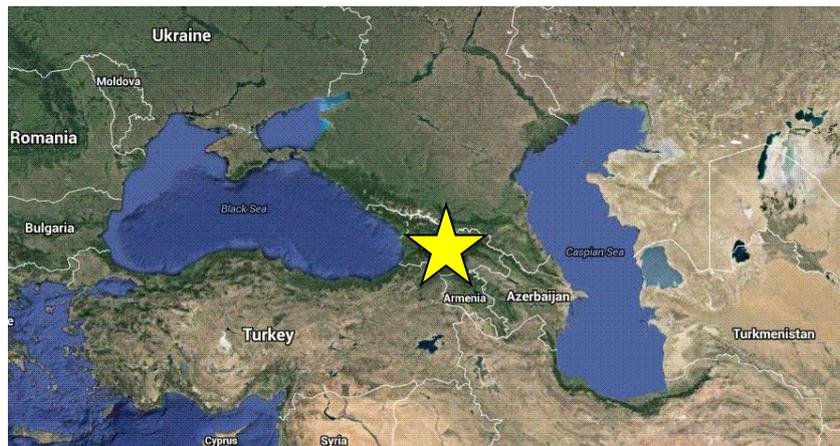


Interim colloquium of RCMNS* and

EU PRIDE final conference:

**Ecosystem isolation and connection: rise and
demise of biota in the Pontocaspian-Caucasian
region**



2nd CIRCULAR

27-29 August 2018

Tbilisi, Georgia

Georgian National Museum

*RCMNS: REGIONAL COMMITTEE ON MEDITERRANEAN NEOGENE STRATIGRAPHY

We cordially invite you to the joint PRIDE-RCMNS conference, 27-29 August 2018 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The terrestrial ecosystems of the Caucasus region and the lacustrine and marine Pontocaspian basins have a dynamic intertwining Neogene and Quaternary history. Landscape evolution in these areas is driven by an interplay of tectonic processes and climate that affected the evolution of Caucasian and Pontocaspian biota simultaneously. In time intervals when lake basins were connected, terrestrial areas were isolated and in times lake basins were isolated terrestrial corridors existed. This affected the evolution of the terrestrial and aquatic biota in various ways. In this conference we will explore the evolution of the Caucasus-Pontocaspian region and its effect on the evolution of the biota in this wonderfully diverse region that currently faces many threats to its unique biodiversity.

We have identified four session topics and a panel session (there might be changes):

- I Geological and climatic drivers of biodiversity in the Pontocaspian in the Neogene and Quaternary**
- II Rise and fall of Pontocaspian biodiversity – origins and controls**
- III Neogene and Quaternary terrestrial ecosystems in the southern Caucasus**
- IV The role of invasive species in the current Pontocaspian biodiversity crisis**
- V Panel discussion**

The PRIDE-RCMNS conference aims at bringing together geologists, biologists and climatologists from the region and from beyond. We will invite senior keynote speakers but also encourage the participation of scientists and students from the region itself. The conference will contain invited keynote speakers, integrated science talks where various researchers combine their background to shed light on specific topics, regular session talks and posters.

Keynote speakers:

We are very excited that the following keynote speakers will join our conference:

- [Prof. Henri Dumont](#) – Professor of Ecology at Ghent University, Belgium and Guangzhou University, China.
- [Prof. Oriol Oms](#) – Professor of Geology at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
- [Prof. M.G. Karpinsky](#) – Russian Federal Research Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography, Moscow.
- [Prof. David Lordkipanidze](#) – Professor and Director of the Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi.
- [Dr. Orsolya Sztanó](#) – Associate professor, Department of Physical and Applied Geology, Eotvos Lorand University, Budapest.

We expect to announce further keynote speakers on our website soon.

The conference will be held at the [Georgian National Museum](#), Tbilisi. The official language of the conference will be English.

