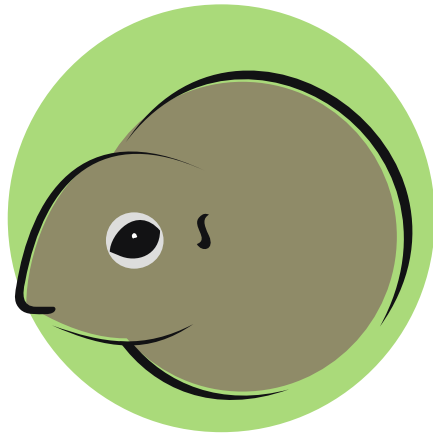


IV European Ground Squirrel Meeting



IV EGSM

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Kamień Śląski, Poland

PROGRAMME
ABSTRACTS
PARTICIPANTS

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Current distribution and status of the European ground squirrel in Romania

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The European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*) is a threatened European endemism, presently showing a serious decline. Its status in Romania is also unfavourable, although data regarding current distribution, isolation and threats are lacking. In the past years, several surveys have been carried out in order to assess the present range of the species within the country. In addition, scattered data from observations by field biologists from various parts of the country have continuously been collected. Aimed habitats included mostly pastures, but also other habitat types (sand steppes, meadows, river banks, roadsides, etc.). Distribution surveys of the Pannonian population of ground squirrels took place between 2006 and 2009, and additional data have continuously been collected since. The two main goals were the proposal of new Natura 2000 sites for the European ground squirrel and the conservation of saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in the Western Plain of Romania. The species was located in 79 UTM grids of 10×10 km. Available habitats and thus colonies are generally isolated in this part of the country, which represents a serious threat for ground-squirrel populations. Extinctions have been proven in a few cases, and suspected in many more, although it is virtually impossible to assess the number of extinctions, as old data from the literature are usually connected to localities only. Distribution mapping of the Balkan population of the European ground squirrel (from Oltenia, Muntenia, Moldavia and Dobruja regions of Romania) took place in 2009 and 2010, when surveys were conducted to collect data about the distribution, density and conservation status of ground squirrels, with the main aim of proposing new Natura 2000 sites. During these surveys most historical localities of the species known from the literature, as well as a large number of potential sites were checked for the presence of the species. According to our results, ground squirrels still occur in 379 UTM grids, with relatively large populations in Dobruja and some parts of Moldavia, but with considerable gaps of the current distribution in the southern part of the country.