

Although many causes for this pattern have been suggested, the loss of suitable habitats may be the key factor. In the frame of the Europe-wide AGRIPOPEs project (<http://www.agripopes.net/>) we analysed the species richness and diversity of farmland birds in organic and conventional managed wheat fields across landscapes differing in structural complexity (0-70% semi-natural habitats). A bird survey was conducted during the breeding season and in winter in western and eastern Germany, where all bird species were mapped on 500 x 500 m quadrates around the central point of each focal field. We hypothesized that species richness, abundance and diversity are negatively affected by conventional management and a decreasing amount of semi-natural areas. Our results show positive effects of landscape complexity on farmland bird species richness but no effect of farming practice. In conclusion, the restoration and preservation of semi-natural habitats in agricultural landscapes may be more effective for the conservation of farmland birds than organic farming.

250. EVALUATION AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN APPLIED CONSERVATION

Fischer, Frauke, University of Würzburg, Germany

Applied conservation remains one of the large (economic) fields in which evaluation and quality management play only a little role - if at all. I here refer to conservation as an economic activity since large NGOs have access to financial resources that makes some of them and their projects large businesses. NGOs working in conservation are not required to fulfill general quality standards. Even though they are required under most national laws to prove their benefit to the public in order to get or keep their tax benefits, they often do not have to prove how they spent their money on the ground that their work is successful. This lack of accountability varies, with some NGOs having strict internal evaluation processes while others are only large fundraising machines with little conservation expertise. This lack of accountability results in a non-comparability of projects and NGOs that makes it difficult if not impossible for donors and the general public to discriminate sound projects from trial-and-error approaches or the simple waste of money. In this paper I describe the underlying problems and outline a potential way out of this dilemma, while briefly outlining future standards and potential benefits to the conservation community.

251. AGRICULTURAL INTENSIFICATION AND DISPERSAL ABILITY AFFECT BETA DIVERSITY OF PLANTS, CARABIDS AND BIRDS

Flohre, Andreas, Department of Agroecology, Georg-August-University of Goettingen, Germany; Fischer, Christina, Department of Agroecology, Georg-August-University of Goettingen, Germany; Aavik, Tsipe, Institute of Botany and Ecology, University of Tartu, Estonia; Amelxa, Olga, Institute of Systems Biology and Ecology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Czech Republic; Bengtsson, Jan, Department of Ecology, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden; Berendse, Frank, Nature Conservation and Plant Ecology Group, Wageningen University, Netherlands; Bommarco, Riccardo, Department of Ecology, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden; Ceryngier, Piotr, Centre for Ecological Research, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland; Clement, Lars W., Institute of Ecology, Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena, Germany; Dennis, Christopher, Department of Zoology, Ecology and Plant Sciences, University College Cork, Ireland; Sebastian, Hänke, Georg-August-University Goettingen, Germany; Sönke, Eggers, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden; Mark, Emmerson, University College Cork, Ireland; Flavia, Geiger, Nature Conservation and Plant Ecology Group, Wageningen University, The Netherlands; Irene, Guerrero, Faculty of Sciences, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain; Violetta, Hawro, Centre for Ecological Research, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland; Pablo, Inchausti, CEBC-CNRS, France; Pavel, Kindlmann, Institute of Systems Biology

and Ecology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Czech Republic; Jaan, Liira, Institute of Botany and Ecology, University of Tartu, Estonia; Manuel, B. Morales, Faculty of Sciences, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain; Tomas, Pärt, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden; Wolfgang, W. Weisser, Institute of Ecology, Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena, Germany; Camilla, Winqvist, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden; Carsten, Thies, Georg-August-University of Goettingen, Germany; Teja, Tschardtke, Georg-August-University of Goettingen, Germany

Agro-environmental schemes aimed at reducing agricultural intensification focus on local field scales to conserve biodiversity, whereas diversity patterns largely differ across spatial scales. Unfortunately, most studies addressing the effects of agricultural intensification on biodiversity use the mean diversity on the plot scale (i.e. alpha diversity). The plot scale diversity, however, is only one part of the total diversity (gamma diversity). The between plot diversity (beta diversity) can account for major parts of the total diversity and gives important insights into the variation of species composition between plots. In the Europe-wide AGRIPOPEs project we quantified the alpha-, beta- and gamma-diversity at the micro, meso and macro scale from fields to regions to countries to explore how agricultural intensification filters the beta diversity of plants, carabids and birds via species-specific dispersal abilities. Our results indicate strong changes in the relative values of alpha- and beta-diversity depending on the taxon and its body size, thereby indicating species-specific effects of agricultural intensification at different spatial scales. Agro-environment schemes therefore should not only consider this large-scale contribution of beta-diversity at regional scales to maximize the dissimilarity between conservation areas, but also recognize species-specific responses to intensification.

252. CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE FATE OF MEDITERRANEAN WATERBIRD COMMUNITIES UNDER A POTENTIAL SCENARIO OF INCREASED SALINITY

Florencio, Carlos, Doñana Biological Station, CSIC, Spain; Piñeiro, Xurxo, Doñana Biological Station CSIC, Spain; Seoane, Javier, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain; Bustamante, Javier, Doñana Biological Station, CSIC, Spain; Figüerola, Jordi, Doñana Biological Station, CSIC, Spain

Among other impacts, climate change may increase salinity in inland wetlands due to changes in precipitation and evaporation regimes, especially in Mediterranean countries. This may influence the composition of bird communities wintering, foraging or breeding in wetlands. We studied bird species composition in 80 wetlands of South-western Spain (including the Doñana wetland complex) covering a wide range of salinity to ascertain whether this variable may affect the occurrence of some bird species, thus modifying the composition of bird assemblages. We used self-organized maps to create clusters of sites showing similar species composition. The association between clusters and site's salinity was explored for the wintering, pre-breeding, breeding and post-breeding periods. In each period, we only considered those species greatly contributing to the main activity of the bird assemblage (i.e. breeding species during breeding, wintering and sedentary species during wintering and non-resident species during the two migratory periods). In every period we found that increased salinity may jeopardize the occurrence of several bird species of conservation concern, sometimes affecting a significant proportion of the European population. Potential changes in wetland salinity should be considered when analysing the impact of climate change and designing management policies to deal with it.