Program:

Sunday 26 August 2018:	18.00-20.00 registration and icebreaker
Monday 27 August 2018:	08.30-09.45 registration 09.45-19.00 talks, poster presentations and conference dinner
Tuesday 28 August 2018:	10.00-19.00 excursion to the famous hominid site of Dmanisi
Wednesday 29 August 2018:	10.00-19.00 talks, poster presentations and panel discussion
Thursday 30 August 2018:	07.00-23.00 post conference field excursion (optional)

We invite abstracts. Please use the template provided on the website. Abstract submission deadline is **1 May 2018**.

Further details – The sessions

I Geological and climatic drivers of biodiversity in the Pontocaspian in the Neogene and Quaternary

The Black Sea, Caspian Sea and satellite basins (Ponto-Caspian basins) have undergone substantial hydrological and environmental changes since the Pliocene. Interaction between climate and tectonic activity led to regional landscape restructuring and changes of the basins' water budgets, which in turn caused connection/disconnection phases. However, the origin, time and impact of these climatic and environmental changes are still a matter of debate.

We invite submissions that aim to understand the impact of different paleoenvironmental changes on biodiversity and evolution of biodiversity in semi-isolated basins. This session especially encourages submissions that combine climate modelling, geological, geochemical and paleobiological proxies. Session coordinators: Diksha Bista, Liesbeth Jorissen, Sergei Lazarev, Sifan Koriche, Sri Nandini, Tom Hoyle.

Keywords: paleoenvironment reconstruction, climate modelling, inter basin connectivity, tectonics, semi-isolated basins, water budget, Pontocaspian region, biological proxies.

II Rise and fall of Pontocaspian biodiversity – origins and controls

Since the 1930s, aquatic biota of the Caspian and Black Seas are facing a biodiversity crisis. The Pontocaspian species downfall is a textbook example of a biodiversity crisis. By analysing the species evolution and response to environmental changes over the past five million years, we aim to understand speciation and extinction processes. By gathering knowledge on biogeography and paleoecology of species we hope to improve the preservation and conservation of species in the future. We invite submissions that aim to understand evolutionary processes that shape biodiversity. For this session we especially encourage submissions that combine paleoenvironmental, paleontological, and time-calibrated phylogenetic studies. Session coordinators: Arthur Sands, Justine Vandendorpe, Lea Rausch, Sabrina van de Velde.

Keywords: Neogene, Quaternary, biodiversity loss, paleontology, paleoecology, Paratethys, turnover, extinction, molecular clock analysis, connectivity.

III Neogene and Quaternary terrestrial ecosystems in the southern Caucasus

During the Neogene and Quaternary, the Southern Caucasus has played a key role as a refugium area both for vegetation and terrestrial vertebrates. The extraordinary continental record in this area, which covers the late Miocene, Pliocene and Pleistocene, offers a unique opportunity for analyzing Neogene faunal dispersals and turnover events, associated with paleogeographic changes and global climatic evolution.

Moreover, the Southern Caucasus is the area of earliest human occupation in Eurasia, proven by findings of *Homo* fossils in Georgia with an age of ca. 1.8 Ma. Since then, hominids were present in this region and inhabited different environments. To better understand the relationships between environment and mammal as well as early human dispersals, the symposium intends to encompass all kinds of environmental proxies that can shed light on the complex geological, paleontological and paleoanthropological history of the region. We invite contributions on paleontology, geology, vegetation and climate reconstructions, which add to the understanding of Neogene and Quaternary terrestrial environmental dynamics of this special part of the world. Session coordinators: Jordi Agusti & Angela A. Bruch (RCMNS), Tom Hoyle.

Keywords: dating and correlation, biostratigraphy, dispersal events, paleobiogeography, endemic evolution, refugium areas, paleoclimate change, vegetational successions, paleoecological modeling and reconstruction

IV The role of invasive species in the current Pontocaspian biodiversity crisis

The Pontocaspian region functions as a source and sink for invasive species. We know that invasive species that accessed the region are currently a dominant factor in affecting native species assemblages, while native Pontocaspian species caused serious damages when introduced into new ecosystems elsewhere. To address the Pontocaspian invasives international collaboration and the planning and implementation of effective management strategies are very important. Scientific information sharing and building of new professional links between different actors can be an essential step for creating a "Pontocaspian Network" for joint decision making and action towards the management of invasive species and to conserve the native biota.

