



Folk knowledge of invertebrate species in Central Europe

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Introduction

In Central Europe there has been many ethnobiological research on the folk knowledge of plants, but much less on animals. Among them **non-domesticated species and mainly invertebrates are especially underrepresented**. Tight-knit communities such as ethnic Hungarians out of parent state usually preserve far more unwritten tradition than others. That is why we carried out our research among these ethnic Hungarians in three different countries. Our main goals were to document the local **ecological knowledge on invertebrates in three landscapes (57 knowledgeable persons from 18 villages) and unravel its characteristics, and to compare it to the knowledge among the examined regions**. We studied which kinds of **local invertebrates the villagers know, which folk taxa they identify, the names they use for these taxa, what do they know about the morphological, behavioral, and ecological characteristics, and the economic impact brought about by these species**.

Materials and methods

The most important method of our work was asking **picture-based questions**. We placed an average of six photos of species of similar size on an A4 sheet to allow the interviewees to have a feeling of the relative proportion of each animal. In case of ambiguous descriptions, **further enquiries of the specific characters of the species in question were asked** to ascertain the identity of the animal at the species level. **Pile sorting** was also an important technique of our work.

We used these data to reconstruct folk taxonomy. Figures depicting taxonomic relations were prepared following the **method of Berlin (1992)**.

