

## Newsletter August 2013

### From the Board

Dear SER-Europe Members,

Last few months interesting meetings took place: Summer School in France, workshops in Germany in Poland, Forum on Ecological Restoration in Spain, giving an insight in the recent development in restoration ecology and in the approaches in wetland restoration. There are several exciting up-coming events as well (see our website and this newsletter).

Also the strategic goals, formulated in Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Convention for Biological Diversity) are being discussed and translated in the policy actions in Brussels.

We want to follow at least the developments concerning the target of restoring 15% of degraded ecosystems (target 15) by 2020 as this one directly refers to conservation and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

We encourage you to feature your work or publications on restoration via our website or newsletter! Society for Ecological Restoration is also active as a group on Linked-In. You can use this medium to contact your peers from elsewhere and to post a link to interesting publication or meeting.

Best regards and we wish you a great field season / holidays !  
*Agata Klimkowska (secretary)*

[www.ser-europe.org](http://www.ser-europe.org)

### Forum on Ecological Restoration in Spain

The 1st Forum on Ecological Restoration *Creating networks* took place in July in the National Museum of Natural History in Madrid, Spain:

[www.fororestauracionecologica.wordpress.com](http://www.fororestauracionecologica.wordpress.com). On the pros, the presence of a wide variety of sectors including researchers, docents, students, NGO's and entrepreneurs, the comfortable and creative environment for discussion, the willingness to promote ER in all sectors, and the feeling that the time for ER and RE has arrived. On the cons... actually nothing. Spain has achieved a rather acceptable level of knowledge in RE, based on its long tradition in silviculture, horticulture, landscaping and civil engineering as well as the remarkable effort deployed by Universities, research organizations, NGO's and the Environmental Administrations over the last 20 years. Still, we miss a stronger commitment from the private sector and the Administration. Initiatives such as the Forum are particularly timely, as they will encourage collaboration between the different sectors involved in ER, and promote the practice of high quality restoration!



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### New chapter established: SICRE

In Bogotá (Colombia) was held the III Iberoamerican and Caribbean Congress on Ecological Restoration ([www.congreso2013.redcre.com](http://www.congreso2013.redcre.com)). For several reasons, ER has boomed in this area. Several countries in the area have developed national ecological restoration strategies and the number of researchers and enterprises involved is outstanding.

There are many ER projects that are adequately designed, implemented, evaluated and monitored. A number and quality of projects involving participative management and social restoration is worth mentioning which could provide guidance for European practitioners and decision makers. Congress figures are overwhelming: 500+ registered participants before the opening, 200+ oral presentations and the most outstanding were the enthusiasm, the human capital and the aim to carry out high quality ER.

During the congress, delegates from Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Cuba, Peru, Mexico and Spain established the Iberoamerican and Caribbean Society of Ecological Restoration **SICRE**. Delegates elected José Ignacio Barrera, from Pontificia Universidad Javeriana de Bogotá as the first SICRE President. If the Society works as the Congress did, we anticipate a brilliant future for SICRE. We look forward to the next Congress. No doubt that Gustavo Zuleta (Univ. Maimónides, Buenos Aires) and colleagues will take it a step further.

By *Jordi Cortina*

# Report AWARE workshop, Warsaw

The international workshop "AWARE: Approaches to Wetland Restoration - the focus on fen landscapes" was held in Warsaw on 22-23 April 2013, followed by a field-discussion in fens of NE Poland. We had more than 70 participants from 11 countries. A several concluding statements and challenges in wetland restoration were formulated. Organizers, under the lead of Wiktor Kotowski are currently working on an workshop publication.

We are waiting for publication with more of these refreshing views on fen restoration. The poster

contributions were invited to SER Europe Knowledge Base on Ecological Restoration in Europe (see website: [www.ser-europe.org](http://www.ser-europe.org)).

Wiktor pointing to the 'right direction' !



More information on: [www.biol.uw.edu.pl/aware](http://www.biol.uw.edu.pl/aware)



Some of the topics discussed were:

- *Cost-effectiveness of restoration: how to match intensity with expected outcomes?* A high investments should be made in those sites, which offer good potential for long-term preservation of biodiversity in possibly stable systems. Enhancement of ecosystem resilience is regarded a goal of ecological restoration. Currently, most fen restoration projects are oriented on short-term gains in rare species, while they do not account on long-term stability.

- *Size matters!* In large areas, there might be more room for natural dynamics and wilderness-approach, while small areas will usually deserve higher intervention approach. A need for integrated landscape-approach in wetlands restoration was stressed.

