

Newsletter January 2013

View from the Chair

At the 8th European Conference on Ecological Restoration Karel Prach and his team provided all participants a particularly warm welcome in the cozy town of Ceské Budejovice. During the meeting I got the impressions that our community has meanwhile grown to a well established pan-European network of restoration ecologists that are closely linked to each other. Before and during the conference we had several board meetings that were used to discuss organizational issues and fields of activity in the forthcoming years. One major achievement in 2012 was the legal status of an international NGO in Belgium after a long and partly painful bureaucratic struggle, in which Kris Decler was most involved. The European Chapter is now a fully operable legal organization that is able to go into contracts and receive funding and other donations. For the reception of our organization e.g. at EU-level the legal status as an international NGO is also of outstanding importance.

During the Budweis meeting we had also some restructuring within the board. Kathrin Kiehl will step back from her function as secretary but

will stay in board at large. I would like to thank Kathrin for her commitment as secretary during the past six years - we are happy that she will continue working in the board. Agata Klimkowska from the Netherlands will step in as new secretary. The board was further enlarged by Anne Tolvanen, who will be organizer of the 9th European Conference on Ecological Restoration in Oulu, Finland in 2014.

The conference in Budweis was also attended by Cara Nelson, Vice-Chair of SER International and Steve Bosak the new executive director of SER International. Cara and Steve joined of our meetings and gave us the opportunity for intense discussions concerning membership, public relations and policy issues. Many problems arising from different cultures and structures in Europe and the US were solved and a road ahead for future collaboration could be envisioned. The updated webpages are a promising clue for the refreshed relations to our mother organization.

As the end of the year is approaching, on behalf of myself and the whole Board, I wish you an exciting and successful 2013!

Best regards,
Norbert Hölzel

www.ser-europe.org



A legal status SER Europe

Since June 2012 SER Europe is officially recognized as an international non-profit organization. The new legal status facilitates our community to get involved in European policy development, networking and projects. Funding opportunities to support the activities of SER Europe will increase and hopefully allow further growth of our community and better promotion of our goals. Of course, we keep operating under the umbrella of the globally active SER International.

The preference of the Board was to get established as an NGO in Belgium, close to European decision making. We are therefore grateful to the Brussels based Research Institute for Nature and Forest for willing to host the official seat of SER Europe.

The full text of our statutes can be consulted on our website. Also the minutes of the meetings will be available for members on the website.

Kris Decler

New logo & website

As you noticed we have a new logo. It was re-designed on request of SER International and chosen by members in an open Logo Competition. Let's get used to a new look.

The website of SER Europe got a substantial face lift. We hope you like it. www.ser-europe.org can now be added to the favorites in your web browser. More than ever our website is meant to link you with news items, upcoming events and archived documents of past events. We also like to invite you to deliver content for the website, such as:

- Announcement of events
- Reviews of new books or reports you consider relevant
- Contributions for the 'SER-Europe Knowledge Base' on your best-practice experiences.

All contributions and comments to our web page can be send to Kris.Decler@inbo.be

Conference report



Report on the biannual SER Europe Conference in the Czech Republic, 9-14 September 2012

382 participants from 40 countries all over the world enjoyed the 8th European conference on Ecological Restoration in the beautiful town of České Budejovice (Budvisek).

'Near-natural restoration' was the official Conference theme, pointing out that restoration is more successful and cheaper when facilitated by ecological processes, instead of using more expensive, artificial technical measures.

With this theme, the local organizers (the Working Group for Restoration Ecology of the University of South Bohemia, under the leadership of Prof. Karel Prach) shared their

knowledge and experience from many years of research on spontaneous succession processes.

On the occasion of the conference the organizers also published an impressive report showcasing the most important restoration projects in the Czech Republic up till now and the lessons that were learnt.

Thanks to the help of many volunteers, students and staff of the local University, the Conference was a great experience.

Participants got the feeling of being relaxed and especially enjoyed the healthy dose of Central European humor.

Next to a busy scientific program - with presentations, poster sessions, special sessions and student workshops, our hosts took care of social events, so there was no time to get bored. The organizers thought about everything - from a 'best pubs in the town' guide to the classical music concert in one of the Old Town churches. They treated us with lots of beer and also with an unforgettable concert of "ecologists-making-noise" - a music band of the University.

