

# PALAEARCTIC GRASSLANDS

Journal of the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group



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### Palaeartic Grasslands

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

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

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

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

**All other text contributions** (News, Announcements, Short Contributions, Book Reviews, Glimpses of a Grassland, Forthcoming Events) should be submitted to Anna Kuzemko ([anyameadow.ak@gmail.com](mailto:anyameadow.ak@gmail.com)) AND Idoia Biurrun ([idoia.biurrun@ehu.es](mailto:idoia.biurrun@ehu.es)).

**Photo contributions** (photos for general illustrative purposes with captions; Photo Stories) should be submitted to Rocco Labadessa ([rocco.labadessa@gmail.com](mailto:rocco.labadessa@gmail.com)).

**Contributions to Photo Competitions** should be submitted to Edy Fantinato ([edy.fantinato@unive.it](mailto:edy.fantinato@unive.it)).

Contributions to the section "**Recent Publications of our Members**" should be sent to Iwona Dembicz ([i.dembicz@gmail.com](mailto:i.dembicz@gmail.com)).

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

*Palaeartic Grasslands* on [ResearchGate](#), [Google Scholar](#), [vegsciblog.org](#)

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**LAYOUT AND TYPESETTING:** Rocco Labadessa



## Editorial

Dear readers,

This issue of *Palaeartic Grasslands* comes in full spring, when many grassland researchers are busy with fieldwork activities.

At the same time, we are all very sorry to see that Ukraine and its people are still suffering from the effects of the Russian invasion. Many EDGG members have expressed their wish to help Ukrainian colleagues to continue their scientific work. Thus, we are glad that finally we can open the EDGG Fund for Ukrainian Scientists, a call for donations to our mother organisation IAVS, which will then forward the money to EDGG to spend it in agreement with the aims of the fund. Ukrainian territories are also illustrated in a Photo Story by T. Shupova and B. Chaplygina.

This issue also comes after the first ever Asian Grassland Conference, which was also the first online conference orga-

nized by EDGG. In the following pages you can read the outcomes of the conference, with several positive outcomes, as well as many beautiful images from Asia.

We also announce Alla Aleksanyan's decision to leave the Executive Committee - therefore we thank her very much for the work done together! - and we invite you to the next EDGG Field Workshop in South Tyrol (Italy) in June 2023.

We wish you pleasant reading of this spring issue.

With best regards,

**Rocco Labadessa**



*Daphne cneorum* in the "Siegenderfer Puszta" near the village of Siegenderf, Burgenland, Austria. Photo: P. Sengl.

## News

# EDGG Fund for Ukrainian Scientists Call for financial donations

EDGG is shocked by the Russian war of aggression against the peaceful Ukraine. A whole country is suffering, thousands of people have been killed and millions had to flee their towns or their country. This war also negatively affects Ukrainian grassland scientists with whom we closely collaborate. Some female scientists could flee to other European countries and obtain a paid position through one of the support programs for Ukrainian refugees. However, the majority of Ukrainian scientists remain in Ukraine, but suffer from cancellation of projects, cut salaries or the impossibility of field work in most parts of the country, or they could flee the country but were too late to get benefit from the support programs.

Many EDGG members have expressed their wish to help our Ukrainian colleagues to continue their scientific career and have asked the Executive Committee how they could do this. Thus, we are glad that finally we can open the EDGG Fund for Ukrainian Scientists. We call for donations, small or large, to our mother organisation IAVS which will then forward the money to EDGG to spend it in agreement with the aims of the fund. If each of our 1400 EDGG members on average would give only 10 EUR (or every fifth member 50 EUR), then we could already support a dozen Ukrainian colleagues for some time. Of course, non-members are also welcome to make donations.

### Aim and organisation of the fund:

- The EDGG Fund for Ukrainian Scientists is governed by the Funding Committee comprising Didem Ambarli, Idoia Biurrun, Iwona Dembicz, Jürgen Dengler, Rocco Labadesa and Stephen Venn, and takes all decisions on the Fund with a simple majority.
- Project ideas could either be proposed by EDGG or by the applicant. Projects should be outlined in a way that they can be conducted under prevalent conditions regarding the war.
- Currently, EDGG offers work options in two such projects, namely in its regional vegetation-plot databases (GrassVeg.DE and Nordic-Baltic Grassland Vegetation Database), for digitising and georeferencing plot data from the literature.
- Ukrainian members can propose their own project ideas, e.g. concerning the analysis of data or the writing of a manuscript.
- If EDGG members have project ideas which they wish to propose, they should contact the Funding Committee.
- Any Ukrainian member can apply to the Funding Committee to receive a grant.



Steppe with *Stipa lessingiana* and *S. ucrainica* in Azovo-Syvaskyi National Nature Park, now occupied by Russian troops, Kherson oblast, Ukraine. Photo: A. Kuzemko



- Decisions on the assignment of grants to applicants will be made by the Funding Committee whenever sufficient money and applications have accumulated.
- The decisions will normally given in 500-EUR tranches, but smaller amounts are possible if there are many applicants or only limited funds. If there is enough money available, the Funding Committee can assign another tranche to the same applicant for the continuation of the same project or for another project.
- For each project, the Funding Committee appoints at least one mentor from outside Ukraine whose job is to remain in contact with the grantee and support her/him in the project.
- For each tranche assigned to a grantee, a short, written document will be created that formulates the scientific task to be addressed and its specifications (e.g., in the case of plot databases: the number of plots to be digitised for the amount of money agreed). The grant is paid prior to the start of the project. After the completion of the project, the grantee and mentor together compile and send a short (1 paragraph) report on the achievements of the project.
- From time to time, the Funding Committee will provide summarizing reports on all running projects on the EDGG website and in Palaeartic Grasslands.

#### How to make donations:

You can make donations, large or small, to our fund either by credit card via our online form or by money transfer to

IAVS' Dutch bank account. Please note that the money will go through the accounts of IAVS. Therefore, it is crucial that you indicate the purpose of your payment precisely as stated below, because otherwise the money might not reach EDGG's Fund.

#### (A) With credit card via the online platform

- You can make your payment here: <https://www.iavs.org/donations/donate.asp?id=21837>
- Please indicate whether you wish your name as donator to be publicized or not
- Fees: **0.20 USD per transaction**

#### (B) With bank transfer to IAVS' Dutch bank account

- BIC/Swift code: **SNS BNL 2A**
- IBAN: **NL40 SNSB 0921 5290 23**
- Recipient: **INTERNATIONALE VERENIGING VOOR VEGETATIEKUNDE**
- Subject line: **EDGG Donation Fund for Ukraine**
- Fees: **0.07 EUR per transaction**

If you consent to your name being listed as donator, please send an e-mail with your name, date and amount of the donation to [dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com](mailto:dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF  
UKRAINIAN SCIENTISTS IN NEED!**



Participants of the 15<sup>th</sup> EDGG Field Workshop in in Chorna Dolyna steppe depression, now occupied by Russian troops, Kherson oblast, Ukraine. Photo: I. Smelansky.