Results

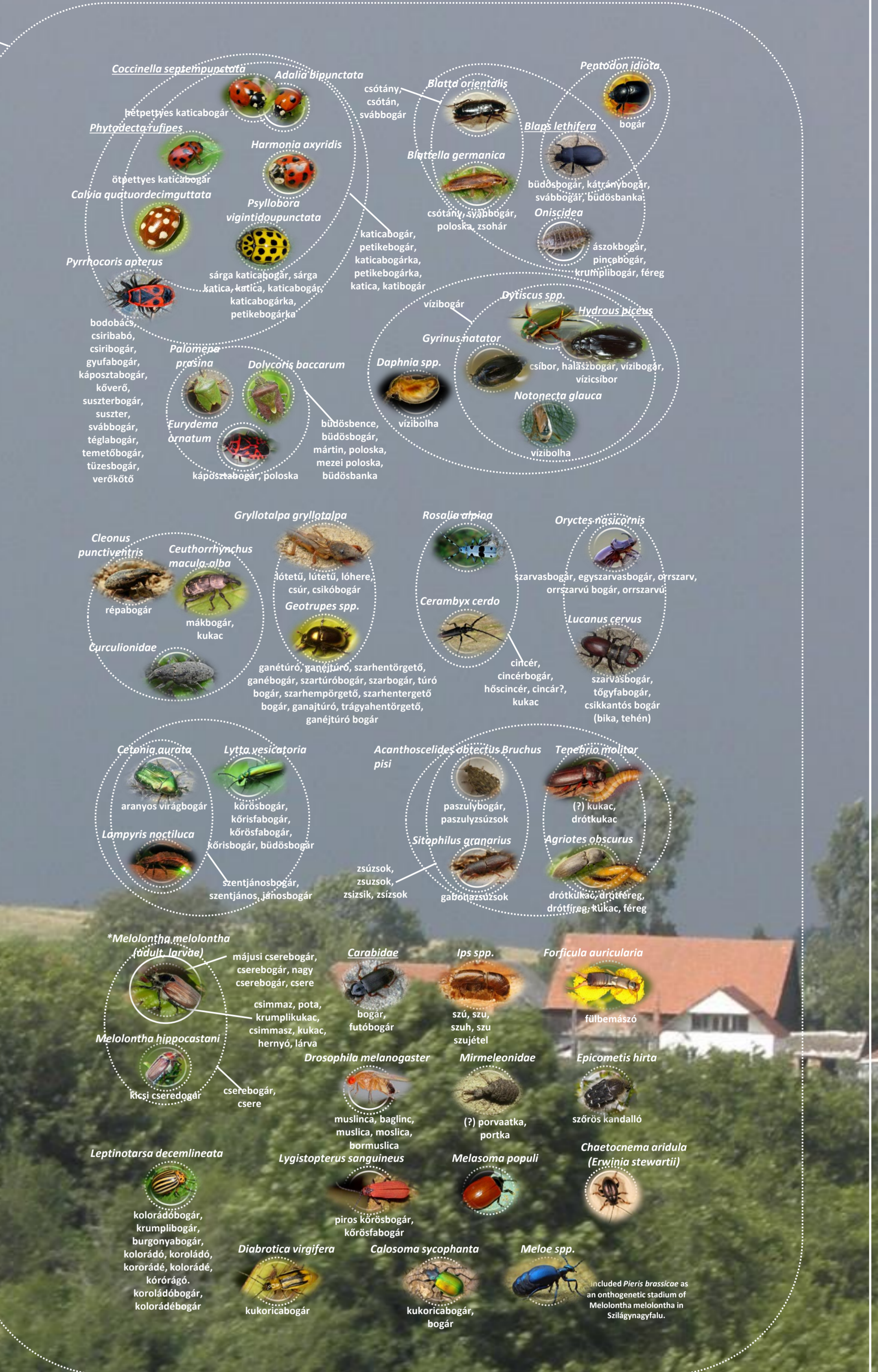
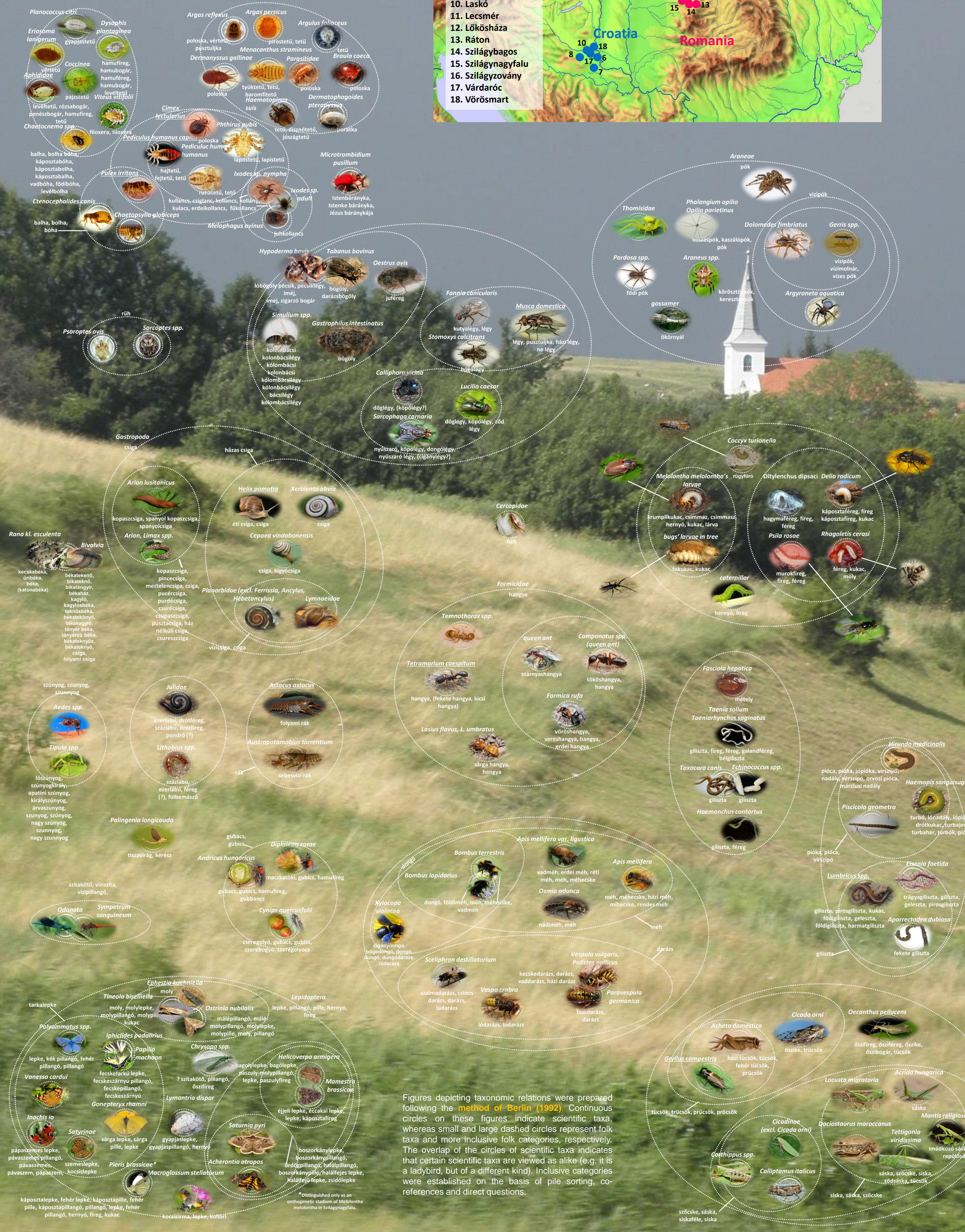
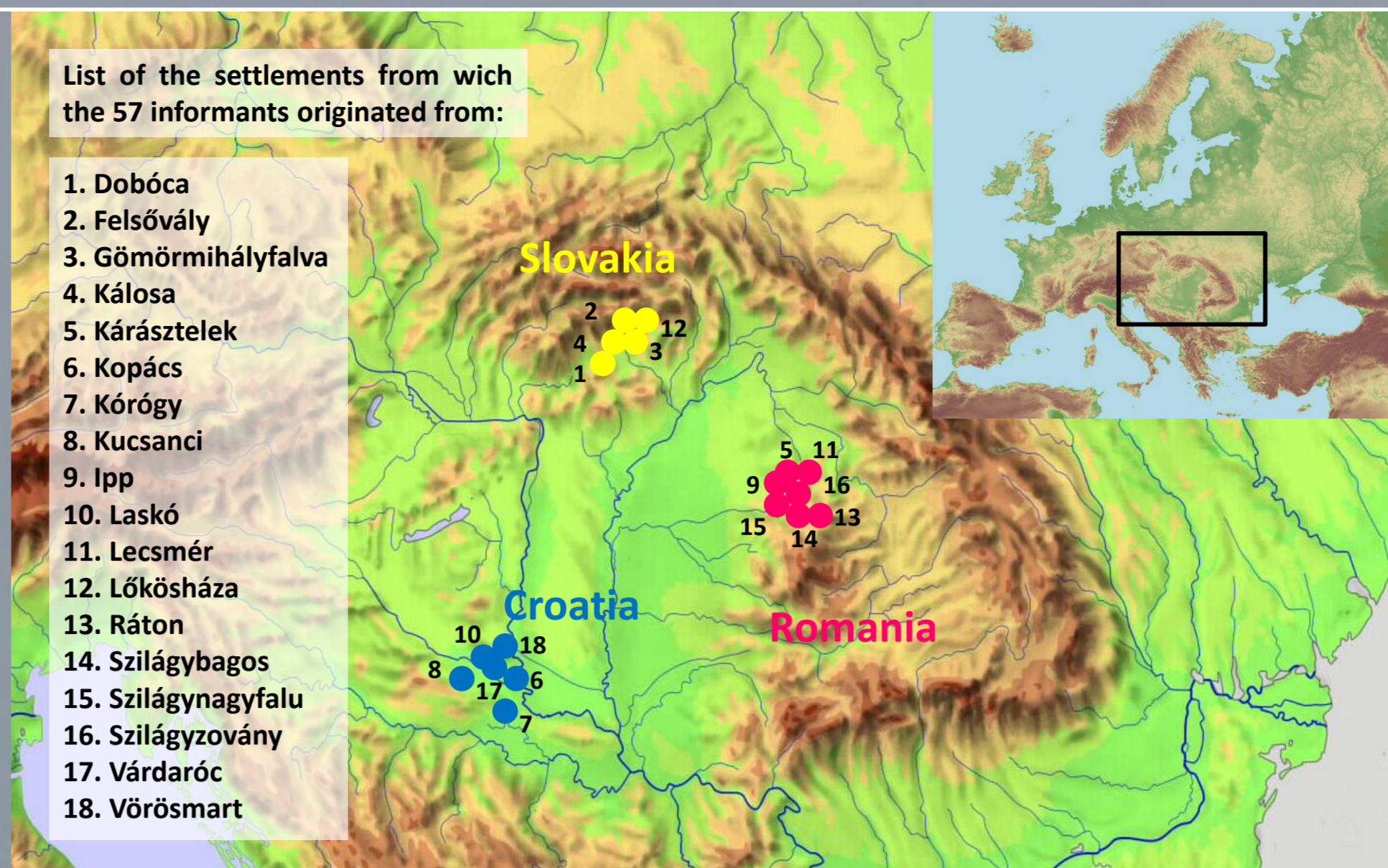
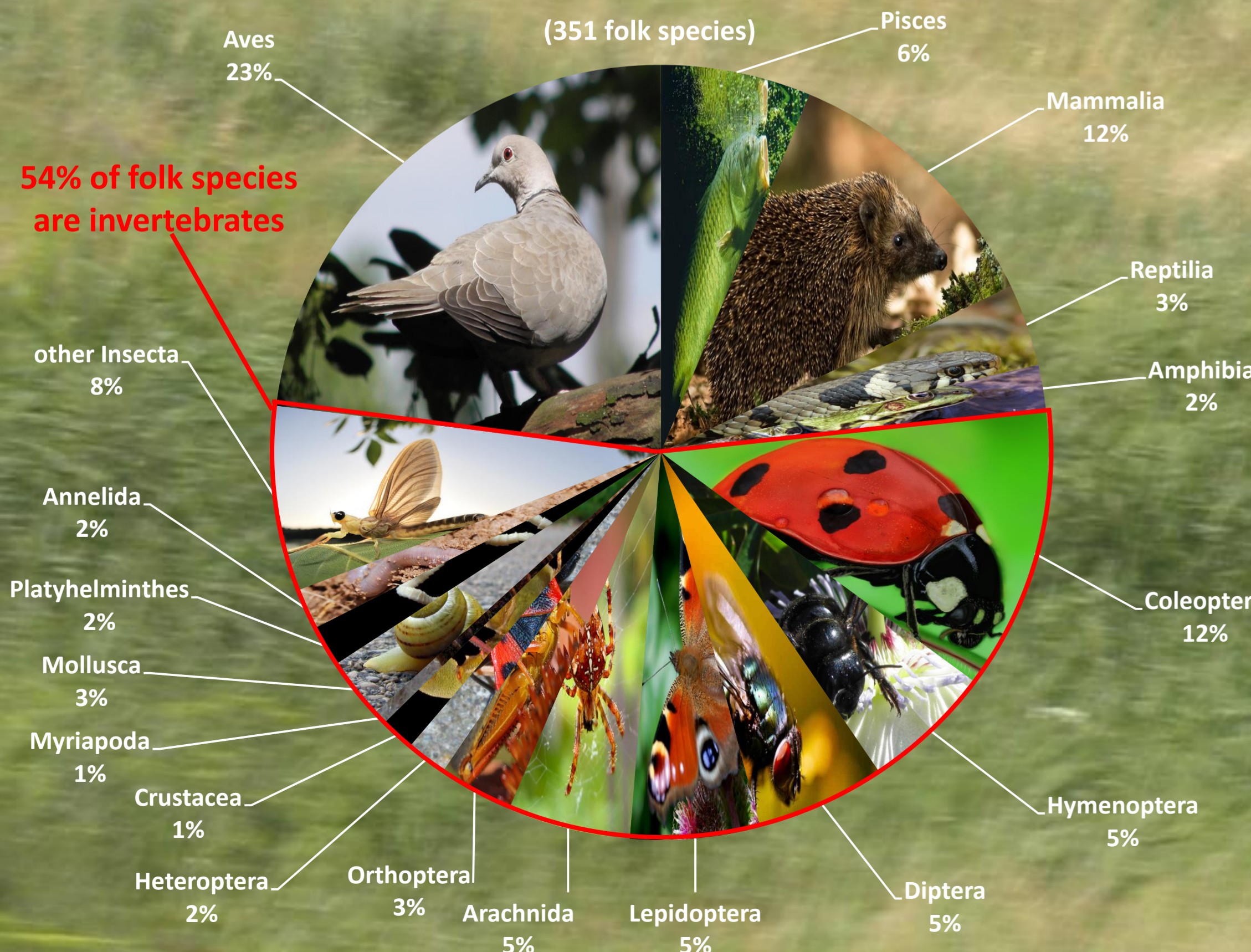
We collected altogether **4948 individual data on 188 invertebrate folk taxa**. According to our other researches it means **54% of the folk animal species**. Most taxa were not only characterized verbally, but most of them had a specific folk name. Though the folk names surely originate from the ancestors, most of the characterizations depend on personal experience. Some of the characterizations are not scientifically correct because they depend on a special type of logic (we may say traditional logic). The most picturesque example for this point is the clam - frog relation. Actually clams are not in a separate folk taxon, but something like frogs' egg or rather their intermittent self-made house. It is also obvious in traditional logic, that it must be some kind of animal, but without head, limbs or visible orthography clams must be some kind of inchoative stage of an aquatic in my informants' conception. Considering this idea the clam's folk name is especially apposite: *békateknyő* means frog's tub in a bit archaic form. This way of thinking is also supported by its generality, for many North American tribes believe the same. **Odd folk taxa's relations depend on many factors namely the animal's figure, habitat and surely the most important is the rate of adverse/usefulness**. Sometimes animal's habitats, or hosts can also be important factors in classification as their haphazard usefulness. For example there is sharp distinction between lice, or fly species even they have nearly the same appearance.

