# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PALEARCTIC STEPPE BIRDS

## ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

**25-29 MARCH 2025**

Universidad de Castilla La Mancha

**CIUDAD REAL**

**SPAIN**

# SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM


Technical Secretariat:
Fase20 congresos
C/ Narváez 15 1°izq
28009 Madrid - Tel. 902 430 960
www.fase20.com - info@fase20.com

https://steppebirds.com
info@steppebirds.com

GIAE Grupo de Investigación en Aves Esteparias

# WELCOME

Welcome to the International Conference on Palearctic Steppe Birds: ecology and conservation challenges (ICPSB). The Conference is held in Ciudad Real (Spain), from 25 to 29 March 2025, commemorating two decades since the International Symposium on Ecology and Conservation of Steppe-land birds (Lleida (Spain), 2004).

Palearctic steppes are among the most extensive terrestrial ecosystems worldwide, but they are also one of the habitats most threatened due to human activities. The intensification of traditional land uses, along with the development of new ones such as renewable energy, have jeopardised these environments and the bird community that inhabit them. Identifying the ecological requirements of species and the factors limiting their population size, as well as understanding current and future conservation challenges, such as global warming, is crucial for their conservation.

ICPSB aims to bring together researchers, students, practitioners and managers to share and exchange their experiences and latest research results on the ecology and conservation challenges of Palearctic steppe birds, and to promote and strengthen international scientific cooperation in synergy with other professional associations.

The conference is organised by the Research Group on Steppe Birds of the Iberian Peninsula (GIAE) and the University of Castilla-La Mancha, with the collaboration of the Steppe Forward Chair. The programme will include keynote speakers, oral presentations, posters, workshops and field trips.

Finally, the intention of this conference (which has already been held three times in Spain) is for this forum to meet periodically, with the possibility of other countries hosting it in the future. We encourage all those interested to register and contribute to this event, which will be an important reference for researchers, managers and conservationists.

COMMITTEES

# SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Members

## Nyambayar Batbayar
*Director and researcher at the Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia.*

## Ana Benítez
*Researcher at the Natural Museum of Natural Sciences. Spain.*

## Carolina Bravo Párraga
*Researcher at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Member of GIAE and the Organizing Committee. Spain.*

## Inês Catry
*Researcher at BIOPOLIS-CIBIO, University of Porto. Portugal.*

## Mario Díaz Esteban
*Researcher at the Natural Museum of Natural Sciences. Member of the Scientific Committee of SEO/Birdlife. Spain.*

## Aldina Franco
*Professor of ecology at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom.*

## Julia Gómez Catasús
*Assistant Professor at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Member of the Organizing Committee. Spain.*

## Irene Guerrero
*Researcher in the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission.*

## Yves Hingrat
*Research Manager at Reneco International Wildlife Consultants located in the United Arab Emirates.*

## Johannes Kamp
*Researcher in the University of Göttingen. Germany.*

## Santiago Mañosa
*Researcher at the University of Barcelona. Member of GIAE. Spain.*

## Francisco Manuel Ferraira Moreira
*Senior researcher at the University of Porto, into the Biodiversity and Genetic Resources Research Centre (CIBIO). Portugal.*

## Robert Sheldon
*Freelance researcher from the United Kindom. Linked to the Ornithological Society of the Middle East the Caucasus and Central Asia (OSME). United Kingdom.*

## Ilya Smelansky
*Researcher at the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan.*

## Rocío Tarjuelo
*Researcher at the Natural Museum of Natural Sciences. Spain.*

## Elena Concepción
*Researcher at the Natural Museum of Natural Sciences in Spain.*

COMMITTEES

# ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Members

## Beatriz Arroyo
*Researcher of the Spanish National Research Council, and director of the Institute for Game and Wildlife Management. Spain.*

## Gerard Bota Cabau
*Researcher at Forest Sciences and Technology Centre of Catalonia. Spain.*

## Carolina Bravo Párraga
*Researcher at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Spain. Member of GIAE and the Organizing Committee.*

## Julia Gómez Catasús
*Researcher at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Spain.*

## Teresa Marques
*Researcher at the University of Porto, Center in Biodiversity and Genetic Resources. Portugal.*

## Carlos A. Martín
*Professor of the Faculty of Biological Sciences, Department of Biodiversity, Ecology and Evolution, Complutense University of Madrid. Spain.*

## Manuel B. Morales Prieto
*Professor at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Spain.*

## Francois Mougeot
*Researcher at the Spanish National Research Council, Institute for Game and Wildlife Management. Spain.*

## Núria Pou Àlvarez
*Technical Secretary. Knowledge Transfer Technician in the Forest Sciences and technology Centre of Catalonia. Spain.*

## Joao Paulo da Silva
*Researcher at the University of Porto, Center in Biodiversity and Genetic Resources. Portugal.*

## Juan Traba Díaz
*Researcher at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Spain.*

THE CITY

# CIUDAD REAL

Ciudad Real is a Spanish city in the autonomous community of Castilla-La Mancha, with a population of around 75,000. The city is surrounded by dry farmland areas, home to steppe bird populations.

Its economy is largely based on services, tourism (throughout the province of Ciudad Real), hunting, fishing, agriculture (large vineyards, olive groves and cereals), livestock and, to a lesser extent, industry. However, its architecture and historic quarter give a glimpse of the city's wealth at other times in history, when it was the capital of La Mancha.

