

# sPlot open - An environmentally-balanced, open-access, global dataset of vegetation plots

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# Abstract

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Vegetation provides the foundation of life on Earth. Assessing biodiversity status and trends in plant communities is therefore critical to understand and quantify the effects of global change on ecosystems. Here, we present the largest dataset of vegetation plots (i.e. species co-occurrence or community composition data) ever released in open access. It contains information on 91,031 vegetation plots recording the cover or abundance of each plant species that occurs in a plot of a given surface area at the date of the botanical survey. Plots were derived from 103 local to regional datasets. To improve the representation of Earth's environmental conditions, plots were resampled from a larger pool of vegetation plots using an environmentally stratified sampling design. Each vegetation plot comes with information on community-weighted means and variances of key plant functional traits. Our open-access dataset can be used to explore global patterns of diversity at the plant community level, as ground truthing data in remote sensing applications or as a baseline for biodiversity monitoring.

## Background & Summary

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Biodiversity is facing a global crisis (1). As many as 1 million species are estimated to be already facing extinction, mostly as a consequence of anthropogenic impacts, land-use and climate change (1). The rates of biodiversity redistribution and homogenization are also accelerating (2; 3). Biological assemblages are becoming progressively more similar to each other globally, as local biodiversity and endemic species go extinct and are replaced by introduced exotic species or by more widespread and competitive native species (1; 3). This has profound potential impacts on human and ecosystem health (4; 5). For instance, many terrestrial and marine species are shifting their geographical distribution as a response to climate change (2), including animals hosting pathogens transmissible to humans (6; 7; 8).

Vegetation, i.e., the assemblage of plant species, is no exception to this biodiversity crisis (9; 10; 3). This is worrisome, since terrestrial vegetation accounts for 80% (450 Gt C) of the living biomass on Earth (11). Given the central role of vegetation in ecosystem productivity, stability and functioning (10), assessing biodiversity status and trends in plant communities is paramount, for other life compartments and human societies alike.

Monitoring plant biodiversity trends requires adequate data across a range of scales (12). Large independent collections of plant occurrence data do exist at the global or continental extent via the Botanical Information and Ecology Network (BIEN) (13), the Global Inventory of Floras and Traits (GIFT) (14) or the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) (<https://www.gbif.org/>). However, all these occurrence-only databases either neglect how individual plant species co-occur and interact locally to form plant communities, or are collected at spatial resolutions (e.g., one-degree grid cells) which are too coarse to assess biodiversity trends at the most relevant scale of local plant communities (15).

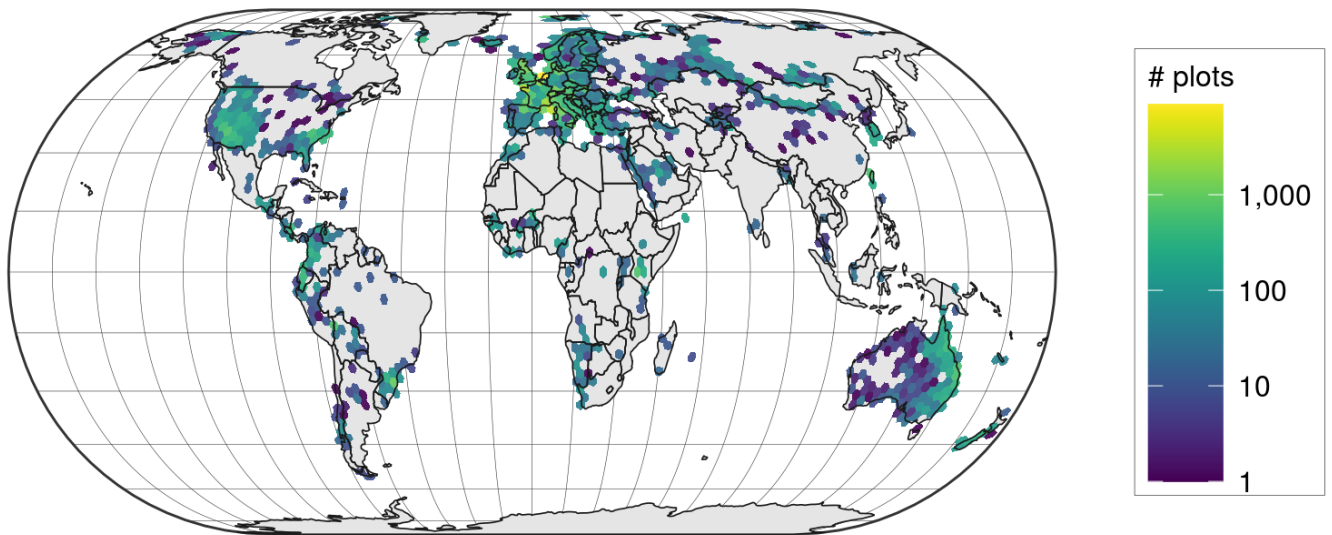
Yet, there is a long-lasting tradition among botanists to record the cover or abundance of each plant species that occurs in a vegetation plot of a given size (i.e. surface area) at a given time (e.g. 16). Compared to species-level data, vegetation-plot data present many advantages. First, they contain information on which plant species co-occur together in the same locality at a given moment in time (17). This built-in feature of vegetation plots is a necessary prerequisite for testing hypotheses related to biotic interactions among plant species (i.e. plant-plant interactions). It can also provide crucial information on where and when a species is absent, therefore improving current species distribution models (18). Being spatially explicit, vegetation plots can be resurveyed through time to assess potential changes in plant species composition relative to a baseline (19; 20, 3). As they normally contain also information on the relative cover or abundance of each species, vegetation plots are more adequate to detect subtle biodiversity changes, compared to data based on the occurrence of individual species only (21).

