



NEWSLETTER // SUMMER 2023

**Marie-Pierre
Ryser-Degiorgis
1971 - 2023**



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ON THE COVER

Marie-Pierre Ryser-Degiorgis



Disclaimer

The editors have put this non-citable bulletin together as carefully as possible and apologise for any errors or omissions may have been committed. The content of this newsletter has not been peer-reviewed and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Wildlife Disease Association.

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President's Corner

"When you realize the value of all life, you dwell less on what is past and concentrate more on the preservation of the future"

Dian Fossey

Summer is in full bloom and while not so long ago most of us were happy to finally dig light clothes out of the boxes, in many places the picture has already changed again to dramatic conditions and large parts of our countries are unfortunately again suffering from severe drought and forest fires or sudden rain is trying to make up for the lack of the past months and is descending in floods that are difficult to control. In our professional field of wildlife research, there are also more and more signs that seem to be related to climatic changes. Although it seems of minor importance, a handful of deceased blue tit nestlings had just been sent for examination to our lab. All of them had been fed exclusively on daisy flowers - one can only assume the probable lack of insects in their immediate environment. But it indicates that the impact of climate change is in our vicinity.

EWDA's Sustainability Committee continues to be busy developing advice and guidance on how to work in a more sustainable way. On the EWDA website's *Resources* you will now find "A quick guide on how to reduce the environmental impact of your work".

Busy times also await the Small Grants Committee, which called for a new round of small grant applications this year. But while last time the number of grants had risen to three, this year a fantastic six grants can be awarded. On the one hand, this is possible by the generous initiative of a French endowment fund, which provided the budget for another **Wildlife Conservation Research Grant**. In addition, a new type of grant is offered: **Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Grant**. Again, it was the generous offer of a private donor that made the introduction of this grant possible.

On behalf of EWDA, I would like to take the opportunity to express a big cordial **THANK YOU** to both donors!

Apart from the budget for the first "Wildlife Conservation Research Grant" and the "Wildlife Health Research and Education in Eastern Europe Grant" the additional grants will depend on future donations. Those who are contemplating about options to donate might kindly also consider this....

Some time ago EWDA was invited to participate as stakeholder in a European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) Action "Safety in the Game Meat Chain". This transnational and multidisciplinary One-Health approach seeks to exchange experiences and concepts through networking of all relevant stakeholders along the game meat chain from the wildlife animal to the consumer. A particular focus lies on identifying and assessing important biological risks. The application only recently was positively evaluated and accepted.

By now you will all have learned of the sad passing of one of EWDA's most distinguished members: **Marie-Pierre Ryser-Degiorgis**. Please know that Karin Lemberger held a wonderful touching speech at the fare-well ceremony in Marie-Pierre's mother-tongue. Thank you, Karin, for making this possible. To all other EWDA members - a basket of colorful flowers representing all of us was standing at Marie-Pierre's side.

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EWDA Chair



Notes from the Board

"Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans"
John Lennon



Life as the EWDA secretary is like the sea - usually pretty calm, when all one has to do is to reply to incoming questions and delete the regular spam messages. Other moments, it is a bit more demanding, with meetings and minutes that have to be made and mails to the membership that need to be sent out.

In rare moments it can be difficult. We just went through such a period with the passing of our beloved Marie-Pierre Ryser, who was a dedicated EWDA member, EWDA Chair from 2010-2014, and much respected colleague in our wildlife community, but also a great friend and a lovely person. Being part of the Board meant having also an "official" role to inform EWDA members about this sad news, while coping with the loss at the same time. As some of us have been very close to Marie-Pierre, this was hard to do, but it allowed us to make sure she received a fitting tribute that would commemorate her immense contribution.

Marcy Uhart and Tiggy Grillo, WDA members that were very close to her, have written a beautiful eulogy. In the Board we are meanwhile contemplating how Marie-Pierre's passion for wildlife research can best be honoured and as soon as this has become more clear, we will let you know.

As you probably have noticed by the number of e-mails from me, there has been a lot of EWDA activity this year. The call for small grant applications is now open, and comprises six grants in four different grant

categories, including the new "Transformative Change in Wildlife Research Grant". The deadline is September 15, 2023, so if you have great wildlife research plans, but you need a little financial help to realize them, be sure to grab this opportunity.

Though the Sustainability Committee is relatively new in the EWDA, it is very ambitious. In April, almost 100 participants joined an interesting and thought-provoking webinar that was delivered by Marjan Minnesma, discussing biodiversity loss and the potential role of wildlife health researchers to contribute to transformative changes in human society.