More information, abstract book and picture gallery on the SER2012 conference are available at website: www.ecer2012.eu



European Conference
on Ecological Restoration
September 9-14, 2012
České Budejovice, Czech Republic

www.ecer2012.eu



The world of ecological restoration is very diverse and it was well resembled in the conference contributions: not only ecological research and its practical sides were presented, but also links to social science and policy were elaborated. The role of spontaneous succession and facilitated succession in near-natural restoration, especially in the context of restoring species-rich grasslands got a lot of attention, but also restoration science and practice in other ecosystems such as peatlands, wetlands, forests, man-made sites and others were presented. Also attention was given to the problems of invasive species and the importance of including multi-trophic relations in ecosystem restoration.

Most stimulating debates arose during several special sessions dealing with hot topics and controversial concepts. Like never before we had many such sessions: on setting up standards and up-scaling the grassland restoration & native seed production and use, on functional approach in wetlands restoration, on restoration in marine habitats, on the good practice on river restoration, and on the importance of soil biota in restoration. We had a mini-symposium and a heated up discussion on novel ecosystems and abuse of this concept. A call to get involved in the planning and application of European regulations was followed by a double-special session on the topic of '

Restoring Green Infrastructure in Europe', where the issues such as restoring "wilderness" and target of restoring 15% of degraded ecosystems in Europe were addressed. This session was concluded with a special letter to EU commission, appealing for ambitious implementations of these plans and offering the knowledge that already exists within our network for assistance.

From "understanding how does it work" we are getting, as a community, more and more involved in making the choices, setting the standards, and affecting the national and international policies.

Our Czech colleagues prepared an impressive overview of the ecological restoration work going on in this part of Europe and gave us opportunity to see some of it - during a great choice of the mid-conference and post-conference excursions.

The conference was concluded with a conference declaration (see website), with a call for extended abstracts - to be included in the online SER Europe Knowledge Base on Ecological Restoration, and an invitation for submitting publications in the special issues of several peer-reviewed journals.

Agata Klimkowska and Kris Decler



Next conference in 2014



9th European Conference on Ecological Restoration | August 3–8, 2014
Oulu, Finland

The 9th European Conference on Ecological Restoration will be held in Oulu, Northern Finland, 3-8th August, 2014.

The specific theme of the conference is the Restoration of Ecosystem Services, which means that the ecological, economic and socio-cultural values of restoration will be intensively discussed. The conference aims at creating a close

link between restoration and land use policies, and it thereby points to issues discussed continuously at international, EU and national levels.

The main organizer is the Finnish Forest Research Institute (METLA).

Co-organizers are the University of Oulu and Metsähallitus.

More information will be available soon on website: www.ser2014.org

Contact: Anne Tolvanen

www.ser2014.org • ser2014@metla.fi

The conference venue Oulu is located in the middle boreal vegetation zone, by the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia. Oulu is after the capital the second most important city in Finland and the major university, science, industry and cultural centre of Northern Finland. The region is the peatland richest area in Finland & the peatland richest country in the world. The coastal area is unique due to the strong land uplift after the deglaciation.

During the Mid-Conference excursion, you will see primary succession areas; 'baby forests' and 'baby peatlands' at the seashore region near Oulu or forest and peatland restoration sites, bird lakes created from peat production areas, restored rivers, and lichen-rich esker forests.

You will also have a chance to get a more close-up picture of Northern Finland by joining one or both of the conference field

trips. The pre-conference trip will take you to western Lapland, to the surroundings of Pallas-Yllästunturi national park. The park is characterized by alpine heaths on smooth mountains called fjells or fells, which locate in between northern boreal forests. The post-conference trip will take you near the Russian border, to the surroundings of Oulanka national park. The park represents a combination of northern, southern and eastern nature and is characterized by pine forests, steep river valleys and spectacular rapids. Important topics in the trip will be for example mass tourism, forest restoration and peatland restoration. See more:

www.outdoors.fi/destinations/nationalparks/pallasyllastunturi

www.outdoors.fi/destinations/nationalparks/oulanka

Anne Tolvanen



Feel invited to mysterious Finland ...

News 1

New Board Members short introduction

Anne Tolvanen: I am professor in forest ecology at the Finnish Forest Research Institute & at the University of Oulu. My position in two organizations aims at increasing the link between basic and applied research.

