity and abundance of nitrophilous species across wet and dry high-mountain grasslands as proxies of the grazing pressure at the Maiella national park, in the central Apennines (Italy). We conducted a vegetation survey at lower-elevation (1900-2100 m a.s.l.), and higher-elevation (2500 m a.s.l.) Within each sampling area, paired wet and dry grasslands were sampled on previously mapped polygons using 86 randomly distributed circular plots (1 meter radius). For each plot we recorded the total plant cover, the richness and the cover of nitrophilous plant species (4). In addition, indicators of grazing pressure were quantified by recording the presence and the cover of livestock and wild herbivore excrements (cattle, sheep/goats, and Apennine chamois), together with basic habitat descriptors such as bare soil, disturbed soil, and detritus cover. To explore the role of environmental gradients, altitude (high vs. low) and moisture conditions (wet vs. dry) were used as explanatory factors in data analyses. Linear mixed models were used to test the effects of altitude and moisture and grazing pressure on nitrophilous plant composition and cover. The results indicated that both altitude and local moisture conditions significantly affected vegetation cover and nitrophilous plant assemblages. In particular, moisture had a strong effect on the cover and richness of nitrophilous species, while total vegetation cover decreases with altitude and increases with higher moisture, suggesting that water availability becomes a stronger limiting factor at higher elevations. Although preliminary, these results highlight the importance of small-scale environmental heterogeneity and grazing-related nutrient inputs in shaping alpine and subalpine grasslands in central Apennines. This contribution constitutes a first step toward a comprehensive assessment of grasslands within the PRESINMED project network, while also contributing to the development of nature-based solutions aimed at preserving plant diversity in Mediterranean high-mountain grasslands.

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Horticultural potential of karstic dolines in the northern Dinarides

Andraž Čarni^{1,2}, Mateja Breg Valjavec³, Aljaž Jakob^{1,4}, Blanka Ravnjak⁵, Željko Škvorc⁶ & Jože Bavcon⁵

¹Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Jovan Hadži Institute of Biology, Novi trg 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia; aljaz.jakob@zrc-sazu.si, andraz.carni@zrc-sazu.si; ²University of Nova Gorica, School for Viticulture and Enology, Vipavska 13, 5000 Nova Gorica, Slovenia; ³Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Anton Melik Geographical Institute, Novi trg 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia; mateja.breg@zrc-sazu.si; ⁴University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Department of Biology, Večna pot 111, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia; ⁵University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, University Botanic Gardens Ljubljana, Jamnikarjeva 101, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia; joze.bavcon@bf.uni-lj.si, blanka.ravnjak@bf.uni-lj.si; ⁶University of Zagreb, Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology, Svetošimunska 23, 1000 Zagreb, Croatia; zskvorc@sumfak.hr

Karst dolines are unique geomorphological and ecological features of limestone landscapes, characterised by strong microclimatic and edaphic gradient. These concave landforms form natural microrefugia that harbour a variety of plant species. This study investigated dolines in the northern Dinaric Kras plateau with the aim of evaluation their horticultural potential. Vegetation surveys along edge-to-bottom transects revealed a pronounced species turnover and differentiation of functional traits. Besides supporting biodiversity conservation by acting as microrefugia, dolines preserve cultural heritage through ethnobotanical species, and provide species pool for the selection of plants with horticultural potential. We selected the plants of horticultural importance (HPs) and analysed them within the dolines. Dolines' bottoms are dominated by shade-tolerant geophytes and early-flowering perennials, while the edges harbor drought-tolerant aromatic herbs. Culturally and horticulturally important taxa such as *Paenonia officinalis* and *Dictamnus albus* were found on the intermediate slopes. Doline also represent a species pool of underutilised and climate-resistant species with ornamental, medicinal, and culinary value. By linking biodiversity conservation with applied horticulture, this study emphasises the multifunctional role of dolines as small natural features of disproportionate ecological and horticultural importance. We suggest that integrating of doline species into horticulture utilization could improve sustainability, diversify plantings, and strengthen climate adaptation strategies.

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Vegetation diversity and community composition across successional stages in forest clear-cuts in Lithuania

Agnė Bagušinskaitė, Kęstutis Katilius, Domas Uogintas & Valerijus Rašomavičius

State Scientific Research Institution Nature Research Centre, Zaliuju Ezeru 47, Vilnius, Lithuania, agne.bagusinskaite@gamtc.lt

Forest ecosystems are dynamic systems characterized by continuous structural and functional changes driven by both natural processes and anthropogenic disturbances. Forest harvesting represents one of the most significant human-induced disturbances, as it markedly alters plant communities, community structure, as well as environmental conditions such as microclimatic conditions, and soil characteristics. Changes in light availability, temperature, moisture regimes, and nutrient dynamics strongly influence vegetation composition and diversity. After harvesting, secondary succession processes are initiated, during which plant communities gradually reassemble and ecosystem functions begin to recover over time. In Lithuania, forests cover more than one third of the country's territory, making their sustainable management and regeneration important from both ecological and economic perspectives. Early regeneration processes in forest clear-cuts play a crucial role in shaping the future structure of forest communities, influencing species composition, vegetation dynamics, and overall biological diversity. This study investigates forest clear-cuts representing different stages of secondary succession in the hemiboreal forests of Lithuania. Study plots were distributed across different regions of the country to capture variation in forest management practices as well as biogeographical and climatic gradients. In total, 100 vegetation plots, each covering an area of 100 or 400 m², were surveyed. Within each plot, overall vegetation cover and the abundance of individual plant species were recorded. Several analytical approaches will be used to evaluate vegetation patterns in forest clear-cuts. Changes in species richness and diversity will be analysed to assess how plant diversity varies across different stages of succession. Community composition analyses, such as ordination methods, will be applied to identify major vegetation gradients and differences among plots. Additionally, indicator species analysis will be used to determine plant species characteristic of succession stages. Finally, relationships between vegetation patterns and environmental will be explored to better understand the drivers of vegetation development in forest clear-cuts.

Low-density reintroduction of threatened arable plants supports biodiversity restoration in agroecosystems without reducing crop yield

Martina D'Agostino¹, Silvia Assolari², Marco Vuerich^{3,4}, Giacomo Trotta^{4,6}, Francesco Boscutti^{4,5} & Thomas Abeli⁷

¹Independent researcher, Italy, martina.dagostino.research@gmail.com; ²SemeNostrum, Via Pozzuolo 324, I-33100, Udine, Italy, info@semenostrum.it; ³Department of Agricultural, Food, Environmental and Animal Sciences, University of Udine, Via delle Scienze 206, I-33100, Udine, Italy, francesco.boscutti@uniud.it, giacomo.trotta@phd.units.it, marco.vuerich@uniud.it; ⁴NBFC, National Biodiversity Future Center, Piazza Marina 61, I-90133, Palermo, Italy; ⁵Department of Life Sciences, University of Trieste, Via Licio Giorgieri, 5, I-34127, Trieste, Italy; ⁶Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Pavia, Via S. Epifanio 14, I-27100, Pavia, Italy, thomas.abeli@unipv.it

The decline of arable plant species across Europe represents a major ecological challenge in agricultural landscapes and is largely driven by agricultural intensification and the loss of species historically adapted to cereal cropping systems. Active restoration through seed-based plant reintroduction has been proposed as a promising strategy to restore arable plant biodiversity and support the recovery of threatened species within productive agricultural systems. However, restoration implementation remains limited because farmers are often concerned that the presence of arable plants within crop fields may reduce crop productivity through competition for resources. Empirical evidence quantifying the effects of arable plant reintroduction on cereal yield under realistic agronomic conditions remains scarce. In this study we tested whether seed-based restoration through low-density reintroduction of threatened arable plant species is compatible with wheat production and whether functional trait responses provide insight into coexistence mechanisms between crops and arable plants. A two-year field experiment was conducted in northern Italy in winter wheat fields using 36 experimental plots established under standard agronomic conditions. Two declining arable species historically associated with cereal systems, *Agrostemma githago* and *Centaurea cyanus*, were reintroduced into winter wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) at low densities corresponding to 5% and 10% of crop density. Wheat yield components, including ear number and thousand-seed weight, were measured to assess crop productivity. Functional traits of both crop and arable species were also analysed, including leaf chlorophyll content, specific leaf area, leaf dry matter content and root-to-shoot ratio, in order to investigate the mechanisms underlying species coexistence. The reintroduction of both species did not significantly affect wheat yield components, indicating that the presence of these arable plants does not compromise crop productivity under the tested conditions. Wheat functional traits remained largely stable across treatments, suggesting strong resistance of the crop to interspecific competition. In contrast, the reintroduced species showed plastic functional trait responses across treatments and years, indicating physiological adjustment to environmental variability and crop presence rather than competitive dominance. These results demonstrate that low-density reintroduction of threatened arable plant species can be compatible with productive cereal systems and represents a feasible strategy to restore arable plant biodiversity within working agricultural landscapes.

Hemiparasites vs. legumes: does the species identity affect parasitism-mutualism balance?