In this session, we aim to foster collaboration to address this problem. Therefore, our idea is to gather expert knowledge about the biology and ecology of invasive species and facilitate international information sharing. Session coordinators: Alberto Martinez Gandara, Anouk D'Hont, Aleksandre Gogaladze, Manuel Sala Perez, Matteo Lattuada.

Keywords: invasive species, Pontocaspian biodiversity, anthropogenic impact/drivers, outreach, taxonomy crisis, Black Sea, Caspian Sea.

Participation - Submissions

The participants can send in abstracts for presentations and for posters using the abstract template that you will find on the website. We have a limited number of slots and the organizing committees will make a selection based on the number of submissions. In some cases we may ask you to give a poster presentation instead.

Talks will in general be **15 minutes** (including short Q&A) and **keynote talks** will be **30 minutes**. **Posters** will have to be printed on portrait A0 format. Our poster stands maximally allow for **A0 posters** (1189 * 841 mm) in portrait orientation.

The abstract submission deadline for talks and poster presentations is 1 May 2018. Please upload your abstract via the Google form on the website. **The abstraction submission tool is now open!**

Practical Information

Our **website** can be found at <http://pontocaspian.eu/content/pride-rcmns-conference-0>. If you have any further suggestions or questions please contact us through e-mail infoconference@naturalis.nl.

Deadlines:

- **Abstracts submission deadline:** 1 May 2018
- **Abstract decisions:** 15 May 2018
- **Registration deadline:** 1 June 2018 for participants that have a poster or abstract
- **Registration deadline:** 15 June 2018 for other participants

Registration: please register via the website. You can only be registered if you have paid the conference fee.

Conference fee: The conference fee includes: participation to scientific sessions, excursion to the hominid site of Dmanisi (with lunch and dinner), program booklet, abstract pdf, 1 conference dinner, coffee breaks and lunches, registration reception, (non-alcoholic) drinks during poster sessions.

The conference fee in euro:

	Early registration, until 22 May	Late registration, until 15 June
Student*	150 euro	200 euro
Regular registration	350 euro	420 euro
Ticket for the icebreaker for an extra person**	25 euro	25 euro
Dinner ticket for an extra person**	50 euro	50 euro

- Early registration: is until 22 of May 2018.
- Late registration is from 23 May until 15 June 2018.

*For fee waivers, see below.

**There is one icebreaker and one dinner ticket included in the conference fee. Additional tickets can be purchased for the specified price.

Payment of the conference fee: Please transfer the conference fee according to early/late registration (plus the fee for any extra icebreaker ticket (25 euro) and/or extra banquet ticket (50 euro), and/or the excursion fee (70 euro)) to the following bank account. We can only register you if you have paid your conference fee. The **registration deadline** is **15 June 2018**.

Name account: Naturalis

Address Naturalis: Darwinweg 2, 2333 CR Leiden, The Netherlands

Account number: 11.44.77.000

SWIFT or BIC: RABONL2U

IBAN: NL34 RABO 011 44 77 000

Name of bank: Rabobank

Address bank: PO Box 2041, Leiden, The Netherlands / Schipholweg 105, Leiden, The Netherlands

Reference: "PRIDE-RCMNS conference", and your FIRST NAME and SURNAME

Fee waivers: A limited number of fee waivers will be available for local and regional scientists and students to attend the meeting. Local and regional scientists and students can apply for fee waivers via the form at the website <http://pontocaspian.eu/content/application-fee-waiver>. When a fee waiver is granted to you, you do not have to pay the fee of the conference.

Publication in abstract book: If you send in an abstract, you should be really serious about participation. The abstracts will be published in an abstract book (pdf). If you do not register you will be *removed* from the abstract book, and if you or another presenter do not come to the meeting, your abstract will be *removed* as well.

