

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

4–8 June 2018, Sulmona (Italy)

COOPERATING FOR GRASSLAND CONSERVATION

<http://edgg.org/egc2018>

## *Second call*



*Pian della Casa, Majella National Park. Photo: E. Giarrizzo.*

## Organizers



## Supporters



## *Main topic of the conference*

### Cooperating for grasslands: from habitat interpretation to conservation measures

Grasslands are being addressed by a high number of projects aimed at conserving their biodiversity and the wide range of ecosystem services they provide. Still these projects are jeopardized by the challenges that derive from grasslands intrinsic features: the fine grain at which they should be analysed, the complexity that derives from their extraordinary biodiversity and variability, and their tendency to change rapidly in response to various natural and human drivers. Although local information is particularly important, a set of shared principles, methodologies and procedures would make the efforts to maintain grasslands across the Eurasian continent substantially more effective. The topic of the conference is therefore to address the main grassland conservation issues by establishing a basis for cooperation projects within the framework of the EDGG. The subtopics that are described below aim at stimulating exchange of local and national experiences that represent an example for effective cooperation projects.

### *Subtopics*

#### 1. Habitat classification and indicators of conservation status

This session will cover grassland habitat classification, and the assessment of habitat conservation status by means of specific indicators. For habitat classification, a special emphasis will be given on the potential use of the large number of vegetation relevés stored in European and global databases. Similarly, special focus will be given on widely applicable approaches for the identification of appropriate indicators of habitat conservation status.

#### 2. Grassland threats and pressures

Land abandonment, invasive alien species, and climate change are among several important threats to grassland habitats and species. However, how these threats change in relation to environmental conditions and land use legacies is still unclear. This gap in knowledge does not allow defining the practical steps that can be developed to increase resistance and resilience across the Eurasian continent. Large scale cooperation may represent a huge opportunity to assess threats through standardized monitoring and survey protocols, as well as to align a framework of threats and pressures for grassland habitats.

#### 3. Conservation goals and appropriate measures

Grassland conservation projects focus on goals related to target species and habitats, but the effectiveness of conservation measures to achieve these goals is often a topic of debate. Conservation goals and measures should be integrated into wider society by positively engaging stakeholders, respecting cultures and the role of traditional knowledge, as well as the economic value of managing habitats and their ecosystem services. Conservation planning should therefore

be framed in wider contexts and take into account other plans (such as forest plans, water management plans, park plans, etc.). By comparing experiences and approaches with integrated management planning and stakeholder engagement, this session will indicate which factors should be considered to achieve good governance models.

#### 4. Setting conservation priorities

Appropriate choice of priorities of sites/habitats to conserve or restore is essential in order to maximize the effort and money spent. Specific analyses should take into account how priorities can be different at different scales, and should therefore be addressed through a wide range of prioritization methodologies, from spatial analysis to a synthetic analysis of different habitats that will be addressed during this session.

#### 5. Cooperating for grasslands

During the last session four working groups will address the four session subtopics to brainstorm transnational cooperation projects within the EDGG.

#### Open topics

Submission of abstracts on any other topic related to Palaeartic grasslands, their fauna, flora, ecology and conservation is possible, although such contributions do not have priority for the slots of the oral sessions.

## *Preliminary time schedule*

June 4<sup>th</sup>

9.30 – 10.30	Registration
10:30 – 13:30	Workshop “Effective writing for international peer-reviewed journals”
13:30 – 14:30	Lunch break (registration will be possible)
14:30 – 18:00	Workshop on preparing proposals for LIFE+ and INTERREG
18:00 – 20:00	Welcome drink (registration will be possible)

June 5<sup>th</sup>

9:00 – 9.30	Registration
09:30 – 10:00	Keynote lecture – Prof. Pietro Brandmayr “Carabid beetle assemblages in natural and seminatural grasslands of Italy: management and conservation”
10:00 – 12:30	Session 1 - Habitat classification and indicators of conservation status
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:45	Session 2 - Grasslands threats and pressures
15.45 – 16.15	Coffee Break
16:15 – 19:00	Session 3 - Conservation goals and appropriate measures