- *Biodiversity and ecosystem services may require different approaches:* multiple benefits, such as ecosystem services and provision of habitats for threatened species can be achieved to a

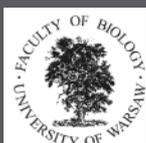
certain extent, but there are trade-offs related to optimizing restoration strategies for such different targets. There are at least two ways of solving conflicts of interests: looking for compromises or setting priorities.

- *Primum non-nocere:* ecological restoration, as a science-based method of assisting degraded ecosystems in their natural recovery, should never be used as an excuse for damaging other sites. Conservation of existing biodiversity hotspots and remaining natural or semi-natural ecosystems should be of highest priority.

Also a 'Resolution on Polish Rivers' was prepared. Participants expressed their concern about current river management in Poland. Due to ecologically harmful measures many of smaller rivers have recently been brought under threat, which may decrease biodiversity and ecosystem services of riparian landscapes.



By Agata Klimkowska, based on summary by Wiktor Kotowski  
Photos: A. Klimkowska



# Report SER Summer School 2013

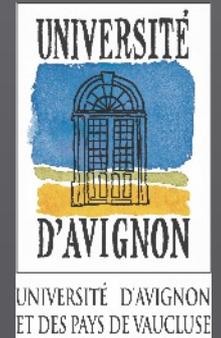
Twenty people, 11 students and young researchers and 9 practitioners, from 14 countries, joined the 2013 SER Summer School, funded by OT-Med, Région PACA and Université d'Avignon.

Participant came from Europe (Italy, Spain, The Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Estonia, the UK), but also from Brazil, Colombia, the USA, Russia, Algeria, Tunisia and Niger, showing the attractiveness of such an event. Nineteen experts, 12 researchers and 7 practitioners, mainly from France, but also from Spain, Germany and Italy, gave talks and led excursions to various restoration projects in south-eastern France.

## Mediterranean ecosystem restoration



Summer School group



## Université d'Avignon et des Pays de Vaucluse & Aix-Marseille Université 13 - 18 May 2013

Talks tackled subjects from the importance of taking genetic diversity into account in restoration to the restoration in Mediterranean agricultural landscapes for wildlife enhancement and from the characteristics of Mediterranean wetlands for their conservation and restoration to phytoremediation. The field trips covered a wide range of habitats. Participants went from Mont Ventoux afforestation project carried out at the end of the 19th century to the Camargue wetlands and salt

ponds and from the steppe of La Crau to the dunes and shores of the Berre Lagoon. Participants were invited to present their work. They were also taken to various towns, such as Avignon, Arles and Marseille, to spend their evening. Students, researchers and practitioners participated actively in all the proposed activities and exchanged extensively on their own experience.

*By Elise Buisson*

*Photos: Elise Buisson & Albin Blaschka*



Excursion Frioul



Excursion Crau



Excursion Camargue

# Open Landscapes 2013

## Upcoming conference!



- **Ecology, Management and Nature Conservation** -

**29<sup>th</sup> Sept. – 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. 2013**

**Hildesheim, Germany**

Dear colleagues,  
I like to announce the international conference Open Landscapes 2013. Open Landscapes 2013 will bring together researchers from all over the world that have a focus on open landscape habitats: wetlands, coastal ecosystems, grasslands, wood-pastures, mountain ecosystems, agricultural landscapes and other open habitats.

The opening plenary session will be given by Paul Keddy. Other keynote speakers include

Roland Bobbink, Michael Kleyer, Jan Lepš, Iris Möller and Osvaldo Sala. The conference is organized in cooperation with the Society for Ecological Restoration-European Chapter, and the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU) Lower Saxony. For more information visit our website.

The Open Landscapes 2013 conference is organized in cooperation with the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) - Europe, the European Dry Grassland Group (EDGG), the

Ecological Society of Germany, Austria and Switzerland (GfÖ) and the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU) Lower Saxony.

Looking forward to see you in Hildesheim!

*Jasmin Mantilla-Contreras*  
(Chair of Open Landscapes 2013)  
Contact: [Jasmin.Mantilla-Contreras@open-landscapes2013.de](mailto:Jasmin.Mantilla-Contreras@open-landscapes2013.de)

# [www.open-landscapes2013.de](http://www.open-landscapes2013.de)

Main topics of the conference are: ecological pattern and ecosystem services of open landscape habitats, management and conservation of semi-natural habitats, plant-animal relationships, including the grazing effects on biodiversity. Many sessions address the problems and methods of restoration of open landscape habitats.