The Sustainability Committee also made suggestions how the ecological footprint of the EWDA can be reduced, for example by adapting the location of our biennial conference, since travel to attend forms the largest environmental impact of our activities. Members were invited to vote, so they could also have their say in these important matters that concern our Association.

To conclude, some secretary facts: there are currently 155 EWDA members living in the geographic region and 20 based outside Europe. There are 31 members from the Nordic WDA.

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Marie-Pierre Ryser-Degiorgis

20 July 1971 - 14 May 2023

"Things don't just happen. You make them happen"

A devoted mentor and committed leader whose interdisciplinary approach and passion changed wildlife health in Europe and beyond has left us.

Marie-Pierre was one of those people who lightened a room when she walked in. She smiled with her eyes in a way that made our hearts melt. She was strong, committed, devoted, passionate. Her convictions firm, her ways subtle, her charm irresistible. And since she was as much a star professional as a caring friend, she was someone you could instantly love, relate to, and look up to. Her wisdom was in sharing, building, convening, working with others for change. Her talent was rare and unique, matched only by her will and hard, sustained, relentless work. Things don't just happen, you make them happen, she would say.



Marie-Pierre was born in Geneva, Switzerland in 1971. After graduating with a veterinary degree from the University of Bern in 1998, her PhD studies took her into the field exploring infectious disease in wildlife, feeding her sense of adventure and providing a path for her career. Unsurprising to those who knew her, she soon became easily identified as a frequent and fearless contributor and collaborator in wildlife health forums in Europe.



Marie-Pierre recognized that relationships and connections provide critical opportunities to learn from one another. Her ability to engage and commit and improve left a lasting mark in all who interacted with her professionally and personally. And this all became obvious when in the darkest hours, so many people, colleagues and friends from all around the world, engaged every day in a network of support.



... devoted to wildlife and the natural world...

Her extended professional family included the Wildlife Disease Association, of which she was a tirelessly active and devoted member for 18 years, and through which she developed deep connections and meaningful friendships. As president of the EWDA for two terms, member of the WDA Council (2016-2020), WDA Student Awards Committee(2009-2012), as well as serving on the multiple scientific committees for WDA / EWDA conferences, she is remembered for her rigor, innovative ideas, scientific curiosity, unbreakable courageous spirit, her open collaboration, and kindness. Her engagement with WDA activities was always whole-hearted and her efforts characterized as beyond the call of duty, recognised by being the recipient of the WDA Ed Addison Distinguished Service Award in 2019.



She was so devoted to the wildlife and natural world that nurtured her soul that one of the things that most saddened her was not having finished the many papers on lynx health she had left in stand-by just because there was always that extra data point needed for perfection.



... forums where she felt she could make a difference...

That was her nature, never settling, always aspiring to excellence. A true lesson and legacy to the 19 veterinary doctoral and 8 veterinary master's theses, and many others who she mentored and took under her wing.

Marie-Pierre was active and engaged in the most relevant professional forums, such as the EWDA Network and the World Organization of Animal Health (WOAH) Working Group on Wildlife. These were always forums where she felt she could make a difference. And she did. She is respected and thanked for this specially, and her memory carries on in the wildlife health surveillance programs, training events and networks she helped establish, in the grants and fellowships that continue to change student's lives, and in many of us who see her as a role model. Her sharp mind and rare talent for understanding the necessary interdisciplinary approach to wildlife disease investigation will be a great loss to the profession.



Marie-Pierre never shied away from challenges, always volunteering for the hard work, in real and figurative ways carrying the heavy pack, climbing the steeper path. And she faced her illness with that same obstinate commitment, in a way that has been inspirational beyond words. Fighting cancer she travelled the world, from the channels of Venice to the culture of Japan to collaring elephants in Guinea to whale watching to fulfil a friend's last wish.

Whilst simultaneously she maintained her unwavering commitment to wildlife health as well as colleagues and friends by maintaining her roles on various committees (Chair of EWDA) and though her courageous spirit (and perhaps a little bit of her stubbornness) attending multiple EWDA, Study Group on the Ecopathology of Mountain Wildlife (GEEFSM) and international WDA conferences throughout her illness.



*...an exceptional scientist,
an extraordinary colleague, and
an outstanding friend, above all,
a proud and devoted mother.*

And yet beyond and above all, she was a mother who never stopped singing the praises of her two beloved sons. She was so proud of them and felt so blessed for being able to enjoy them as young men.



Marie Pierre leaves us all with an immense legacy - an exceptional scientist, an extraordinary colleague, and an outstanding friend. Her legacy has only just begun and will continue to inspire many generations to come.

