



## **EWDA Section Report July 2017-June 2018**

### Board

The current EWDA board (2016-2018) is: Marie-Pierre Ryser (Switzerland, Chair), Erik Ågren (Sweden, Vice Chair), Karin Lemberger (France, Secretary), Philippe Berny (France, Treasurer), Lisa Yon (UK, Past Chair), Rogier Bodewes (The Netherlands, Website Coordinator), Lidewij Wiersma (The Netherlands, Newsletter Editor), Lineke Begeman (The Netherlands, Student Activities Coordinator), Anna Baauw (Belgium, new Student Representative), Anne-Fleur Brand (The Netherlands, former Student Representative), Andrew Breed (Australia, Research Advisor), Károly Erdélyi (Hungary, Eastern Countries Communication Facilitator), Károly Erdélyi (Hungary, Eastern Country Facilitator), Gábor Czirják (Germany, Eastern Countries Communication Facilitator), Miriam Maas (The Netherlands, Member at Large). Additionally, Marc Artois (France) acts as the Account Officer.

There were board meetings on 8 September 2017, 12 January 2018 and 4 May 2018 (teleconferences).

The Nomination Committee included Lisa Yon (UK, Committee Chair), Paul Duff (UK) and Francisco Ruiz-Fons (Spain). Identified candidates for the open EWDA Board positions were put to vote in the spring of 2018. The new Board will take over after the AGM in August 2018, to be held at the biennial EWDA conference in Greece.

### Membership

As of June 2018, there were 220 members from Europe, not including 50 from Nordic countries (NWDA members): Andorra (1), Austria (8), Belgium (8), Croatia (2), Cyprus (2), Estonia (1), France (23), Germany (22), Greece (3), Hungary (2), Ireland (4), Italy (15), Netherlands (17), Poland (1), Portugal (4), Romania (4), Russian Federation (1), Slovakia (1), Slovenia (1), Spain (28), Switzerland (15), United Kingdom (57). This is an increase of 21 members compared with June 2017.

### Student chapter

The European Student Chapter has 59 student members, all EWDA members. The current Student Board (September 2017 – June 2019) comprises: Anna Baauw (Chair), Rebecca Berg (Secretary), Manon Moullex (Workshop Coordinator), Eirini Kamenaki (Communications Officer) and Anne-Fleur Brand (Past-Chair/Advisor). There are currently 18 country representatives for 14 countries. The Student Chapter has a website, a Facebook page, a Facebook group and a Twitter account to promote the Chapter and for sharing knowledge.

Student country events were organized in the UK (field trip), Belgium (marine mammal symposium, bat lecture, wildlife conservation symposium “Turning science into practice”, elephant lecture), Austria (three wildlife disease lecture events: ornithology, the role of

veterinarians in wildlife conservation and wildlife medicine, and Nordic fauna), The Netherlands (three lecture events: whale behaviour, otters in the Netherlands, and European bison), France (EWDA and Student Chapter presentation at the Yaboumba Junior wildlife congress), Hungary (one lecture followed by monthly gatherings)

After the traditional biennial EWDA Student Workshop that was scheduled for April 2017 had to be cancelled due to the last minute withdrawal of one of the main sponsors, it was decided to set up a one-day student workshop right before the biennial conference 2018 in Larissa, and to start planning a longer workshop for 2019, expected to be held at the vet school in Lyon (France).

### Bulletin

Issues 17 and 18 of the EWDA Bulletin were produced in December 2017 (28 pages) and June 2017 (20 pages). They are available from the EWDA website.

### Website

After some initial testing and development, the EWDA website (<http://www.ewda.org>) including all data files has completely been moved to a new server and hosting company early 2018. The transfer of the site allowed using many additional possibilities for the association website, which has been especially useful for the WildList (see Network activities below). This WildList has also been completely transferred from the server previously used by the WildTech Project to the EWDA website and is now continuously updated by Paul Tavernier (WildList Coordinator). In addition, the website now uses [ewda.org](http://ewda.org) as its only url, without links to a google site address. Of interest, it is the first hit on [google.com](http://google.com) when keywords such as “ewda”, “European wildlife health” or “European wildlife disease” are used. After the initial mail to all members in February 2018 about the new website, the website has received more than 1000 visits, with a main focus on the information about the EWDA2018 conference and the updated WildList.