Ciudad Real is located 171 km south of Madrid, the capital of Spain, with which it is well connected by train and roads. The best way to get to Ciudad Real from outside Spain is to fly to Madrid and take a high-speed train to Ciudad Real (which takes about 1 hour; "there are more than 15 trains connecting Madrid and Ciudad Real each day": Click here for more information). There are good connections between Madrid Airport and Atocha Train Station (from where trains to Ciudad Real leave) by taxi (35€) or "suburban trains" (Click here for more information) (which take about 30 min and leave every 15 min or so).

Further information about the city can be found here:
https://turismo.ciudadreal.es/en/home-2/

THE VENUE

# PARANINFO LUIS ARROYO

**Universidad de Castilla - La Mancha,**
• Paseo del Rectorado • 13003 Ciudad Real (SPAIN)

The University of Castilla La Mancha is co-organiser of the Conference and hosts the headquarters of the Institute for Game and Wildlife Research (IREC), a mixed institute belonging to the UCLM, the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) and the Castilla-La Mancha regional Government (JCCM). IREC is one of the Spanish research centres where steppe birds are studied, among to other lines of research related to game management.

The main events of the Conference take place in the Paraninfo Luis Arroyo of the University of Castilla-La Mancha in Ciudad Real. The rest of the events will take place in the IREC, which is located in the building opposite the auditorium.

The campus where the auditorium is located is accessed from the entrance located on the Ronda de Toledo, just in front of the Hotel Doña Carlota. From there you enter the Paseo del Doctorado, in the central part of which there is a well signposted access to the Paraninfo. Just on the other side of the Paseo del Doctorado is the IREC.

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

# TUESDAY 25TH MARCH

## 09:00-13:30h. Reception.

**Hall IREC**

## 10:00-13:30h. Workshop 1.

**IREC auditorium**

### Conservation research perspectives on Pin-tailed Sandgrouse (*Pterocles alchata*) and Calandra Lark (*Melanocorypha calandra*).

**Outline**

The Pin-tailed sandgrouse and the Calandra lark share many ecological requirements and are frequently sympatric across their distribution range in Western Europe. They also experience alarming population declines and range contraction throughout the Mediterranean.

Although extensive research has recently been conducted on Pin-tailed sandgrouse in the Iberian Peninsula, both species remain among the least understood steppe birds, slowing the development of efficient conservation strategies.

Proposed as part of the French conservation plan on Pterocles alchata and Melanocorypha calandra, this workshop seeks to outline recent progress in the understanding of the biology and ecology of both species, and to explore future priorities in conservation research.

**Overall and specific objectives**

The session will invite various species specialists to present recent research results on the ecology and conservation of Pterocles alchata and Melanocorypha calandra. Because of the elusive nature of the species, special attention will be given to methodological challenges, and how they can be overcome.

Attendees will then be invited to debate about research priorities. The workshop will specifically aim at stimulating research on the species, sharing experiences and practices, and developing national and international collaborations.

**Debates will especially focus on:**

- Estimation of demographic parameters and associated threats
- Population monitoring methods
- Habitat requirements and management of pseudo-steppe and agro-pastoral landscapes

**Related topics**

- Life-history strategies
- Population monitoring and trends
- Dynamics and drivers of habitat change

**Benefits for participants**

Participants will be provided with an update in conservation research on Pterocles alchata, Melanocorypha calandra, and their habitats. Debates will seek to give insights about how to overcome methodological challenges, and to create emulation and collaboration perspectives for the development of new researches.

**Workshop length**

210 min

**Number of participants**

10 to 30

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

**Target audience**

Specialists of the species, people conducting research on related species or on the management and conservation of their habitats, and anyone interested in developing research or conservation projects related to either species.

**Coordinator:**

Axel Wolff

## 10:00-13:30h. Workshop 2.

**Classroom 1**

### Automated acoustic detection of steppe birds: Learn to use BirdNET GUI.

**Outline**

Passive acoustic monitoring (i.e. recording sounds in an environment with autonomous recording units) has proven to be useful for monitoring birds in a wide range of contexts. Nonetheless, its use to monitor steppe birds is still limited. In this workshop we aim to train the attendees on how to use BirdNET GUI, a user-friendly and free software able to identify over 6,000 bird species. This tool will extend the current list of methods available for monitoring steppe birds. The attendees will learn how to use the software on their own computers, and therefore should be able to run the analyses by themselves after the training, as well as know how to choose the best set of parameters for automated detection of steppe birds, and validate the output of the software.

**Overall and specific objectives**

Present how passive acoustic monitoring and BirdNET can be used for acoustic automated detection of steppe birds. 1) Train the attendees on how BirdNET should be used, 2) what are the meanings of the settings that can be adjusted, 3) how the outputs of BirdNET should be analysed to remove false positives (a species predicted but not actually present) and 4) how to filter BirdNET outputs to keep only high-confidence predictions.

**Related topics**

Population monitoring and trends

**Benefits for participants**

The participants will learn how to use BirdNET and how passive acoustic monitoring can contribute to monitoring steppe birds. These skills will improve their capability for monitoring steppe bird communities and improve their monitoring programmes.

**Workshop length**

210 minutes

**Number of participants**

5-30

**Target audience**

The target audience are researchers, technicians and managers eager to learn about how BirdNET, a free and user-friendly machine learning tool, can be used for automated detection of steppe birds in sound recordings.