We will forever cherish those fun moments filled with her infectious laughter and sparkling, sometimes mischievous, eyes.

Farewell Marie-Pierre.



Tiggy Grillo
Director National
Coordinator/COO,,
Wildlife Health Australia



Marcy Uhart
Latin America Program
One Health Institute,
School of Veterinary Medicine,
University of California, Davis

Special focus - Poland



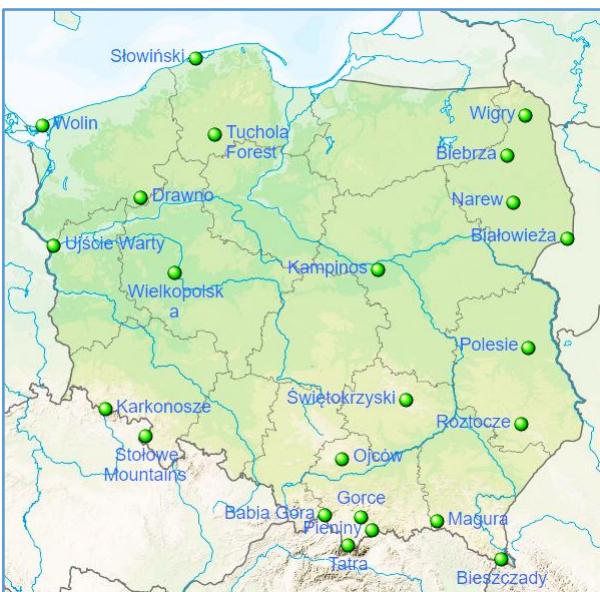
Meeting the Neighbours – Wildlife Research in Poland

Since its early days EWDA developed into a lively international crowd of wildlife researchers with active exchange and cooperation across Europe. Meanwhile, the eastern part of the continent remains under-represented among EWDA members - this series of short presentations of colleagues in these countries aims to stimulate future communication.

EWDA sections members geographically assigned to the European continent originate from 22 different European countries. However, there is a distinct bias in membership numbers between eastern and western countries: 13 members from Eastern in relation to 197 members from Western countries (as of March 2023).

This year EWDA could welcome the first student member from Poland, a basis to start with this country to be introduced in a small series of further country portraits.

Poland, the sixth largest country in the European Union, surprises with one of the most species rich fauna of Europe as it also serves as a highly important stop-over site for thousands of migratory birds.



The country has established 23 national parks, eleven of which are part of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Program and one of which is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Parks_of_Poland

The parks cover a total of 3,140 km², about 1% of the country's land area and the oldest national park is the famous [Białowieża National Park](#). It is home to the European bison (*Bison bonasus*) and stretches far beyond the Belarusian border.





Indeed, there seems to be a special tradition in Poland of cooperating with its immediate neighbors when it comes to protecting nature as six further national parks in the mountainous southern part of the country are crossed by a national border: Czech Republic, [Stołowe Mountains National Park](#), Slovakia e.g., the [Tatra National Park](#), inhabited by Tatra chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra tatrca*), Eurasian brown bear (*Ursus arctos arctos*), and Ukraine, [Bieszczady National Park](#).

Research in wildlife biology has a long-standing history in Poland and countless scientific articles and books have been published.

Wildlife colleagues in Poland

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

To learn more about the people involved with wildlife science, I contacted Dr. [Natalia Osten-Sacken](#) from the Faculty of Biological and Veterinary Sciences at the Nicolaus Copernicus University, who frequently participates in wildlife conferences in Germany. Her main professional interest is wildlife parasitology with an emphasis on endoparasites of carnivores like raccoons or wild cats.

The Mammal Research Institute in Białowieża is one of the most important places for wildlife research is also one of the oldest scientific institutions of the Polish Academy of Sciences: The Institute is headed by Prof. Dr. [Michał Żmihorski](#). He heads a group of 25 scientists as well as several doctoral students and technicians.



Instytut Biologii Ssaków
Polskiej Akademii Nauk
Białowieża

The immediate proximity to the Białowieża National Park is often the basis for the numerous research projects carried out by the institute. The pride of the Mammal Research Institute is a large zoological collection curated by Prof. Dr. [Rafał Kowalczyk](#). The collection has about 190.000 wildlife specimens, comprising bones and skulls as well as carnivore scats and pellets from birds of prey. An online list gives an overview of the wildlife collection ibs.bialowieza.pl/en/scientific-collection/

Beside topics related to wildlife biology projects on wildlife diseases are also conducted. For example, the institute is partner of the ENETWildlife Network – alongside with the National Veterinary Research Institute.