Vegetation-plot data are very fragmented, though, as they typically stem from a myriad of research projects. As such, these data often suffer from the usual trade-off in biodiversity data: Collections have either fine-grain spatial resolutions but small spatial extents, or vice versa (22). Furthermore, with their disparate sampling protocols, standards and taxonomic resolutions, aggregating and harmonizing vegetation plot data proves extremely challenging (23). It is not surprising, therefore, that these data have only been rarely used in global-scale biodiversity research until recently (24; 25).

The sPlot initiative tries to close this data gap. It leverages on several existing local to regional vegetation-plot datasets, to create a harmonized and comprehensive global geo-database of terrestrial plant species assemblages (26). Established in 2013, sPlot currently contains more than 1.9 million vegetation plots, and is fully integrated with the TRY database (27), from which it derives information on plant functional traits. The sPlot database is increasingly being used to study continental- to global-scale vegetation patterns, such as the relative contribution of regional vs. local

factors on the global patterns of fern richness ([28](#)), the mechanisms underlying the spread and abundance of native vs. invasive tree species ([29](#)), and worldwide trait–environment relationships in plant communities ([23](#)).

Here, we provide an open-access data set composed of 91,031 plots, which is representative of the environmental space covered by the sPlot database. Plots stem from 103 databases, and span across 115 countries (Figure [1](#)). This resampled dataset (sPlot Open - hereafter) is composed of: (1) plot-level information, including metadata and basic vegetation structure descriptors; (2) the species composition of each vegetation plot, including species cover or abundance information when available; and (3) community-level functional diversity indices derived from the TRY database ([27](#)).



**Figure 1:** Global map of sPlot Open ( $n = 91,031$ ) and spatial distribution of vegetation plot density per hexagonal cell with a spatial resolution of approximately 70,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Map projection is Eckert IV.

# Methods

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## Vegetation plot data sources

We started from the sPlot database v2.1 (created October 2016), which contains 1,121,244 vegetation plots and 23,586,216 species records stemming from 110 different vegetation-plot datasets of regional, national or continental extent. Some of the 110 datasets stem from regional or continental initiatives (see [26](#) for more information). For instance: 48 vegetation-plot datasets derive from the European Vegetation Archive (EVA) ([17](#)), three major African datasets from the Tropical African Vegetation Archive (TAVA), multiple vegetation datasets in the USA from the VegBank archive ([30](#); [31](#)). Data from other continents (South America, Asia) or countries were contributed as separate datasets. The metadata of each of the 110 vegetation-plot datasets stored in sPlot are managed through the Global Index of Vegetation-Plot Databases (GIVD; [32](#)), using the GIVD identifier as the unique dataset identifier.

## Resampling method

Data in the sPlot database are unevenly distributed across continents and biomes (see [23](#)). Mid-latitude regions in developing countries (mostly Europe, the USA and Australia) are overrepresented, while regions in the tropics and subtropics are underrepresented, which is a typical geographical bias in biodiversity data (e.g., [33](#); [2](#)). To reduce this imbalance to the extent possible, we performed a stratified resampling approach, using several environmental variables available at the global extent as sampling strata. We considered 30 climatic and soil variables. For climate we complemented the 19 bioclimatic variables from CHELSA ([34](#)), as well as two variables reflecting growing-season warmth (growing degree days above 1 °C - GDD1 - and 5 °C - GDD5), which we calculated based on CHELSA bioclimatic variables. In addition we considered an index of aridity (AR) and a model for Potential Evapotranspiration (PET - [35](#)). For soil, we extracted seven variables from the SOILGRIDS database ([36](#)), namely: soil organic carbon content in the fine earth fraction, cation exchange capacity, pH, as well as the fractions of coarse fragments, sand, silt and clay.

We stratified our sampling effort based on the following procedure. First we ran a global principal component analysis (PCA) of the 30 above-mentioned environmental variables. We considered the full environmental space of all terrestrial habitats on Earth at a spatial resolution of 2.5 arcmin, totaling 8,384,404 terrestrial grid cells, irrespective of whether a grid cell hosted vegetation plots from the sPlot database v2.1 or not. We then subdivided the environmental space represented by the first two principal components (PC1-PC2), accounting for 47% and 23% of the total variation on PC1 and PC2, respectively, into a 100 × 100 grid. This PC1-PC2 bidimensional space was subsequently used to balance our sampling effort across all PC1-PC2 grid cells for which vegetation plots are available. Before projecting vegetation plots from the sPlot database v2.1 onto this PC1-PC2 environmental space, we removed vegetation plots: from wetlands; from anthropogenic vegetation types; without geographical coordinates; and with a location uncertainty higher than 3 km for those having geographical coordinates. This led to a total of 799,400 out of the initial set of 1,121,244 vegetation plots. When projecting the 799,400 vegetation plots in the PC1-PC2 grid, we calculated how many vegetation plots occurred in each PC1-PC2 grid cell. For those grid cells with more than 50 vegetation plots ( $n = 858$ ), we randomly selected up to 50 vegetation plots using the heterogeneity-constrained random resampling algorithm from [[37](#)]. This approach optimizes the selection of a random subset of vegetation plots that encompasses the highest variability in species composition while avoiding peculiar and rare communities, which may represent outliers. We based the quantification of variability in plant species composition among the 50 randomly selected vegetation plots by computing the mean and the variance of the Jaccard's dissimilarity index ([38](#)) between all possible pairs of vegetation plots for a given random selection of 50 vegetation plots ( $n = 1225$ ). We chose this



dissimilarity index because it is not influenced by differences in species richness among vegetation plots. More precisely, for a given PC1-PC2 grid cell containing more than 50 vegetation plots, we generated 1,000 random selections of 50 vegetation plots and ranked the 1,000 random selections according to the mean (ascending order) and variance (descending order) value. Ranks from both sortings were summed for each random selection, and the random selection with the lowest summed rank was considered as the most representative of the focal grid cell. In case a grid cell contained fewer than 50 plots, we retained all of them. In this way, we reduced the imbalance towards over-sampled climate types, while ensuring the resampled dataset to be representative of the entire environmental gradient covered by the sPlot database. We repeated the resampling procedure three times to get three different possibilities of a random selection of 50 vegetation plots per PC1-PC2 grid cell with, initially, more than 50 vegetation plots. Vegetation plots selected during the first iteration were our first choice, while we considered the vegetation plots additionally selected in the second and third iteration as reserves when asking for the permission to release the data as open access to each dataset's contributor(s).