**Technical requirements**

Attendees should bring their own laptop.

**Coordinator:**

Cristian Pérez Granados
*Centre de Ciència i Tecnologia Forestal de Catalunya.*

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

## 10:00-13:30h. Workshop 3.

**Classroom 2**

### Applications of Remote Sensing for Steppe Bird Conservation Using Google Earth Engine.

**Outline**

This workshop will provide participants with hands-on training on the use of Google Earth Engine (GEE) for remote sensing applications aimed at the ecology and conservation of steppe birds. Participants will learn how to pre-process imageries and calculate baseline ecological metrics like the NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index).

Through guided exercises, participants will apply remote sensing techniques to quickly create NDVI time series and visualize them within GEE. Furthermore, the workshop will demonstrate how to match telemetry data from bird tracking studies with satellite-derived data at multiple scales, an essential step to explore relationships between bird movement patterns with environmental variables. This approach will offer research opportunities into habitat selection, movement ecology, and behavioral patterns, all essential for effective conservation strategies.

The workshop will combine theoretical presentations with hands-on coding sessions, making it suitable for participants at a beginner/intermediate level of experience in remote sensing. Participants will also gain practical experience in customizing analysis workflows and applying them to real-world conservation challenges. This workshop will equip participants with essential skills to leverage remote sensing for more informed decision-making in the conservation of steppe bird habitats.

**Overall and specific objectives**

Equip participants with practical remote sensing skills to address conservation challenges for steppe birds.

**Specific Objectives:**

Understand the basics of GEE.

Learn techniques for data pre-processing.

Derive habitat quality metrics.

Apply time-series analyses.

Integrate telemetry data with remote sensing time series metrics.

**Related topics**

Dynamics and drivers of habitat change in steppe and pseudo-steppe ecosystems.

Evolutionary and behavioral ecology of steppe birds.

Conservation strategies and policy mechanisms.

**Benefits for participants**

Participants will gain hands-on experience in remote sensing techniques, with a focus on GEE, enabling them to process and analyze large-scale environmental datasets rapidly and match with telemetry data.

**Workshop length**

210 minutes

**Number of participants**

20

**Target audience**

Researchers, conservation practitioners, and students with an interest in steppe bird ecology and conservation.

# SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

**Technical requirements**

Important preparation step for participants: Since the analyses will be conducted on the cloud computing platform Google Earth Engine (GEE), attendees must first subscribe to GEE and load the necessary materials as soon as possible. This is crucial, as the GEE account approval process can take some time, and participants will need access to the platform to follow the hands-on exercises. To facilitate this, I have prepared a detailed guide that outlines:

How to subscribe to Google Earth Engine for free using an academic account.

How to load the prepared materials, including shapefiles.

How to access and run the provided code for data extraction.

Link to download the guidelines and workshop materials: https://osf.io/jwchx

**Coordinator:**

Francesco Valerio

## 13:30-15:00h. Lunch break (not included).

## 15:00-18:00h. Reception & placement of posters.

**Hall Paraninfo**

## 16:30-17:30h. Opening ceremony.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Speakers:**

Eduardo De Juana Aranzana
*President of the Research Group on Steppe Birds of the Iberian Peninsula (GIAE).*

Beatriz Arroyo
*Director of the Institute for Game and Wildlife Research (CSIC-UCLM-JCCM)*

Gerard Bota Cabau
*Member of the Organizing Committee.*

**Presenters:**

Núria Pou Àlvarez
*Technical Secretary. Technician in the Forest Sciences and technology Centre of Catalonia. Spain.*

## 17:30-18:30h. Inaugural Plenary Session.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Moderator:**

Gerard Bota Cabau
*Researcher at Forest Sciences Centre of Catalonia. Spain. .*
*Coordinator of the Steppe Forward Chair.*

**Speaker:**

Johannes Kamp
*Head of the Conservation Biology Department, University of Göttingen, Germany.*

### Dynamic land use shapes the bird community of the Eurasian steppe.

**Abstract**

The Eurasian steppes are among the largest grassland biomes globally, stretching from Eastern Ukraine to the Altai mountains. They host large parts of the world populations of some charismatic steppe birds such as Little Bustard, Pallid Harrier, Sociable Lapwing and

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

Black Lark. At the same time, huge populations of farmland birds that are declining all across Europe still thrive in the region.

The Eurasian steppes have been formed and maintained by especially dynamic human land use. Traditional grazing systems and livestock numbers collapsed in the early 20th century, and again after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, but are now partly recovering. Grassland was converted to cropland in many areas historically, but economic difficulties in the post-Soviet period resulted in land abandonment over millions of hectares. Land abandonment also triggered carry-on effects, such as an increase in size and area of wildfires. Grazing dynamics also changed with declines and recovery in wild grazers, such as the Saiga antelope, due to variations in the intensity of poaching and conservation management.

In my talk, I will summarize twenty years of research on bird communities and on the ecology of selected steppe species across Kazakhstan. I will showcase how post-Soviet and current changes in grazing pressure, cropland abandonment and recultivation as well as fire affect steppe bird occupancy, abundance and live history. I will also illustrate the importance of conditions at wintering and stopover sites for steppe birds. I will conclude with a summary of research priorities, and suggest important areas for cross-Eurasian collaboration.

