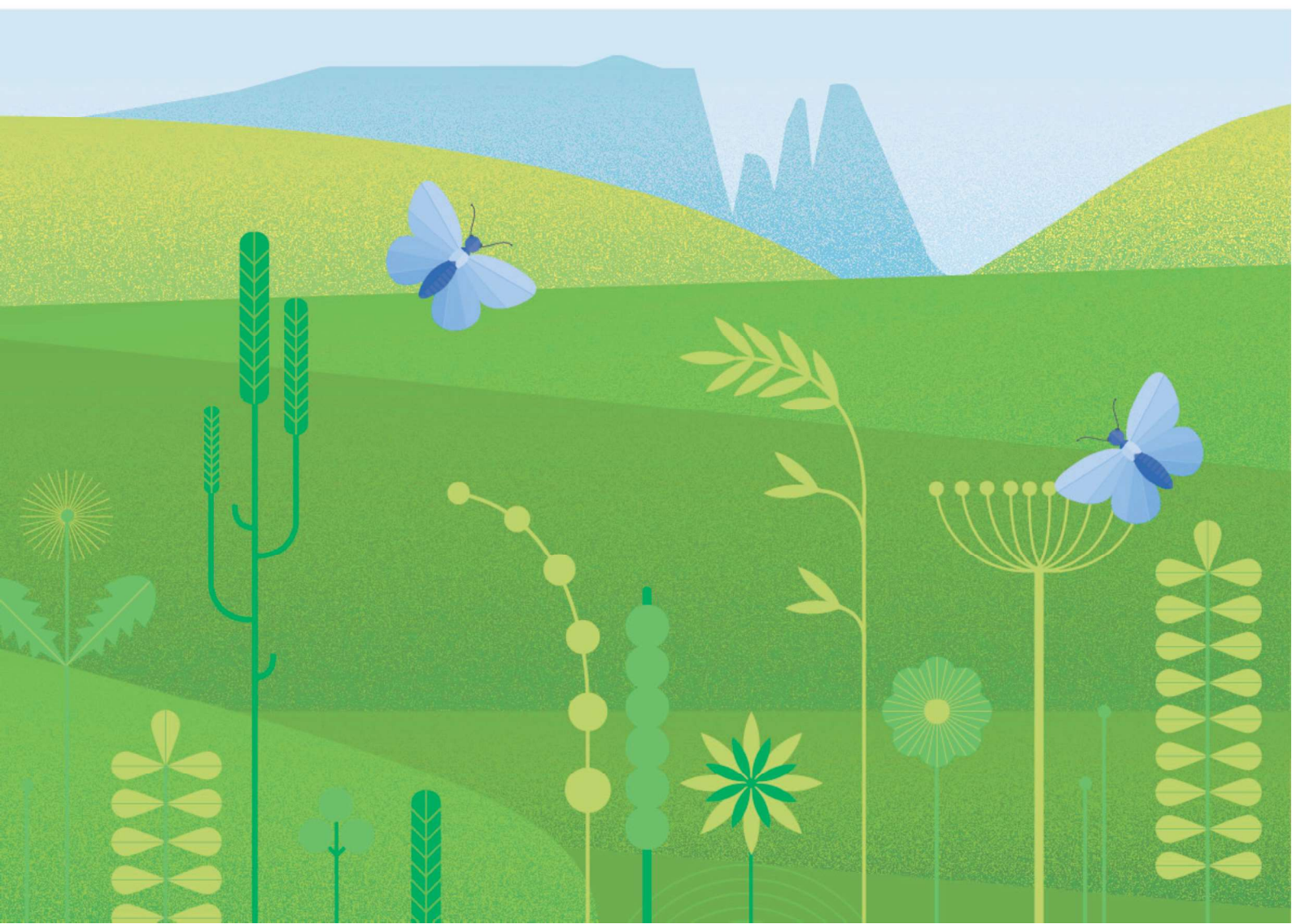


Book of Abstracts

19th Eurasian Grassland Conference
26 August – 1 September 2024
Bolzano/Bozen, Italy



Educational activity to sensitize children on grassland biodiversity conservation, animal welfare and social utility of research

Paola Scocco¹, Sara Moscatelli², Anna Paniccià¹, Francesca Mercati³

¹ School of Biosciences and Veterinary Medicine UNICAM-Italy

² International School of Advanced Studies UNICAM-Italy

³ Department of Veterinary medicine UNIPG-Italy

Email of the corresponding author: paola.scocco@unicam.it

Study aim was to explore children's knowledge and level of awareness to 3 general concepts representing the 3 project's pillars grassland biodiversity, animal welfare and the social utility of research, by means of an observational study involving 252 students of both genders, aged between 9 and 11. The educational activity was organized in 3 meetings; interactive ppt presentations about the project topics were proposed, followed by ludic activities to enable the children to review the concepts discussed during the theoretical parts. Two different types of tests referred to as "attitude questionnaire" (AQ) and "maximum performance test" (MPT) were administered during the project. The AQ was administered before the start and at the end of the project to assess both the children's sensitivity to the treated topics and their awareness toward the project's pillars. The test consisted of 15 items; for each item children could express their degree of agreement/disagreement by choosing from 1 to 5 score to obtain useful data for statistical processing. Cumulative Link Mixed Models were used to test for the effects of the various explanatory variables on the children's responses. Data were analyzed in R Studio using the "lme4" package. The MPT aim was to evaluate if children had understood the topics explained during the meetings in the immediate term. Each test contained sentences about the specific meeting topics, respondents had to choose between "true" or "false" options. The correlation between MPT score and school Science evaluations of each child was analyzed. Among the 5 items for each pillar, 4 items related to biodiversity, 3 items related to animal welfare and 2 items related to social utility of research, showed a significant difference in the second AQ responses. The analysis of data from the MPT showed that the didactic methodology used was effective and improved the position of most of the children bringing them into higher Science evaluation groups. The children's awareness of the topics increased and showed the effectiveness of dissemination in Citizen science activities. The children expressed their thoughts and appreciation through pictures and nursery rhymes, and someone expressed their intention to care for animals, protect biodiversity and to become a scientist.