Tamara Těšitelová¹, Martin Franc¹, Tomáš Vymyslický² & Jakub Těšitel¹

¹Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Kotlářská 267/2, CZ-611 37 Brno, Czech Republic. E-mail: tamara.malinova@centrum.cz;

²Research Institute for Fodder Crops, Ltd. Troubsko, Zahradní 1, CZ-664 41 Troubsko, Czech Republic

Root hemiparasites are a specialized group of plants that attach to the roots and rhizomes of host plants via haustoria and uptake mineral nutrients, water, and organic carbon. In natural ecosystems, they function as ecosystem engineers, suppressing competitive dominants. The impact of parasites on host plants varies among species - while some species serve as good hosts for parasites and their growth is suppressed, others are good hosts but tolerate parasites without strong growth suppression, and some other species are resistant to parasitism and do not allow parasite attachment at all. However, the above- and belowground competition among species in the vegetation may have a stronger effect on biomass reduction than parasitism. Thus, the parasitic suppression of dominant competitors may lead to an indirect, mutually beneficial effect on other hosts, even increasing biomass and fitness despite parasitism. These complex effects may strongly influence species coexistence in vegetation. We decided to study the relationships among three functional groups of plants: two species of the hemiparasitic genus *Rhinanthus*, two species of grasses, and 15 species of legumes with different growth characteristics (annual, perennial, rhizomatous above- or belowground). While grasses often present strong competitors that suffer from parasitism, legumes are usually weak competitors, with varying tolerance to parasitism. We established a large common-garden experiment on arable land with various combinations of the presence of species in each functional group, resulting in 93 combinations of species in 590 plots. The plots were sized 0.8 m x 0.8 m. In the first year, the grass and legume species established a vegetation cover in the plots, and hemiparasites were added the following autumn. We measured dry biomass of all functional groups in May during parasite flowering and analysed the level of host suppression. We believe these results will disentangle the complexity of hemiparasite-legume interactions in the context of competition with grasses, which is crucial for understanding vegetation dynamics and community ecology of European grassland vegetation.

Importance of cryptic species in the characterisation and dynamics of certain habitats

Alain Fridlender

Aix Marseille Université, Faculté des Sciences, 3 Place Victor Hugo, 13 003 Marseille, France

Many Ericales are key species in subarctic vegetation. The number of arctic-alpine plants decreases as one moves southwards in Europe, where they become increasingly rare and localised. An in-depth cytogenetic study has led us to identify new taxa considered subarctic in the Massif Central, which represents a refuge at the southernmost limit of their range. The identification of cryptic species (*Empetrum nigrum* & *Vaccinium* sp.pl.) is difficult and their taxonomic status controversial. In any case, analysis of the ploidy levels of these taxa in the different types of vegetation where they are present shows that in Europe, diploid *V. uliginosum* s.l. are found from the Sierra Nevada to beyond the Arctic Circle (71° - 37° lat. N), while the southernmost tetraploid populations have just been discovered in the Massif Central (44°4' lat. N). Diploid species characterise certain mountain heathland communities (e.g. *Genisto pilosae-Vaccinium uliginosi*, *Vaccinietum uliginosi-myrtilli*, etc.) and are common in dry grasslands. On the other hand, tetraploids sometimes form a significant part of the vascular vegetation of low marshes and raised bogs (cf. *Scheuchzeria palustris-Caricetea fuscae*, etc.). At the microhabitat level, the precise location of the different ploidy levels (= cryptic taxa) of crowberries and cranberries (*Empetrum nigrum* s.l. and *V. oxycoccos* s.l.) in the Massif Central highlights the extreme ecological specialisation of some cytotypes: hexaploid cranberries colonise the wettest habitats (lacustrine mire), while diploid cranberries preferentially colonise the dry tops of peat.

Considering the different ploidy levels of certain species with sometimes quite wide ecological ranges (dry grasslands ↔ marshes) provides a better understanding of the vegetation and its dynamics. "One species" correspond to several cryptic taxa, each living in a highly specialised habitat.

Poster Sessions

**Session 3: Vegetation
monitoring and resurvey for
biodiversity conservation in a
global change context**

resample: A new R tool for stratified resampling of vegetation plots

Jan Divišek^{1,2}

¹Department of Botany and Zoology, Masaryk University, Czech Republic. divisekjan@sci.muni.cz; ²Department of Geography, Masaryk University, Czech Republic.

Large vegetation-plot databases, such as the European Vegetation Archive (EVA), have become indispensable data sources for modern community ecology and macroecology. However, these databases are inherently biased due to non-random preferential sampling, with vegetation in botanically attractive areas recorded more frequently than in others. This results in a highly uneven density of vegetation plots, which are often spatially clustered and compositionally redundant in intensively sampled regions. Such imbalances can lead to overrepresentation of certain ecological signals and may violate the assumption of independence of observations in statistical analyses. To address this challenge, I introduce a new and highly flexible R function called *resample*. This function is designed specifically for vegetation-plot data to perform data thinning based on a combination of geographic proximity and species composition similarity. Unlike simple spatial filters, this tool identifies pairs of plots within a user-defined distance threshold and evaluates their compositional similarity using metrics such as Bray-Curtis, Simpson, Sørensen, or Jaccard indices. The thinning process is iterative: the function identifies the most similar pair of plots within the specified distance, removes one based on a selection rule, and repeats this until no conflicting pairs remain. The function also allows incorporation of environmental strata (or other plot classifications), so that resampling is performed within each stratum separately, and prioritization of plots based on various rules, such as the number of species, year of sampling, etc. This ensures that the resulting subset minimizes redundancy while preserving maximum ecological information. The function uses a highly optimized *data.table* approach, which enables processing of large datasets on standard hardware in a reasonable time. The practical utility of this approach was demonstrated through the creation of the CzechVeg-OpenStrat dataset, a new open-access resource for the scientific community. By applying this stratified resampling workflow to the Czech Vegetation Database, which contains 116,148 georeferenced plots, a more spatially, compositionally, and environmentally balanced subset of 61,282 plots was produced. The CzechVeg-OpenStrat dataset, accompanied by a comprehensive processing tutorial, provides a standardized, high-quality foundation for ecological modeling and biodiversity assessment. By making both the *resample* function and the dataset publicly available, the goal is to facilitate more robust, transparent, and reproducible research in vegetation science.

Decade of change in Šventoji grasslands: Insights from vegetation resurvey data

Domas Uogintas¹ & Austėja Kalvaitytė²

¹State Scientific Research Institution Nature Research Centre, Akademija 2, Vilnius, Lithuania, domas.uogintas@gamtc.lt; ²Vilnius University, Life Sciences Center, Saulėtekio al. 7, Vilnius, Lithuania;

This study investigates changes in grassland vegetation over the past decade in the Šventoji River valley (Lithuania). Phytosociological relevés were conducted in July–August 2025 at sites previously surveyed in 2012–2017. In each plot, vegetation was recorded at two spatial scales (100 m² and 1 m²), assessing species composition and percentage cover of vascular plants, bryophytes, shrubs, and trees. Vegetation height was estimated based on the tallest herbaceous species. Species identification was carried out in the field and, when necessary, supplemented by laboratory analysis of collected specimens. Data analysis was performed in R using the vegan package. A total of 62 relevés were recorded and incorporated into the Lithuanian vegetation database (EU-LT-001). The surveyed mesophilous and steppe grasslands contained 161 vascular plant species. Mean species richness per plot slightly decreased from 26.7 in earlier surveys to 25.6 in the resurvey; however, this difference was not statistically significant. Detrended Correspondence Analysis (DCA; axis lengths: 3.3 and 3.1) revealed that vegetation changes were heterogeneous and strongly dependent on management regimes and local environmental conditions. Dry and thermophilous grasslands remained relatively stable over time, with observed variation likely reflecting stochastic processes. In contrast, formerly managed but subsequently abandoned grasslands showed signs of nutrient accumulation, litter build-up, and altered light and temperature conditions, which were reflected in species composition and Ellenberg indicator values. Grasslands that remained under active management exhibited only minor compositional changes and an increase in light-demanding species. These findings highlight the key role of management intensity and environmental conditions in shaping grassland vegetation dynamics and emphasize the importance of appropriate conservation and management practices for maintaining grassland biodiversity.