## Permission to release the data as open access

The resampling procedure resulted in a preliminary potential selection of 98,383 vegetation plots (first choice) and 51,634 vegetation plots flagged as reserves (second or third choice for the subset of PC1-PC2 grid cells with more than 50 vegetation plots available). Being the sPlot database a consortium of independent datasets, whose copyright belongs to the data contributor, we used this preliminary potential selection to ask each dataset's custodian (i.e., either the owner of a dataset or its authorized representative in case of a collective dataset) for permission to release the data of each selected vegetation plot as open access. For 8,070 vegetation plots, permission could not be granted, for instance because the data are unpublished, confidential or sensitive. For these vegetation plots, we used the reserve pool to randomly select replacements, for which such permission could be granted. We imposed the constraint that each vegetation plot in the reserve should belong to the same environmental strata, i.e., the same PC1-PC2 grid cell, of the confidential vegetation plot. Note that a given PC1-PC2 grid cell may have one or more confidential vegetation plots (max = xx) that could not be replaced from the reserve pool.

## Trait information

For each vegetation plot for which open access has been granted, we computed the community weighted means for eighteen plant functional traits derived from the TRY database v3.0 ([27](#)). These traits were selected among those traits that describe the leaf, wood and seed economics spectra ([39](#); [40](#)), and are known to either affect different key ecosystem processes or respond to macroclimatic drivers or both ([26](#)). The eighteen plant functional traits were: (1) leaf area [ $\text{mm}^2$ ]; (2) stem specific density [ $\text{g cm}^{-3}$ ]; (3) specific leaf area [ $\text{m}^2\text{kg}^{-1}$ ]; (4) leaf carbon concentration [ $\text{mg g}^{-1}$ ]; (5) leaf nitrogen concentration [ $\text{mg g}^{-1}$ ]; (6) leaf phosphorus concentration [ $\text{mg g}^{-1}$ ]; (7) plant height [m]; (8) seed mass [mg]; (9) seed length [mm]; (10) leaf dry matter content [ $\text{g g}^{-1}$ ]; (11) leaf nitrogen per area [ $\text{g m}^{-2}$ ]; (12) leaf N:P ratio [ $\text{g g}^{-1}$ ]; (13) leaf  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  [per million]; (14) seed number per reproductive unit; (15) leaf fresh mass [g]; (16) stem conduit density [ $\text{mm}^{-2}$ ]; (17) dispersal unit length [mm]; and (18) conduit element length [ $\mu\text{m}$ ].

Because missing values were particularly widespread in the species-trait matrix, we employed a gap-filling procedure based on hierarchical Bayesian modeling (R package 'BHPMF', [41](#); [42](#)). Gap-filling was performed at the level of individual observations. We then loge-transformed all gap-filled trait values and averaged each trait by taxon (i.e., at species, or genus level). Additional information on the gap-filling procedure are available in [\[26\]](#).



Community-weighted means (CWM) and the variances (CWV) were calculated for every plant functional trait  $j$  and every vegetation plot  $k$  as follows (43):

$$CWM_{j,k} = \sum_i^{n_k} p_{i,k} t_{i,j} \quad (1)$$

$$CWV_{j,k} = \sum_i^{n_k} p_{i,k} (t_{i,j} - CWM_{j,k})^2 \quad (2)$$

where  $n_k$  is the number of species with trait information in vegetation plot  $k$ ,  $p_{i,k}$  is the relative abundance of species  $i$  in vegetation plot  $k$  calculated as the species' fraction in cover or abundance of total cover or abundance, and  $t_{i,j}$  is the mean value of species  $i$  for trait  $j$ .

## Data Records

The final dataset that is provided here as open access contains 91,031 vegetation plots from 115 countries and all continents except Antarctica (Figure 1) and stems from 103 constitutive datasets (Table 1). Information on the size (surface area) of the vegetation survey is available for 61,898 vegetation plots, and ranges between 0.01 m<sup>2</sup> and 4 ha (mean = 270 m<sup>2</sup>; median = 78.5 m<sup>2</sup>). The average number of vascular plant species per vegetation plot ranges between 1 (i.e. monospecific stands) and 270 species (mean = 17.6; median = 13). Most plots only include information on vascular plants, while a minority also includes information on lichens (n = 3,045) or mosses (n = 4,963). By reducing the overrepresentation of vegetation plots in specific environmental conditions, the resampling procedure described above strongly reduced the bias in the distribution of vegetation plots within the environmental niche space. Yet, due to the lack or scarcity of data from some geographical regions, like the tropics, the spatial distribution of vegetation plots remains unbalanced across geographical regions (Figure 1). This is evident when comparing the number of plots across continents or biomes. Europe is by far the best represented continent, with 53,884 vegetation plots. In contrast, Africa and South America have only 4507 and 5515 vegetation plots, respectively. The representation of biomes is equally unbalanced. The biomes 'Temperate midlatitudes' and 'Subtropics with winter rain' have 37,507 and 16,510 vegetation plots, respectively, while none of the other biomes have more than 10,000 vegetation plots (Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Distribution in environmental space (R package plotbiomes by Valentin Stefan).