June 6<sup>th</sup>

08:00 – 18:30	Mid-conference excursion
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June 7<sup>th</sup>

09:00 – 09:30	Keynote lecture – Prof. Carlo Blasi “High mountain vegetation of the Apennines”
09:30 – 12:00	Session 4 - Setting conservation priorities
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 14:00	Poster session
14:00	Transfer to National Park Operation Center
14:30 – 17:00	Session 5 - Cooperating for grasslands
17.00 – 17.30	Coffee Break
17:30 – 18:30	EDGG General Assembly
20:00 – 22:30	Grassland Party at the National Park Operation Center

June 8<sup>th</sup>

08:00 – 18:30	Post-conference excursion
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## *Important dates*

Conference dates: 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018

Registration starts at 22<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Deadline for abstract submission and application for travel grants: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Deadline for registration and payment: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018

## *Keynotes speakers*

### Carlo Blasi – Sapienza University of Rome

Carlo Blasi is Emeritus Professor in Plant Ecology at the Sapienza University of Rome. He is presently Scientific Director of the Interuniversity Research Centre on “Biodiversity, Ecosystem services and Sustainability (CIRBISES)” and President of the Foundation for the Italian Flora of the Italian Botanical Society. He is also appointed member of the National Observatory on Biodiversity, of the Committee for the Development of Green Space, and of the Committee for Natural Capital, on behalf of the Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea Protection. Finally, he is member of the National Commission for Forecasting and Preventing Great Risks, appointed by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (Civil Protection Department). His research activities deal with plant ecology, plant sociology, biodiversity conservation, and territorial planning, with particular emphasis on ecological land classification, vegetation dynamics and conservation assessment. He is author of 400 publications, including 240 scientific papers and 40 book chapters.



You can visit his ResearchGate profile to learn more about Blasi’s work:  
[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Carlo\\_Blasi](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Carlo_Blasi)

### Pietro Brandmayr – Università della Calabria

Pietro Brandmayr is Full Professor of Zoology at the Università of Calabria. His research interests range from taxonomy, with special reference to Carabid beetles, to insect ecology. His ecological research has focused on the impact of global change on species, animal communities, and ecosystems. He investigated mainly alpine and Mediterranean environments. He is President of the Natural History Museum and of the Botanical Garden of the Università della Calabria, and he is also assigned by the title of Honoured Academic Member of the National Academy of Entomology.



You can visit his ResearchGate profile to learn more about Brandmayr’s works:  
[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Pietro\\_Brandmayr](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Pietro_Brandmayr)

## Venue

The conference will take place in the Auditorium of the Annunziata, in the very heart of the town of Sulmona (25,000 inhabitants), a beautiful ancient town in the middle of Abruzzi region that was the native town of the famous Latin poet Ovid (Fig. 1).

The town is located at an average altitude of 350 m a.s.l., in a wide basin, completely surrounded by high mountains and protected areas, that is called Valle Peligna, a plateau once occupied by a lake that disappeared in prehistoric times.

The center of the town is characterized by historic architecture with several important artistic monuments datable at Medieval or Renaissance periods, like the Cathedral, the aqueduct and the portal of St. Francesco della Scarpa's church. The main square, Piazza Garibaldi, limited at one of its sides by a XIII century aqueduct, has a stunning view of Monte Morrone (2061 m a.s.l.), and it is one of the largest squares in Italy. It hosts important events and ceremonies and a traditional market on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Sulmona is known for being the home of the Italian confectionery known as "confetti", the traditional sugar-coated almonds.



*Fig. 1. Location of Sulmona and a view of Piazza Garibaldi and Monte Morrone at sunset. Photo: S. Landersz.*

The conference will be held in the "Annunziata" monastic complex and in headquarter of the Majella National Park Operation Center: the S. Spirito abbey. Both of them are the most famous and important monuments of the town. The first, with an unusual asymmetric façade, is composed by a church and a palace built between the XIV and XVI centuries (Fig. 2). The second is the abbey founded around 1300 by the famous pope "Celestino V", also known as Pietro da Morrone, mentioned in the Dante's Comedy as "who made the great refusal". The abbey had its maximum expansion in the XVI century and it is one of the widest abbeys in Italy.