## Thanks to Alla Aleksanyan

Alla Aleksanyan has been an active member of the IAVS since 2015 and was elected to the Executive Committee of the EDGG in 2019. She was the main organizer of the 12<sup>th</sup> Field Workshop on Grasslands of Armenia in 2019. Alla is very enthusiastic and energetic, and was always happy to take an active part in discussions and to take responsibility for whatever tasks that were necessary. Her responsibilities in the EC included membership of the editorial board of *Palaeartic Grasslands*, management of the EDGG website, including the establishment and revision of several of the pages, and responsibility for our YouTube channel, and the organization of conferences. She participated in the organisation of several EDGG events, including Talk Grasslands and the Asian Grassland Conference in 2022. Although this period overlapped with several other major duties for her, she devotedly worked towards the success of these events. For example, the AGC would not have been possible in its eventual size and diversity without her active involvement. It was a pleasure to work with her, particularly as she is very self-responsible and careful about her work. Moreover, she is very positive and persistent in the face of challenges. We thank her for her substantial contributions to the EDGG and we hope that she will continue to support and be part of EDGG in the future. We will miss her happy smile in challenging times.



Alla and Idoia during the 12<sup>th</sup> Field Workshop in Armenia.  
Photo: J. Dengler.



Armenian grasslands during the 12<sup>th</sup> Field Workshop organized by Alla. Photo: J. Dengler.



## Call for photos for *Palaeartic Grasslands*

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

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

As with scientific articles, Photo Stories undergo a review process with a focus on the quality of the photographs. There is no guarantee that they will be accepted without changes, and late submissions may be published in a subsequent issue.

We would also like to encourage you to contribute to **the Global Vegetation Project** with your vegetation photographs:

- 1) If your photos have already been published in *Palaeartic Grasslands*, you can submit them to the global map citing the DOI of your article or of the whole issue (you can find all published issues here: <https://edgg.org/publications/bulletin/>);
- 2) If you are submitting new vegetation photographs to *Palaeartic Grasslands*, either within an article, a photo story or for general illustrative purposes, you can provide each photo file with the following information (\* = required fields): date (year/month/day); author's full name\*; place name; latitude and longitude\*; vegetation type; vegetation classification system; naturalness; dominant species list\*; additional comments.

Please take a look at the [project website](#) for an overview of the global map and the data entry form.

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

Deadline for photo submissions is **31 July 2022**.

**Rocco Labadessa**, Italy  
[rocco.labadessa@gmail.com](mailto:rocco.labadessa@gmail.com)

## Call for Photo Competition "Plant Species Richness"

The theme of the current Photo Competition is "**Plant Species Richness in Palaeartic Grasslands**". Palaeartic grasslands are known for their high species diversity. At small spatial scale, they are characterised by an outstanding diversity of vascular plants, so much so that some Palaeartic grasslands hold the world record for diversity of small-grain vascular plants. Can you capture such amazing biodiversity in a single photograph?

You are invited to send up to three high-quality photographs within the competition theme (full size JPEG or TIFF images, at least 300 dpi) together with captions giving a short title or description and information on the subject (species name, date, place name). The Photo Jury (see imprint) will select the best photographs. The three best shots will be awarded with full space in the next issue, but we reserve the right to use other submitted materials for illustrative purposes in other parts of the issue. If you want to take part in the competition, please submit your photos together with required information to Edy ([edy.fantinato@unive.it](mailto:edy.fantinato@unive.it)) by **31 July 2022**.

**Edy Fantinato**, Italy  
[edy.fantinato@unive.it](mailto:edy.fantinato@unive.it)



Colorful grassland in Inner Mongolia, China. Photo: K. Uchida.

## EDGG Event

### EDGG Field Workshop in 2023

Dear EDGG Members,

Due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EDGG Field Workshop “Ukrainian steppes along climatic gradients” had to be cancelled. We are wholeheartedly with our Ukrainian colleagues, who put a lot of efforts into the preparations of this event, and we really hope that we will return to the idea of organizing the Field Workshop in Ukraine soon.

In 2023 we would like to invite you to the South Tyrol (Italy). The EDGG Field Workshop “Inner-Alpine dry grasslands in the southern part of the Eastern Alps (Vinschgau, Upper Adige Valley and Valtellina)” will be held in June (probably 10 days in the timeframe 1-20 of June), so please keep it in mind if you are interested in participating. More details will be provided in the next *Palaeartic Grasslands* issues and on the EDGG website.

#### EDGG Field Workshop Coordinators:

**Iwona Dembicz**, Warsaw, Poland, [i.dembicz@gmail.com](mailto:i.dembicz@gmail.com)

**Idoia Biurrun**, Bilbao, Spain, [idoia.biurrun@ehu.es](mailto:idoia.biurrun@ehu.es)

#### Coordinator of the local organizing team:

**Andreas Hilpold**, Italy, [andreas.hilpold@eurac.edu](mailto:andreas.hilpold@eurac.edu)



Dry grasslands with *Stipa eriocalis* and *Stipa capillata* in Vinschgau, South Tyrol, Italy. Photo: A. Hilpold.



Landscape in the Matsch/Mazia Valley, South Tyrol, Italy. Photo: A. Hilpold.