My research relates to two major global problems: climate change and the degradation of biodiversity. My aim is to increase the use of interdisciplinary scientific information in the

land-use planning in order to decrease impacts of environmental degradation.

My position in the Board is linked to organising next European SER conference in 2014.

Mark it already in your busy agenda's!

Agata Klimkowska: Currently I am working as a researcher in Restoration Ecology at Bargerveen Foundation, associated with the University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

My work is related to ecological restoration in wetlands and peatlands.

I completed a Polish-Dutch PhD research on the effectiveness of restoration and eco-hydrological & biotic restoration constraints in fens and fen meadows.

In the Board (Polish) Agata Klimkowska from the Netherlands will step in as new secretary. I am looking forward to hear your opinions, suggestions and to work with you!

Brussel corner

An implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 is taking shape, e.g. in the resolution adapted by the European Parliament (in April 2012). This resolution is a follow-up to 'Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020' (CBD).

The European Parliament emphasises that the loss of biodiversity "has devastating economic costs for society which until now have not been integrated sufficiently into economic and other policies".

"The real key to this issue is not this new strategy, but, rather, the forthcoming reforms of the common agricultural and fisheries policies and the multiannual financial framework (MFF)", the resolution says.

One of the priorities elaborated under this resolution is to maintain and restore ecosystems and their services.

The EU parliament "Notes the requirement under the CBD **to restore 15 % of degraded ecosystems by 2020**; regards this as a minimum, however, and wishes the EU to set a

considerably higher restoration target reflecting its own more ambitious headline target and its 2050 vision, taking into account country-specific natural conditions; urges the Commission to define clearly what is meant by 'degraded ecosystems' and to set a baseline against which progress can be measured".

More information on:
ec.europa.eu/environment/nature

Opinions

– EcoSummit 2012 – Ecological Sustainability: Restoring the Planet's Ecosystem Services

EcoSummit 2012 took place in Columbus, Ohio, USA (1-5 October 2012) as the summit for discussing topics in ecology. It was organised by Ecological Society of America (ESA), The International Association for Ecology (INTECOL) and the Society for Ecological Restoration International (SER). Although this is not a conference under the direct responsibility of any of these organizations, the organizers of previous Eco-summits have maintained a tied team to continue discussing relevant problems in ecology approximately every 4 years.

EcoSummit 2012 joined 1,600 people from 70 countries (including a good number of Europeans) which discussed for 45 days about

the major ecological problems of the world nowadays, including human population growth and its impacts on natural resources, the provision of food for the humans in the future, what and how ecological restoration should proceed in many types of ecosystems, the use of ecosystem services in ecological studies.

Different European studies based on restoration projects and the use of ecosystem services were presented dealing with rivers, forest and land management, water quality improvement, etc. The program of the conference had many sessions on common overlapping topics but it was well organized and run smoothly. It was a little bit expensive for people from abroad the USA but the field trips in the middle of the Conference were very interesting and well guided.

It is supposed that this type of conferences must delivered challenging conclusions to guide our society in the future. Although the final declaration of the conference is intended to do so, it may be still thought that non so academic structure for this type of conferences would achieve more impact both in the declaration and in the media for the benefit of our society. EcoSummit 2016 is planned to take place in Montpellier, France. That can be a new good opportunity to continue improving our understanding on how to reverse Earth degradation and improve life in our Planet.

Francisco A. Comin

News 2 from the South

Regional workshop in Alicante, Spain

Ecological Restoration of steppe grasslands of semi-arid region 15-19 October 2012 was attended by 23 experts from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. The Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN-Med) organized this workshop together with the University of

Alicante and the Center for Environmental Studies in the Mediterranean (CEAM Foundation). The workshop included presentations on the techniques of restoring the degraded steppes, trips to Alfa grass processing factories, Albatera demonstration station and Forest Seed Bank of the Region of

Valencia, and lively discussions on restoration of Alfa grass steppes on both sides of the Mediterranean basin. A booklet summarizing techniques to restore Alfa grass steppes will be published in 2012 & available at www.iucn.org

Jordi Cortina



Regional Symposium in Djelfa, Algeria

More than 30 experts from Maghreb countries as well as Argentina, France, USA Kenya and Spain participated in the symposium in Djelfa, 4-9 November 2012, on the topic of Alfa grass steppes conservation.