## 19:00-20:00h. Opening cocktail.

**Sótano del Antiguo Casino De Ciudad Real**
Calle Caballeros 3 - 13001 Ciudad Real

**Description**

Join us for a warm and lively Welcome Cocktail at the basement of the Antiguo Casino de Ciudad Real, a beautiful venue kindly provided by the City Council. Enjoy a special cultural surprise from La Mancha, raise a glass in a welcome toast, and start connecting with fellow attendees in a relaxed atmosphere. Don't miss this fantastic opportunity to kick off the conference with great conversations and a taste of local tradition

# WEDNESDAY 26TH MARCH

## 09:00-10:00h. Invited Plenary 1.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Speaker:**

Alena Klvaňová
*Head of monitoring and research department, Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme manager, Czech Society for Ornithology and European Bird Census Council, Prague, Czechia.*

**Moderator:**

Santiago Mañosa
*Researcher at the University of Barcelona. Member of GIAE. Spain.*

### Using PECBMS and EBBA2 data on steppe birds in European policy and research.

**Abstract**

The main aim of the presentation is to introduce how citizen science data on European bird populations, including the steppe species, have been gathered, analysed, and used in research and policy on a supra-national European level.

# SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (PECBMS) is one of the core programmes of the European Bird Census Council (EBCC). Its main aim is to use common birds as indicators of the general state of nature using large-scale and long-term monitoring data on changes in European breeding bird populations. Today, the scheme gathers data from 30 European countries and annually produces indices of 170 bird species. The main outputs are the bird indicators, most notably the Farmland Bird Index (FBI). The European Commission has accepted the FBI as one of the sustainable development indicators (SDI), agro-environmental indicators (AEI), and Pan-European Streamlining European Biodiversity (SEBI) indicators. The 39 species in the FBI are habitat specialists inhabiting open countryside such as farmland, grassland, and steppes. Recently, the EU regulation on nature restoration includes obligations for Member States to achieve an increasing trend at the national level of FBIs by 2030 and thereafter.

In 2022, EBCC started another project, EBBA Live, aiming to update data on species' distributions more frequently, ensure they are harmonised across Europe, and complement the role of atlases such as the European Breeding Bird Atlas (EBBA2). To date, resulting maps are available online, showing the occurrence of 50 farmland bird species based on data from general bird monitoring projects and the new 10 km modelled distribution maps for the post-EBBA2 period 2018–2022. We also aim to assess changes in distribution using monitoring data, but that is more challenging and deserves further development. However, examples of the estimated change in the probability of occurrence between the EBBA2 period (2013–2017) and the EBBA Live Farmland period (2018–2022) will be shown. Some examples of steppe bird tre

## 10:00-10:30h. Coffee Break.

**Hall Paraninfo**

## 10:30-12:30h. Thematic session 1. Population monitoring and trends 1.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Moderator:**

Yves Hingrat

*Research Manager at Reneco International Wildlife Consultants . located in the United Arab Emirates.*

- Specific monitoring method for the common quail *(Coturnix coturnix)* during the breeding season.
- Assessing bird communities in Mediterranean agricultural landscapes through acoustic monitoring: BirdNET, Merlin and acoustic indices.
- BirdNET, a user-friendly acoustic algorithm, complements traditional field censuses for describing grassland bird communities in Europe.
- The study of the distribution and resources of the Saker falcon in Mongolia.
- Drones and Biodiversity: Impact on Lanzarote's Avifauna.




https://steppebirds.com · info@steppebirds.com

Technical Secretariat: Fase20 congresos C/ Narváez 15 1ºizq 28009 Madrid - Tel. 902 430 960 www.fase20.com - info@fase20.com

GIAE Grupo de Investigación en Aves Esteparias

Organizers: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha · CSIC · irec

Supporters: CÁTEDRA STEPPE FORWARD

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

## 10:30-12:30h. Thematic session 2. Life-history strategies.

**IREC auditorium**

**Moderator:**
Ana Benítez
*Researcher at the Natural Museum of Natural Sciences. Spain.*

- Corn Bunting *(Emberiza calandra)* in the abyss: discrepancy between habitat preferences and breeding success.
- Surviving the heat: climate change challenges for steppe birds.
- Malaria-like parasites of European rollers breeding in a semi-arid zone.
- Low breeding success in two declining steppe birds revealed by remote tracking and field data.
- Estimating apparent survival of Pin-tailed-sandgrouse *(Pterocles alchata)* through non-invasive genetic mark-recapture.

## 12:45-13:30h. Poster session.

**Hall Paraninfo**

## 13:30-15:00h. Lunch break.

**Hall Paraninfo**

## 15:00-17:00h. Thematic session 3. Population monitoring and trends 2.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Moderator:**
Teresa Marques
*Researcher at the University of Porto, Center in Biodiversity . and Genetic Resources. Portugal.*

- Long-term continued decrease in productivity of Montagús harriers *(Circus pygargus)* across Spain explains recent trends and predicts further decline.
- Population status and trends of the Little Bustard in its Eastern range.
- Demography and viability of a reinforced North African houbara bustard population.

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

- Status and migration the Eastern Great Bustard population breeding in the Uvs Nuur Basin of Western Mongolia.
- Significant decline of the houbara bustard in the Canary Island.

