

“Human Niche Construction and Cultural Resilience as Mutual: Evidence from Landscapes Enduring Chestnut Pest and Disease Outbreak across Turkey”

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Room 109 (3 College Farm Rd, New Brunswick)

This presentation will detail the investigation into the influence of diverse livelihood practices on the health of chestnut trees across Turkey in order to better understand the mutuality of cultural resilience and human niche construction. The European chestnut population is enduring multiple exotic pest and disease outbreaks in Turkey. Presently, livelihood access to chestnut-dominated landscapes is partly restricted due to the state position that smallholder activity is detrimental to forest health. We conducted 142 semi-structured interviews with chestnut-utilizing households across Turkey’s Black Sea, Marmara and Aegean provinces. We also conducted chestnut tree health evaluations in 97 participant-identified georeferenced forest and orchard areas. We statistically characterized the effects of environmental, physiological and anthropogenic factors on tree health using a generalized linear mixed model and contextualized results of this analysis with interviewee reports of livelihood memory, learning and connectedness. Our results show that cultural resilience is integral to the performance of livelihood practices which have a significant positive effect on tree health.

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