Finally, the dataset contains a relatively balanced number of forest (n = 25,832) vs. non forest (n = 38,203) vegetation plots, with a minor proportion of plots remaining unassigned (n = 10,050). The assignment of plots to forests and non-forests is based on multiple lines of evidence, including the plot-level information on the cover of the tree layer, as well as traits of species composing a plot, such as growth form and height. In short, a plot record was considered a forest if the cover of the tree layer, or alternatively, the sum of relative cover of all tree taxa, was greater than 0.25. It was instead

considered a non-forest record if the sum of relative cover of low-stature, non-tree and non-shrub taxa was greater than 0.90. For an extensive explanation on this classification scheme, we refer the reader to [\[26\]](#). Even if the proportion of forest vs. non-forest vegetation plots is relatively well-balanced, the geographical distribution of vegetation plots belonging to different vegetation types is likely not balanced in the geographical space, as it depends on the idiosyncrasies of the individual datasets composing the sPlot database. For instance, the data from New Zealand only include plots collected in non-forest ecosystems, while data from Chile only refer to forests. We invite potential users to carefully read the description of each individual dataset before using this open-access dataset.

# Database Organization

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The open-access dataset is organized into three matrices.

The *'header'* matrix contains plot level information for the 91,031 vegetation plots provided in this open access dataset, including metadata (e.g., plot ID, ownership, sampling date, geographical location, positional accuracy), sampling design information (e.g., the total surface area used during the vegetation survey), and a plot-level description of vegetation structure (e.g., vegetation type, percentage cover of each vegetation layer). A brief description of all the xx variables contained in the header matrix is provided in [Table 2](#).

The *'DT'* matrix contains data on the species composition of each plot. It is structured in a long format and contains 1,607,826 records, from 39,922 taxa, mostly resolved at the species level. For each record we report both the taxon name as originally contributed by the data custodian (column *'Matched\_concept'*), and the taxon name after taxonomic standardization (column *'Species\_name\_harmonized'*). For each entry, we report the species cover//abundance values. These follow different standards across the datasets constituting the sPlot database. We therefore provide both the cover//abundance value as reported in the original data, which often is given on a cover//abundance scale (column *'Cover'*), and a *'Relative\_cover'* field, i.e., the cover//abundance of each taxon in each vegetation layer divided by the total cover//abundance of all taxa in that vegetation layer. Finally, for each entry, we provide a *'Taxon\_group'* field, reporting whether the corresponding taxa is a vascular plant, moss, lichen or alga.

Finally the *'CWM'* matrix contains the community-weighted means and variances calculated for each of the 18 functional traits mentioned above. It also contains three additional columns. The column *'Species\_richness'* returns the number of species recorded in each plot. The columns *'Trait\_coverage\_cover'* and *'Trait\_coverage\_pa'* return respectively the proportion of total cover and species in a plot for which functional trait information was available.

Functional trait information was available for 20,932 species. The average proportion of species in each plot for which we have functional trait information is 0.88 (median = 1). For 47,177 plots the coverage is complete, while only in one plot we have no functional trait information for any of the occurring species. When considering relative cover, the average trait coverage is 0.89. As many as 68,234 and 74,388 plots have functional trait information for more than 80% of the species or 80% of relative cover, respectively.

## Technical Validation

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The sPlot database has a nested structure, and is composed of several individual datasets, each validated and maintained by its respective dataset custodian. Each individual dataset also has individual vegetation plots, each provided by its owner (the person who performed the actual vegetation survey) or by someone who digitized the original data from the scientific or grey literature. We obviously have no direct control on the individual vegetation plots that we provide here in an open access dataset. Yet, each of these vegetation plots are stemming from trained professional botanists, or published scientific work, and are accompanied by detailed information on the sampling protocols used, thus ensuring data quality and reliability.

Before having been integrated into the sPlot database, each dataset was further checked for consistency and, if having a different format, was converted to a Turboveg 2 database ([44](#)). During this conversion into a Turboveg format, we checked that all datasets contained the required metadata information and we converted this information to the sPlot database standards, if necessary. Furthermore we cross-checked that each plot is located within the geographic scopes of its respective dataset. Finally, we harmonized all the taxonomic names from a dataset, based on the sPlot's taxonomic backbone (Purschke 2017). This backbone matched all the taxonomic names (without nomenclatural authors) from all datasets in sPlot 2.1 and TRY v3.0 ([27](#)) to their resolved version based on the Taxonomic Name Resolution Service web application (TNRS version 4.0; [45](#); iPlant Collaborative, 2015). This allowed to (1) harmonize all datasets to a common nomenclature, and (2) to link the sPlot database to the TRY database ([27](#)). All taxa originally denoted at taxonomic ranks lower than species, were aggregated at species level. Additional detail on the taxonomic resolution is reported in [[26](#)], while a description of the workflow, including R-code, is available in [[46](#)]

## Usage Notes

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The sPlot Open database can be downloaded from <https://www.idiv.de> (link to PlantHub). The use of data contained in BioTIME should cite original data citations in addition to the present paper. The data included in the present paper represent the subset of sPlot for which we were able to secure licences for making these data open. The additional studies in sPlot are available under sPlot's Governance and Data Property Rules ([www.idiv.de/sPlot](http://www.idiv.de/sPlot)).

## Code Availability

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The R code used to produce sPlot Open from the sPlot 2.1 database is found here (<https://portal.idiv.de/nextcloud/index.php/s/YjMZtwFDwtoefGi>).

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## Author contributions

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FMS wrote the first draft of the manuscript, with considerable input by JL and HB. JL and TH wrote the resampling algorithm. FMS set up the GitHub project and produced the graphs. He also coordinated the sPlot consortium. SMH wrote the Turboveg v3 software, which holds the sPlot database. JK provided the trait data from TRY and FS performed the trait data gap filling. HB secured the funding for sPlot as a strategic project of iDiv. All other authors contributed data. All authors contributed to revising the manuscript.