## 15:00-17:00h. Thematic session 4. Dynamics and Drivers of Habitat Change in Steppe and Pseudo-steppe ecosystems.

**IREC auditorium**

**Moderator:**

Carlos A. Martín

*Professor of the Faculty of Biological Sciences, Department of Biodiversity, Ecology and Evolution, Complutense University of Madrid. Spain.*

- Effects of farming specialisation on steppe birds in southern Portugal.
- Fungicide exposure in declining Iberian steppe birds.
- Dynamic occupancy models and citizen science reveal steppe birds range dynamics and priority conservation areas.
- Habitat structure and landscape composition determine the occurrence of steppe birds in natural grasslands and shrublands.
- Contractions in the distribution of farmland and steppe bird species in Spain in relation to agriculture intensification.

## 17:00-17:30h. Coffee break.

**Hall Paraninfo**

## 17:30-18:30h. Round table. Role of agricultural practices for steppe birds conservation.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Moderator:**

Mario Díaz Esteban

*Research Professor of the Spanish Research Council and coordinator ot the AGRIAMBIO Thematic Platform.*

**Participants:**

Aldina Franco

*Professor of ecology at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom.*

Rocío Tarjuelo

*Researcher at the Natural Museum of Natural Sciences. Spain.*

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

Nyambayar Batbayar
*Director and researcher at the Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia.*

**Description**

Agricultural activities, including arable farming and extensive livestock farming, are key to maintaining the habitats on which steppe birds depend. Agricultural impacts can be either positive or negative, affecting some species or the whole steppe bird community, and are in turn influenced by complex socio-economic factors, including conservation objectives. This roundtable will address these issues with the help of renowned scientists working at the interface between agriculture and bird conservation.

## 18:45-19:45h. GIAE Assembly.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Description**

This event is aimed exclusively at GIAE members and will discuss aspects related to the association.

# THURSDAY 27TH MARCH

## 9:00-10:00h. Invited Plenary 2.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Moderator:**

Julia Gómez Catasús
*Assistant Professor at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Spain.*

**Speaker:**

Joao Paulo da Silva
*Researcher at the University of Porto, Center in Biodiversity . and Genetic Resources. Portugal.*

### Bustards and Powerlines - a major conservation concern.

**Abstract**

The rising demand for energy and the transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources are driving a significant global expansion of overhead power line networks. However, these infrastructures can have serious impacts on biodiversity, particularly birds, which face risks of collision and electrocution. Bustards - among the most threatened bird groups worldwide - are especially vulnerable to collisions with overhead power lines. Their unique combination of behavioural and morphological traits increases their susceptibility, making these collisions a major cause of non-natural mortality and a significant threat to multiple species. In this talk, I will address the impacts of power lines on bustards, from collisions to habitat loss, and explore how this anthropogenic mortality may affect their populations. I will also discuss why bustards are particularly prone to colliding with overhead power lines and why Bird Flight Diverters, designed to make power lines more visible, have not proven to be truly effective. Additionally, I will highlight the importance of careful planning and the role of collision risk maps. Given that current mitigation measures have not been effective in preventing collisions, compensation strategies are necessary when power lines intersect bustard habitats.

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

## 10:00-10:30h. Coffee Break.

**Hall Paraninfo**

## 10:30-12:30h. Thematic session 5. Movement strategies and migration patterns.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Moderator:**
Inês Catry
*Researcher at BIOPOLIS-CIBIO, University of Porto. Portugal.*

- Microclimate refugia availability shapes environmental niches and predicts movement strategies of little bustards.
- Stone-curlews show a remarkable variability in movement patterns: a case study in Northern Morocco.
- Movement ecology of little bustards *(Tetrax tetrax)*: migration strategies, connectivity and corridor features across the Iberian Peninsula.
- Factors affecting survival of GPS tagged steppe land birds.
- Post-breeding dispersal patterns and ecological niche modelling of Lesser Kestrel in the Iberian Peninsula.

## 10:30-12:30h. Thematic session 6. Evolutionary and behavioral ecology of steppe birds 1.

**IREC auditorium**

**Moderator:**
Juan Traba Díaz
*Researcher at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Spain.*

- Coexistence of two diverging lineages of common quails in southern Spain.
- Cultural evolution and changes in the song of the Dupont's Lark *(Chersophilus duponti)* over time and space.
- An accelerometry based model to identify the behaviours of the Little Bustard.
- Use of waste disposal sites by the globally endangered Steppe Eagle Aquila nipalensis in Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman.
- Using accelerometer data to track the behavior of elusive birds: the case of Eurasian Stone Curlew *(Burhinus oedicnemus)*.

# SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

**12:45-13:45h. Poster session.**

**Hall Paraninfo**

**13:45-15:00h. Lunch Break.**

**Hall Paraninfo**

**15:00-17:00h. Thematic session 7. Impact of human infrastructures.**

**UCLM Paraninfo**

Moderator:

Francisco Manuel Ferraira Moreira

*Senior researcher at the University of Porto, into the Biodiversity and Genetic Resources Research Centre (CIBIO). Portugal.*

- Current and future conflicts between utility-scale photovoltaic power plant and sandgrouse distributions.
- The global impact of solar photovoltaic expansion on the worlds birds.
- The European Green Deal must be fully implemented: the acceleration of renewable energy endangers target and threatened steppe bird species.
- Steppe Habitat Compensation in Solar Energy Projects: Analysis of Environmental Impact Statements in Spain.
- Identifying conflicts between renewable energy developments and taxonomic, functional and phylogenetic diversity of steppe birds.
- Alarming state of steppe bird habitats in southern Spain. ZAPRAEs, olive groves and photovoltaic plants.

