

SustEquine project seeks 2 to 3 master students for:

Assessment of large scale equine farms as biodiversity-conservation targets across Europe



Main supervision:

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Partners:

Sandgrueb Stiftung, Gut Aiderbichl, Schweizerische Vogelwarte

Background

Large scale equine farms stand out from agricultural system as high-potential areas for ecological restoration and biodiversity enhancement: they are often exempt from intensive production pressures and maintain semi-natural habitats. Furthermore, through selective grazing, trampling and seed dispersal, and via their heterogenous space use, domestic horses – in certain conditions –, may contribute to ecosystem functioning and boost biodiversity. The SustEquine project investigates the biodiversity potential of such equine facilities to seek solutions for sustainable equine husbandry, while contributing to both horse welfare and ecosystem restoration, supporting the targets of the EU Nature Restoration Law.

Aim

We investigate the biodiversity status of multiple equine farms in Central Europe – in France, Hungary and Germany –, by applying standardized monitoring of three biodiversity indicator species groups. Focusing on breeding birds by passive-acoustic monitoring, and butterflies and Orthoptera by Pollard-walks, we will assess diversity on different scales (alpha, beta, gamma-diversity) as a function of habitat, management, and horse space-use pattern, using spatially explicit linear mixed models.

When: Fieldwork from April/May to August/September (depending on chosen species group) with flexible working conditions, and travels.

Where: Field work in France, Hungary and Germany. (Students will be enrolled at UniNe.)

Your profile: We are looking for two to three highly motivated students interested in conducting fieldwork, data curation and analysis and participating in a long term applied study. Depending on the chosen project, previous taxonomic experience with birds, Orthoptera or Lepidoptera is advantageous. A valid driving license and being independent with a car is necessary, own car is an advantage.

If you are interested to join us, please contact:

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