Limited number of participants: We have a limited number of spaces available, due to the capacity of the plenary room. The maximum number of people for the conference is 120. We will use the first come, first serve principle.

Venue: The beautiful Georgian National Museum is located at Rustaveli Avenue 3, Tbilisi, Georgia. (In the city center near Freedom Square).

Accommodation: Via booking.com and Airbnb.com you can find a range of accommodation in Tbilisi, but please remember that August is high season and the city is quite popular with tourists. The venue is situated in the center of Tbilisi on Rustaveli Avenue 3, near Freedom Square.

Optional excursions: After the final conference, on Thursday 30 August 2018, there will be an optional excursion. In fact we will organize two excursions:

- 1) David Gareja area (geology excursion) <https://goo.gl/ienQb4> (2 hours by bus to the South-East of Tbilisi). See the landscape, visit the miocene layers in the area, and a short visit to the David Gareja monastery.
- 2) 2) Khada Gorge (biology excursion) <https://goo.gl/Z6zmeZ> (2 hours by bus to the North of Tbilisi). See the landscape, a short visit to the the Ananuri castle, walk in the Khada Gorge.

This excursion has to be paid by yourself, as well as the extra night of hotel accommodation. This price includes transport, lunchbox, dinner (in a restaurant on the way back) and guide service.

The excursion will be 70 euro, excluding hotel accommodation.

It is not possible to join both excursions. When you register there is an option to indicate if you would like to join the one of the two excursions.

Organizing committee

Dr Frank Wesselingh (Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, The Netherlands) (chair)
Prof David Lordkipanidze (Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi, Georgia) (chair)
Dr Angela Bruch (Senckenberg Museum Forschungsinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, Germany)
Caroline van Impelen (Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, The Netherlands)
Prof David Tarkhnishvili (Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia)
Dr Giorgi Bezarashvili (Georgian Natational Museum, Tbilisi, Georgia)
Prof Jordi Agusti (Univ. Rovira Virgili, Barcelona, Spain/ RCMNS)
Dr Levan Mumladze (Georgian Natational Museum, Tbilisi, Georgia)
Mariam Inaniashvili (Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi, Georgia)
Nino Kokolia (Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi, Georgia)
Prof Rachel Flecker (Bristol University, UK/ RCMNS)
Prof Thomas Wilke (Justus Liebig University, Giessen, Germany)
Prof Wout Krijgsman (Utrecht University/ RCMNS)

Program committee

Alberto Martinez Gandara (Grigore Antipa Museum, Bucharest, Romania)
Anouk D'Hont (GiMaRIS, Leiden, The Netherlands)
Arthur Sands (Justus Liebig University, Giessen, Germany)
Aleksandre Gogaladze (Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, The Netherlands)
Diksha Bista (Bristol University, United Kingdom)
Justine Vandendorpe (Justus Liebig University, Giessen, Germany)
Lea Rausch (University of Bucharest, Romania)
Liesbeth Jorissen (Utrecht University, The Netherlands)
Manuel Sala Perez (Bristol University, United Kingdom)
Matteo Lattuada (Justus Liebig University, Giessen, Germany)
Sabrina van de Velde (Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, The Netherlands)
Sergei Lazarev (Utrecht University, The Netherlands)
Sifan Koriche (University of Reading, United Kingdom)
Sri Nandini (Bremen University, Germany)
Tom Hoyle (Utrecht University, The Netherlands)

Together with: Dr Frank Wesselingh (Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, The Netherlands), Prof Wout Krijgsman (Utrecht University/ RCMNS), Prof Thomas Wilke (Justus Liebig University, Giessen, Germany), Prof Jordi Agusti (Univ. Rovira Virgili, Barcelona, Spain/ RCMNS), Dr Angela Bruch (Senckenberg Museum Forschungsinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, Germany) and Maia Bukshianidze (Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi, Georgia).

Do you have any questions or comments? Please send them to: infoconference@naturalis.nl
(Caroline van Impelen)