It was organized by the Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN-Med)

and the Haut Commissariat au Développement de la Steppe (HCDS), of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Algeria supported by Mouvement Écologique Algérien (MEA) and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID). During the field trips participants visited examples of severely degraded and

restored steppes. A position statement and a list of recommendations to improve the status of Alfa grass steppes was discussed, formulated & will be forwarded to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Algeria & published on www.iucn.org

Jordi Cortina

Short Course: Basics of the ecological restoration of semiarid ecosystems

BASES PARA LA RESTAURACIÓN ECOLÓGICA DE ECOSISTEMAS TERRESTRES SEMIÁRIDOS

This short course was held in Font Roja Natural Park. 28-30 November 2012. It was organized by CEMACAM Font Roja and University of Alicante-CEAM Foundation Research Unit.

More info at: web.ua.es/en/estacion-cientifica-font-roja

Contact : *Jordi Cortina*



Upcoming SER events

SER summer school "Mediterranean ecosystem restoration" 13-17 May 2013, Avignon, France

SER summer school 2013 on the restoration of Mediterranean ecosystems will be held at the University of Avignon, France under the auspices of SER Europe. This course is primarily intended for PhD students who work in restoration ecology. The program includes lectures of specialists, many field trips and short presentations by the participants. During field activities we will train practical research skills and learn about restoration projects on-site. It will also give a frame for intensive exchange between participants, researchers and practitioners. The field trips will take us to :1) the La Crau plain: an orchard and site polluted by an oil spill rehabilitated to a grassland ecosystem; 2) abandoned rice fields rehabilitated to

Mediterranean marshes; 3) old pine plantations on the slopes of Mont Ventoux, stopping soil erosion caused by overgrazing, 4) salt ponds; 5) dunes, and 6) Mediterranean islands.

We will address topics such as, restoration concepts, the importance of T-zero studies and restoration experiments, long-term studies, resilience and near-natural restoration, the local socio-economic context linked to restoration projects, post-restoration management and the implementation of an habitat mitigation bank.

Contact: Dr. Elise Buisson: elise.buisson@univ-avignon.fr

Agroparc, BP 61207

84 911 Avignon Cedex 09

Tél.+334 90 84 38 58

Fax. +334 90 84 03 77

International Workshop "Approaches in Wetland Restoration", 22-24 April 2013, Warsaw, Poland

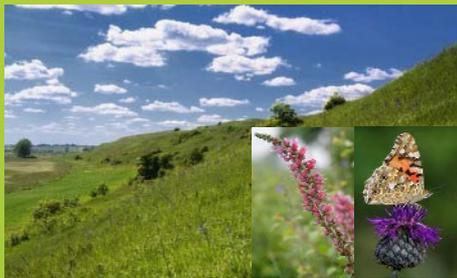
The focus of this workshop will be on the restoration of mires and specifically fens, but other, functionally interrelated wetland types may be included as well. The organisers aim to review synergies and trade-offs between various targets and approaches to the restoration of this group of ecosystems. Plant vs. bird diversity, carbon sink function vs. species richness, cultural landscapes vs.

natural ecosystem resilience - these are some of the main points of the foreseen discussions. The discussions will be structured around lectures by invited speakers, whereas contributions on case studies are invited to be presented as posters and short communications and can be published as extended abstract.

Contact: restoration@bagna.pl or Dr. Wiktor Kotowski

w.kotowski@uw.edu.pl

More information soon on www.bagna.pl/restoration



10th European Dry Grassland Meeting (EDGM) 24-31 May 2013, Zamosc, Poland

The aim of the conference is to link theoretically based approaches with practical restoration in various types of grasslands. The main questions are of the conference are: How can we protect grasslands in fragmented landscapes? What do we need to do to ensure the sustainable

management and conservation of grasslands? It is a great opportunity to meet colleagues from different parts of Europe and elsewhere.

See more: www.edgg.org/edgg_meeting_2013

Contact: Katarzyna Barańska or Michael

Vrahnakis kasia_baranska@interia.pl &

mvrahnak@teilar.gr

www.ser-europe.org • info@ser-europe.org

Contact SER Europe

Don't forget to renew your membership in 2013! Also for SER Europe

Chair: Norbert Hölzel: nhoelzel@uni-muenster.de

Secretary: Agata Klimkowska: info@ser-europe.org

Treasurer & webmaster: Kris Decler: Kris.Decler@inbo.be

Postal address: University Münster

Robert-Koch-Str. 28

D-48149 Münster