

Dear Colleagues,

Traditional rural and land-use practices produce a typical mosaic structure at the landscape scale. Extensive agricultural landscapes are usually characterized by small man-made structures. These structures are recognized as important elements for the conservation of biodiversity, and they act as stepping stones and increase connectivity corridors among biological populations. In fact, these structures maintain the viability of animal metapopulations in many agricultural landscapes. However, in recent years large land-use transformations are occurring, increasing the homogeneity of the rural landscape. Moreover, in many remote areas, traditional rural practices are abandoned and these man-made structures are neglected and lost. In many areas, the abandonment of rural practices may have severe outcomes on biodiversity both at the local and regional scale, especially in the Mediterranean region where animal and plants has well adapted to human rural activities.

The objective of this Topic is to serve as a forum for advancing scientific understanding on the effects of land-use changes in rural landscapes on animal diversity.

Keywords:

- rural ecosystems
- animal diversity
- rural sustainability and animal populations
- extensive agriculture and animal diversity
- artificial habitats
- rural abandonment and animal diversity
- animal conservation in rural ecosystems
- small landscape features