The National Veterinary Research Institute

in Puławy, piwet.pulawy.pl has the national responsibility of controlling livestock health but also has projects investigating concerning wildlife diseases including avian influenza, rabies, and trichinellosis. In this context, the institute also takes part in EU projects like “ASF STOP - Understanding and combating African Swine Fever in Europe” and “Wildlife, Agricultural soils, Water environments, and antimicrobial resistance”.



The Research Station of the Polish Hunting Association

in Czempin, czempin.pzlow.pl has monitoring game animals in Poland as its most important task. Samples of wildlife species from all over Poland are stored at the research station. Further, breeding of European rabbits as well as endangered bird species such as peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) is taking place at the premises. For educational purposes for hunters and pupils likewise, lecture rooms and a small hotel for about 40 participants are available.

Universities with veterinary faculties

Additionally, there are four universities with veterinary faculties:

- The University of Life Sciences Lublin
- The University of Agriculture Kraków
- Warsaw University of Life Sciences
- Wrocław University of Life Sciences

Besides veterinary science regarding domestic animals, all universities also have research projects in different wildlife related topics.

Another wildlife researcher from the University of Warsaw, but the Faculty of Biology, is Prof. Dr. [Sabina Nowak](#), whose work is focusing on large wildlife carnivores. She is also president of the Association for Nature WOLF polskiwilk.org.pl/en/ an NGO dedicated to conservation of mammals, particularly carnivores, and their habitats.

All wildlife projects are undertaken by several researchers throughout the country. Here we present and highlight a few of them:

Prof. Dr. [Wanda Olech](#) from Warsaw University of Life Sciences was nominated for the 2023 Indianapolis Prize, the World's Leading Animal Conservation Award, as she initiated and led the European Bison Conservation Centre, an international network of European bison breeders across Europe.

Prof. Dr. [Henryk Okarma](#), a research associate at the Institute for Nature Conservation of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow, also receives great international recognition for his scientific work. His main interest are also large wildlife carnivores with emphasis on wolves and lynxes leading to numerous publications.

But also, small-sized wildlife species are investigated. [Magdalena Hędrzak](#) is staff scientist at University of Agriculture in Krakow and has a particular interest in the European hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*), as the numbers of this animal species are declining fast from the modern agricultural landscape of the country.



European hamster *Cricetus cricetus*
pinterest.se/pin/773000723556067615/

It would be great if the mutual interest in wildlife research between colleagues from Poland and EWDA members could lead to increased communication and exchange. Do not hesitate to take contact with them!

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Reflections on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in wildlife



Before 2001, highly pathogenic avian influenza was not considered to occur in wild birds. But now wild birds are very much involved, both as victims and as vectors.

The current outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5 of the Goose/Guang-dong lineage started in 1996. Here is an overview about its spillover from poultry into wild birds, and subsequent spread from continent to continent.

We are so often told about highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in wild birds nowadays, that you would start to think it was something normal. Yet before 2001, HPAI was not considered to occur in free-living wild birds. There were exceptions, an occasional sparrow or starling that came too close to an infected poultry barn and the 1953 HPAI H5N3 outbreak in common terns in South Africa—exceptions that proved the rule. HPAI is essentially a disease of poultry; it typically arises in the confines of a densely populated poultry barn, and spreads among poultry flocks. Historically, wild birds were not involved in the epidemiology of HPAI.

And now? Now wild birds are very much involved, both as victims and as vectors. The current HPAI outbreak, caused by an H5 virus of the so-called Goose/Guangdong lineage, has been going on since 1996 and has resulted in around 400 million deaths of chickens and other poultry. This is higher than the mortality of all previous HPAI outbreaks since 1950 combined. In addition to poultry, it may have caused millions of deaths in wild birds, and the virus continues to tear its way through the world's avifauna.

After temporarily spreading with wild birds from Asia to Europe and Africa every few years between 2005 and 2020, it finally became established in wild bird populations. Using West Europe as a springboard, the virus hopped the Atlantic with wild birds in 2021. Like the first European explorers in the Middle Ages, the island of Newfoundland was the virus's first port of call in North America. From there, it fanned out across the North American continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts. Not pausing, it continued south, reaching Peru in November 2022, and reaching the island of Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America by April 2023.

What's next? Continent-wise, it will likely spread to Antarctica, and perhaps Australia and New Zealand. Host-wise, there will no doubt be continued expansion into naive wild bird populations.