## Competing interests

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*[A competing interests statement is required for all papers accepted by and published in Scientific Data. If there is no conflict of interest, a statement declaring this must still be included in the manuscript.]*

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Oliver Purschke

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.845445](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.845445)

**47.:(unav)**

Biodiversity & Ecology

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DOI: [10.7809/b-e](https://doi.org/10.7809/b-e)

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Jonathan Lenoir, Bente Jessen Graae, Per Arild Aarrestad, Inger Greve Alsos, W. Scott Armbruster, Gunnar Austrheim, Claes Bergendorff, H. John B. Birks, Kari Anne Bråthen, Jörg Brunet, ... Jens-Christian Svenning

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**51. Balkan Vegetation Database: historical background, current status and future perspectives**

Kiril Vassilev, Hristo Pedashenko, Alexandra Alexandrova, Alexandar Tashev, Anna Ganeva, Anna Gavrilova, Asya Gradevska, Assen Assenov, Antonina Vitkova, Borislav Grigorov, ... Vladimir Vulchev

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Flavia Landucci, Marcela Řezníčková, Kateřina Šumberová, Milan Chytrý, Liene Aunina, Claudia Biță-Nicolae, Alexander Bobrov, Lyubov Borsukevych, Henry Brisse, Andraž Čarni, ... Wolfgang Willner

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**53. European Mire Vegetation Database: a gap-oriented database for European fens and bogs**

Tomáš Peterka, Martin Jiroušek, Michal Hájek, Borja Jiménez-Alfaro

*Phytocoenologia* (2015-11-01) <https://doi.org/f724p4>

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Michele De Sanctis, Giuliano Fanelli, Alfred Mullaj, Fabio Attorre  
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DOI: [10.1127/phyto/2017/0178](https://doi.org/10.1127/phyto/2017/0178)
55. **Czech National Phytosociological Database: basic statistics of the available vegetation-plot data**  
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Zvezdana Stancic  
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Solvita Rūsiņa  
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60. **Schatten voor de natuur. Achtergronden, inventaris en toepassingen van de Landelijke Vegetatie Databank**  
J. H. J. Schaminée, J. A. M. Janssen, R. Haveman, S. M. Hennekens, G. B. M. Heuvelink, H. P. J. Huisjes, E. J. Weeda  
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Kiril Vassilev, Eszter Ruprecht, Valeriu Alexiu, Thomas Becker, Monica Beldean, Claudia Biță-Nicolae, Anna Mária Csergő, Iliana Dzhovanova, Eva Filipova, József Pál Frink, ... Jürgen Dengler



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Alexey Sorokin, Valentin Golub, Kseniya Starichkova, Lyudmila Nikolaychuk, Viktoria Bondareva, Tatyana Ivakhnova  
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*Phytocoenologia* (2017-09-27) <https://doi.org/ghgt84>  
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**67. Vegetation Database of Slovenia**

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*Biodiversity & Ecology* (2012-09-10) <https://doi.org/ghgt9k>  
DOI: [10.7809/b-e.00215](https://doi.org/10.7809/b-e.00215)

**68. Slovak Vegetation Database**

Jozef Šibík  
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Sarah C. Elmendorf, Gregory H. R. Henry, Robert D. Hollister, Robert G. Björk, Noémie Boulanger-Lapointe, Elisabeth J. Cooper, Johannes H. C. Cornelissen, Thomas A. Day, Ellen Dorrepaal, Tatiana G. Elumeeva, ... Sonja Wipf  
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Elizabeth Kearsley, Thales de Haulleville, Koen Hufkens, Alidé Kidimbu, Benjamin Toirambe, Geert Baert, Dries Huygens, Yodit Kebede, Pierre Defourny, Jan Bogaert, ... Hans Verbeeck  
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Arkadiusz Nowak, Marcin Nobis, Sylwia Nowak, Agnieszka Nobis, Grzegorz Swacha, Zygmunt Kącki  
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78. **Vegetation of the woodland-steppe transition at the southeastern edge of the Inner Mongolian Plateau**  
Hongyan Liu, Haiting Cui, Richard Pott, Martin Speier  
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Yun Wang, Gwendolyn Heberling, Eugen Görzen, Georg Miehe, Elke Seeber, Karsten Wesche  
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DOI: [10.1111/avsc.12312](https://doi.org/10.1111/avsc.12312)
80. **Community assembly during secondary forest succession in a Chinese subtropical forest**  
Helge Bruelheide, Martin Böhnke, Sabine Both, Teng Fang, Thorsten Assmann, Martin Baruffol, Jürgen Bauhus, François Buscot, Xiao-Yong Chen, Bing-Yang Ding, ... Bernhard Schmid  
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Viktoria Wagner  
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Henrik von Wehrden, Karsten Wesche, Georg Miehe  
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Kim André Vanselow  
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DOI: [10.1127/phyto/2016/0122](https://doi.org/10.1127/phyto/2016/0122)
84. **Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Infrastructures**  
Informa UK Limited  
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DOI: [10.1201/9781315368252](https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315368252)
85. **Structural and floristic diversity of mixed tropical rain forest in New Caledonia: new data from the New Caledonian Plant Inventory and Permanent Plot Network (NC-PIPPN)**  
Thomas Ibanez, Jérôme Munzinger, Gilles Dagostini, Vanessa Hequet, Frédéric Rigault, Tanguy Jaffré, Philippe Birnbaum  
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Timothy J. S. Whitfeld, Jesse R. Lasky, Kipiro Damas, Gibson Sosanika, Kenneth Molem, Rebecca A. Montgomery  
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Viktoria Wagner, Toby Spribille, Stefan Abrahamczyk, Erwin Bergmeier  
*Applied Vegetation Science* (2014-01) <https://doi.org/f5mpvm>  
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89. **Vegetation and altitudinal zonation in continental West Greenland**  
B. Sieg, B. Drees, F. J. A. Daniëls  
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90. **The Alaska Arctic Vegetation Archive (AVA-AK)**  
Donald A. Walker, Amy L. Breen, Lisa A. Druckenmiller, Lisa W. Wirth, Will Fisher, Martha K. Reynolds, Jozef Šibík, Marilyn D. Walker, Stephan Hennekens, Keith Boggs, ... Donatella Zona  
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Gwendolyn Peyre, Henrik Balslev, David Martí, Petr Sklenář, Paul Ramsay, Pablo Lozano, Nidia

Cuello, Rainer Bussmann, Omar Cabrera, Xavier Font  
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A. C. Vibrans, L. Sevgnani, D. V. Lingner, A. L. Gasper, S. Sabbagh  
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# Supplementary Material

**Table Table 1:** List of databases contributing to the open access dataset extracted from the sPlot database. Databases are ordered based on their ID in the Global Index of Vegetation Databases (GVID ID).