Fig. 2. The complex of Annunziata where the plenary sessions will take place.

## Registration and Fees (euros)

You can register and post your abstract at the web page of the conference at <http://edgg.org/egc2018>

### Registration fees

#### IAVS Members

195 € Senior IAVS Members

155 € IAVS-member students and members under the age of 30

#### NON IAVS Members

215 € Senior non-IAVS Members

175 € Students (including PhD) and researchers under the age of 30

Registration fee covers attendance to the scientific sessions, coffee breaks and lunches between the sessions, grassland party, attendant pack, transport and lunch pack for the mid-conference excursion.

### Fees of the optional events

20 € Pre-conference workshop “Effective writing for international peer-reviewed journals”

30 € Pre-conference workshop on preparing proposals for LIFE+ and INTERREG

30 € Post-conference excursion (includes transport and lunch pack)

### Payment

All the payment should be made at the latest by **30<sup>th</sup> of April**.

Fees should be paid to Società Botanica Italiana onlus by bank transfer

IBAN: IT 90K033 5901 6001 0000 0019 636.

Reason of the payment: EDGG Conference – name of the participant.

### **Cancellation and refund**

70% of the fee will be refunded in case of cancellation up to one month before the conference only if no abstract was submitted. There will be the possibility to transfer the fee to a colleague up to a week before the conference.

### ***Excursions (Fig. 3)***

The Majella National Park is one of the three national parks in the Abruzzi region, Central Apennines. Its flora is very rich, counting over 2150 species and subspecies of vascular plants. The Park has a high relevance for plant sciences and biogeography: over 50 entities have their *locus classicus* there; 174 taxa are endemic of Italy and five of them are exclusive of the National Park area.

The territory is mainly mountainous, and, similarly to other mountain areas in Central Italy, it was exploited in the past, both for timber production and for agriculture. Nowadays, the population living in the mountain is less numerous, and consequently, the landscape is changing. For example, in the sites of the excursion we will be able to see secondary pastures spread on ancient crops, witnesses of which are represented by stone heaps derived by clearance operations, dry stone walls, stone huts and some plant species typical of abandoned fields. These secondary pastures are subjected today to secondary succession, being invaded by herb and shrub species that indicate this ongoing process. Luckily, in the Majella National Park, differently from other areas, alien species do not play an important role in this process. The grazing itself is changed: once almost exclusively made by sheep and goats, today the great majority of grazing animals are cattle and horses. The structure and the composition of the pasture are involved with deterioration evidences in the sites where the animals stay for a long time. Surveying the pastures, it is possible to observe different ancient and actual processes whose government is the current challenge to maintain high levels of biodiversity. Many historic evidences of human presence occur within this mountainous area, the more evocative being the plenty of hermitages within the Park. We will visit one of the more suggestive of them in the mid-conference excursion: the S. Bartolomeo hermitage.



Fig. 3 Locations of the conference excursions

These secondary pastures are subjected today to secondary succession, being invaded by herb and shrub species that indicate this ongoing process. Luckily, in the Majella National Park, differently from other areas, alien species do not play an important role in this process. The grazing itself is changed: once almost exclusively made by sheep and goats, today the great majority of grazing animals are cattle and horses. The structure and the composition of the pasture are involved with deterioration evidences in the sites where the animals stay for a long time. Surveying the pastures, it is possible to observe different ancient and actual processes whose government is the current challenge to maintain high levels of biodiversity. Many historic evidences of human presence occur within this mountainous area, the more evocative being the plenty of hermitages within the Park. We will visit one of the more suggestive of them in the mid-conference excursion: the S. Bartolomeo hermitage.

### **Practical advices to participants about the excursions**

For both the excursions, the participants are recommended to wear different layers of clothes because the temperature could be very variable. A waterproof cover and comfortable shoes are strongly recommended. The participants are invited not to collect plants, animals or stones, because it is not allowed. If someone wants to do it for scientific purpose, a specific request must be submitted to the Majella National Park administration.