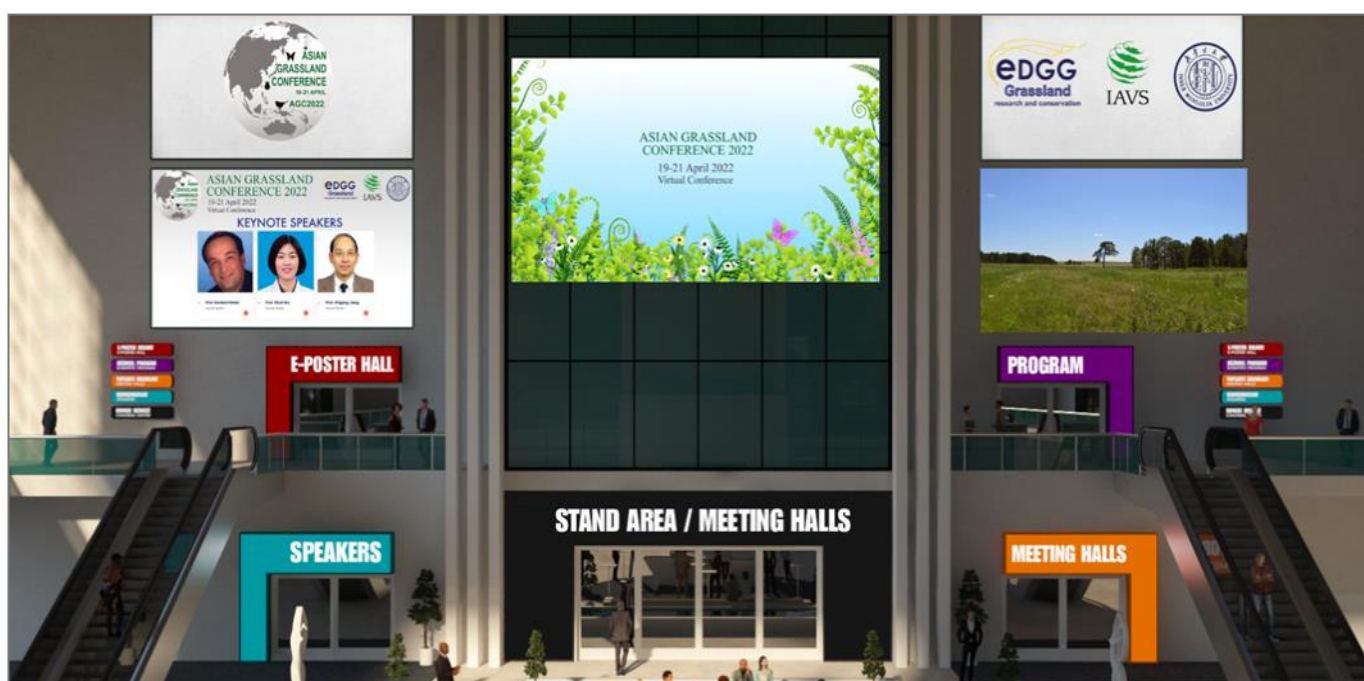


## Conference Report

### Asian Grassland Conference

The first ever Asian Grassland Conference was held online during 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> April. This was also the first online conference organized by EDGG, though we were able to benefit from the experience of our previous Talk Grasslands series of online talks. There were some new challenges for the organizing committee, comprising Alla Aleksanyan, Didem Ambarli, Stephen Venn, Jianshuang Wu and Frank Yonghong Li, to deal with, some of which required rapid responses. Hopefully you didn't notice. The conference platform was provided by a commercial enterprise, Coinnect, from Turkey, and fortunately for us, they did a really great job, providing immediate support whenever it was needed. Their reliability and flexibility was a great help to us and we can certainly recommend their services to anyone else who is planning to organize an online conference. We were also fortunate to rely on members of the scientific committee (25 members) for assistance in a number of tasks, such as evaluating abstracts, chairing sessions, etc. We also had the benefit of generous sponsorship from the IAVS and Inner Mongolia University, as well as the publishers Pensoft, Wiley and Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution, whose stands you may have visited in the conference hall.

The scientific programme of the AGC comprised 45 oral presentations and 66 posters with speed talks, which were all organized into three parallel sessions under eight topics (1. Biodiversity, 2. Plants & Fungi, 3. Animals, 4. Livelihoods, 5. Global change, 6. Function, 7. Conservation and 8. Vegetation). Each day began with a plenary presentation, and these were given by **Shuli Niu** (Chinese Academy of Sciences), **Norbert Hölzel** (University of Münster) and **Jiang Zhigang** (Chinese Academy of Sciences). These keynotes covered a diverse range of the conference topics. Shuli Niu's talk was on *Grasslands' Response to Global Change Gradient - From Sites to Globe*, Norbert Hölzel spoke on *Impact of Post-Soviet Land-Use Change on Central Asian Steppe Ecosystems* and Jiang Zhigang's plenary was on *Wild ungulates in the grasslands of China: Status and Conservation*. You can still access information about the conference at [edgg.org/AGC](http://edgg.org/AGC), [agc2022.org](http://agc2022.org) and the conference venue is still accessible at [agc2022.coinnect.com](http://agc2022.coinnect.com). So if you missed the conference or would like to look at some of the presentations again, it is still possible for about one month. To access a presentation, simply go to the Hall in which the presentation was originally presented, then click on the ∨ symbol in the upper left-hand corner, then select the session you would like to view from the dropdown menu and click play.



View of the Asian Grassland Conference venue, still accessible at [agc2022.coinnect.com](http://agc2022.coinnect.com).

In keeping with EDGG tradition, there were competitions to acknowledge the best oral and poster contributions of Young Investigators. The winners of these were, for oral presentations:

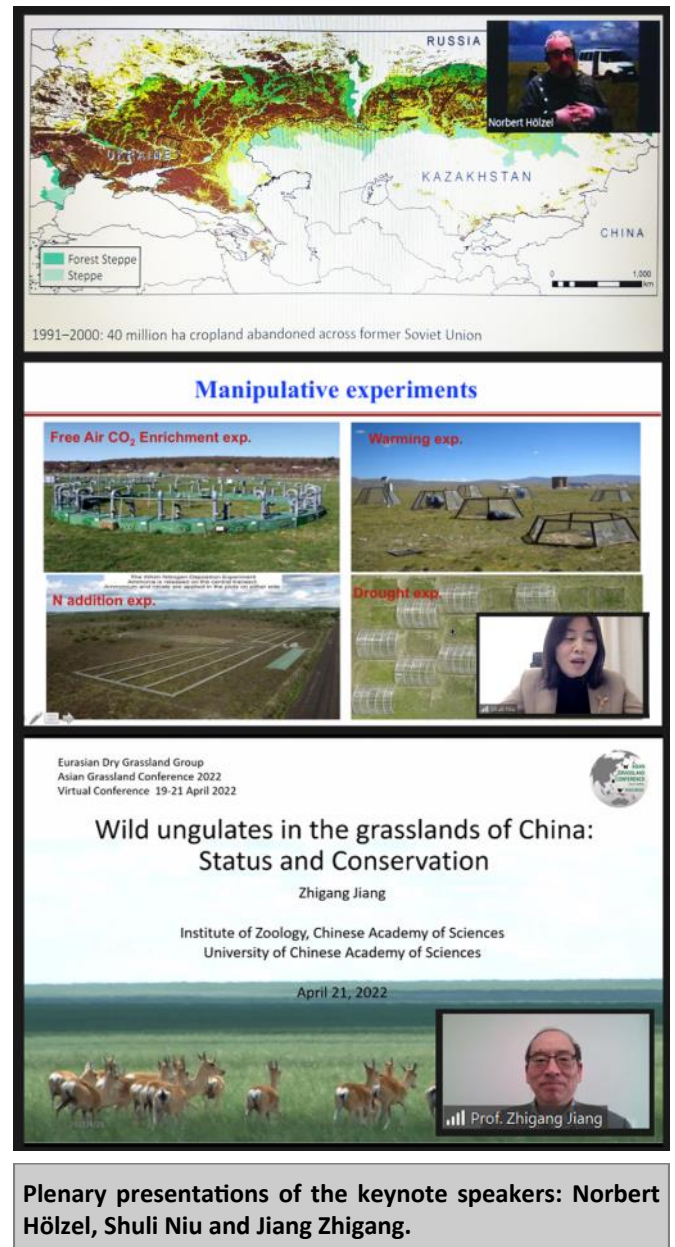
1. **Fengshi Li:** Compared to soil bacterial and fungal diversity, mowing significantly mitigate the adverse effects of fertilization on plant diversity in grassland
2. **Yujie Niu:** Soil cracking is a critical turning point in the collapse processes of *Kobresia* ecosystems on Tibetan Plateau
3. **Anita Devi:** Biological invasion by livestock and dogs in wet grasslands of Brahmaputra floodplains of Assam affecting its integrity

and for posters:

1. **Gantuya Batdelger:** Mongolian herders' ecological understanding in their landscape and landscape change
2. **Anna Wróbel:** High-elevation halophytic communities in the Pamir Mountains, Central Asia – habitat requirements and distribution via ecological niche modelling
3. **Yanan Wang:** Mixing up plant litter and herbivore dung alters their decomposition rate in a semi-arid grasslands ecosystem

There was also a Photographic competition in conjunction with the conference, organized by Edy Fantinato (this issue, pp.12-23). There were four categories, and the prize-winners were:

- **Asian Grassland Plants** (winners: 1. Jalil Noroozi, 2. Sergey Levykin, Murat Nurushev and Ilya Yakovlev, 3. Jianshuang Wu),
- **Asian Grassland Animals** (winners: 1. Jianshuang Wu, 2. Yuzhen Liu, 3. Jalil Noroozi),
- **Asian Grassland Landscapes** (winners: 1. Gencer Yaprak, 2. Yuzhen Liu, 3. Jelena Erdal),
- **Humans and grasslands in Asia** (winners: 1. Jalil Noroozi, 2. Jelena Erdal, 3. Yuzhen Liu).



Plenary presentations of the keynote speakers: Norbert Hölzel, Shuli Niu and Jiang Zhigang.



“Group photo” of the participants at the closing ceremony of the Asian Grassland Conference.



The photographic competition was supported by the journal *Grassland Research*, and winners received copies of the book: *Common plant identity along an alpine grassland research transect across Changtang, North Tibet of China*, by authors Jianshuang Wu, Shaowei Li, and Xiangtao Wang.

Three Special Issues in scientific journals are being prepared in connection with the conference. They are in the journals: *Vegetation Classification and Survey* (Jürgen Dengler), *Hacquetia* (Orsolya Valkó), *Biodiversity and Conservation* (Didem Ambarlı) and these will be published in 2023.

In addition to the presentations, the programme of the conference included four workshop events, three of which were held during the conference, and one as a post-conference event, organized by the IAVS.

**Workshop 1: Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) and GrassPlot database** - organized by Jürgen Dengler, Iwona Dembicz and Rocco Labadessa, provided an introduction to the organization and its activities and also a presentation of the Grassplot database and protocol. The workshop went well and was attended by around 30-40 people, many of whom remained for nearly 1.5 hours. Initially Jürgen Dengler gave a brief presentation about EDGG and its many activities, as well as the GrassPlot database. He specifically called for activities in and data contributions from Asia. Later there was a lively discussion with participants, complemented by input from the other chairs of EDGG and GrassPlot (Idoia Biurrun, Iwona Dembicz, Anna Kuzemko, Riccardo Guarino) who were present. Questions concerned details of the EDGG sampling methodology (all available on the EDGG website) and practical issues regarding Field Workshops.

**Workshop 2: Workshop on the Vegetation Typologies in Asia**, led by Riccardo Guarino and Idoia Biurrun. A workshop on grassland vegetation typologies in Asia was held on day 2. The aim of the workshop was to discuss the physiognomic-typological classification of the vegetation plots included in the [GrassPlot database](#) and related syntaxa. The workshop was attended by 25 people from 18 countries. It is planned to establish a collaborative network to compile a consistent syntaxonomical checklist of phytosociological classes for the open vegetation and grasslands (so far) recognized throughout the Palaeartic.

**Workshop 3: Meet the editors** – moderated by Stephen Venn with contributions from editors of eight relevant scientific journals: Jianshuang Wu (*Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*; *Frontiers in Environmental Science*); Orsolya Valkó

(*Biological Conservation*, *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, *Hacquetia*); Jürgen Dengler (*Vegetation Classification and Survey*; *Journal of Vegetation Science*; *Tuexenia*; *Applied Vegetation Science*); Jinglun Peng (*Grassland Research*); Dunlian Qiu (*Journal of Mountain Science*); Yanpei Wu (*Grassland Research*); Csaba Tolgyesi (*Global Ecology and Conservation*; *Restoration Ecology*) and Jianguo Wu (*Landscape Ecology*). Each of the editors briefly introduced themselves and told something about the journals they represented. This session was well-supported, though most of the questions came from experienced researchers and editors, rather than from junior scientists. However, the presentations of the editors were diverse and informative and probably covered most of the issues concerning submissions to these journals.

**Workshop 4: on the foundation of an IAVS Regional Section in Asia**, moderated by David Zelený and Jürgen Dengler. First, David introduced the IAVS, its internal structure including working groups and regional sections, history, membership, how Regional Sections are established and the benefits of Regional Sections. Jürgen presented the ideas behind organizing this initial workshop, the low number of members from Asian countries, and benefits of Regional Sections. Then invited guests introduced their own working groups: Milan Chytrý presented the European Vegetation Survey (EVS) and Reginald Guuroh introduced the African Regional section, and Jürgen Dengler presented the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG). The members of the initiative committee for the Asia regional section, which was set up a few weeks before, were all in favour of a single Regional Section for the continent. The participants discussed options for communication tools. Currently, there are 24 members from 13 countries and membership will be available via an online form. A total of eight participants declared that they are interested in serving in the steering committee. From now on, the initial steering committee will organise the necessary next steps regarding membership, effective communication within the group, Bylaws and the establishment of a Steering Committee.

The scientific programme of the conference was quite intensive, though for those who wished to socialize with other participants of the conference, a separate Happy Hour venue was available, where people could meet up informally and form groups to chat with.

Stephen Venn, Łódź, Poland.  
[stephen.venn@helsinki.fi](mailto:stephen.venn@helsinki.fi)

## Photo Competition

### Best Shots on “Asian grasslands”

Here are the winners of the EDGG “Asian Grasslands” Photo Competition, within the topics: Asian grassland plants; Asian grassland animals; Asian grassland landscapes; Humans and grasslands in Asia.