Like the previous website, the new website is regularly updated and provides information about various topics, including announcements of upcoming events, proceedings of past EWDA conferences, links to websites of research groups and associations related to wildlife diseases, job offers, training programs, CVs of candidates, access to Diagnosis and Species Cards, and information about the EWDA Google group.

### EWDA Network for Wildlife Health Surveillance in Europe

The long-term goals of this network are to improve exchange of information among wildlife health surveillance programmes in Europe; to develop standard operating procedures for diagnostic investigation of wildlife; to develop common criteria for diagnosis of wildlife disease; to share specialist expertise; and to provide training opportunities in wildlife health surveillance. After the Committee status changed from *ad hoc* to permanent in the second half of 2016, and new committee members were elected, the history and functioning of the Network were put on paper and the roles of the Committee members were better defined. Current Network Committee members are: Thijs Kuiken (The Netherlands, Committee Chair), Antonio Lavazza (Italy, Diagnosis Card Editor), Becki Lawson (U.K., Secretary), Jordi Lopez Olvera (Spain), Marie-Pierre Ryser-Degiorgis (Switzerland, Species Card Editor), and Paul Tavernier (Belgium, WildList Manager).

Part of the committee's time was spent on planning a Network Meeting at the 2018 EWDA conference with the subject "How to start up a wildlife health surveillance programme." The reason for this meeting is that out of 49 European countries, we know of only 14 countries that have a partial or comprehensive wildlife health surveillance programme. As a consequence, we have no or only poor knowledge of the state of wildlife health in the majority of European countries. Therefore, the goal of this upcoming EWDA Network meeting is to share information on experiences from the start-up periods as well as from further programme developments of countries with established wildlife health surveillance systems, as well as information on difficulties encountered in countries without such systems, to help them to set up one.

As decided during the 6th EWDA Network meeting held in Berlin in August 2016, the EWDA Network Committee has worked towards the revival of the former WildList of the WildTech project, with the support of the EWDA Website Coordinator and of the past WildList managers. Following the transfer of the EWDA website to a new site, the former WildList was moved to the EWDA website. Subsequently, adaptations of the list structure and functioning were made to fulfil the EWDA expectations. In April 2018, the EWDA WildList opened for registration. The setting up of this EWDA WildList was based on repeated requests from participants of EWDA Network meetings to have a member list indicating the areas of expertise of each member, in order to facilitate contacts, communication and collaboration among them. Furthermore, there was a need to expand the scope of the EWDA Network beyond disease surveillance and veterinary sciences, in order to pursue the time-limited efforts of projects such as WildTech, APHAEA, ASF-STOP and ENETWILD and to integrate representatives from more countries and more disciplines (in particular wildlife ecology) to move towards a sustainable, multidisciplinary network at a continental scale. The WildList aims to connect fellow scientists interested in wildlife health. It allows users to find European colleagues from any discipline with specific interests and expertise in wildlife health-related fields, based on their profiles. The corresponding email list allows WildList members to share information on a wide range of topics related to wildlife, including the announcement of meetings and courses and job advertisements. Anybody with a particular expertise and/or strong interest in wildlife health can register on WildList. The WildList can be found under the "EWDA Network" tab on the EWDA website (<http://ewda.org/wildlist-2/>). At the date of writing (July 2018), the WildList had 289 members.

By July 2018, the EWDA Surveillance Platform (an e-mail discussion list for people involved in European wildlife health surveillance, previously referred to as "Google group": <http://groups.google.com/group/ewda-network>) counted 193 members from at least 27 European countries (Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK) as well as Canada and the U.S.A. A total of 27 online discussions were launched within the past year, with 84 posts and many more views. Subjects included, among others: *Capillaria hepatica* infection vs. hepatic coccidiosis in hares, an upsurge of canine distemper in free-living carnivores in Israel, the U.S.A., and several European countries, mortality from highly pathogenic avian influenza virus H5N6 in western and northern Europe, and the use of phone apps to capture information about wildlife events.

### Conferences

The 13th biennial EWDA conference will be held 27-31 August 2018 and hosted by the University of Thessaly in Larissa, Greece. The local organiser is Charalambos Billinis. The

general topic is “Wildlife Health and Conservation: Expectations in a Challenging Era”. Pre-conference activities include the above-mentioned EWDA Network meeting, a Student workshop, pre-conference workshops, and the 2018 AGM of the European College of Zoological Medicine. The scientific programme is already available and covers a wide spectrum of topics (see <https://ewda2018.vet.uth.gr/>).