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*Substrate-specific drivers of bryophyte and lichen species richness in temperate managed oak forests

Natalia Mazurek¹, Monika Staniaszek-Kik², Katarzyna Szczepańska³, Zygmunt Kącki¹ & Ewa Stefańska-Krzaczek¹

¹Botanical Garden, University of Wrocław, Sienkiewicza 23, 50-335 Wrocław, Poland, natalia.mazurek2@uwro.edu.pl, zygmunt.kacki@uwro.edu.pl, ewa.stefanska-krzaczek@uwro.edu.pl; ²Department of Geobotany and Plant Ecology, University of Łódź, Banacha 12/16, 90-237 Łódź, Poland, monika.staniaszek@biol.uni.lodz.pl; ³Department of Botany and Plant Ecology, Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Norwida 25, 50-375 Wrocław, Poland, katarzyna.szczepanska@upwr.edu.pl

Forests provide a wide range of microhabitats colonised by different groups of organisms, including bryophytes and lichens. Assemblages of these organisms form distinct microcoenoses within plant communities, particularly on specific substrates such as tree bark or decaying wood. Although their distribution may be associated with particular forest types, their usefulness in distinguishing forest communities is usually limited, as their occurrence is influenced by numerous environmental factors. Understanding these drivers is important for the conservation and management of forest ecosystems, especially because most forests are subject to management pressure and human activities strongly shape environmental conditions within forest landscapes. Despite extensive knowledge of the diversity and dynamics of European forests, the diversity of bryophytes and lichens occurring on different substrates and the factors shaping this diversity remain insufficiently understood, particularly in managed forests. To address this gap, we analysed the relationships between species richness of epiphytic, epixylic and epigeic bryophytes and lichens and a set of habitat and landscape variables in a managed forest complex in south-western Poland (Bory Stobrawskie Mesoregion). Oak stands were selected because oaks are dominant species in many natural forest communities of Central Europe. The study included 100 circular plots (300 m²) located in stands ranging in age from 40 to 180 years. For each plot, data necessary for plant community identification were collected and then bryophytes and lichens were recorded on three substrates: living tree trunks (up to 130 cm height), decaying wood (logs, stumps and fine woody debris), and the forest floor. Each plot was characterised by variables describing habitat conditions and landscape context within a 1000 m radius. Relationships between species richness and environmental variables were analysed using generalized linear models (GLM). Separate models were fitted for six species groups: epiphytic, epixylic and epigeic bryophytes and lichens. The studied groups showed contrasting responses to the analysed variables. Both habitat and landscape factors influenced all epiphytic and epixylic groups, whereas the richness of epigeic bryophytes and lichens was associated with only a single, but different, landscape variable. The largest number of predictors affected the richness of epiphytic bryophytes and epixylic lichens. Fragmentation of oak stands influenced the highest number of groups, with a positive effect on epiphytic and epixylic lichens but a negative effect on epixylic bryophytes. Plant community type was a significant predictor only for epiphytic bryophytes and lichens, with clear differences between riparian floodplain forests and acidophilous oak forests. These results indicate that the diversity of organisms inhabiting different forest substrates is shaped by multiple habitat and landscape factors, and that different organism groups respond to environmental conditions in different ways. Consequently, formulating universal forest management recommendations supporting high biodiversity remains challenging.

Bryophytes and lichens across substrates in different types of managed deciduous forests

Ewa Stefańska-Krzaczek¹, Monika Staniaszek-Kik², Katarzyna Szczepańska³, Zygmunt Kącki¹ & Natalia Mazurek¹

¹Botanical Garden, University of Wrocław, Sienkiewicza 23, 50-335 Wrocław, Poland, ewa.stefanska-krzaczek@uwro.edu.pl, zygmunt.kacki@uwro.edu.pl, natalia.mazurek2@uwro.edu.pl; ²Department of Geobotany and Plant Ecology, University of Łódź, Banacha 12/16, 90-237 Łódź, Poland, monika.staniaszek@biol.uni.lodz.pl; ³Department of Botany and Plant Ecology, Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Norwida 25, 50-375 Wrocław, Poland, katarzyna.szczepanska@upwr.edu.pl

Most plant communities, including forest vegetation, are identified primarily on the basis of vascular plants. Nevertheless, forests provide numerous microhabitats and substrates that support the diversity of bryophytes and lichens. Deciduous forests, characterised by a complex vertical structure and high spatial heterogeneity, may particularly promote their biodiversity. Natural forests constitute the most important refugia for these organisms because of their diverse age structure and abundant decaying wood resources. In contrast, managed forests are often considered impoverished habitats due to the limited availability of old trees and large pieces of decaying wood. However, because European forest landscapes are largely dominated by managed stands, they should also be regarded as important habitats for forest species, and management practices supporting biodiversity should be developed. Effective biodiversity conservation requires a thorough understanding of species inhabiting different forest substrates and microhabitats. The aim of this study was to assess the species richness and composition of bryophytes and lichens occurring on different substrates in deciduous forests shaped by regular forest management. The study was conducted in lowland forests of Central Europe, within the Bory Stobrawskie Mesoregion in south-western Poland. A total of 100 circular plots (300 m²) were established in acidophilous oak forests, oak-hornbeam forests, and riparian floodplain forests. In all stands, economically important oaks (*Quercus robur* and/or *Q. petraea*) were the dominant tree species. Within each plot, bryophyte and lichen species were recorded on different substrates without estimating their cover. The survey included trunks of living trees (up to 130 cm height), the largest stump, the largest log, fine woody debris, and the forest floor. To characterise diversity patterns, we calculated the total number of species recorded in each forest type and the mean species richness of bryophytes and lichens, including epiphytic, epixylic, and epigeic groups. Differences in species richness were tested using the Kruskal-Wallis test. We assessed species associations with forest types and substrates. Moreover, detrended correspondence analysis (DCA) was used to evaluate the role of bryophytes and lichens in differentiating forest communities. The studied forest types differed in the species richness of bryophytes and lichens. Moreover, bryophytes and lichens exhibited somewhat different preferences among forest types. Bryophytes more often occurred on two or three substrates, whereas most lichen species were restricted to a single substrate. Overall, bryophytes and lichens weakly differentiated the analysed forest communities, although bryophytes showed slightly greater diagnostic value. Our results indicate that managed deciduous forests may support diverse assemblages of bryophytes and lichens and that habitat variability among forest types plays an important role in shaping their diversity. Increasing the availability of suitable microhabitats may enhance biodiversity in managed forests, but conservation measures should take into account the diversity of forest types within forest landscapes.

Functional diversity of urban flora declines with urbanization

Daniel Szokala, Veronika Kalusová & Zdeňka Lososová

Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Kotlářská 2, 611 37 Brno, Czech Republic

Urbanization acts as a strong environmental filter, altering plant species composition. As a result, plant communities in urban environments tend to consist of species with similar traits that enable them to tolerate urban conditions. However, the effects of urbanization may differ across distinct axes of trait variation due to varying environmental pressures and human preferences affecting urban floras' composition. In this study, we used a trait-based approach to examine the impact of urbanization on the functional diversity of plant assemblages in Brno, Czech Republic.

The flora of Brno was systematically surveyed between 2011 and 2021. The presence of all spontaneously occurring plant species was recorded within grid cells measuring 1.1×1.5 km across the entire city, covering a pronounced urban gradient from the city centre to suburban habitats. In total, we compiled a dataset of 1,492 spontaneously occurring vascular plants and combined these records with trait information available in trait databases.

We analysed the effects of urbanization on functional diversity separately for several axes of trait variation related to survival, reproductivity, and dispersal ability. We also included traits related to aesthetic and functional value, such as flower and fruit color, thorn presence, etc. We compared separate indexes for both functional and human-valued traits. Our results show that urbanization significantly affects community trait diversity across all examined trait axes. Specifically, functional diversity decreases with increasing levels of urbanization.

*Bogovađa – A Case Study of Forest Understory Vegetation Change in Central Serbia

Štěpánka Pustková¹, Mirjana Ćuk², Klára Friesová¹, Petr Hubatka¹, Branislav Kopčan¹, Karolína Nejeschlebová², Kristýna Ratajová¹, Jaroslav Rohel¹, Martin Večeřa¹ & Milan Chytrý¹

¹Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic; ²Department of Biology and Ecology, Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Novi Sad, Serbia, 499933@muni.cz

Forest ecosystems across Europe are currently undergoing rapid structural and compositional shifts. While the trends in understory plant communities have been well-documented in Western and Central Europe through repeated vegetation records from permanent or "quasi-permanent" plots, comparable data from other parts of the continent are lacking. Additionally, the Western Balkans is considered one of Europe's hotspots for forest plant species richness, and in some regions in the Balkan Peninsula, traditional practices like coppicing or forest grazing still persist, unlike in better studied areas of Europe. We provide first insights into forest vegetation changes in Southeastern Europe by presenting results of a vegetation resurvey in the Bogovađa Monastery forest in Central Serbia (44.3° N, 20.2° E). The forest is situated in the peripannonian region of Central Serbia, where the landscape is dominated by lowland oak forests with *Quercus cerris* and *Q. frainetto* and with beech forests occupying stream valleys. Historically, the forest was managed extensively; it served as a pig pasture in past years, and the wood was used for the monastery. After WWII the forest was a state property, until it was restituted in 2009. Currently, it is an overgrown coppice, and forest management practices encompass both selective and clear-cutting systems to produce timber and biomass fuel. It also serves as a hunting ground. In 2024, we resampled 33 plots originally recorded in the 1960s. Although the original coordinates were unavailable, localization to forest compartments allowed highly accurate plot relocation. The results indicate a significant shift in understory species composition, manifested in a decline in light-demanding species and, in beech forests, also an increase in moisture-demanding species. In both oak and beech forests, there was a significant decline in disturbance-tolerant species. This study represents the first step toward understanding the changes of forest vegetation in Southeastern Europe.