In Europe this caused die-offs of barnacle geese in 2021, of northern gannets and sandwich terns in 2022, and of black-headed gulls so far this year. However, any water-associated wild bird that lives in dense aggregations as part of its lifestyle may be fair game for the virus.

And then there are bystander species, not really important for the persistence of the virus in wildlife, but severely affected nonetheless because of close contacts with infected birds; Red fox, European polecat, Canada lynx, striped skunk, harbour seal, South American sea lion, and other mammal species that predate or scavenge on wild birds, or just live very close to them. Avian predators and scavengers too: peregrine falcon, Eurasian buzzard, black vulture, California condor, species that can find a sick bird more easily than a human surveillance system.

At some point, HPAI will hit an epidemic trough in wild birds when most species that could be exposed to the virus have been exposed to the virus, and the virus will need to survive in partly immune populations.

And the future? Is this global HPAI H5 outbreak a freak event, never to happen again? Or is the continuously growing poultry population; 25 billion and increasing by about 0.5 billion per year, a recipe for the next spillover of HPAIV or another infectious pathogen from domestic into wild birds? Something to think about.

On behalf of the
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Investigating the 2022 H5N1 outbreak in French Griffon vultures



Griffon vultures coped with HPAIV infection ... and survived !

Since 2011, an unprecedented epizootic of highly pathogenic avian influenza has been underway worldwide, following the emergence of an H5N1 variant from clade 2.3.4.4b. Wild bird populations have been dramatically impacted, especially colonial nesting species. The virus also reached populations not classically considered as targets such as Griffon vultures (*Gyps fulvus*).

In spring 2022, an HPAI infection was detected in French Griffon vulture populations: limited mortality in adult individuals and high mortality in juveniles were observed as well as reduced activity of adults. To understand the dynamics of the infection in this population of remarkable hosts, we set up a comprehensive study of the outbreak by combining serological, biomolecular, phylogenetic, and ecological approaches.

Two capture sessions were carried out (summer and autumn 2022) at four different sites covering the entire range of the French griffon vulture population. A total of 236 individuals were captured and sampled.

All the samples (oropharyngeal and cloacal swabs) were screened for AIV by PCR and tested negative. In contrast, we detected a mean seroprevalence of 32% by H5 competitive ELISA (ranging from 0% to 59% for the four colonies). Positive samples were confirmed by HI as positive for antibodies directed against H5 2.3.4.4b clade. These seroprevalences were relatively stable between summer and autumn.

Phylogenic analysis indicated a likely unique introduction in Griffon vulture populations, probably located in Spain. The virus then spread widely in the French-Spanish metapopulation, favored by the movement ecology of vultures, especially their feeding

behavior and colonial breeding. Finally, the ability to fly long distances and the associated spread of the virus was strongly suspected by the analysis of telemetric data which showed an overlapping of the distribution areas of several French and Spanish individuals at the time of the outbreak.

The large-scale introduction of HPAI virus in a naive population led to numerous direct or indirect deaths of juvenile individuals, resulting in a sharp drop in yearly breeding success. On the other hand, adult individuals seem to have coped well with the infection, which caused only a drop in activity and a limited mortality. To date, one can reasonably assume that the virus is no longer circulating in this population and serological data suggest that populations are at least partially immunized. However more sampling is forecasted in summer 2023 to continue monitoring the outbreak.

Olivier Duriez, Yohan Sassi, Ursula Hofle, Marta Barral, Anne Van De Wiele, Chloé Le Gall-Ladevèze, Guillaume Croville, Claire Guinat, Thierry Boulonier, Jean-Luc Guérin, Guillaume Le Loc'h

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NWDA Nordic section news



NWDA members meet in Norway

The Nordic section of WDA, NWDA biennial meeting 2023 was hosted by Norway, in the small island fortress of Oscarsborg to discuss wildlife diseases of the region.

The Nordic section of WDA meet alternative years with the EWDA meetings. The first physical meeting since the COVID pandemic gathered 20 Nordic members and the JWD editor Debra Bourne for a two-day meeting. The Norwegian Veterinary Institute moved from Oslo to new housing on the Ås university campus two years ago. A guided tour in brand new facilities, including a large necropsy room was followed by a short ferry ride to the small islands guarding the inlet to Oslo. The old fort Oscarsborg from 1853 is famous for sinking the German cruiser Blücher on 9 May 1940, the day when Norway was invaded by nazi Germany.