### Small Grants

In 2017 the EWDA Board decided to offer two small grants (of maximum 2'000 Euros each) every second year, one to foster research on health topics relevant to wildlife conservation (WildCons), the other one to promote wildlife health activities in Eastern European countries (EastEur). The current Small Grants Committee dedicated to the selection of applicants comprises: Andrew Breed (Australia), Marco Chiari (Italy), Gábor Czirják (Germany), Károly Erdélyi (Hungary), Emmanuelle Gilot-Fromont (France), Jacques Godfroid (Norway, Committee Chair), Ignasi Marco (Spain), and Tony Sainsbury (UK).

In total, 6 proposals were submitted after the first call sent in June 2017. Unfortunately, the only proposal for the EastEur grant did not fulfil the eligibility criteria. By contrast, excellent proposals were submitted for the WildCons grant. Considering the goals of the Small Grants Programme and the close scores of the top applications, the EWDA Board and the Small Grants Committee agreed to share the second grant among the two other best scored WildCons applications. The deadline for application for the next EWDA Small Grants cycle will be September 2019.

Furthermore, a Conference Attendance Fund aimed at supporting the attendance of non-student members who do not benefit from institutional support was created thanks to the very generous donation of Vic Simpson. The first call took place early 2018. Three candidates out of 6 were selected for receiving financial support to travel to the EWDA conference in Larissa.

### Bylaws

Since the EWDA has been created, the EWDA Board has progressively worked towards a more structured association, with the aim of facilitating the work of the volunteers who continuously take over Board positions and of ensuring the continuity of the association. During the past two years, the current EWDA Board has faced a number of questions regarding how the association was supposed to work and regarding the relationships with the WDA, NWDA and EWDA Student Chapter. After consultation of previous and current Board members to clarify the situation, it was decided to draft more extensive Bylaws. The WDA Bylaws were used as a basis and adapted for the EWDA needs, integrating the already existing but very rudimentary EWDA Bylaws. The WDA executive manager (Dave Jessup) was also consulted multiple times, and Allen Press helped fixing issues regarding membership application (EWDA and/or NWDA). The final draft of the new EWDA Bylaws was approved by the Board members by anonymous electronic vote after the Board teleconference held on 4 May 2018. The draft was subsequently sent to the membership for voting. The approved version will be available after the biennial conference in Greece. With this document, the EWDA Board hopes not only to strengthen the structure of the EWDA but also to contribute to its visibility and to the recognition by others that it is a strong professional association able to provide expertise on wildlife health issues.

### Statement on lead use restriction in wetlands

As the European Commission is assessing the legislation on lead shot use in wetlands in the European Union, in the spring 2018 the EWDA Board was approached by an EWDA member regarding a possible supportive statement on the lead use restriction proposal formulated by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). The EWDA Board approved the idea of submitting such a statement and drafted a text that was submitted to vote to the membership on May 18<sup>th</sup>. 98% voters were in favor and the final text was submitted to the European Chemicals Agency by the EWDA Chair on May 21<sup>st</sup>. The full text was published in the 2018 summer edition of the EWDA Newsletter. Following a brief description of the EWDA, of detrimental health effects of lead and on difficulties to manage disease in wildlife, it says that “The EWDA shares the opinion of the ECHA’s Committees for Socioeconomic Analysis (SEAC) and for Risk Assessment (RAC), that a total ban of lead gunshot or a ban of lead gunshot for its use in hunting in all ecosystems could be more effective than the proposed restriction, because: it would be beneficial to all wildlife in all habitats; it would be easier to implement (same regulations everywhere within a country and compliance would not fall upon individual shooters but on the producers and retailers of lead gunshot); and because it would likely result in greater compliance than a targeted restriction on the use in wetlands. As stated by the two Committees, this would go beyond the topic of the current mandate attributed to ECHA by the European Commission. However, the EWDA hopes that this first initiative will be followed by others aiming at a wider restriction of lead use, including in terrestrial habitats. Lead poisoning remains a frequent problem in other species than waterbirds, including but not limited to protected birds such as endangered vultures and eagles that consume lead contaminated carcasses.”

Respectfully submitted,

Marie-Pierre Ryser

(with contributions of EWDA Board members and of the EWDA Network Committee chair)