*Session proposal for the 9th International Conference on Monitoring and Management of Visitors in Recreational and Protected Areas (MMV), Bordeaux, France, August 28-31, 2018.*

**Title:** **Why Count? Best practices in the field of pedestrian data collection to preserve and manage natural areas**

As the global leader in bicycle and pedestrian counting equipment, Eco-Counter are the experts in visitor monitoring for natural areas and urban parks. With a global network of specialists in 35 countries, the company has worked with a variety of natural area and urban park managers to better understand and manage their spaces - from Czech Republic to Chile, from the United States to Japan.

With the increasing popularity of nature tourism and the global accessibility of natural sites, many natural area managers and NGOs are facing new challenges regarding sustainability and nature preservation.

Human pressure is rising on these spaces and it is increasingly important to understand visitor flows in natural spaces, both at the entrance and inside the area. Monitoring visitation also allows to capture yearly trends, daily and weekly profiles, seasonality effects and the impact of weather.

This parallel session will present the best practices in the field of data collection through automatic counters. Specifically, the session will outline how count data can help to:

* Preserve natural areas
* Justify decisions
* Anticipate trail erosion
* Measure the impact of visitors on fauna and flora
* Allocate resources more efficiently.

Drawing on three different examples, the session will be a round table to show how reliable data can help gain increased knowledge of the actual attendance flow and adapt maintenance and nature preservation accordingly.

The main speaker for this round table will be Enrico Durbano, General Director for Eco-Counter, enrico.durbano@eco-counter.com

The session will be open to potential contributors to talk about their experience and practice with data collection. They are not yet confirmed as contributors for the session but Eco-Counter’s reference clients include: Department de la Gironde (France), Metsähallitus (Finland), Tatra National Park (Poland).