The Jury for the Photo Competition was composed of Edy Fantinato (Chair), Anna Kuzemko, Rocco Labadessa, Jim Martin, Arkadiusz Nowak and Salza Palpurina.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> place - Asian grassland plants



*Onobrychis cornuta*, 2900 m in Sahand Mts. (3710 m) in NW Iran. June 2018. Photo: Jalil Noroozi.

#### Reviews from the Jury:

*“The colorful cushions and the snowy mountains make a striking combination.”*



2<sup>nd</sup> place - Asian grassland plants



Feather grass (*Stipa lessingiana*) comes back. Steppe area to the South from Orenburg (Russia, Southern Urals). June 2020. Photo: Sergey Levykin, Murat Nurushev, Ilya Yakovlev.

**Reviews from the Jury:**

*“Colonization pattern of feathergrass is depicted like a herd of feathered animals moving through the steppe.”*

**3<sup>rd</sup> place - Asian grassland plants**

*Meconopsis horridula* in alpine meadow. August 2021. Photo: Jianshuang Wu.

**Reviews from the Jury:**

*"The blue poppy in its habitat stands like a flag of Asian grassland beauty."*



**1<sup>st</sup> place - Asian grassland animals**



**A swamp in Central Tibet, China. Photo: Jianshuang Wu.**

**Reviews from the Jury:**

*"A lovely composition of goats grazing with the mountains rising up in the background."*

**2<sup>nd</sup> place - Asian grassland animals**

**Yaks in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Photo: Yuzhen Liu.**

**Reviews from the Jury:**

*"Beautiful photograph of yaks grazing with the uplands in the distance."*



3<sup>rd</sup> place - Asian grassland animals



Safe apartments for White storks (*Ciconia ciconia*) in the gypsophilous hills of Mahneshan Protected Area, in NW Iran. June 2020. Photo: Jalil Noroozi.

**Reviews from the Jury:**

*"It's amazing to see nests of white storks in their natural habitat!"*

**1<sup>st</sup> place - Asian grassland landscapes**

Mountain meadow, Sivrikaya Village, Rize, Turkey. July 2018. Photo: Gencer Yaprak.

**Reviews from the Jury:**

*"A perfect ray of sunlight is able to define the hill shapes and to highlight a thin grassland contour."*



2<sup>nd</sup> place - Asian grassland landscapes



Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Alpine Meadow. Photo: Yuzhen Liu.

**Reviews from the Jury:**

*"The photo encapsulates the rugged nature of upland grasslands."*

**3<sup>rd</sup> place - Asian grassland landscapes**

Dry rocky steppe in Mount Artos, above the Lake Van, Turkey. July 2021. Photo: Jelena Erdal.

**Reviews from the Jury:**

*"Stones and plants in a perfect and powerful balance."*



1<sup>st</sup> place - Humans and Asian grasslands



Wedding party of a Bakhtiari tribe in the foothills of Zardkuh Mts., Central Zagros, Iran. Photo: Jalil Noroozi.

**Reviews from the Jury:**

*“A colorful party in the field as a symbol of joy and life of human relationships with grasslands.”*

**2<sup>nd</sup> place - Humans and Asian grasslands**

Shepherd and his herd, Aladağlar Mountains, Kayseri, Turkey. July 2019. Photo: Jelena Erdal.

**Reviews from the Jury:**

*"A wonderful rural scene with the shepherd and sheep dog watching over the herd."*



3<sup>rd</sup> place - Humans and Asian grasslands



Yaks and human in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Photo: Yuzhen Liu.

**Reviews from the Jury:**

*"Moving yaks and tents highlight the life of nomadic people in the wide open Asian landscapes."*

## Photo Story

DOI: 10.21570/EDGG.PG.53.24-30

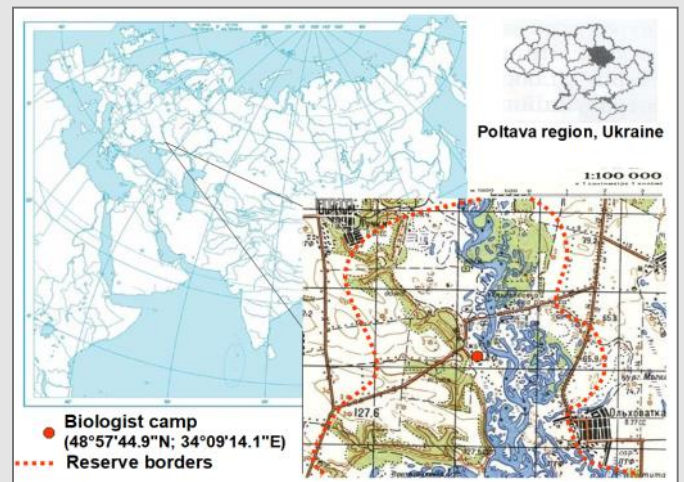
### Visit to the Vorskla River in May

Photos and text by Tatiana V. Shupova<sup>1</sup> & Angela B. Chaplygina<sup>2</sup>

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During May 1-3, 2014 we visited Luchkovsky nature reserve (Ukraine), 20 years after the early studies. In 1996 the reserve was established in the Lower Vorskla River flow to protect natural complexes. Since 2002, the Luchkovsky nature reserve has been part of the Regional Landscape Park "Nizhnevorskyansky". The total length of the Vorskla is 464 km. The territory of the reserve is located at the northern border of the Steppe zone, and 15 kilometers from where the Vorskla flows into the Dnieper. Here, the river is adorably beautiful. It splits into many branches, alternating with islands and reed thickets. On the right bank of the Vorskla River, ravine oak forests have been preserved in combination with steppe meadows (Stecuk et al. 2002).



Location of the Luchkovsky nature reserve.



Panorama from the right bank to the main watercourse of the Vorskla River (48°57'25.5\"N 34°09'40.2\"E). In the foreground there is a ravine forest and a steppe meadow.





Panorama from the right bank to the Vorskla River mouth. The riverside is indented by picturesque ravines and often includes clay cliffs up to 20 m high. In these clay cliffs European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*), Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*) burrow for nesting. Common Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) and Great Tit (*Parus major*) settle in old burrows.





On the left side of the Vorskla river are steppe and wet meadows. Small trees of *Elaeagnus commutata* and *Pyrus communis* grow in these meadows (48°58'17.3"N 34°09'42.1"E).



We came to study the avifauna to discover if the species composition of birds has changed over 20 years. Mosaic landscape and absence of civilization, creates comfortable conditions for nesting birds. As before (in 1996 and 1997), we were made very welcome and settled at the camp in the same house as 20 years ago. In the evening we met here a mouse and a robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) and got to work at dawn.







The dawn pleased with the beauty of the sunrise, the dew adorned the plants. Dew condensed on the spider's web and made the work of the spider conspicuous for photos. There are about 850 species of higher plants in the flora of the reserve, two of which are included in the European Red List (Natural Reserve Fund of Ukraine 2009).