In the areas corresponding to the “A zone” of the Park (strict reserve), the participants are invited to walk only in the indicated paths or in those that will be indicated by the guides during the excursions.

## 1. Mid-conference excursion – 6<sup>th</sup> June

The excursion will take place from S. Bartolomeo Hermitage to Rifugio Pomilio. It will be divided in three parts (Fig. 4):

1. S. Bartolomeo Hermitage at 610 m a.s.l., embedded in the rock in a context of dry grasslands (*Bromopsis erecta*, *Brachypodium rupestre*, *Trachynia distachya*), cultivated and uncultivated fields, thermophilous deciduous shrubs;
2. From Stazzo di Roccamorice to La Maielletta (1450–1670 m a.s.l.), through *Bromopsis erecta*, *Festuca circummediterranea* and *Brachypodium genuense* grasslands;
3. Rifugio Pomilio (2000 m a.s.l.), among the shrubs of *Pinus mugo*, at the southern limit of its distribution area, and with a wonderful view on the Murelle glacial amphitheater.



Hiking boots and clothes, hat and sunscreen will be necessary.



Fig. 5. Anfiteatro delle Murelle (one of the mid-stops of the Mid-conference excursion) and a Chamois (*Rupicapra pyrenaica ornata*) frequenting the site. Photos: A. Guerri.

## 2. Post-conference excursion – 8<sup>th</sup> June

(optional - max number of participants: 90)

From Sant'Antonio (Palena) towards Tavola Rotonda

The excursion will cover a great altitudinal range from about 1000 m a.s.l. to about 2000 m a.s.l. Along the footpath it will be possible to see the secondary grasslands of the montane belt (dominated by *Bromus erectus* and *Sesleria juncifolia*), and the subalpine dwarf shrublands dominated by *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* and *Juniperus communis* var. *saxatilis*. Finally, we will reach the alpine belt, with primary grasslands dominated by *Festuca violacea* subsp. *italica*, and scattered examples of alpine vegetation.

During this excursion, EDGG Co-chair Jürgen Dengler, will demonstrate to interested participants how to collect the standardised multi-scale and multi-taxon EDGG Biodiversity Plots (see Dengler et al. 2016, *Bull. Eurasian Dry Grassl. Group* 32: 13–30). This can be interesting both for potential future hosts and participants of the annual EDGG Field Workshops and for colleagues who want to learn this method for their own research. Depending on the number of interested colleagues, we will sample one or several complete EDGG Biodiversity Plots from high-elevation grasslands, which will be fed into the EDGG database “GrassPlot” (<http://bit.ly/2HvVkgu>). If interested, please contact J. Dengler in advance ([juergen.dengler@uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:juergen.dengler@uni-bayreuth.de)).

Hiking boots and clothes, hat and sunscreen will be necessary.



Fig. 6. A view from the slope towards Tavola Rotonda and itinerary of the excursion. Photo: G. Ciaschetti.



Fig. 5 Itinerary of the post conference excursion

## *Workshops (optional)*

### Technical workshop “Effective writing for international peer-reviewed journals”

For many researchers from more traditional scientific cultures, writing manuscripts for peer-reviewed international journals remains challenging. In this workshop you will learn that writing successful manuscripts (in the sense that they are accepted in the intended journal and get many citations) has nothing to do with witchcraft, but a lot with techniques – which can be learned.

The workshop will introduce you to the IMRaD (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion) structure of standard research papers and showcase the key aspects that make up good Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion sections. You will learn how to optimize the presentation of results through a wise combination of figures, tables, appendices and text. We will deal with formal aspects of citing and listing references. You will also learn how to write an effective Abstract and how cleverly selected titles and keywords can contribute to the success of your article. As the majority of participants likely will not have English as their mother tongue, we will also briefly address the appropriate style when writing a scientific article in English.