#### Sample of Sessions :

- *Global change and nature conservation of open landscapes*
- *Nutrient deposition into open landscapes*
- *Long-term sustainability of dynamic open habitats as biodiversity hotspots*
- *The role of expansive native and invasive alien plants in the functioning of intact, degraded and restored freshwater wetlands*
- *Climate change and mitigation in coastal ecosystems*

- *Global change impacts on European heathland ecosystems*: session addresses various aspects of current threats to heathland ecosystems, research on global change impacts on heaths and the functioning of heathlands.

- *Conservation and restoration of grassland biodiversity at multiple scales*

- *The role of megaherbivores for open landscapes in Europe*: results from palaeontological, historical and ecological studies.

- *European wood-pastures in transition*

- *Ecology and management of high mountain ecosystems*

- *Importance of semi-natural habitats for ecosystem services in agricultural landscapes*

And many other interesting sessions!

*Jasmin Mantilla Contreras*



# News - Brussels corner

## Restoration Prioritisation under the EU Biodiversity strategy 2020

### Implementation of the 15% restoration target

The DG-Environment is currently working out the Restoration Prioritisation Framework, for implementing the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, specifically Target 15. (See more at: [www.cbd.int/sp/targets](http://www.cbd.int/sp/targets))

A commercial contractor together with the representatives of Member States (MS) supports this work with assistance. Last May the EC organized the workshop "*Priorities for the Restoration of Ecosystems and their Services*", where a strategic framework was proposed for setting the priorities for ecosystem restoration at sub-national, national and EU levels. The nature conservation community was represented by six Europe-wide NGOs: Birdlife International, European Environmental Bureau, CEE Web, IUCN and WWF. The meeting, which was the first one to welcome stakeholders beyond the working group, was also attended by nine experts from Belgium, France, Hungary, The Netherlands and Spain, and several representatives of the Commission. More information can be found on: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/2020.htm>

According to the organizers the workshop and the comments provided by the participants "will be taken into account during the further elaboration of the content". Here we present the most relevant issues presented and discussed during the workshop. It is worth mentioning that, according to the Biodiversity to 2020 agenda, each MS must prepare a national restoration prioritisation plan by the end of 2014. As the EC is aware of this challenge, a common framework and guidelines for implementation will be produced to assist MS.

### Ecosystem types

The working group proposed 5 ecosystem types: forests, croplands, grasslands, wetlands and urban. This classification can be substantially improved. Refining the list of ecosystem types, and harmonizing the 15% restoration target with the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive are further challenges of the prioritisation framework.

### The 4-level concept

An important point of the discussed framework is that the restoration targets are not set for the sake of biodiversity alone but rather for the restoration of ecosystem services, which can be beneficial to biodiversity.

As a common framework, a 4-level concept was proposed and accepted. In this concept, Level 4 corresponds to *transformed ecosystems* (e.g., intensive agriculture, urban areas, brownfields,

etc.), and Level 1 corresponds to areas where satisfactory abiotic conditions prevail, and key species and ecosystem properties have been unaltered or restored (e.g., wilderness areas and Natura 2000 habitats). The four levels will be characterized by *descriptors*. The descriptors are still under development, and should be seen as part of a toolbox for restoration. It was suggested that the descriptors should somehow address ecosystem functioning and processes. Also with large numbers of descriptors, rules how to choose "right one's" are needed. Any change to a higher level in this 4-level scale, will be considered restoration, whereas decreases will account as degradation.

At the workshop there was a general feeling that, despite its simplicity and limitations, the 4-level concept could provide a suitable tool to support MS in their planning, and help them to reach the 15% target. However, this concept differs from SER understanding of restoration and the 9 indicators of 'restored ecosystem', as it was introduced in SER primer on ecological restoration.

(See: [www.ser.org/resources/resources-detail-view/ser-international-primer-on-ecological-restoration](http://www.ser.org/resources/resources-detail-view/ser-international-primer-on-ecological-restoration))

The challenges identified during the workshop were: (1) to keep a balance between simplicity and complexity, (2) to find a way to combine area-based and non-area based targets, (3) to find common and specific descriptors, that allow the identification of transitions, and (4) to deal with data bases of contrasting extent and quality. As an alternative, the landscape-approach was proposed, as this would presumably require less detailed data per ecosystem type, and would offer a robust framework for restoration prioritisation.

