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Press Release

Tübingen researchers join major DFG biodiversity program

Three Tübingen projects contribute to better understanding links between land use, ecosystems processes and the variety of species

Tübingen, 23 May 2014

Three Tübingen University professors will be pursuing vital biodiversity research funded by a special German Research Foundation program. Geoscientist Yvonne Oelmann, is examining the cycle of phosphate, the essential nutrient in fertilizer, over different periods and in varying intensities; greater biodiversity is linked to reduced nutrient loss in ecosystems. Biologist Oliver Bossdorf examines the effects of changing land use on the epigenetic diversity of meadow plants; and his colleague Katja Tielbörger is working with colleagues at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to challenge one of the holy cows of biodiversity research – the notion that increasing diversity of habitat automatically leads to greater species variety.

Species tend to disappear when land use changes, such as when forestry and agriculture intensify. The loss of species can have a negative effect on the productivity and stability of ecosystems – which in turn can mean losses in forestry and farming. But little is known about the precise connections between the intensity of land use, the loss of biodiversity and the intrinsic value of ecosystems.

The DFG program is one of the biggest and most comprehensive biodiversity projects in the world, says Professor Oelmann, pointing out that thousands of areas across Germany are included in the research. Vast numbers of organisms and ecosystem processes are being examined as well as the diversity of species and the genetic diversity within species. The program is also expected to provide practical findings on how to maximize yields from land use as well as the diversity of species. The DFG Biodiversity Exploratories program is coordinated by Bern University.

Details at www.biodiversity-exploratories.de/1/home/

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