Country reports summarizing the past two years of wildlife diseases in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland were presented, with similarities such as widespread avian influenza, and sarcoptic mange in arctic foxes

In Norway and Sweden. The Swedish programme for health and disease surveillance of marine mammals was presented, with the first finding of a clinical case of avian influenza in a harbour porpoise, as well as PhD work on African swine fever, and surveillance of *Echinococcus* in red fox. An update on CWD work in wild reindeer in Norway was presented, and collaborative work done to show that CWD in old moose in the Nordic countries seems to be a sporadic and not contagious form. Future cooperation in common challenges such as explaining the enigmatic cause of outbreaks of diarrhoea in roe deer was raised in this Nordic network.

The formal handover of the NWDA reindeer antler gavel from the old chair Jørn Våge, Norway, to the new chair Anne Sofie Hammer, Denmark, was done after the AGM, the inset photo below captures the formal event!



NWDA 2023, Oscarsborg fortress, Norway. The participants of the meeting on parade outside the meeting room venue in the old military schoolhouse on the island, now used for conferences.

Marie-Pierre in our memories

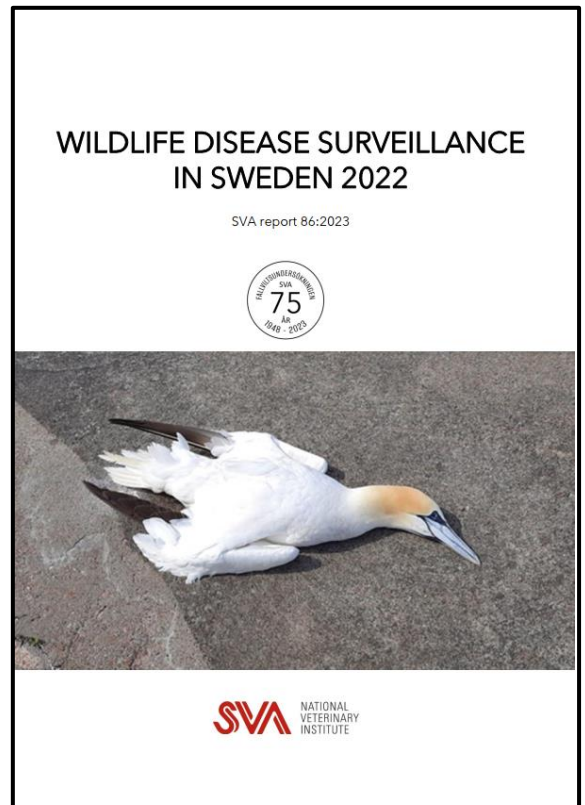


Marie-Pierre Ryser in Sorsele, northern Sweden, 1999
The collar is supposed to be used for reindeer!
Photo: Erik Ågren

In the late 1990 ´s, still in the early days of her career, Marie-Pierre stayed in Sweden for a year working with us at the National Veterinary Institute in Uppsala. As we received many dead lynx for necropsy at the wildlife section, she wanted to learn as much as possible regarding diseases and causes of death, useful knowledge for the re-introduction programme of lynx in Switzerland. No other external visitor had or has after her stayed for such a long period of time. But most of the foreign wildlife veterinary visiting us in Uppsala are people with initiative and a great interest. Many have later become the leading name in wildlife disease work in their country, and Marie-Pierre more than anyone else! The lynx work continued, and Swedish lynx were suitable control animals for studies and articles.

To experience the north of Sweden and to see reindeer, she visited me in Lapland when I was working on a project on reindeer calf mortality. This included trying snowmobile driving in deep snow and helping to put hundreds of reflective (to avoid being road-killed in the winter darkness) sticker numbers on plastic reindeer collars for my individually numbered project animals. A happy and tired Marie-Pierre, after late-night work and some red wine is captured in the old-school diachrome photo. A dear memory of such a successful wildlife veterinary colleague, and a role model and inspiration for many!

Remembered by Erik Ågren and colleagues at the Wildlife Section at SVA, Uppsala.



The Report on Swedish wildlife disease surveillance 2022 is available on <https://www.sva.se/en/animals/wildlife/>

Erik Ågren

National Veterinary Institute
Department of Pathology and
Wildlife Diseases, Uppsala, Sweden
Newsletter editor



News from the EWDA Student Chapter



After a very successful 2023 workshop, the Student Board is looking forward to welcoming their successors!



The 2023 EWDA SC Workshop
"Combining talents, sharing knowledge: Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Age of One Health"



Embracing the collaborative spirit, the local student association **AVAFES** (Associació de Veterinaris per a l'atenció de Fauna Exòtica i Salvatge/ Association of veterinarians for the care of exotic and wild fauna) provided crucial assistance to the workshop, lending their invaluable and highly appreciated support in organizing local logistics.