Representatives of the flora in the reserve: *Equisetum* sp., *Pulsatilla* sp., *Ornithogalum boucheanum*, *Anemone nemorosa*, *Viola* sp. and *Myosotis* sp.





When the sun rose and the dew has dried the insects became active. *Xylocopa violacea* is a rare species of bee that lives in xerophytic woodlands and steppe cliff. *Meloe proscarabaeus* is a rare beetle that parasitizes bees. *Melolontha melolontha* and *Cordulia aenea* are widely distributed species.



Common Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) freshly hatched from its egg.





A group of Tree Sparrows (*Passer montanus*) settled in the nest of a White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*). This is common as small birds are well protected from predators next to a large and strong bird.



The most interesting ornithological encounter: European nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) hiding for a day's rest in the thickets of shrub. Here it is protected. Its coloration and body shape are similar to a tree bough. At dusk, it will go hunting for insects. Soon the Nightjar will nest on the ground in a meadow.

Today, 88 species of 15 orders nest in the Luchkovsky reserve, which represent 11 faunogenetic complexes (Shupova & Chaplygina 2016). Due to the presence of woody vegetation, 54 species of bird nest in the meadows (ground-nesting and tree-nesting).

#### Further reading

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## Short Contribution

# Remote sensing and habitat mapping to determine the effects of intensive cattle breeding in the Hârtibaciu Plateau, Transylvania

The Hârtibaciu Plateau is located in Transylvania right in the centre of Romania, within the arc of the Carpathian Mountains. It is the largest terrestrial protected area in Romania (split between eight Natura 2000 sites spread over 270.000 ha) and holds one of the most well preserved traditional multi-cultural landscapes in Europe (WWF 2015) and holds one of Europe's most important High Nature Value (HNV) farmland areas. The area of interest consists of two of these protected areas: Podișul Hârtibaciului, a Special Protection Area (SPA) and Hârtibaciu Sud – Vest, a Site of Community Importance (SCI) (Fig. 1).

The region holds a unique mosaic of habitats (forests, grasslands, network of wetlands, arable land) that are the product of the interaction over centuries between the local people and nature (Fig. 2). The traditional land-uses have made it a hotspot for biodiversity: holding 60% of the total number of bird species observed in Romania and some dry

grassland types have the highest species diversity recorded in any plant community worldwide (Fundatia ADEPT 2022). It is also an area of major importance for large carnivores, such as European brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) and Eurasian wolf (*Canis lupus*).

Intensive cattle breeding is a new phenomenon in Transylvania, introduced by foreign agri-businesses after accession to the EU. According to the definition (European Coordination Via Campesina 2016), the activity of these companies can be considered land-grabbing. In less than 15 years, Angus cattle breeding has replaced the extensive grazing of sheep and mixed village herds and has become the dominant land use in the region. For the raising of cattle, large parts of the open landscape have been enclosed by electric fences. Fattening with maize silage is later done in paddocks and stables until they are ready for slaughter.

The most significant environmental impacts observed are:



Fig. 1. Location of protected areas Podișul Hârtibaciului (SPA) in red, Hârtibaciu Sud - Vest (SCI) in white.





**Fig. 2. Mosaic landscape.**

- Consolidation of land – leading to increased homogeneity of the mosaic and a reduced number of hedgerows and field margins (Fig. 3).
- Crop monoculture – homogenisation of arable land for maize silage, resulting in increased exposure to agrochemicals and soil degradation.
- Permanent electric fences – excessive use of electrical fencing (often 7 rows of wire) to demarcate and enclose huge parts of the landscape, creating a physical barrier to the free movement of people and mammals (especially corridors for large carnivores).
- Pasture clearance – the undisciplined removal of shrubs, trees and sometimes the whole plant layer in preparation for pasture conversion, destroying plant and structural diversity.
- Grazing pressure – non-ideal stocking rates and rotation increases pressure on the soil, vegetation and converts favourable habitats.
- Agrochemicals – use of herbicides, pesticides and chemical fertilisers (as well as excessive natural fertilisation) contaminates the soil, water and has knock-on effects through the trophic system.
- Re-seeding – the seeding of pastures with a handful of favourable grass species for grazing completely simplifies the natural grassland composition and diversity, as well as introducing invasive species.
- Agricultural mechanisation – the use of large, heavy ma-



**Fig. 3. Consolidation of land in Alțâna from 2005 and 2019.**

chinery compacts the soil and causes direct disturbance and damage to vegetation and ground-dwelling species.

Alongside the environmental issues, there are a multitude of socio-economic and political effects that are being felt by the local communities, including access to land, opportunities for rural development, clean water, healthy soil, cultural heritage and safety.

Despite the designation as Natura 2000 sites, since the initial data collection there has been a distinct lack of monitoring to determine the trends in biodiversity and in particular the conservation status of habitats. In the SPA there has





Fig. 4. Drone shot of Angus paddock in Alțâna.



Fig. 5. Hay meadows.

been no detailed habitat mapping. Thus, there is no basis to quantify and prove the deterioration of the protected areas. In order to create a baseline dataset as quickly as possible, we are looking for support to design and implement a methodology to assess the impacts. This information can then be used to provide evidence to the competent authorities, in order to develop the appropriate guidelines and protection measures.

We see this work as an important part of raising awareness among local people and policy makers about the very complex issue of land grabbing by large agro-businesses in our region and beyond. As the area is quite large, change is rapid and local authorities are overwhelmed, we believe that a combination of remote sensing and field work would be the most effective and therefore we want to approach people with expertise in these areas with our CALL FOR HELP!

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Fig. 6. Electric fences blocking a road in Alțâna.

## Book Review

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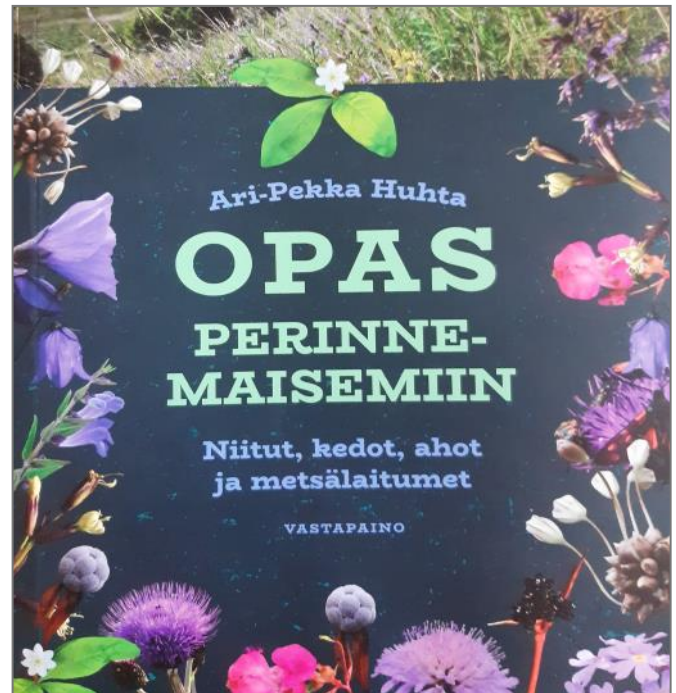
**Huhta, A-P. 2021 Opas perinnemaisemiin — Niitut, kedot, ahot ja metsälaitumet** (Engl. Guide to traditional landscapes – Meadows, dry meadows and woodland pastures. Vastapaino Oy (Tampere, Finland). 477 pages, 300 colour photos, 30 sites ISBN 978-951-768-775-1. Price €33.90 paperback. <https://vastapaino.fi/opas-perinnemaisemiin/>