GVID ID	DB_name GIVD	n - Plots	contributed_plots	Citation
00 - 00 - 00 - 00 - 4	Vegetation Database of Eurasian Tundra	1132	600	
00 - R - U - 00 - 3	Database Meadows and Steppes of Southern Ural	2354	99	
00 - TR - 00 - 1	Forest Vegetation Database of Turkey - FVDT	919	15	
EU - 00 - 00 - 00 - 2	Nordic-Baltic Grassland Vegetation Database (NBGVd)	7675	931	<a href="#">47</a>
EU - 00 - 01 - 1	Vegetation-Plot Database of the University of the Basque Country (BIOVEG)	18441	1694	<a href="#">48</a>
EU - 00 - 01 - 3	Balkan Dry Grasslands Database	7683	224	<a href="#">47</a>
EU - 00 - 01 - 6	Mediterranean Ammophiletea Database	7359	3713	<a href="#">49</a>

<b>GIVD ID</b>	<b>DB_name GIVD</b>	<b>n - P l o t s</b>	<b>contrib uted_pl ots</b>	<b>Citation</b>
EU - 00 - 01 7	European Coastal Vegetation Database	4 6 2 4	1369	
EU - 00 - 01 8	The Nordic Vegetation Database	5 4 7 7	1755	<a href="#">50</a>
EU - 00 - 01 9	Balkan Vegetation Database	9 1 1 8	211	<a href="#">51</a>
EU - 00 - 02 0	WetVegEurope	1 4 1 1 1	61	<a href="#">52</a>
EU - 00 - 02 2	European Mire Vegetation Database	1 0 1 4 7	1843	<a href="#">53</a>
EU - AL - 00 1	Vegetation Database of Albania	2 9 0	99	<a href="#">54</a>
EU - AT - 00 1	Austrian Vegetation Database	3 4 4 5 8	950	<a href="#">47</a>
EU - BE - 00 2	INBOVEG	2 5 6 6 5	48	

<b>GIVD ID</b>	<b>DB_name GIVD</b>	<b>n - P l o t s</b>	<b>contrib uted_pl ots</b>	<b>Citation</b>
EU - B G-001	Bulgarian Vegetation Database	5254	74 <a href="#">47</a>	
EU - C H-005	Swiss Forest Vegetation Database	14193	1409 <a href="#">47</a>	
EU - C Z-001	Czech National Phytosociological Database	104697	579 <a href="#">55</a>	
EU - D E-001	VegMV	53822	5 <a href="#">47</a>	
EU - D E-013	VegetWeb Germany	23078	199 <a href="#">47</a>	
EU - D E-014	German Vegetation Reference Database (GVRD)	30840	286 <a href="#">47</a>	
EU - D K-002	National Vegetation Database of Denmark	24264	1181	
EU - E S-001	Iberian and Macaronesian Vegetation Information System (SIVIM) - Wetlands	6560	292	

<b>GIVD ID</b>	<b>DB_name GIVD</b>	<b>n - Plots</b>	<b>contributed_plots</b>	<b>Citation</b>
EU - FR - 003	SOPHY	209864	13322	
EU - GB - 001	UK National Vegetation Classification Database	28533	5457	
EU - GR - 001	KRITI	292	43	
EU - GR - 005	Hellenic Natura 2000 Vegetation Database (HelNatVeg)	5168	777	<a href="#">47</a>
EU - GR - 006	Hellenic Woodland Database	3199	4	<a href="#">47</a>
EU - HR - 001	Phytosociological Database of Non-Forest Vegetation in Croatia	5057	213	<a href="#">56</a>
EU - HR - 002	Croatian Vegetation Database	8734	688	
EU - HU - 003	CoenoDat Hungarian Phytosociological Database	8505	17	[???



<b>GIVD ID</b>	<b>DB_name GIVD</b>	<b>n - Plots</b>	<b>contributed_plots</b>	<b>Citation</b>
EU - IT-001	VegItaly	15332	2712	<a href="#">57</a>
EU - IT-010	Italian National Vegetation Database (BVN/ISPRA)	3562	155	<a href="#">47</a>
EU - IT-011	Vegetation-Plot Database Sapienza University of Rome (VPD-Sapienza)	12780	1003	<a href="#">58</a>
EU - LT-001	Lithuanian Vegetation Database	7821	119	
EU - LV-001	Semi-natural Grassland Vegetation Database of Latvia	5594	306	<a href="#">59</a>
EU - MK-001	Vegetation Database of the Republic of Macedonia	1417	10	
EU - NL-001	Dutch National Vegetation Database	102327	10223	<a href="#">60</a>
EU - PL-001	Polish Vegetation Database	22229	464	<a href="#">61</a>