This year's EWDA Student Chapter Workshop was held April 1st to 4th, at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) in Spain.

Focusing on "**Combining talents, sharing knowledge: Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Age of One Health**", this year's event aimed to promote collaboration between different specialties in wildlife health early in student's careers. Our hybrid-workshop attracted students with medical and ecological backgrounds, and featured talks from a diverse range of speakers (veterinarians, biologists, and legal specialists)

Twenty participants had the unique opportunity to investigate a "**wildlife disease outbreak**" firsthand. Splitting into groups and guided by experienced mentors, students scoured the UAB campus for (mock) "bodies." They also had the chance to perform a post-mortem examination on a real carcass donated by collaborators from UAB's Wildlife Ecopathology Service (SEFaS). This hands-on experience provided participants with valuable insights into the challenges encountered in the face of wildlife diseases outbreaks, and how they can often only be overcome by teamwork.

Case studies



Diarrhoea in roe deer
(*Capreolus capreolus*)

Karin Lemberger



African swine fever in wild boar
(*Sus scrofa*)

Károly Erdélyi



Starvation due to overfishing in Eider ducks
(*Somateria mollissima*)

Thijs Kuiken



Avian botulism in mallards
(*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Ruth Cromie

Irene Torres and Karin Lemberger demonstrating the post-mortem examination of a ruminant to students.



Students preparing for field investigations with their mentor, Ruth Cromie



Overall, this year's workshop was a great success – not only in bringing people back together after a period of social isolation over the past few years – but also in terms of promoting multidisciplinary collaboration amongst professionals in the field of wildlife health. We strongly feel that this is the inherent spirit of the (E)WDA, which is enthusiastically carried on by the next generation of wildlife health professionals and are very much looking forward to future events like these.



Students investigating a disease outbreak in wild boar with their mentor, Károly Erdélyi

Passing on the torch: **EWDA SC Board 2023 - 2025**

Voting for the new EWDA Student Chapter Board has officially concluded on July 1st – keep an eye out for the results!

It has truly been a pleasure to work with and for the (E)WDA students these past two years. We feel very fortunate to have been part of this journey and are looking forward to seeing what's next for the EWDA Student Chapter – as active members of the European Wildlife Disease Association.



The EWDA Student Chapter Board 2021-2023
Anna Langguth, Irene Torres Blas, Loïc Palumbo,
Garu Tsinopoulou and Marco Vecchiato



WOAH answers the call of the wild



World
Organisation
for Animal
Health
Founded as OIE

Organisation
mondiale
de la santé
animale
Fondée en tant qu'OIE

Organización
Mundial
de Sanidad
Animal
Fundada como OIE

What does WOAHA do for global wildlife health monitoring?

The World Organisation for Animal Health contributes to reinforcing wildlife health monitoring in its 183 Members by strengthening the capacity of Veterinary Services, developing science-based educational mediums, and creating expert networks.

The [World Organization for Animal Health, WOAHA](#) is the only global organization focused on animal health and welfare, promoting international solidarity for the surveillance and control of animal diseases. WOAHA collects, analyzes, and disseminates veterinary information, ensuring Member countries have the necessary tools and support to respond to animal diseases. National Veterinary Services are WOAHA's main counterparts, but WOAHA also nurtures [key partnerships](#), for instance with WDA, to create a network of people, knowledge, and resources for easy access and sharing.

One Health

WOAHA promotes a One Health approach, recognizing the interdependence of animals, humans, and the environment. WOAHA has been working to improve animal health, including wildlife health, for 99 years. The [Wildlife Health Framework](#), launched in 2020, promotes surveillance systems for wildlife health at regional, national, and international levels. It encourages members to reevaluate wildlife health importance, use One Health strategies, and protect wildlife in disease emergence scenarios. The framework supports the growth of political, policy, and scientific enabling environments for Veterinary Services to effectively run wildlife health monitoring, surveillance, and management systems.

Tools and guidelines

A large set of tools were produced to support Members, provide practical support to National Veterinary Services as well educate the general public regarding wildlife diseases.

For instance, [technical factsheets on viral hemorrhagic fevers](#) and preventative behaviour posters were developed within the framework of the EU-funded [EBO-SURSY project](#), which aims at enhancing knowledge and surveillance systems on hemorrhagic fevers in several African countries, together with scientific partners. Infographics and educational tools were also produced on [African Swine Fever](#) together with FAO. They include tools for wildlife disease practitioners as well as hunters interacting with wildlife.