Contrary to most of my previous book reviews, the purpose of this review is not to present a book that you will all wish to buy and read. Unfortunately this book will not be accessible to many of you for the simple reason that it is written in Finnish, and I am not aware of any plans to publish translated versions. However, the author is one of the foremost authorities on semi-natural grassland habitats in Finland, with an intimate knowledge and extensive experience of these habitats and their history. As a result, it is packed with fascinating information and a really enjoyable read for Finnish readers interested in these habitats.

The classification of grassland habitats in Finland is rather unique and contrasts with the approaches to grassland classification that have been adopted in other regions. So I would like to take this opportunity to summarise the contents of this guide to Finnish semi-natural grasslands for you. I guess that for most people, an electronic version of the book would have been more practicable, as that would permit the use of digital translation applications, though some of the associated terminology is challenging to translate. Unfortunately, however, it is not available in electronic form.

Finland is a rather long country, with its southernmost parts in the hemiboreal region and northernmost parts above the Arctic Circle and extending even beyond the tree limit. In these northernmost parts, the summer is short and intensive, characterized by non-stop sunshine during the summer. Classification of grassland habitats in Finland distinguishes cultural grasslands, which have arisen through traditional agricultural practices, and natural meadows, such as flood meadows and meadows with an insufficient soil layer to support the development of woodland. This book covers 12 main categories of semi-natural grasslands, some of them with further sub-divisions, and two categories of anthropogenic grasslands. These include moorland pastures (*nummi*), dry meadows on bedrock (*kallioketo*), dry meadows (*keto*), fresh meadows (*tuore nitty*), wet meadows (*kostea nitty*), lake and riverine flood meadows (*järven- ja joen rantaniitty*), coastal flood meadows (*merenrantaniitty*), flood meadows (*tulvaniitty*), bog meadows (*suoniitty*), meadows with trees managed for fodder production (*lehdesniitty*), wooded pastures (*hakamaat*) and forest pastures (*metsälaitumet*). The anthropogenic categories are novel environments (roadside and railway verges; powerline corridors, municipal parks, artificial meadows, ski slopes and aerodromes) and historical castle grounds and fortifications.

In the first section of the book, Huhta provides an introduc-



tion to cultural grassland habitats in Finland, a history of their development and subsequent decline. The first part ends with a review of threatened species of semi-natural grasslands in Finland, covering the taxa vascular plants, mosses, lichens, fungi, birds, insects and amphibians and reptiles. Part two goes through each of the 12 main types of semi-natural grasslands, for each of which there is a general description, with a list of indicator species, and then descriptions of 1-6 examples for each one. There is also a map inside the front cover of the book, on which the locations of all the sites covered are shown.

The book is sumptuously illustrated with beautiful colour photographs of example habitats and their vegetation. It comprises a comprehensive guide to the semi-natural grasslands of Finland, which is an invaluable resource for anyone working with these habitats and their conservation. In particular, it is a great help to anyone surveying these habitats. It is also enjoyable to read because it is written in an entertaining style, with references to poetry and local culture. The sections are also colour-coded, which helps its use as a reference work.

For me this book is a wonderful resource, packed with valuable information and an enjoyable read. I am a little disappointed that it is aimed solely at the domestic market, though many of the people in Finland who work with the conservation of semi-natural grasslands, work in Finnish and this is a wonderful resource for them. However, it would have been great if there could have been at least brief summaries in English in each of the grassland descriptions, as a result of which the book would also have been appealing to grassland scientists elsewhere.

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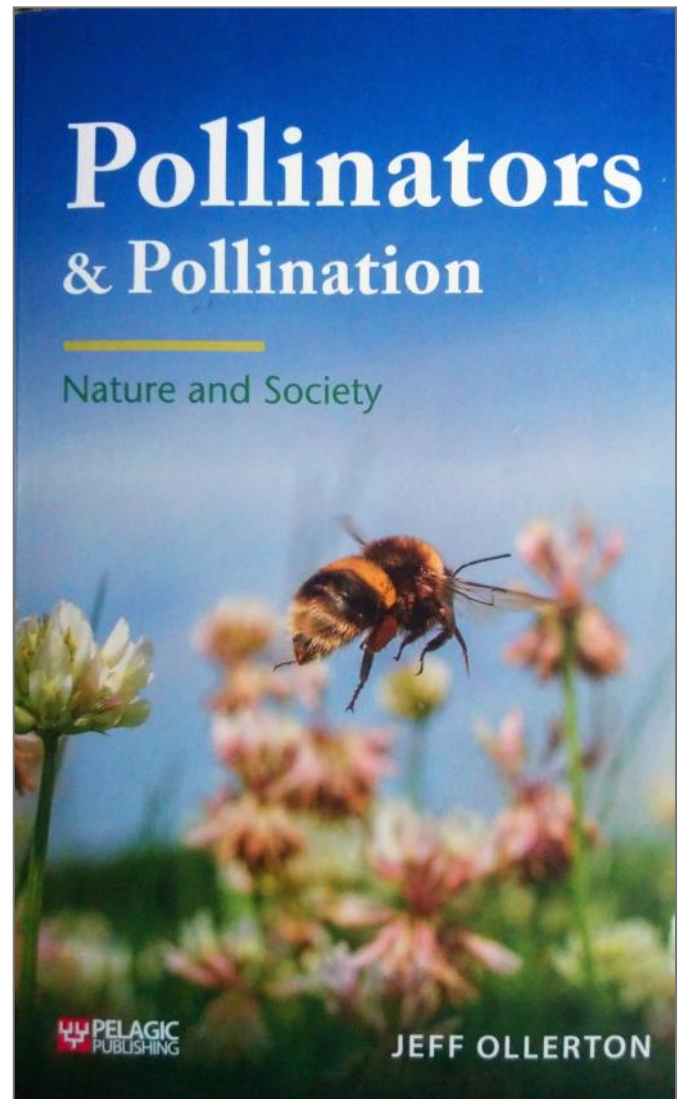
**Book Review**

**Ollerton, J. 2021. Pollinators and Pollination - Nature and Society.** Pelagic Publishing (Exeter, UK). 289 pages, 78 colour figures, ISBN 9781784272289. Price £25:00 as paperback or eBook. <https://pelagicpublishing.com/pollinators-and-pollination-ollerton>

Grassland habitats are diverse and species rich and many such habitats are in need of conservation measures. Currently the main paradigm for conservation is that of ecosystem services and nature-based solutions. Pollination is unequivocally the most widely recognized ecosystem service provided by grassland habitats. In recent years, there have been a huge number of publications on pollination and grasslands, so it can be difficult to know where to begin. The book that I now have in my hands is perfect as a comprehensive introduction to the topic, from one of the UK's most highly respected experts on pollinators and pollination, Jeff Ollerton. The author's objective for this book, as stated in the preface, is to 'provide a personal, state-of-the-art overview of what pollinators are' and he certainly succeeds in that goal.