Vegetation is worth being described by large datasets: progress of the National French data base

Bonis Anne¹, Theveniaud Estelle¹, Bouzillé Jan-Bernard²

¹UMR GEOLAB CNRS-UCA, MSH, 4 rue Ledru, 63001 Clermont Ferrand, France, estelle.theveniaud@uca.fr and Anne.bonis@uca.fr;

²UMR ECOBIO CNRS-Univ Rennes, Campus Beaulieu, 35000 Rennes, France, jbbouzille@gmail.com

Datasets describing vegetation species composition and structure along years, space and seasons are extremely valuable for assessing plant communities' dynamic and their response patterns to global or local changes. Analysis based on large data set are also a requirement for reliable vegetation classification. Large data set structure and dissemination were pioneered by the European Vegetation Survey group, and such effort enabled significant advancements in vegetation science since then. The national database VegFrance was set up 15 years ago, in close connection with the EVS objectives and European dynamics. The data base is designed to store and deliver both local vegetation relevé and synoptical table. Two tables are associated for each relevé or table: i) the relevé table with up to 70 fields provided key information on the date: provider, precision of localization, completeness of the species list, method used, etc. while only 3 are mandatory; ii) the vegetation table providing the species list observed and an expression of the abundancy when available, both being mandatory fields. The data model was recently improved, the date base is now in Postgresql and the data may be visualized, provided and demanded on the web site <https://vegfrance.cnrs.fr>. A safe and powerfull data storage will be provided by the CNRS tool, an additional reason for providing data to VegFrance database. Data may be provided to users either with a free-acces (régime 1), or conditionnaly to providers' authorization (régime 2). At present, 60933 relevés stationnels are available in the VegFrance data base, covering a large variety of vegetation types, periods of observation and regions. Any additional data, fitting with the few mandatory information will be welcome to improve this resource of high common interests.

Poster Sessions

**Session 4: Vegetation
classification: a tool for better
understanding and improving
management of European
habitats**

*Arable plant communities and species diversity across the Aegean islands: bridging knowledge gaps in Mediterranean agro-ecosystem research

Lina Rinne¹, Stefan Meyer² & Erwin Bergmeier³

¹Department of Vegetation and Phytodiversity Analysis, University of Göttingen, Untere Karspüle 2, 37073 Göttingen, Germany, lina.rinne@biologie.uni-goettingen.de; ²Senckenberg Museum of Natural History Görlitz, Am Museum 1, 02826 Görlitz, Germany, stefan.meyer@senckenberg.de; ³Department of Vegetation and Phytodiversity Analysis, University of Göttingen, Untere Karspüle 2, 37073 Göttingen, Germany, erwin.bergmeier@biologie.uni-goettingen.de

Arable plant communities in Greece are underrepresented in Mediterranean vegetation research, and their syntaxonomy is transferred from on descriptions and diagnostic species from the Western and Central Mediterranean. This study aims to help fill this gap by characterizing arable plant communities and their diagnostic species in the Eastern Mediterranean, using the Aegean islands as a model region. In addition, we examined abiotic drivers of community composition, including geological substrate and climatic variation, and assess floristic diversity across islands. We conducted vegetation surveys on multiple Aegean islands during the spring pre-harvest period, focusing on fields of winter cereals, pulses, and rotational fallows. We analyzed the data using Two-Way-Indicator-Species-Analysis (TWINSPAN) for individual islands and the full dataset to identify both island-specific and general patterns of community differentiation. Furthermore, we applied non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) to assess the floristic patterns and the influence of environmental variables on plant community differentiation. For each island, we quantified arable plant species richness and assessed the frequency of rare and common taxa, as well as the occurrence of facultative and obligate arable species and neophytes, enabling an evaluation of inter-island species turnover. We used synoptic tables to display the arable plant communities of the Aegean. The establishment and persistence of arable plant species were preconditioned by agricultural practices, particularly shallow tillage depth, the absence of herbicide application, and at most moderate amounts of fertilizers. These management factors contributed to the development of a core species pool of arable plants shared across the islands. Community composition was primarily structured by soil properties such as base content and texture, with additional differentiation along moisture and biogeographic gradients. Islands dominated by calcareous parent material supported higher overall species diversity. Species turnover among islands was also partly related to their geographical position within the archipelago, potentially reflecting influences of adjacent mainland floras and regional climatic variation. Overall, our study addresses a major gap in Mediterranean agro-ecosystem research by documenting the composition, diversity, and environmental drivers of Greek arable plant communities. The results contribute to the European syntaxonomic standard *EuroVegChecklist* (1) by expanding the plant syntaxonomic framework and identifying new diagnostic species, and they provide new insights into the distribution of obligate and facultative arable species and neophytes in the Aegean. Our findings highlight the Aegean islands as a hotspot of agro-biodiversity with high conservation value within the Mediterranean region.

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Segetal vegetation of Ukraine: current state and syntaxonomical overview

Tetiana Dziuba¹, Svitlana Iemelianova^{1,2}, Denys Davydov¹, Anastasia Davydova¹, Vadym Datsiuk¹, Pavlo Tymoshenko¹, Olha Krasova³ & Oksana Tyshchenko⁴

¹M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany National Academy of Science of Ukraine, 2, Tereshchenkivska street, Kyiv, Ukraine, ttdziuba2014@gmail.com, tovarystwo@gmail.com, anasta3kz@gmail.com, vdacuk@ukr.net, tymoshenkopa@ukr.net; ²Masaryk University, Žerotínovo nám. 617/9, Brno, Czech Republic, yemelianova.sv@gmail.com; ³Kyryvi Rih National Botanical Garden National Academy of Science of Ukraine, 50, Marshaka street, Kyryvi Rih, Ukraine, kras.kbs.17@gmail.com; ⁴Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, 64/13, Volodymyrska Street, Kyiv, Ukraine, oksana_tyshchenko@knu.ua

Anthropogenic pressure is the one of the major drivers of the degradation and fragmentation of natural vegetation and habitats, resulting in the large-scale development of agricultural phytocoenoses and associated segetal vegetation. To assess the current state of segetal vegetation in Ukraine, its study were conducted within the national research project coordinated by the M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany NAS of Ukraine, with the involvement of many Ukrainian phytosociologists. The results showed that the segetal vegetation represents a complex system of agrophytocoenoses characterized by a well-defined syntaxonomic structure, pronounced zonal and edaphic differentiation, high floristic diversity, and a considerable level of invasion contamination. Based on 1,817 phytosociological relevés, vegetation communities belonging to seven classes of the vegetation (*Papaveretea rhoeadis*, *Digitario sanguinalis-Eragrostietea minoris*, *Sisymbrietea*, *Artemisietea vulgaris*, *Chenopodietea*, *Polygono-Poetea annuae* and *Oryzetea sativae*) were identified. In total, 59 associations belonging to 19 alliances and nine orders were recorded. Two associations (*Viola arvensis-Chaenorhinetum minoris* and *Bromo squarrosi-Eriochloetum villosae*) were described as new for a science, while four associations were reported for the first time in Ukraine. The database EU-UA-011 Anthropogenic Vegetation of Ukraine was substantially expanded. Results of ordination and phytointication analyses revealed that temperature, light, and hydrological gradients are the main ecological determinants for the vegetation differentiation in Ukrainian agricultural landscapes, whereas soil reaction and salinity belong to secondary environmental factors. The territorial differentiation of vegetation communities highlights the high specificity of the Crimea, which represents a centre of several distinctive syntaxa which are absent in other regions of Ukraine. This specificity is explained by a unique combination of climatic conditions, diverse soil types, and a high contribution of thermophilous Mediterranean species to the regional flora. The level of alien plant invasion in Ukrainian agroecosystems reaches 27.7%, indicating a strong anthropogenic transformation. Particularly high levels of invasion were recorded in row-crop agroecosystems of the Steppe and Forest-Steppe zones. The strategy for the agrobiodiversity conservation in Ukraine has been developed. Rare phytocoenotic diversity was identified and the Red List of rare vegetation communities of agricultural ecosystems was compiled, the latter includes 10 associations. The important role of segetal communities as refugia for rare and threatened arable weeds (*Agrostemma githago*, *Bromus secalinus*, *Camelina alyssum*, *Lolium remotum*, and *Spergula linicola*) was emphasized.

Gordi R package: Bridging the gap between the multivariate models and ggplot2 graphics

Branislav Kopčan¹, Štěpánka Pustková¹, Kryštof Chytrý^{1,2} & Jakub Těšitel¹

¹Department of Botany and Zoology, Masaryk University, Kotlářská 2, CZ-611 37 Brno, Czech Republic; ²Biodiversity Dynamics and Conservation, University of Vienna, Rennweg 14, AT-1030 Vienna, Austria

The multivariate analyses serve as a fundamental tool in vegetation ecology, providing the statistical framework for description of complex community patterns across space and time, from interpreting species composition and environmental gradients to visualizations of vegetation classification results. Over the last decade, R has become the primary environment for statistics in ecology, with various packages for model calculations and visualisation. While the mathematical implementation of these models is well established most notably within the *vegan* package, a gap remains in the transition from statistical outputs to publication-ready visualisations. Modern scientific publishing is inclined towards visually appealing graphical presentations of analytical results, such as those provided by the *ggplot2* framework. While *ggplot2* has become a standard for most types of graphs from scatterplots to network graphs, there is still a disconnection between the complex objects produced by ordination models and the data structure required by *ggplot2*. Bridging this gap typically means manual data extraction, scaling, and alignment with various metadata that are not included in the multivariate models directly. This manual data wrangling is not only time-consuming but might also increase the potential of errors. To close the gap between the calculation and visualisation of a wide range of multivariate models, we created a new R package, *Gordi*. *Gordi* is compatible with outputs of the *vegan* package and it specifically supports both unconstrained ordinations, such as Principal Component Analysis (PCA), Correspondence Analysis (CA), Detrended Correspondence Analysis (DCA), Non-metric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS), as well as constrained ordinations, including Canonical Correspondence Analysis (CCA), Redundancy Analysis (RDA) and distance-based RDA (db-RDA). *Gordi* introduces pipe-based syntax that automates the extraction and scaling of species and site scores, and integrates them with environmental variables and traits, ensuring the metadata is preserved throughout the plotting process. The package also functions as a bridge, returning a standard *ggplot2* object that allows an extensive post-hoc customization through native *ggplot2* layers and themes. Overall, we hope that *Gordi* will simplify and speed up the model-to-plot workflow, enabling the production of reproducible, high-quality graphics without unnecessary technicalities, allowing researchers to remain focused on biological interpretation.