The characteristics of folk taxa are described below according to their salience. **Morphological salience**. In the case of physical appearance, naming of a prototype and comparison to it was typical, as in the case of bed bug (*Cimex lectularius*), or Carabidae, to which the related species were compared. (I signed these species with underscored scientific names on the taxonomic figures.)

Ecological salience. In terms of ecological salience, the following characteristics were the most frequently mentioned: feeding habit, characteristics of movement, habitat, breeding habit, bashfulness, voice, annual and daily pattern of behavior, and observability.

Cultural salience. In terms of cultural salience, the characterization of harm caused and benefit gained was unequivocally dominant. In several cases, a species was considered harmful, although not causing considerable damage (many species of beetle, butterflies, etc.).

Number of species belong to odd taxonomic groups among farmers in three landscapes (Szilályság in Romania, Drávaszög in Croatia, Gömör in Slovakia)



Conclusion
Tight-knit Hungarian communities still preserve a remarkable part of their ancestors' ethnozoological knowledge. Besides the classical **verbal** form, the **nonverbal traditional classification** exists as well. **188 invertebrate folk taxa**, and several folk names prove that the examined knowledge about these animals is still **detailed and precise**. This was surprising, because we were expected to find more eroded knowledge than it was reported from the 19th century, what e.g. Jolsvay (1977), and Lórciny (1979-2002) published. We made semi-structured interviews with the majority of people and carried out picture sorting, during which they could group the species at their will. We used these results to **reconstruct folk taxonomy**.

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