**15:00-17:00h. Thematic session 8. Evolutionary and behavioral ecology of steppe birds 2.**

**IREC auditorium**

Moderator:

Carolina Bravo Párraga

*Researcher at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Spain. Member of GIAE and the Organizing Committee.*

- **The** Palaeoecological Links between Climate Change, Vegetation change and British Farmland Birds in the Archaeological Record.

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

- **Good** neighbours: habitat partitioning and coexistence in a steppe bird community.
- **Direct** and indirect effects of rainfall variability on steppe bird abundance under climate change: the species-specific ecological profile matters.
- **Interannual** and seasonal variations in niche partitioning between two sympatric sandgrouses.
- **Winter** habitat selection of Eurasian Stone curlew *(Burhinus oedicnemus)* in Southwest Iberia revealed by high-resolution data.
- **Feeding** habits of the male Little Bustard during the breeding season: the role of habitat and land use in diet selection.

## 17:00-17:30h. Coffee Break.

**Hall Paraninfo**

## 17:30-18:30h. Round table. Renewable energy and the impact on steppe birds.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Moderator:**

Manuel B. Morales Prieto
*Professor at the Autonomous University of Madrid and Coordinator . of the Steppe Forward Chair.*

**Participants:**

Ana Benítez
*Researcher at the Natural Museum of Natural Sciences. Spain.*

Luis Benvente
*Programme Director. Subdirectorate General for Environmental Assessment. . Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge.*

Gankhuyag Purev-Ochir
*Director of the Mongolian Bird Conservation Centre).*

David Howell
*Senior Energy Policy Officer, BirdLife Europe.*

**Description**

This round table addresses a hot topic in steppe bird conservation and steppe ecosystem management: the development of renewable energy projects (both solar photovoltaic and wind) and associated powerlines across steppe areas of the Palearctic region harboring populations of endangered steppe bird species. Its aim is to provide the broadest possible view of the threats to steppe birds arising from the development of renewable energies and how the implementation of these energies should be approached to minimize the impact in different countries and regions.

These issues will be discussed with five experts representing different stakeholders, from scientists to administrations and energy developers.

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

## 20:00-00:30h. Congress dinner.

**Hotel Exe Doña Carlota**

**Description**

Enjoy a delicious meal at Hotel Exe Doña Carlota, with vegetarian options available. After dinner, stay for a fun evening with music and dancing, featuring a DJ at the restaurant. Don't miss this great opportunity to connect with fellow participants in a relaxed and festive atmosphere.

# FRIDAY 28TH MARCH

## 09:00-10:00h. Invited Plenary 3.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Moderator:**

Beatriz Arroyo

*Researcher of the Spanish National Research Council, and director of the Institute for Game and Wildlife Management. Spain.*

**Speaker:**

Nigel Collar

*Research Fellow, BirdLife International, Cambridge UK, and Co-Chair, IUCN Bustard Specialist Group.*

### The plight of Palearctic bustards.


**Abstract**

All five species of bustard (Otididae) known from the Palaearctic region have suffered significant negative changes in status since 1900 (two of them since 1800). Great Bustard Otis tarda once had a near-continuous range across the region, but now barely survives in remnant populations too disjunct for gene exchange and still subject to relentless hunting, agricultural intensification and powerline mortalities. Little Bustard Tetrax tetrax had a similar semi-continuous range from North Africa to westernmost China, with major population centres in Iberia and Central Asia, but has suffered often unexplained extinctions in many countries and now a catastrophic collapse in Iberia attributable to sweeping agricultural land-use change and again powerlines, while birds in Central Asia have a worrying dependency on a few unprotected key wintering areas. Arabian Bustard Ardeotis arabs was patchily common across Morocco around 1900, but was exterminated by colonial hunting with rifles. African Houbara Chlamydotis undulata has also suffered from foreign (Gulf State) hunters, whose financial and physical autonomy has totally concealed their impact on the species; the single (doubtlessly well-intentioned) compensatory measure of industrial-scale captive breeding only puts wild populations in further jeopardy through genetic swamping or simple replacement. Identical problems afflict Asian Houbara C. macqueenii: its sedentary populations in Arabia have been exterminated by uncontrolled hunting, while its eastern migratory populations face scientifically unscrutinised pressures from uncontrolled hunting, genetic swamping and powerline proliferation. Moreover, all species face catastrophic losses from near-future temperature rises. Their conservation requires revolutions in the management of habitats and land use at larger scales; in the regulation of houbara hunting, to become truly sustainable without massive ex-situ programmes; and in current endeavours at atmospheric CO2 reduction.

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

## 10:00-11:30h. Thematic session 9. Conservation strategies and policy mechanisms: Present and future 1.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Moderator:**
Nyambayar Batbayar
*Director and researcher at the Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia.*

- Haemosporidian diversity in captive and wild Asian houbara bustard populations: implications for conservation and ecosystem stability.
- Scenario planning and participatory processes: a useful tool for European steppes' conservation.
- Coexistence conservation: The potential of behaviour-based methods to mitigate predation on steppe birds in farmland ecosystems.
- Long-term Systematic Conservation Planning for Two Declining Steppe Birds in Iberia.
- Bustards Without Borders: A Collaborative Approach to Global Bustard Conservation.