Assessing traditional medicinal plants across forest types in eastern Alps

Silvia Cannucci¹, Alessandro Bricca², Gianmaria Bonari³, Stefan Zerbe⁴ & Leonardo Montagnani⁵

¹Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy, silvia.cannucci@unibz.it; ²University of Camerino, Italy, ale.bricca@gmail.com; ³University of Siena, Italy gianmaria.bonari@unisi.it; ⁴University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Göttingen, Germany, stefan.zerbe@hawkw.de; ⁵Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy, leonardo.montagnani@unibz.it

Traditional medicinal plants (TMP) supply numerous services spanning across provisioning, regulating and cultural ones. Among TMP, some can be defined as both ecological and cultural keystone species, meaning that these plants are important for both biodiversity and cultural aspects mostly linked to medical care. Despite their millennial role in human diets and folk medicine, TMP use and associated knowledge have largely vanished, persisting mainly in marginalized landscapes such as the Eastern Alps, where medicinal plants retain both ecological relevance and ethnobotanical value. Given the important role in biodiversity and in alpine culture of TMP, we provide a habitat assessment of forest habitats, focused on TMP in eastern Alps. More precisely, we i) assess the number of TMP in different forest habitat types, indicating their contribution to the entire plant community and the environmental conditions mostly affecting their presence; ii) assess the potential use of TMP across the forest habitat types, in order to identify forests with higher ecological and biocultural value that may deserve conservation priority, and iii) assess the influence of human pressure on TMP. To do so, we selected 705 vegetation plots spanning the eastern Alps area. We classified each plot into major forest habitat types, specifically: broadleaved deciduous forests, temperate montane *Pinus* forests and temperate montane *Picea* and *Abies* forests. Higher numbers of TMP occur in temperate montane *Pinus* forests, followed by temperate montane *Picea* and *Abies* forests, while broadleaved deciduous forests show the lowest values. TMP account for a mean of 46% of the diagnostic species in the investigated forest habitat types, acting as key indicators for habitat identification and for assessing their favorable conservation status. The effects of altitude and soil pH on TMP varied among forest types. Altitude showed a positive relationship with TMP in broadleaved deciduous forests, a negative relationship in *Picea* and *Abies* forests, and a very weak positive relationship in *Pinus* forests. In contrast, pH has a negative effect on TMP in broadleaved deciduous forests but positive in both conifer-dominated forest types. Across forest types, cardiovascular medicinal use was the most represented in both temperate montane *Picea* and *Abies* forests and temperate montane *Pinus* forests, whereas medicinal use for skin was the most frequent in broadleaved deciduous forests. A weak but significant positive correlation between population density and TMP richness in conifer-dominated forests suggests that moderate anthropogenic disturbance may slightly promote TMP occurrence, whereas the non-significant relationship in broadleaved deciduous forests indicates negligible human influence on TMP distribution. Integrating TMP into community and landscape ecology offers a novel tool for habitat assessment and restoration, supporting the co-design of multifunctional landscapes in the Eastern Alps Living Labs and linking biodiversity conservation with cultural heritage revival and sustainable land management.

Vegetation units and habitat types on Mt Parnassos, central Greece

Fotios Xystrakis¹, Christos Damianidis¹, Nikoleta Simopoulou¹, Ilias Karmiris¹ & Georgios Varvarigos²

¹Forest Research Institute, ELGO DIMITRA, 57006-Vassilika Thessalonikis, Greece, fotios.xystrakis@elgo.gr; ²Management Unit of Parnassos and Oiti National Park and Protected Areas of Eastern Central Greece, Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency, 35002-Amfikleia, Greece

Mt Parnassos (central Greece) is amongst the most prominent massifs in Greece due to its high ecological, aesthetic and cultural value. Several botanical excursions have been taken place, the earliest probably from J. Sibthorp during 1786-1787. The floristic research has substantially increased our knowledge regarding the mountain's flora, yet there remains a significant gap in our knowledge regarding the vegetation communities of the mountain. This is striking given the proximity of Mt Parnassos to large urban centres (Athens and Lamia) and the considerably dense road network which ensures easy access. During 2022 and 2023 we sampled vegetation data from 45 phytosociological relevés with the aim of identifying and describing the priority habitat types of the special area of conservation GR2450005 (Notioanatolikos Parnassos-Ethnikos Drymos Parnassou-Dasos Tiethoreas, Spileovarathro). This work was conducted within the framework of a project founded by the Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency. The present vegetation survey complements the only extensive vegetation study of the mountain known to us which was carried out within the frame of the project "Identification and description of habitat types in sites of interest for the protection of nature" during 1999-2000. Vegetation was sampled from *Juniperus foetidissima* thickets and from dry to wet, mid- to high-elevation grasslands. Cluster analysis of the relevé data, using Bray-Curtis distance measure and Ward's linkage method, resulted in the identification of seven vegetation units. For each unit indicator taxa were identified and based on these, each unit was assigned to phytosociological classes and habitat types of the 92/43/EU Directive. For the assignment we calculated the weighted average contribution of the diagnostic taxa of each phytosociological class, using taxon cover values as weights for each relevé and aggregated these values at the vegetation unit level. Four vegetation units were assigned to the priority habitat types: 3170 (*Mediterranean temporary ponds), 6220 (*Pseudo-steppe with grasses and annuals of the *Thero-Brachypodietea*), 6230 (*Species-rich *Nardus* grasslands, on silicious substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas in Continental Europe)) and 9560 (*Endemic forests with *Juniperus* spp.). The former habitat type was described on the mountain for the first time. The remaining grassland vegetation units correspond to habitat types of national interest, some of which are also described for the first time on the mountain. In addition, we identified the most important pressures acting on the vegetation units. Our results indicate that the vegetation description of the mountain is far from being considered comprehensively described, and that a substantial knowledge gap remains, particularly regarding the classification of grassland communities. The authors acknowledge the contribution of the Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency for funding this research through the Operational Programme «Transport Infrastructures, Environment and Sustainable Development» (OP TIESD) 2014-2020 –MIS id:5032966.

Vegetation of oak forests in southeastern Europe

Petr Hubatka¹, Štěpánka Pustková¹, Klára Friesová¹, Branislav Kopčan¹, Anna Kučerová¹, Karolína Nejeschlebová¹, Kristýna Ratajová¹, Jaroslav Rohel¹, Martin Večeřa¹, Mirjana Čuk², Tijana Šikuljak², EVA data contributors & Milan Chytrý¹

¹Department of Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic; ²Department of Biology and Ecology, Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Novi Sad, Serbia

Deciduous and semideciduous oak forests of the classes *Quercetea pubescentis* and *Quercetea robori-petraeae* represent one of the most widespread vegetation types in southeastern Europe. Despite numerous local studies, a comprehensive phytosociological synthesis of these communities across southeastern Europe is still lacking. The aim of this study is to revise the syntaxonomy of deciduous and semideciduous oak forests in this area and to characterize their physiognomy and ecology. The study is based on the numerical classification of vegetation plots obtained from the European Vegetation Archive (EVA) and our own field surveys. We provide a preliminary classification of oak forests in this region. The northern part of the study area is strongly influenced by the continental climate of the Pannonian Basin and Wallachian Plain. This zone is characterized by lowland thermophilous forests of the alliance *Aceri tatarici-Quercion*. These forests are usually dominated by *Quercus pubescens* or *Q. petraea* and develop on deep base-rich soils on loess. The central inland parts of southeastern Europe are characterized by a more humid temperate climate, diverse relief, and heterogeneous geological substrate. Calcareous bedrocks in this region are often colonized by communities dominated by *Quercus pubescens*, usually assigned to the alliance *Quercion pubescenti-petraeae* or related units of sub-Mediterranean distribution. Acidic bedrocks support meso-thermophilous stands dominated by *Quercus cerris*, *Q. frainetto*, and *Q. petraea*, prevalently belonging to the alliance *Quercion confertae*. In mountainous areas, mesic oak forests of the class *Quercetea robori-petraeae* occur locally. Sub-Mediterranean oak forests of the alliance *Fraxino ornio-Ostryion* are found in transitional zones between the temperate and Mediterranean climates. These communities are characterized by thermophilous and xerophilous species adapted to prolonged summer drought. The dominant tree species are usually *Quercus cerris* or *Q. pubescens*, accompanied by taxa with southern European distribution such as *Acer monspessulanum*, *Carpinus orientalis*, *Fraxinus ornus*, and *Ostrya carpinifolia*. In coastal areas, deciduous oak forests of the alliance *Carpinion orientalis* are common. These forests are dominated by *Quercus pubescens* and *Carpinus orientalis*, forming dark, closed-canopy stands with Mediterranean species in the understory. A specific type related to the *Carpinion orientalis* alliance is vegetation with *Quercus frainetto* in the Mediterranean zone, mostly occurring on sedimentary bedrocks. The southern part of the study area is characterized by a drier Mediterranean climate that supports communities with semideciduous oaks such as *Quercus trojana* and *Quercus ithaburiensis* subsp. *macrolepis*.