If time allows, there is the option to provide some insights into the peer-review process, the meanings of bibliometric indices or how to find appropriate journals for manuscripts. The course will consist of lectures, interactive and practical parts. The program is flexible and can be adjusted spontaneously to the needs and wishes of participants. In addition to the three-hour class, the lecturer is also available for individual coaching of participants in the afternoon on the basis of concrete writing problems and manuscript drafts they bring with them. If you are interested in this, please indicate this with your registration, including a short summary of the problem you have/support you wish.

#### Tutor:

Jürgen Dengler is Professor of Vegetation Ecology at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) in Switzerland and co-founder of EDGG. He is chief editor of *Phytocoenologia*, member of the editorial boards of *Applied Vegetation Science* and *Tuexenia* and has led the guest editor teams of about 20 Special Issues/Special Features in various international journals (*Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment*; *Journal of Vegetation Science*; *Biodiversity and Conservation*;...). He authored 250 scientific publications, including 73 papers in the Web of Science, and has extensive experience in teaching the art of scientific writing.

## Technical workshop on preparing proposals for LIFE+ and INTERREG

In order to facilitate the work of the participants in establishing new connections and potential cooperation projects the workshop will introduce some funding possibilities, with special reference to the EU but with the possibility of involving other countries. The workshop will focus on LIFE+ and INTERREG programmes.

The LIFE Programme is the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action. The general objective of LIFE is to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental and climate policy and legislation by co-financing projects with European added value. The 'Environment' strand of the new programme covers three priority areas: environment and resource efficiency, nature and biodiversity and environmental governance and information. The 'Climate Action' strand covers climate change mitigation; climate change adaptation; and climate governance and information.

Interreg Europe helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy. By creating an environment and opportunities for sharing solutions, Interreg Europe aims to ensure that government investment, innovation and implementation efforts all lead to integrated and sustainable impact for people and place. The programme supports actions in four different thematic categories: 1) Research, technological development and innovation, 2) Competitiveness of SMEs, 3) Low-carbon economy, 4) Environment and resource efficiency, and all the actions financed by Interreg Europe have the objective of promoting a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Proposal preparation will be explained and practical examples of successful proposals will be described.

### Tutors:

Tutors are from PROGEU - Progress in European Union.

Mattia Angelini - Master's Degree in Political Science obtained from "Sapienza University of Rome". Junior Project Manager since June 2017 at PROGEU - Progress in European Union. He is responsible for the digital communication area and for the evaluation and the development of project proposals for public bodies, SMEs and NGOs.

Lorenzo Carrozza - is an environmental policy expert and consultant. He graduated from "Sapienza University of Rome" in "Innovation and Development". Since 2013, he is policy consultant for the Environment Commission of the Italian Parliament. He collaborates with several authorities, NGOs and private sector for the implementation of projects supported by the European Commission. He also runs courses on Development Cooperation, Climate Change and Environmental Studies.

## *Accommodation*

Each participant should book it independently. Sulmona hosts several hotels and bed and breakfast that are advertised on popular hotel search engine, and a list of the principal structures is available at the download section in the conference webpage.

## *Traveling*

The city may be reached by train or bus from Rome or Pescara. Both these cities host international airports. Please see the travel information document at the download section in the conference webpage for details.

Italy is part of the Schengen area, therefore all the citizens from one of those Schengen countries are allowed to visit Italy without visas. However, if you are from a non-EU country, you can check if you need visa to visit Italy at <http://vistoperitalia.esteri.it/home/en#BMQuestionario>. In case you need an invitation, please refer to the contact persons.

## *Grants*

Thanks to our supporter (IAVS), we can offer a limited number of travel grants to attend the EGC (partial or full coverage of travel costs and conference fee). To qualify, active participation at the conference (oral presentation or poster) is required and priority will be given to young scientists with financial constraints (i.e. low income and/or of particularly high costs to get to Sulmona).

If you wish to apply for financial support, you first need to register yourself and the abstract of your contribution and provide the necessary information for travel grant application including a motivation letter. **Applicants must be IAVS members** (membership can be obtained at low rates and in many cases even for free at <http://www.iavs.org/MembershipRenew.aspx>, <http://www.iavs.org/AwardsFinancial.aspx>). In both cases, applications will only be considered when the criteria are met and the required information is provided completely.