## 11:30-12:00h. Coffee Break.

## 12:00-13:45h. Thematic session 10. Conservation strategies and policy mechanisms: Present and future 2.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Moderator:**
Aldina Franco
*Professor of ecology at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom.*

- Can habitat management and human-induced mortality mitigation reverse the decline of the little bustard in Extremadura?
- A demographic evaluation of the conservation management of the Little Bustard *(Tetrax tetrax)* in Catalonia.
- Assessing the Effectiveness of CAP measures for the conservation of endangered steppe birds.
- Restoration of Iberian Shrub Steppes: Effects on Arthropod Biomass and Dupont's Lark Populations.

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

- Results of two years of translocations of a steppe passerine in continental Europe: the endangered Dupont's lark.
- Conservation actions and assessment of hunting (un) sustainability to recover the Common Quail *(Coturnix coturnix)*.

## 13:45-15:00h. Lunch Break.

## 15:00-16:00h. Closing Plenary.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Moderator:**

François Mougeot
*Researcher at the Spanish National Research Council, Institute for Game and Wildlife Management. Spain.*

**Speaker:**

Vincent Bretagnolle
*Senior Scientist CNRS, at Centre d'Etudes Biologiques de Chizé.*

- **30 years studying harriers, bustards and stone curlews: new knowledge and lessons for conservation.**


**Abstract**

In this talk, I use 30 years of data collected in SW France, on our study site, the Long-Term Social-Ecological Research (LTSER) Platform "Zone Atelier Plaine & Val de Sèvre". Since 1994 or 1995, monitoring of 2 Harrier species (Montagu's and Hen), Little Bustard and Stone Curlew has been on-going every year, including nest search, breeding biology surveys, capture and marking, and Radio-tracking and GPS monitoring. I will present long-term data on each of the species and aspects of breeding biology, long term trends, research findings and conservation measures implemented and their effects on population size and dynamics. I will argue that monitoring trends is insufficient to implement sound conservation measures, and that a whole system approach, including food availability and landscape, is needed to understand the patterns observed and implement correct and realistic conservation strategies. I will also discuss the importance of long-term studies to detect population changes and their drivers. Lastly, I will advocate that beyond implementing a whole system approach, we need also to involve local stakeholders, typically farmers but also beyond them (children, citizens, policy makers), as both drivers of change and potential solutions.


## 16:00-17:00h. Closing Ceremony.

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Speakers:**

Juan Traba Díaz
*Member of the Organizing Committtee. Researcher at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Spain.*

Carolina Bravo Párraga
*Member of the Scientific Committee. Researcher at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Spain. Member of GIAE and the Organizing Committee.*

Borja Heredia Armada
*Head of the Terrestrial Fauna Area of the General Directorate for Biodiversity, Forests and Desertification of the Spanish Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge.*

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

**Presenter:**

François Mougeot

*Researcher at the Spanish National Research Council, Institute for Game and Wildlife Management. Spain.*

## 17:30-19:00h. Presentation of the documentary. "URPA: A Fresh Brew to Save the Montagu's Harrier".

**UCLM Paraninfo**

**Description**

URPA: un glop fresc per salvar l'arpella cendrosa"

We want to share a beautiful and inspiring story of collaboration to help save a threatened species, the Montagu's Harrier (Circus pygargus).

The documentary 'URPA: A Fresh Brew to Save the Montagu's Harrier' showcases decades of work in the Lleida plains (NE Spain) to protect this globally endangered bird, following its breeding season from April to August.

It also highlights an innovative initiative: transforming cereal crops left unharvested to protect harrier nests into Urpa (claw in Catalan), an artisan beer, to reward and raise awareness about the farmers involved.

The film gives a voice to all key players–farmers, scientists, and more–offering an inspiring and replicable model of conservation success.

After the screening of the documentary, there will be a free tasting of the craft beer featured in the documentary.

# SATURDAY 29TH MARCH

## 08:00-15:00h. Excursion. A Journey Through the Steppes of La Mancha.

**UCLM entrance (Ronda de Toledo)**

**Description**

As part of the International Conference on Palearctic Steppe Birds, Fundación Global Nature invites participants to a field trip to explore the unique steppe landscapes of La Mancha. This excursion will showcase key conservation efforts and habitat management practices, while offering the opportunity to observe iconic steppe birds such as the Great Bustard and Little Bustard.

The itinerary includes visits to critical areas managed under conservation agreements, such as fallow vegetation islands, temporary salt lagoons and lagoon biodiversity restoration projects. Stops will highlight collaborative management between Fundación Global Nature, local farmers, grazers and hunters, demonstrating the balance between agriculture, biodiversity and steppe bird habitat conservation.

Participants will enjoy local hospitality, including a wine and cheese tasting hosted by regional producers, and engage with experts and community members actively involved in habitat restoration.

# SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

Practical details:

- Departure: 8:00 am from UCLM (Paraninfo).
- Arrival (aprox.): 04:00 pm to UCLM
- Transport: Small buses (max. 35 people).
- Activities: Short walks to key sites (15-20 minutes each).
- Lunch in Villacañas in a local restaurant.