Illyrian oak-hornbeam forests (*Erythronio-Carpinion*) in Slovenia

Urban Šilc¹, Andrej Rozman², Lado Kutnar³, Aleksander Marinšek³, Janez Kermavnar³ & Branko Vreš¹

¹ZRC SAZU, Novi trg 2, Ljubljana, Slovenia, urban.silc@zrc-sazu.si, branko.vres@zrc-sazu.si; ²University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical faculty, Jamnikarjeva 101, Ljubljana, Slovenia, andrej.rozman@bf.uni-lj.si; ³Slovenian Forestry Institute, Večna pot 2, Ljubljana, Slovenia, lado.kutnar@gozdis.si, aleksander.marinsek@gozdis.si, janez.kermavnar@gozdis.si

Illyrian oak-hornbeam forests (*Erythronio-Carpinion* (Horvat 1958) Marinček in Wallnöfer *et al.* 1993) in Slovenia comprises south-eastern hornbeam associations: extrazonal in the submediterranean area, while others are found within the Illyrian floral province (prealpine, predinaric and subpannonian region). We have carried out a supervised classification of oak-hornbeam forests in Slovenia using the Cocktail method at the association level. We used the Vegetation of Slovenia database, which was extended with data from other institutions and contained 28,425 vegetation relevés. Classification was performed on a stratified dataset of 21,471 relevés of all vegetation types. A total of 12 associations with dominant *Carpinus* species were identified using formal definitions. They are classified into *Pseudostellario-Carpinetum betuli*, *Carici albae-Tilietum cordatae*, *Asperulo odoratae-Carpinetum betuli*, *Helleboro nigri-Carpinetum betuli*, *Carici umbrosae-Quercetum petraeae*, *Carici albae-Carpinetum betuli*, *Vaccinio myrtilli-Carpinetum betuli*, *Abio albae-Carpinetum betuli*, *Pruno padi-Carpinetum betuli*, *Seslerio autumnalis-Carpinetum betuli* and *Asaro-Carpinetum betuli*. For each association, we presented a formal definition and determined diagnostic, constant and dominant species. For ecological interpretation, we used Pignatti's ecological indicator values. The distribution of syntaxa was represented by grid maps.

Diversity of urban meadows in Latvia: The case of Jelgava city

Inga Straupe, Liga Liepa, Daiga Skujane & Natalija Nitavska

Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Akademijas street 11, Jelgava, Latvia, E-mail inga.straupe@lbtu.lv

In the last decade, grasslands have increasingly entered cities as an alternative to the existing intensively managed grasslands. In cities, grasslands can occupy up to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total urban area, which is a significant area (1). Frequently mowed grasslands are characterized by lower biological and structural diversity, which reduces the adaptive capacity of the urban environment to climate change. Consequently, research on urban grasslands largely focuses on studying the ecosystem services they provide and comparing them with traditional grasslands. Urban grassland research is dominated by findings that meadow-type vegetation, which structurally resembles natural grasslands, creates new habitats in urban environments and increases plant and animal diversity, providing regulatory services (improving the microclimate, rainwater infiltration, pollution reduction). Jelgava city area (60.56 km²) is divided into squares - the central part is 500x500 m, and the peripheral part is 1x1 km. A vegetation plot of 1x1 m was created in each square. A total of 104 plots were established. The projective cover of vegetation in % was determined, all plant species were listed and the projective cover in % was determined for each species. Totally 130 vascular plant species were identified. In general, it was found that in all the study plots, a large proportion of native species are found (98% in total), while the proportion of alien species is 2%. It is known that the urban green areas are more exposed to impacts compared to natural ecosystems. The most common native species in the Jelgava city plots are *Trifolium repens* L., *Taraxacum officinale* F.H.Wigg.s.l., *Achillea millefolium* L., *Poa pratensis* L., *Cerastium holosteoides* Fr., *Medicago lupulina* L. The most common alien species is *Solidago canadensis* L.s.l.. The largest projective cover in the vegetation plots of Jelgava city was found for the following species: *Trifolium repens*, *Poa pratensis*, *Achillea millefolium*, *Trifolium pratense* L., *Lolium perenne* L., *Taraxacum officinale*, *Aegopodium podagraria* L. Meadows can become important elements of urban green infrastructure, due to their structural structure (low and medium vegetation) and undemanding nature (no need for improved soil, regular watering), they can be successfully integrated into underused green areas, parks and green areas of residential areas, roadsides, traffic separation zones and areas where tree plantations are not possible. Due to the flexible placement of meadows in the urban environment, they can often serve as linear or point connections or biocorridors between larger green areas, promoting the continuity of ecological processes. Often we can start with extensive management of existing grasslands (less frequent mowing, removal of biomass after mowing, no use of fertilizers and pesticides). Extensive grassland management is often the main condition for the gradual increase in biodiversity and the provision of broader ecosystem services compared to intensively managed grasslands (2,3).

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An Integrated Approach to the Restoration of Annex I Wetland Habitats: The LIFE IMAGINE Project (LIFE19 IPE/IT/000015 "Integrated Management and Grant Investments for the Natura 2000 Network) in Umbria Central Italy

Roberto Venanzoni, Giampiero Ciaschetti, Fabio Maneli & Corrado Marcenò

Department of Chemistry, Biology and Biotechnology, University of Perugia, Via Elce di Sotto 8, 06123 Perugia, Italy

The LIFE IMAGINE project aims to implement a coordinated, participatory strategy for the integrated management of the Natura 2000 Network in Umbria, in accordance with the conservation objectives defined by the Habitats and Birds Directives and the Prioritised Action Framework (PAF). Within this framework, several actions focus on the conservation and restoration of rare wetland habitats with limited regional distribution.

Following an initial assessment of conservation status based on structural and functional parameters, as well as the identification of pressures and threats, site-specific restoration measures were implemented for selected Annex I habitats.

Habitat 7210 (Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae*) is restricted to the shores of Lake Piediluco, where restoration actions aimed at increasing habitat extent through the planting mostly of *Cladium mariscus* and *Carex pseudocyperus*, including the use of artificial floating islands to support the re-development of original floating vegetation mats.

Habitat 7230 (Alkaline fens), rich fens of *Caricion davallianae* occurring in the Colfiorito Marsh, is currently threatened by natural succession due to the abandonment of traditional management practices. Restoration activities focused on the control of secondary vegetation, the collection and propagation of typical species, and the establishment of a dedicated nursery to support reintroduction phases (e.g. *Eriophorum latifolium*, *Carex panicea*, *Carex viridula*, *Anacamptis laxiflora*, etc.)

Habitat 7140 (Transition mires and quaking bogs), D2.23 – Apennine oligo-mesotrophic peat bogs on acidic (karstic, decarbonated) substrates occurring in the Monti Sibillini area – is currently threatened by mowing and grazing practices. Restoration activities focus on the management of these practices under future climate change scenarios.

Habitat 6420 (Mediterranean tall humid grasslands of the *Molinio-Holoschoenion*) is represented in Umbria by small and highly fragmented stands associated with fluctuating hydrological conditions at Lake Trasimeno. Conservation actions addressed the main pressures affecting this habitat-including hydrological alterations, agricultural intensification, and invasive species-through measures aimed at restoring appropriate moisture regimes, reducing external disturbances, and promoting the recovery of characteristic plant communities: plants targets: *Juncus acutus* and *Scirpoides holoschoenus*.

Habitat 92A0 (Riparian galleries of *Salix alba* and *Populus alba*) shows a generally poor conservation status along the Tiber River, mainly due to habitat fragmentation and the spread of invasive alien species such as *Robinia pseudoacacia*. Restoration interventions included the mechanical control of invasive species over large areas and the reintroduction of native woody species to improve habitat structure and ecological functionality.

Overall, the project highlights the importance of integrating ecological and phytosociological knowledge, traditional management practices, and active restoration measures to enhance the conservation status of priority habitats within the Natura 2000 Network.