## *Conference publications*

As in previous years, there will be Special Features (SFs) with selected contributions from the conference in international, peer-reviewed journals, guest-edited by EDGG members. Notably, a Special Feature in *Tuexenia* 2019 and a Special Feature in *Hacquetia* 2019 have already been approved.

## *Young Investigator Prizes*

As in previous years, prizes will be awarded to young scientists for excellent presentation of their research (talk or in poster form). For these purposes, young scientists (less than 35 years old) will be asked during registration if they wish to participate in the contest.

## *Contact persons*

Sabina Burrascano – [sabina.burrascano@uniroma1.it](mailto:sabina.burrascano@uniroma1.it)

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## *Local Organizing Committee*

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## *Organizers*

Besides the EDGG, the conference will be organized by the Department of Environmental Biology – Sapienza University of Rome, and by the Majella National Park with the support of the Società Botanica Italiana.

**Eurasian Dry Grassland Group** (EDGG) ([www.edgg.org](http://www.edgg.org)) was established in August 2008. It is an official working group (1049 members) of the International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS, [www.iavs.org](http://www.iavs.org)), though it deals both with animals and with plants. Its basic aims are to compile and to distribute information on research and conservation in grasslands beyond national borders, and to stimulate active cooperation among scientists, NGO's and all who work with or are interested in grasslands.

**Sapienza University of Rome** was founded in 1303 by Pope Boniface VIII, is one of the oldest universities in the world. With over 111,000 students, 4000 teachers and 2000 employees, technicians and librarians, in addition to 2000 administrative staff in university hospitals, Sapienza is the largest university in Europe. Its mission is to contribute to the development of a knowledge society through research, excellence, quality education and international cooperation. The Department of Environmental Biology (DBA) was founded in 2010 after a re-organization of the Departments of Biology of Sapienza. The Department focuses on research and teaching of the biology and ecology of various taxonomic groups ranging from algae and fungi, to plants, animals and man.

**Majella National Park** was founded in 1991. The park has an extent of about 75,000 hectares and it is completely occupied by mountains. Majella is known as the Mother Mountain of Abruzzi and it is located in the most remote and wildest area of central Apennine. This area is also called the Holy Mountain because of many sites that have always inspired profound religiousness and hermitage. The Park is notable for its vast plateaus at high altitudes and for the wild and imposing canyons, but also for its Abbeys, and wonderful old towns.

**Società Botanica Italiana onlus** was founded in Florence in 1888. Its origin derives from the Società Botanica Fiorentina, the oldest botanical association in Europe (funded in 1716). Today the Society has about 1300 members that carry out a wealth of activities, from courses and excursions to conferences and publications with the ultimate goal of promoting the advance and dissemination of botanical culture and sciences and of their various applications.

### *Supporting organisations / institutions*

**International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS, [www.iavs.org](http://www.iavs.org)):** its original precursor was the International Phytosociological Society (IPS), which was founded in 1939. IAVS is a worldwide union of scientists and others interested in theoretical and practical studies of all aspects of vegetation. The main goals of the IAVS are to facilitate personal contacts among vegetation scientists all over the world and to promote research in all aspects of vegetation science and its applications.

**John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (<http://eu.wiley.com/WileyCDA/>)** was founded in 1807. It aspires to be a valued and respected provider of products and services that make important contributions to advances in knowledge and understanding, a role that is essential to progress in a healthy and prosperous society. Wiley's mission is to provide must-have content and services to professionals, scientists, educators, students, lifelong learners, and consumers worldwide.

**Società Italiana di Scienza della Vegetazione** was founded in 2006 as a continuation of the Società di Fitosociologia (S.I.Fs.) that was founded already in 1964 as an idea of a group of researchers led by Valerio Giacomini, who was the first president of the society. The aim of the society is to promote research on vegetation, also through national and international networking, and to support people and institutions with an interest in the conservation of vegetation.