Join us on this enriching journey into the heart of steppe bird conservation, guided by the invaluable expertise of Fundación Global Nature

Meeting point at 8h – UCLM entrance (Ronda de Toledo).

Field Visit – Surroundings of Villacañas

**10:30-12:30h. Excursion. Cultural visit to Castilla La Mancha cultural heritage, in collaboration with the regional administration.**

## ORGANIZERS

GIAE Grupo de Investigación en Aves Esteparias

irec
INSTITUTO DE INVESTIGACIÓN EN RECURSOS CINEGÉTICOS

CSIC
Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas
UCLM
Castilla-La Mancha

UCLM Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha
CAMPUS DE EXCELENCIA INTERNACIONAL

## SPONSORS

Lotek
advancing wildlife science

ECOTONE®
GPS TELEMETRY

oryx LA TIENDA DEL AMANTE DE LA NATURALEZA

## SUPPORTERS

CÁTEDRA STEPPE FORWARD

## COLLABORATORS

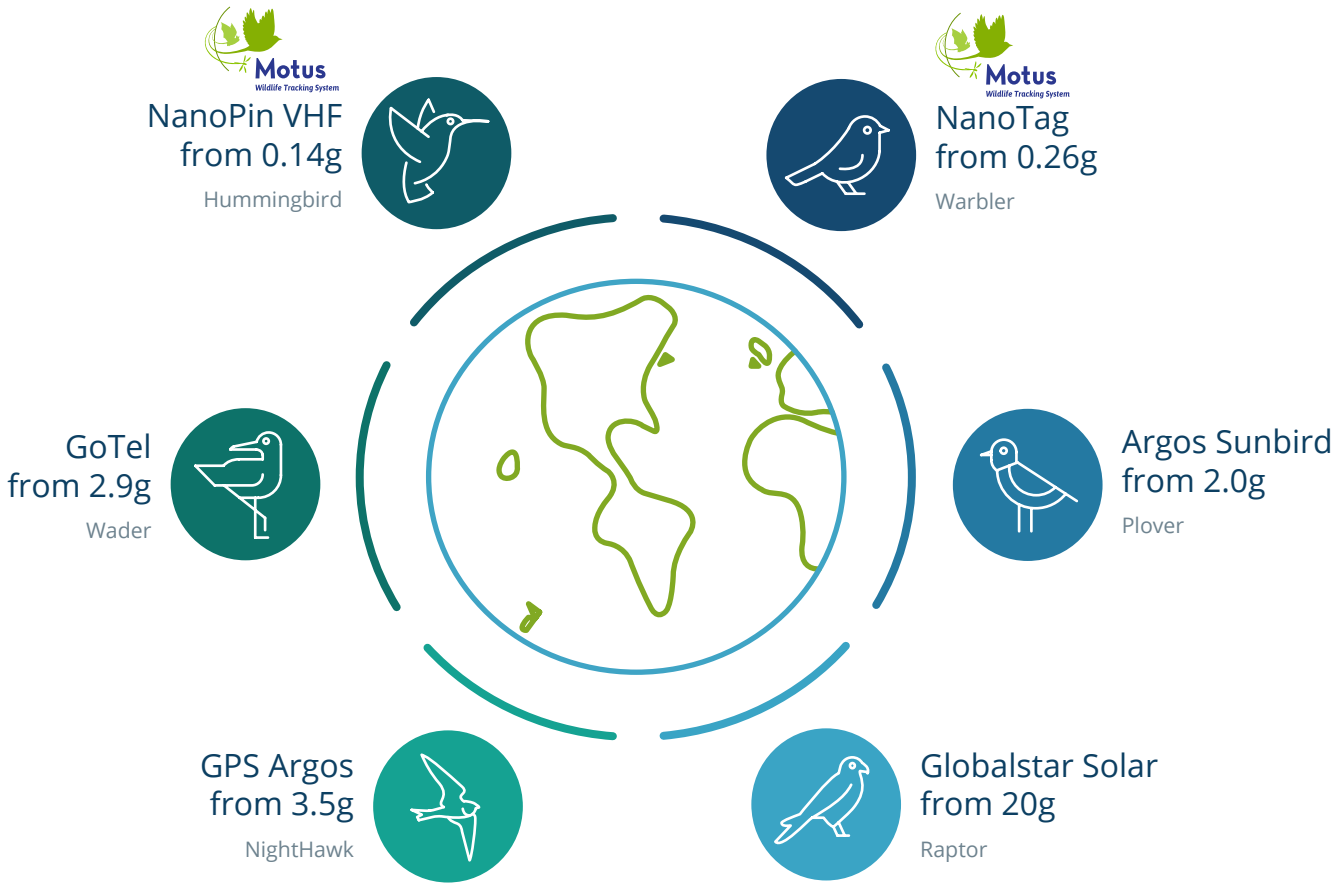
Fundación Global Nature

SEO BirdLife
ARDEOLA
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ORNITHOLOGY

LIFE Connect Ricotí

Life NATURA 2000

# SMALL TAGS — BIG RESULTS




## What are you studying? Let us help!

Lotek is a world leader in the design and manufacture of fish and wildlife monitoring systems. Speak to **Sarah Deans** at the Lotek booth to learn more about our solutions and find out if our products are right for your study.

Lotek

advancing wildlife science

+44 (0) 1929 552992 info.uk@lotek.com www.lotek.com