Keywords: Annex I Habitat Restoration, LIFE Integrated Projects, Natura 2000 Network



*The vegetation database of Gran Paradiso National Park (Italy)

Dario Comunello¹, Andrea Mainetti², Michele Lonati³, Ginevra Nota³, Marco Pittarello⁵, Simone Ravetto Enri³, Guido Brusa⁶ & Gianmaria Bonari^{1,4}

¹Department of Life Sciences, University of Siena, Siena, Italy, d.comunello@student.unisi.it, gianmaria.bonari@unisi.it; ²Gran Paradiso National Park, Fraz. Valnontey 44, 11012 Cogne (Aosta), Italy, andrea.mainetti@pngp.it; ³Department of Agriculture, Forest and Food Sciences, University of Torino, Largo Paolo Braccini 2, 10095 Grugliasco, TO, Italy, michele.lonati@unito.it, ginevra.nota@unito.it, simone.ravettoenri@unito.it; ⁴NBFC, National Biodiversity Future Center, Palermo, Italy; ⁵Department of Veterinary Sciences, University of Torino, Largo Paolo Braccini 2, 10095 Grugliasco, TO, Italy, marco.pittarello@unito.it; ⁶Via Corridoni 97, 21100 Varese, Italy, guido.brusa@libero.it

National parks play a key role in biodiversity conservation by protecting species and habitats while supporting the collection of ecological data. Structured vegetation databases provide a solid foundation for environmental management, long-term monitoring, and scientific research. Here we present the vegetation database of the Gran Paradiso National Park, Italy's first national park, established in 1922. Located in the Graian Alps, the park spans approximately 71,000 hectares across the Aosta Valley and Piedmont regions. Characterized by a massive elevational gradient (800–4,061 m a.s.l.) and complex geology, it supports a mosaic of habitats ranging from mixed broadleaf-conifer forests to alpine grasslands and nival pioneer communities. Consequently, the park hosts a high floristic diversity, including over 1,100 vascular plant species and more than 500 bryophytes, with over 80 Alpine endemics and more than 40 species of conservation interest. This database integrates decades of botanical research, spanning from 1970 to 2023, through structured field surveys and targeted research projects. Vegetation was sampled using different methodologies, including traditional phytosociological relevés, point-quadrat, and linear methods. To ensure consistency and interoperability, all records were georeferenced and harmonized by converting diverse abundance scales into standardized percentage cover values. The database comprises four interconnected tables: a species information table; a species-by-relevé matrix; a relevé metadata table incorporating environmental variables; and a formalized EUNIS habitat classification utilizing an R-based expert system. The database includes 860 taxa (816 vascular plants and 43 bryophytes) recorded across 1,203 relevés, largely collected in high-elevation environments above 2,000 m a.s.l. Notably, nearly 7% of these taxa are Alpine endemics, and more than 100 species are assigned to regional, national, or European conservation categories. Most relevés were successfully assigned to an EUNIS habitat category, with a dominance of grasslands (N = 888), followed by wetlands, sparsely vegetated inland habitats, heathlands, and forests. This database provides a robust baseline for ecological research and long-term ecosystem monitoring. By offering high-resolution data on community composition, it facilitates evidence-based conservation strategies, restoration planning, and habitat management. Ultimately, these standardized data enable large-scale comparative studies and offer crucial insights into alpine vegetation dynamics under the synergistic pressures of climate change and shifting land-use patterns.

Assessment of structure and dynamics of vegetation in EU protected boreal forest habitats of Latvia

Līga Liepa, Evelīna Skrastiņa, Inga Straupe, Edgars Dubrovskis, Zigmārs Rendenieks, Linards Sisenis, Āris Jansons

Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Faculty of Forest and Environmental Sciences, Akadēmijas street 11, LV-3001, Jelgava, Latvia, e-mail: liga.liepa@lbtu.lv

In Latvia, protected areas of EU and national importance have been established to ensure nature protection, which provides the preservation of biodiversity, where most of these areas are included in areas covered with forests. Since there is no unified forest policy at the EU level, the existing nature protection requirements and common EU regulations have a significant impact on forest management both in NATURA 2000 and in protected areas of national importance, as well as in the restrictions established in commercial forest areas (for example, micro-reserves, EU specially protected habitats). Latvia is in the transitional zone between the boreal and non-boreal vegetation zones, where most of the forests are occupied by representatives of the boreal forest class. Despite the increase in specially protected natural areas, the implementation of certain measures, for example, the inventory of protected habitats of EU importance throughout Latvia, restrictions in the context of nature protection, the protection status of boreal forests was assessed as poor quality or unknown in 18% (9010*) and 21% (9050) of cases. In turn, the protection of boreal forest habitats in the EU countries (17 countries) was assessed as insufficient or poor – 56% with a worsening trend (approximately 43%). With this study we aimed to carry out a comprehensive landscape- species-level assessment of vegetation in EU protected boreal forest habitats to establish facilities for boreal forest restoration. We analyzed all mapped boreal forest habitats in Latvia, divided into 16 ecoregions. Using data sets of National Forest Inventory, protected areas of national and EU importance and empirical data site specific field data in Latvia we assessed the structure and change in vegetation between 2014 and 2024 in the context of Latvian Ecological Network. We utilized Hot-Spot analysis and Cluster analysis in GIS to identify areas of concern for biodiversity conservation. Results showed that notable portion (23%) of EU forest habitats occur outside the formally protected areas, mostly in commercial forests. Spatial analysis also highlighted the hotspots of boreal forest habitat occurrence in both inside and outside formally protected areas. These results are significant in informing forest policy and nature conservation frameworks as such investigation has not been done before using empirical forest habitat survey data.

Influence of soil characteristics on floodplain forests classification in Northern Serbia

Tijana Šikuljak¹, Miloš Ilić¹, Dragana Vukov¹, Vladimir Stupar², Dragan Koljanin², Ankica Vku¹, Mirjana Ćuk¹

¹Department of Biology and Ecology, Faculty of Science, University of Novi Sad, 21 000, Serbia; ²Faculty of Forestry, University of Banja Luka, 78 000 Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Floodplain forests as sensitive buffer zones between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems are affected by negative impacts from changes in flooding regimes as well as anthropogenic pressures, which can lead to their degradation and collapse. For their conservation and protection, it is important to classify them appropriately. The aim of this study is to investigate the soil characteristics of floodplain forests and their influence on the classification of floodplain forests. Soil characteristics were analyzed on 30 phytosociological plots distributed across three types of floodplain forests: willow, poplar and oak forests. Representative soil parameters previously identified as ecologically relevant were used as explanatory variables: moisture content (%), clay content (%), total organic carbon (TOC), pH (H₂O), and phosphorus content (P). Analysis using linear models showed that moisture has the greatest influence as the main ecological driver of floodplain forest diversification. PCA analysis revealed the spatial distribution of the three forest types—indicating clearly separated groups along the ecological moisture gradient, with poplar and oak floodplain forests distinguished from willow forests. CCA analysis further demonstrated that soil texture can additionally modulate community composition, likely through its effects on water retention and aeration, while soil chemical properties do not play a decisive role in differentiating forest types at this spatial scale. Indicator species further confirmed the clear differentiation of communities along the hydrological gradient, with willow forests showing the strongest association with wet conditions.

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List of participants

- Akmane Ieva, University of Latvia, Latvia - ieva.akmane@lu.lv
- Allard Benjamin, UMR GEOLAB, UCA, CNRS, France - benjamin.allard2@doctorant.uca.fr
- Argagnon Olivier, Conservatoire botanique national méditerranéen, France - o.argagnon@cbnmed.fr
- Attorre Fabio, Sapienza university of Rome, Italy - fabio.attorre@uniroma1.it
- Aunina Liene, University of Latvia, Latvia - liene.aunina@lu.lv
- Axmanová Irena, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - axmanova@sci.muni.cz
- Bagušinskaitė Agnė, State Scientific Research Institute Nature Research Centre, Lithuania - agne.bagusinskaite@gamtc.lt
- Bátori Zoltán, University of Szeged, Hungary - batori.zoltan@szte.hu
- Bioret Frédéric, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, France - frederic.bioret@univ-brest.fr
- Bíró Marianna, HUN-REN Centre for Ecology, Hungary - biro.marianna@ecolres.hu
- Bonari Gianmaria, University of Siena, Italy - gianmaria.bonari@unisi.it
- Bonis Anne, UMR GEOLAB CNRS-UCA France - Anne.bonis@uca.fr
- Bonnet Pierre, CIRAD, PI@ntNet, France - pierre.bonnet@cirad.fr
- Borovyk Daria, M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany NAS of Ukraine, Ukraine - dariaborovyk@gmail.com *
- Brocard Léa, Université Clermont Auvergne, France - lea.brocard@uca.fr
- Buffi Francesca, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy - francesca.buffi@uniroma1.it
- Bürger Jana, University of Rostock, Germany - jana.buerger@uni-rostock.de
- Cabot Franck, AMAP, France - cabotfranck.pro@gmail.com
- Candini Francesco, University of Siena, Italy - francesco.candini75@gmail.com *
- Cannucci Silvia, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy - silvia.cannucci@unibz.it
- Capelo Jorge, Instituto Nacional de Investigação Agrária e Veterinária I.P., Portugal - jorge.capelo@gmail.com
- Carla de Francesco Maria, University of Molise, Italy - maria.defrancesco@unimol.it
- Čarni Andraž, Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia - carni@zrc-sazu.si
- Chevrollier Corentin, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, France - corentinchevrollier56@gmail.com
- Chytrý Milan, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - chytry@sci.muni.cz
- Clark Adam, University of Graz, Austria - adam.clark@uni-graz.at
- Comunello Dario, University of Siena, Italy - d.comunello@student.unisi.it *
- D'Agostino Martina, Independent researcher, Italy - martina.dagostino.research@gmail.com
- De Sanctis Michele, University Sapienza of Rome, Italy - michele.desanctis@uniroma1.it
- Divíšek Jan, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - divisekjan@sci.muni.cz
- Dutoit Thierry, CNRS, UMR IMBE, IUT Avignon, France - thierry.dutoit@imbe.fr
- Dziuba Tetiana, M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany NAS of Ukraine, Ukraine - tdziuba2014@gmail.com
- Fernez Thierry, MNHN, France - fernez@mnhn.fr
- Frei Kata, University of Szeged, Hungary - frei.kata@szte.hu
- Fridlender Alain, Aix Marseille Université, France - alain.fridlender@univ-amu.fr
- G. Gavilán Rosario, Complutense University, Spain - rgavilan@ucm.es
- Galliot Jean-Noël, INRAE, France - jean-noel.galliot@inrae.fr
- Gauberville Christian, France - cgauberville@gmail.com
- Glémarec Erwan, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, France - erwan.glemarec@univ-brest.fr
- Guarino Riccardo, University of Palermo, Italy - iccardo.guarino@unipa.it