<b>GIVD ID</b>	<b>DB_name GIVD</b>	<b>n - P l o t s</b>	<b>contrib uted_pl ots</b>	<b>Citation</b>
EU - R O- 00 7	Romanian Forest Database	6 0 1 7	60	<a href="#">62</a>
EU - R O- 00 8	Romanian Grassland Database	1 9 2 1	44	<a href="#">63</a>
EU - RS - 00 2	Vegetation Database Grassland Vegetation of Serbia	5 5 8 7	57	<a href="#">64</a>
EU - R U- 00 2	Lower Volga Valley Phytosociological Database	1 4 8 5 3	149	<a href="#">65</a>
EU - R U- 00 3	Vegetation Database of the Volga and the Ural Rivers Basins	1 5 1 6	96	<a href="#">47</a>
EU - R U- 01 1	Vegetation Database of Tatarstan	7 4 7 1	94	<a href="#">66</a>
EU - SI- 00 1	Vegetation Database of Slovenia	1 0 9 8 6	435	<a href="#">67</a>
EU - SK - 00 1	Slovak Vegetation Database	3 6 4 0 5	893	<a href="#">68</a>

GI V D ID	DB_name GIVD	n - P l o t s	contrib uted_pl ots	Citation
EU - U A- 00 6	Vegetation Database of Ukraine and Adjacent Parts of Russia	3 3 2 6	479	
AF - 00 - 00 1	West African Vegetation Database	3 1 2 9	184	<a href="#">47</a>
AF - 00 - 00 8	PANAF Vegetation Database	2 4 6 9	942	
AF - BF - 00 1	Sahel Vegetation Database	1 0 7 9	279	<a href="#">69</a>
00 - 00 - 00 1	ForestPlots.net	1 8 2 7	108	<a href="#">70</a>
00 - 00 - 00 3	SALVIAS	4 8 8 3	2860	
00 - 00 - 00 5	Tundra Vegetation Plots (TundraPlot)	5 7 7	227	<a href="#">71</a>
00 - R U- 00 2	Database of Masaryk University`s Vegetation Research in Siberia	1 5 4 7	128	<a href="#">47</a>

<b>GIVD ID</b>	<b>DB_name GIVD</b>	<b>n - P l o t s</b>	<b>contrib uted_pl ots</b>	<b>Citation</b>
AF - 00 - 00 3	BIOTA Southern Africa Biodiversity Observatories Vegetation Database	1 6 6 6	562	<a href="#">47</a>
AF - 00 - 00 6	SWEA-Dataveg	2 7 0 4	1211	
AF - 00 - 00 9	Vegetation Database of the Okavango Basin	5 9 0	202	<a href="#">72</a>
AF - C D- 00 1	Forest Database of Central Congo Basin	2 9 2	97	<a href="#">73</a>
AF - ET - 00 1	Vegetation Database of Ethiopia	7 4	59	<a href="#">74</a>
AF - M A- 00 1	Vegetation Database of Southern Morocco	1 3 3 7	266	<a href="#">47</a>
AF - Z W- 00 1	Vegetation Database of Zimbabwe	3 6	17	<a href="#">75</a>
AS - 00 - 00 1	Korean Forest Database	4 8 8 5	766	<a href="#">76</a>

GI V D ID	DB_name GIVD	n - P l o t s	contrib uted_pl ots	Citation
AS - 00 - 00 3	Vegetation of Middle Asia	1 3 8 1	128	<a href="#">77</a>
AS - 00 - 00 4	Rice Field Vegetation Database	1 7 9	31	
AS - B D- 00 1	Tropical Forest Dataset of Bangladesh	2 1 1	82	
AS - C N- 00 1	China Forest-Steppe Ecotone Database	1 4 8	97	<a href="#">78</a>
AS - C N- 00 2	Tibet-PaDeMoS Grazing Transect	1 4 6	27	<a href="#">79</a>
AS - C N- 00 3	Vegetation Database of the BEF China Project	2 7	18	<a href="#">80</a>
AS - C N- 00 4	Vegetation Database of the Northern Mountains in China	4 8 5	70	
AS - EG - 00 1	Vegetation Database of Sinai in Egypt	9 2 6	98	<a href="#">47</a>

GI V D ID	DB_name GIVD	n - P l o t s	contrib uted_pl ots	Citation
AS - ID - 00 1	Sulawesi Vegetation Database	2 4	24	
AS - IR- 00 1	Vegetation Database of Iran	2 3 3 5	105	
AS - KZ - 00 1	Database of Meadow Vegetation in the NW Tien Shan Mountains	9 4	3	<a href="#">81</a>
AS - M N- 00 1	Southern Gobi Protected Areas Database	1 5 1 6	688	<a href="#">82</a>
AS - R U- 00 1	Wetland Vegetation Database of Baikal Siberia (WETBS)	2 3 8 1	6	<a href="#">47</a>
AS - R U- 00 2	Database of Siberian Vegetation (DSV)	9 1 1 6	2150	
AS - R U- 00 4	Database of the University of Münster - Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research Group's Vegetation Research in Western Siberia and Kazakhstan	4 4 5	85	
AS - SA - 00 1	Vegetation Database of Saudi Arabia	9 1 9	607	

GI V D ID	DB_name GIVD	n - P l o t s	contrib uted_pl ots	Citation
AS - TJ- 00 1	Eastern Pamirs	2 8 2	174	<a href="#">83</a>
AS - T W- 00 1	National Vegetation Database of Taiwan	9 3 0	897	
AS - YE - 00 1	Socotra Vegetation Database	3 9 6	190	<a href="#">47</a>
A U- A U- 00 2	AEKOS	2 1 2 6 1	7443	<a href="#">84</a>
A U- N C- 00 1	New Caledonian Plant Inventory and Permanent Plot Network (NC-PIPPN)	2 0 1	98	<a href="#">85</a>
A U- N Z- 00 1	New Zealand National Vegetation Databank	1 8 9 5	983	<a href="#">86</a>
A U- P G- 00 1	Forest Plots from Papua New Guinea	6 3	53	<a href="#">87</a>
N A- 00 - 00 2	Tree Biodiversity Network (BIOTREE-NET)	1 7 5 7	208	<a href="#">47</a>