The style of the book lies somewhere in between scientific and popular, which has the advantage of being accessible and easily readable, though it rigorously follows normal scientific practices regarding citation, for instance, so everything is founded in expert interpretation of solid science. Accordingly, it is easy for those with a more academic interest to follow up interesting topics via those citations. Scientifically, this book encompasses a very diverse range of literature by many internationally recognized researchers in the field. There are many graphs and figures from scientific studies of which some, such as the bipartite graph of interactions between nine plant species and their pollinators (page 60), may look daunting at first sight, but they are all clearly presented and explained, so they should be helpful for any generally interested reader who wishes to learn more about pollination. However, these certainly don't disturb those who are interested in a less academic introduction to the topic. The book contains a number of intriguing anecdotes, such as the role of flies in the pollination of cocoa, plant phenologies and the 'evolutionary hangover [?] of *Darwin and the wild carrot*', which are sure to catch the imagination of anyone interested to learn more.

A particularly endearing aspect of Jeff's approach is his patient and clear explanations of basic aspects, such as the structure of flowers, the diversity of pollinators and evolution of pollination strategies, for instance, which make them accessible to readers of different levels of expertise and interest. Jeff has clearly put a lot of thought into the chapter titles, which are imaginative and entertaining, such as 'Fidelity and promiscuity in Darwin's entangled bank' and 'New bees on the block', and the content of the chapters lives up to their promise; being entertaining and informative.



Whilst the book is not particularly large, it succeeds in covering a broad range of relevant topics, such as climate change, agriculture, urban environments and politics, and each in considerable depth. Whilst the book covers material from a diverse range of studies and examples from around the globe, there are also a considerable number of examples from the regions of the UK that the author is most familiar with. These may be refreshing for UK expats such as myself, though they may be unfamiliar for readers from other regions. All in all, this book is a great introduction to the topic of pollinators and pollination for people with different levels of prior knowledge and I recommend it to anyone looking for a primer in this topic and an enjoyable read.

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## Recent Publications of our Members

In this section, the contents of which will also be made available via our homepage, we want to facilitate an overview of **grassland-related publications** throughout Eurasia and to improve their accessibility. You are invited to send lists of such papers from the last three years following the format below to Iwona Dembicz, [i.dembicz@gmail.com](mailto:i.dembicz@gmail.com). We will include your e-mail address so that readers can request a pdf. For authors who own full copyright, we can also post a pdf on the EDGG homepage.

### Biodiversity & Ecology

Bury, J., Chmielewski, P. & Mazepa, J. 2022. Changes in the distribution ranges of selected species of butterflies (Lepidoptera: Papilionoidea) in south-eastern Poland. *Annals of the Upper Silesian Museum in Bytom* 28 (online 006): 1-15.

Godó, L., Valkó, O., Borza, S. & Deák, B. 2022. A global review on the role of small rodents and lagomorphs (clade Glires) in seed dispersal and plant establishment. *Global Ecology and Conservation* 33: e01982.

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### Conservation and Restoration

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Valkó, O., Rádai, Z. & Deák, B. 2022. Hay transfer is a nature-based and sustainable solution for restoring grassland biodiversity. *Journal of Environmental Management* 311: 114816.

### Methodology, classification, databases

Pärtel, M., Sabatini, F.M., Morueta-Holm, N., Kreft, H. & Dengler, J. 2022. Macroecology of vegetation – lessons learnt from the Virtual Special Issue. *Journal of Vegetation Science* 33: e13121.

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## Forthcoming Events

### International Biogeography Society Biennial Conference

2-6 June 2022, Vancouver, Canada

Conference website: <https://www.biogeography.org/meetings/vancouver-2022/>

### 29<sup>th</sup> European Grassland Federation general meeting

26-30 June 2022, Caen, France

Conference website: <https://egf2022.symposium.inrae.fr/>

### 64<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium of IAVS 2022

27 June – 1 July 2022, Madrid, Spain

Symposium website: <https://iavsmadrid2022.com>

### 26<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Entomology

17-22 July 2022, Helsinki, Finland

Conference website: <https://ice2020helsinki.fi/>

### International Society for Behavioral Ecology Congress 2022

28 July – 2 August 2022, Stockholm, Sweden

Conference website: <https://www.isbe2022.com/>

### Congress of the European Society for Evolutionary Biology

14-19 August 2022, Prague, Czech Republic

Conference website: <https://www.eseb2022.cz/>

### European Congress of Conservation Biology

22-26 August 2022, Prague, Czech Republic

Conference website: <https://www.eccb2022.eu/>

### Conference on Mediterranean Ecosystems

5-9 September 2022, online and South Africa

Conference website: <https://medecos2020.org/>

### 17<sup>th</sup> Eurasian Grassland Conference of the EDGG

12-18 September 2022, Tolosa, Spain

Conference website: <http://edgg.org/egc2022>

### 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Biological Invasions

13-16 September 2022, Tartu, Estonia

Conference website: <https://www.neobiota.eu/conferences/>

### EDGG Field Workshop 2023

June 2023, Vinschgau, Alto Adige, Italy

See details in this issue, on pp. 8



Cranefly (Diptera, Tipulidae) on *Anthriscus sylvestris*, near Zaježová, Javorie Mts., Slovakia. Photo: M. Janišová.



EDGG on the web:

<http://www.edgg.org>



The Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG), founded in 2008, is a working group of the International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS) and member of the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP). On 30 May 2022, it had 1369 members from 65 countries.

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

**The EDGG covers all aspects related to grasslands, in particular:** plants - animals - fungi - microbia - soils - taxonomy - phylogeography - ecophysiology - population biology - species' interactions - vegetation ecology - syntaxonomy - landscape ecology - biodiversity - land use history - agriculture - nature conservation - restoration - environmental legislation - environmental education.

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Meadow in Vilnius region, Lithuania. Photo: V. Gudynienė.