- Hábenczyus Alida Anna, University of Szeged, Hungary - habenczyus.alida.anna@szte.hu *
- Hájek Michal, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - hajek@sci.muni.cz
- Hajkova Petra, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - buriana@sci.muni.cz
- Haring Verena, University of Graz, Austria - verena.haring@uni-graz.at *
- Haveman Rense, De Ronde & Haveman, Netherlands - rens.haveman@derondehaveman.nl
- Hennekens Stephan, WENR, Netherlands - stephan.hennekens@wur.nl
- Hopkins Frantz, Parc National des Cévennes, France - frantz.hopkins@cevennes-parcnational.fr
- Hubatka Petr, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - hubatka@sci.muni.cz
- Iemelianova Svitlana, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - yemelianova.sv@gmail.com
- Jabot Franck, INRAE, France - franck.jabot@inrae.fr
- Jansen Jan, Radboud University, Netherlands - jan.jansen@science.ru.nl
- Jiménez-Alfaro Borja, University of Oviedo, Spain - jimenezalfaro@uniovi.es
- Kalusová Veronika, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - kalusova@sci.muni.cz
- Katilius Kęstutis, State Scientific Research Institute Nature Research Centre (NRC), Lithuania - kestutis.katilius@gamt.lt
- Kazue Fujiwara, Yokohama City University, Japan - kazue05fujwara@gmail.com
- Kellermannová Julia, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - kellermannova.julia@gmail.com
- Klumpp Katja, INRAE, France - katja.klumpp@inrae.fr
- Kopčan Branislav, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - kopcanb@gmail.com
- Kuzemko Anna, M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany of the NAS of Ukraine, Ukraine - anyameadow.ak@gmail.com
- Kuzmič Filip, ZRC SAZU, Slovenia - filip.kuzmic@zrc-sazu.si
- Lampe (von) Friedmann, University of Göttingen, Germany - fvonlampe@uni-goettingen.de *
- Landucci Flavia, Masaryk university, Czech Republic - flavia.landucci@gmail.com
- Le Hénaff Pierre-Marie, CBN Massif central, France - pierre-marie.lehenaff@cbnmc.fr
- Liepa Liga, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Latvia - liga.liepa@lbtu.lv
- Louault Frédérique, INRAE UREP, France - frederique.louault@inrae.fr
- Marcenò Corrado, University of Perugia, Italy - corrado.marceno@unipg.it
- Martellucci Giulio, INRAE, France - giulio.martellucci@inrae.fr *
- Mazurek Natalia, University of Wrocław, Poland - natalia.mazurek2@uwr.edu.pl *
- McClaran Mitchel, University of Arizona, United States - mcclaran@arizona.edu
- Midolo Gabriele, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (ČZU), Czech Republic - midolo@fzp.czu.cz
- Molnár Zsolt, HUN-REN Centre for Ecological Research, Hungary - molnar.zsolt@ecolres.hu
- Novák Pavel, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - pavenow@seznam.cz
- Palpurina Salza, National Museum of Natural History, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria - palpurina@nmnhs.com
- Panitsa Maria, University of Patras, Greece - mpanitsa@upatras.gr
- Pereyra Almendra Martín, University of Molise, Italy - m.pereyraalmendra@studenti.unimol.it
- Gwenhael Perrin, consultant indépendant, France - gwenhael.perrin@gmail.com
- Petaja Guna, Latvian State Forest Research Institute "Silava", Latvia - guna.petaja@silava.lv
- Plesková Zuzana, Masaryk university, Czech Republic - pleskovicova@gmail.com
- Prud'homme François, Conservatoire botanique national des Pyrénées et de Midi-Pyrénées, France - francois.prudhomme@cbnmpm.fr
- Prunier Patrice, Department of Nature Management, Swiss - patrice.prunier@hesge.ch
- Pustková Štěpánka, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - 499933@muni.cz *
- Rapinel Sébastien, Université Rennes 2, France - sebastien.rapinel@univ-rennes2.fr

- Rašomavičius Valerijus, State Scientific Research Institute Nature Research Centre, Lithuania - valerijus.rasomavicius@gamtc.lt
- Rinne Lina, University of Göttingen, Germany - lina.rinne@biologie.uni-goettingen.de *
- Roetzer Harald, AVL Agency for Vegetation Ecology and Landscape Planning, Austria - harald.roetzer@a-v-l.at
- de Ronde Iris, De Ronde & Haveman, Netherlands - Iris.deronde@derondehaveman.nl
- Roux Camille, Université Clermont Auvergne, France - camille.roux@uca.fr
- Santi Francesco, University of Perugia, France - francesco.santi@imbe.fr
- Shih Mendez Emma, University of Vienna, Austria - emma.shih.mendez@univie.ac.at
- Šibík Jozef, Plant Science & Biodiversity Center of Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia - jozef.sibik@savba.sk
- Šibíková Mária, Plant Science & Biodiversity Center of Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia - maria.sibikova@savba.sk
- Šikuljak Tijana, University of Novi Sad, Serbia - tijana.sikuljak@dbe.uns.ac.rs
- Šilc Urban, ZRC SAZU, Slovenia - urban.silc@zrc-sazu.si
- Skokanova Hana, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - hana.skokanova@vuk.gov.cz
- Škvorc Željko, University of Zagreb, Croatia - zskvorc@sumfak.hr
- Sobotka Vojtěch, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - sobotka.v@sci.muni.cz *
- Stefanska-Krzaczek Ewa, University of Wrocław, Poland - ewa.stefanska-krzaczek@uwr.edu.pl
- Steffen Julie, HEPIA, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland, Switzerland - julie.steffen@hesge.ch
- Straupe Inga, University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Latvia - inga.straupe@lbtu.lv
- Szokala Daniel, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - szokala@sci.muni.cz
- Terracina Noa, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany - noa.terracina@gmail.com *
- Terranova Giovanni, University of Siena, Italy - gioterra711@gmail.com *
- Těšitel Jakub, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - tesitel@sci.muni.cz
- Těšitelová Tamara, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - tamara.malinova@centrum.cz
- Thébaud Gilles, Université Clermont Auvergne, France - gilles.thebaud@uca.fr
- Theurillat Jean-Paul, Fondation du Jardin botanique Flore-Alpe & Université de Genève, Switzerland - jean-paul.theurillat@unige.ch
- Tichý Lubomír, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - tichy@sci.muni.cz
- Tzonev Rosen, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Bulgaria - tzonev@uni-sofia.bg
- Ujházy Karol, Technical University in Zvolen, Slovakia - karol.ujhazy@tuzvo.sk
- Ujházová Mariana, Technical University in Zvolen, Slovakia - ujhazyova@tuzvo.sk
- Uogintas Domas, State Scientific Research Institution Nature Research Centre, Lithuania - domas.uogintas@gamtc.lt
- Van Heusden Tom, Wageningen University, Netherlands - tom.vanheusden@wur.nl
- Varricchione Marco, University of Molise, Italy - marco.varricchione@unimol.it
- Večeřa Martin, Masaryk University, Czech Republic - martinvec@seznam.cz
- Venanzoni Roberto, University of Perugia, Italy - rvenanzo@icloud.com
- Viciani Daniele, University of Florence, Italy - daniele.viciani@unifi.it
- Vymazalová Marie, Landscape Research Institute, Czech Republic - marie.vymazalova@vuk.gov.cz
- Vynokurov Denys, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany - denys.vynokurov@gmail.com
- Wellstein Camilla, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy - camilla.wellstein@unibz.it
- Willner Wolfgang, University of Vienna, Austria - wolfgang.willner@univie.ac.at
- Xystrakis Fotios, Forest Research Institute - Hellenic Agricultural Organization DIMITRA, Greece - fotios.xystrakis@elgo.gr

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