

Summer Schools on restoration ecology - Bringing together young scientists and practitioners throughout Europe

Introduction

Summer Schools are a promising instrument to enhance exchange of knowledge across frontiers by training young academics from Europe and neighbouring regions in restoration ecology. Participants get both the opportunity to broaden their scientific and practical background and to work intensely on a specific topic, together with academic specialists and practitioners in the particular field and with other young colleagues.

THE AIMS OF THE PAST EVENTS WERE

- providing theoretical background by lectures of specialists
- training of practical research skills
- learning about restoration projects on-site by field work and excursions
- short presentations of participants on own research
- exchange between participants and lecturer

Outcomes of the past events

The constantly increasing number of **applications** since the first Summer School in Bremen (2003) and the evaluation results confirm the high interest in such events and in restoration ecology as a field of applied science. For the Summer School 2009 in Münster, 22 participants from 9 European countries out of 48 applicants with 22 different nationalities could be considered.

Within the **evaluation**, the participants of the Summer School 2009 in Münster rated their gain in knowledge as very high to high for the theoretical part as well as for the practical part (89 %) and also for the students' presentations (69 %) (Fig. 1). The evaluation result for the course in multivariate statistics that was embedded in the Summer School reflects the very inhomogeneous previous knowledge of the participants. For such specific courses or lab practicals a separate course with clear preliminary information about the presumed qualifications might be more appropriate.

In the overall view, the discussions with students and lecturers was also considered as very important by the participants.

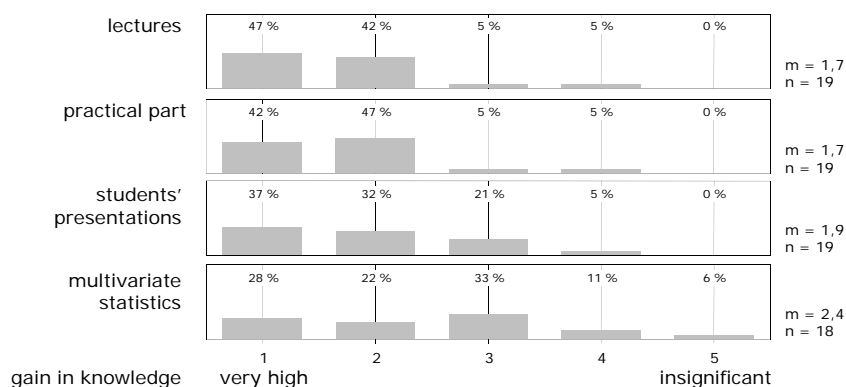


Fig. 1 Evaluation by the participants: gain in knowledge for the different parts of the Summer School 2009.

Opportunities for future events

PARTICIPANTS – The past Summer Schools were primarily intended for PhD students, but one third of the applicants in 2009 belonged to one of the following three groups of applicants who might - beside PhD students - be promising target groups for future events:

Master students can broaden their knowledge in ecology and get important background information for a specialization in restoration ecology.

Young scientists and lecturer can get significant input from specialists for their own research and also for their own lectures and courses, which would be a good tool to spread knowledge about restoration ecology amongst students.

Practitioners in ecological business or administration as participants can learn more about the scientific background of restoration activities and will be equipped with better knowledge and valid arguments for their practical work.

TOPICS – For future events, a broad range of subjects is imaginable, e.g. specific regions, habitat types, ecosystem compartments, etc.

Among the 2009 and 2007 participants, there was a very high interest in courses on the prediction and analysis of **outcomes of restoration activities** as well as on **laboratory practicals**, particularly on experimental design and on the analysis of maps to produce restoration plans.



Fig. 2 Participants of the Summer School 2009 on a field trip to learn about floodplain restoration at river Lippe near Soest.