### State-wise versus bio-geographical

A pragmatic option of allocating 15% target to each MS is currently being considered. Each MS would be given the responsibility for prioritisation, for making the optimal use of databases, and for setting targets at the national and sub-national level. Also reference points (baseline situations by 2010) should be available at the MS level. This approach was seen as 'suboptimal' from a Euro-wide ecological perspective, because of the different background levels, because economic crisis will have contrasting impacts on MS capacity to implement the strategy, and because a common understanding of descriptors and ecosystem types is still poor. An option to combining targets at different levels was also advocated: for example that European or bio-geographical level would provide input on priority ecosystem types, to be integrated in MS Restoration Plans.

### Guidance and knowledge exchange necessary!

Participants identified a clear need for guidance on prioritisation of restoration actions. The criteria for priority setting should have a scientific basis and should be hierarchically structured into two groups: (1) based on ecological and conservation criteria, and (2) based on socioeconomic conditions and sector policies, needed to decide which actions can actually be implemented, given socioeconomic and financial constraints.

EC role in the 15% target was also discussed. Important tasks where EC lead could be crucial include:

- (1) to coordinate the setting of priorities based on transparent justifications,
- (2) to provide reporting formats, propose how MS should work out priorities until the end of 2014, and support stakeholder involvement in the prioritisation process,
- (3) to provide guidelines on funding opportunities and further develop 'biodiversity proofing' of EU funding and policies. It is necessary to propose a concise system where incentives are provided for projects that include nature restoration, and make sure that the positive effects of restoration actions are not being cancelled by negative effects of "bad" funding and policies.

Finally, the importance of facilitating knowledge exchange and capacity building in MS was stressed: 'There is a huge potential for knowledge exchange between MS on the use of descriptors, on methods of data collection, and the way descriptors are linked to different restoration levels, as well as on the way data are collected for these descriptors.' We support this conclusion, which basically overlaps with SER-Europe mission.

### SER Europe role

SERE board recognizes the significance of this initiative and acknowledges DG-Environment commitment and effort. If properly planned and executed, this could be an action in favor of biodiversity and people welfare. We also appreciate the opportunity to participate in the workshop. SER expertise and knowledge base should play a key role in the definition of a sound EU framework, and support national plans. As two of our most distinguished members recently said, it's time to roll up our sleeves and jointly push this European, and global, priority.

*By Agata Klimkowska & Jordi Cortina based on summary of WORKSHOP 'Priorities for the restoration of ecosystems and their services in the EU' by a consortium under the lead of Arcadis Belgium.*

# Upcoming SER events

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

**Restoration, Ecosystem Services and Land Use Planning.** The conference aims at creating a close link between restoration and land use policies. Ecological, economic and socio-cultural values of restoration will be discussed. Pre-Conference excursions to Western Lapland (surroundings of Pallas-Yllästunturi national park) and the Post-Conference trip to the Russian border (surroundings of Oulanka national park). The main organizer is the Finnish Forest Research Institute (METLA). Co-organizers are the University of Oulu and Metsähallitus. Contact: Prof. Dr. Anne Tolvanen  
Email: [anne.tolvanen@metla.fi](mailto:anne.tolvanen@metla.fi)  
Conference secretariat: [info@SER2014.org](mailto:info@SER2014.org)  
More information is available on website



[www.ser2014.org](http://www.ser2014.org)

## SER2013: 5th World Conference of the Society for Ecological Restoration

Madison, Wisconsin, USA

October 6-11, 2013

The SER2013 World Conference on Ecological Restoration: *Reflections on the Past, Directions for the Future* will bring together from around the world interested in the science and practice of ecological restoration as it relates to natural resource management, climate change responses, biodiversity conservation, local and indigenous communities, environmental policy and sustainable livelihoods. Pictures from: [www.ser2013.org/](http://www.ser2013.org/)



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## Contact SER Europe

*Renew your membership in 2013! Also for SER Europe*

Chair: Norbert Hölzel: [nhoelzel@uni-muenster.de](mailto:nhoelzel@uni-muenster.de)

Secretary: Agata Klimkowska: [info@ser-europe.org](mailto:info@ser-europe.org)

Treasurer & webmaster:

Kris Decler: [Kris.Decler@inbo.be](mailto:Kris.Decler@inbo.be)

Editing newsletter: Agata Klimkowska

Postal address:

University Münster

Robert-Koch-Str. 28

D-48149 Münster