GI V D ID	DB_name GIVD	n - P l o t s	contrib uted_pl ots	Citation
N A- CA - 00 3	Database of Timberline Vegetation in NW North America	1 1 0	38	<a href="#">88</a>
N A- CA - 00 4	Understory of Sugar Maple Dominated Stands in Quebec and Ontario (Canada)	1 5 6	9	[???](2007)14
N A- CA - 00 5	Boreal Forest of Canada	8 9	44	
N A- GL - 00 1	Vegetation Database of Greenland	6 6 4	340	<a href="#">89</a>
N A- US - 00 2	VegBank	6 7 3 5 2	6456	<a href="#">47</a>
N A- US - 00 6	Carolina Vegetation Survey Database	1 7 2 2 1	2317	<a href="#">47</a>
N A- US - 01 4	Alaska-Arctic Vegetation Archive	1 3 6 3	467	<a href="#">90</a>
SA - 00 - 00 2	VegPáramo	2 6 4 3	1591	<a href="#">91</a>

<b>GIVD ID</b>	<b>DB_name GIVD</b>	<b>n - Plots</b>	<b>contributed_plots</b>	<b>Citation</b>
SA - AR - 002	Vegetation Database of Central Argentina	218	42	
SA - B O - 003	Bolivia Forest Plots	75	18	
SA - BR - 002	Forest Inventory, State of Santa Catarina, Brazil (IFFSC Project)	1669	1345	<a href="#">92</a>
SA - BR - 003	Grasslands of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil	320	271	
SA - BR - 004	Grassland Database of Campos Sulinos	161	111	
SA - CL - 002	SSAForests_Plots_db	261	163	
SA - CL - 003	Chilean Park Transects - Fondecyt 1040528	165	33	<a href="#">93</a>
SA - EC - 001	Ecuador Forest Plot Database	172	156	

**Table Table 2:** Description of the variables contained in the 'header' matrix, together with their range (if numeric) or

possible levels (if nominal or boolean). Variable type can be c - character (i.e. text), f - factor (i.e. qualitative or ordinal variable), i - integer (e.g. binomial), n - numeric (i.e., double) or l - logical (i.e., boolean).

Variable	Range/Levels	Unit of Measurement	Number of Records	Type
GLV D_ID		NA	91031	character
Dataset		NA	91031	character
Continent	Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, Oceania, South America	NA	90729	factor
Country		NA	91031	character
Bio me	Alpine, Boreal zone, Dry midlatitudes, Dry tropics and subtropics, Polar and subpolar zone, Subtrop. with year-round rain, Subtropics with winter rain, Temperate midlatitudes, Tropics with summer rain, Tropics with year-round rain	NA	91031	factor
Date	-29764 - 16469	NA	75798	numeric

Variable	Range/Levels	Unit of Measurement	Number of Records	Type
Latitude	-54.73863 - 80.149116	° (WGS84)	91031	numeric
Longitude	-162.741433 - 179.590053	° (WGS84)	91031	numeric
Location_uncertainty	1 - 2500	m	91002	integer
Relative_area	0.01 - 40000	m <sup>2</sup>	61898	numeric
Herbs_identified	FALSE = 4876; TRUE = 6323	NA	11199	logical
Plant_recorded	All trees & dominant understory, All vascular plants, All vascular plants and dominant cryptogams, All woody plants, Dominant trees, Only dominant species, Dominant woody plants >= 2.5 cm dbh, Woody plants >= 10 cm dbh, Woody plants >= 1 m height, Woody plants >= 1 cm dbh, Woody plants >= 20 cm dbh, Woody plants >= 2.5 cm dbh, Woody plants >= 5 cm dbh, NA	NA	91015	factor
Elevation	-25 - 4819	m a.s.l.	52121	numeric

Variable	Range/Levels	Unit of Measurement	Number of Records	Type
Aspect	0 - 360	°	30796	numeric
Slope	0 - 99	°	37784	numeric
is_forest	FALSE = 20396; TRUE = 25832	NA	46228	logical
is_nonforest	FALSE = 50870; TRUE = 38203	NA	89073	logical
ESY		NA	55457	character
Naturalness	1 - 2	NA	68011	integer

Variable	Range/Levels	Unit of Measurement	Nr. Records	Type
Forest	FALSE = 38295; TRUE = 23735	NA	62030	Logical
Shrubland	FALSE = 38233; TRUE = 11081	NA	49314	Logical
Grassland	FALSE = 10213; TRUE = 46947	NA	57160	Logical
Sparse_vegetation	FALSE = 33381; TRUE = 11315	NA	44696	Logical
Wetland	FALSE = 29078; TRUE = 18038	NA	47116	Logical
Cover_total	1 - 313	%	24712	integer
Cover_tree_layer	0.5 - 150	%	7245	numeric

Variable	Range/Levels	Unit of Measurement	Nr. Records	Type
Cover_shrub_layer	0.5 - 145	%	10197	numeric
Cover_herb_layer	0.2 - 180	%	26679	numeric
Cover_moss_layer	1 - 100	%	9643	integer
Cover_lichen_layer	1 - 95	%	734	integer
Cover_algae_layer	1 - 100	%	221	integer
Cover_litter_layer	1 - 100	%	4500	integer
Cover_bare_rock_s	1 - 100	%	1897	integer



Variable	Range/Levels	Unit of Measurement	Nr. Records	Type
Cover_cryptograms	1 - 95	%	593	integer
Cover_bar_e_soil	0.1 - 99	%	1412	numeric
Height_trees_highest	1 - 99	m	6115	numeric
Height_trees_lowest	1 - 90	m	221	numeric
Height_shrubs_highest	0.1 - 9.9	m	2880	numeric
Height_shrubs_lowest	0.1 - 9	m	328	numeric
Height_herbs_average	0.1 - 440	m	10125	numeric

Variable	Range/Levels	Unit of Measurement	Number of Records	Type
Height_herbs_lowest	1 - 250	m	2785	integer
Height_herbs_highest	1 - 600	m	1733	integer