Guidelines are released to inform countries on hot topics such as [Mpox](#) management, [invasive species](#), and [avian influenza](#) in wildlife. In the context of the COVID-19





World
Organisation
for Animal
Health
Founded as OIE

Organisation
mondiale
de la santé
animale
Fondée en tant qu'OIE

Organización
Mundial
de Sanidad
Animal
Fundada como OIE



No organization can protect wildlife health alone.

pandemic, WOAH, in collaboration with IUCN, produced the [Guidelines for working with free-Ranging wild mammals in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic](#) and [Considerations for sampling, testing, and reporting of SARS-CoV-2 in animals](#).

[Guidelines for wildlife disease risk analysis](#) and a [Manual of procedures for wildlife disease risk analysis](#) were also co-edited by WOAH and IUCN.

In addition, [Technical disease cards](#) containing information regarding disease aetiology, symptomatology, and diagnosis for widespread wildlife diseases are available to all on the WOAH website.

Communication tools targeting the general public, emphasizing the role of [citizens](#) in animal disease surveillance systems or [community-based](#) surveillance work were widely spread.

Wildlife disease reporting

Moreover, wildlife disease [situation reports](#) are released monthly to collate the data submitted on the animal disease information system WAHIS. The WOAH's strategy for wildlife disease reporting is being revised to favour simplicity and flexibility, reach diverse data providers, and boost data yield for decision-making in conservation and One Health concerns.

The latest [WOAH survey \(2021\)](#) highlighted the situation of wildlife disease surveillance systems in the world. Particularly, it revealed that 77% of European countries have a wildlife surveillance program with both passive (100%) and active (95%) surveillance and Veterinary Services involved in wildlife health management in 53% of the country surveyed. Most collect

and analyze over 1,000 wildlife samples annually, with African Swine fever and Avian Influenza being the main diseases monitored.

Impediments to handling and transporting samples include delays in detection and access to carcasses. Support for conducting wildlife outbreak investigations is a major need. Data management systems are well established, with 85% of European countries maintaining records related to wildlife health events. Key responses to wildlife diseases included carcass removal, biosecurity enhancement, vaccination, and wild animal population density control.

National Focal Points for Wildlife

When it comes to wildlife health monitoring, WOAH relies on a network of National Focal Points for Wildlife (NFPW), who keep close contact with the WOAH's Wildlife Network Coordinator, transfer information on WOAH-listed diseases when they occur in wild species (in coordination with the Delegates) and are responsible for transferring information on non-listed diseases that happen in wild species.

NFPW also undergo regular thematic [trainings organized by WOAH](#) for each region, based on handbooks produced in collaboration with [WOAH's Collaborating Centres](#). The latest training cycle for European NFPW took place in Warsaw, Poland on June 26th-29th and focused on [wildlife health information management](#), while also presenting how system thinking can be applied to solve wildlife disease conundrums.

WOAH, through Claire Cayol
Preparedness and Resilience Department
12-14, rue de Prony, 75017 Paris.
wildlife@woah.org

EWDA research grants in 2023

Record funding available!

Apply by 15th September – 18,000 Euros available!

We now have four categories of grants, and six grants of 3,000 Euros available for 2023:

Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Grant *NEW GRANT*	2 x 3,000 Euros
Wildlife Conservation Research Grant	2 x 3,000 Euros
Grant for Wildlife Health Activities in Eastern Europe	1 x 3,000 Euros
The Amanda Hawkswood Wildlife Health and Welfare Research Grant	1 x 3,000 Euros

For full details see: <https://ewda.org/ewda-small-grants/>

2021 was the first year that the EWDA had three grants on offer, each of 3,000 Euros. In 2023 we have been very fortunate to improve on this and we have received extra funding from a French endowment fund. This has allowed us to offer two grants in the Wildlife Conservation category.

Furthermore, we have been working with the EWDA Sustainability Committee to develop a new grant, '**Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Grant**' and are very pleased to have completed this. Further information about this exciting grant is described by the Sustainability Committee on page 22.

The existing application form and grant proposal guidelines have been adapted with information from the Sustainability Committee to create the new documentation to support this grant. 6,000 Euros of funding has been secured for the 2023 grant cycle, very generously donated by the French endowment fund and another donor. Assessment of the applications will be made in conjunction with the Sustainability Committee.

Link to documents for the new Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Grant:

[Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Proposal Guidelines](#)
[Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Application Form](#)

Links to documents for the three other grants:

[Small Grant Proposal Guidelines](#)
[Small Grant Application Form](#)

For full details see:

<https://ewda.org/ewda-small-grants/>

We are now looking forward to receiving and assessing the applications which need to be submitted by
15th September 2023

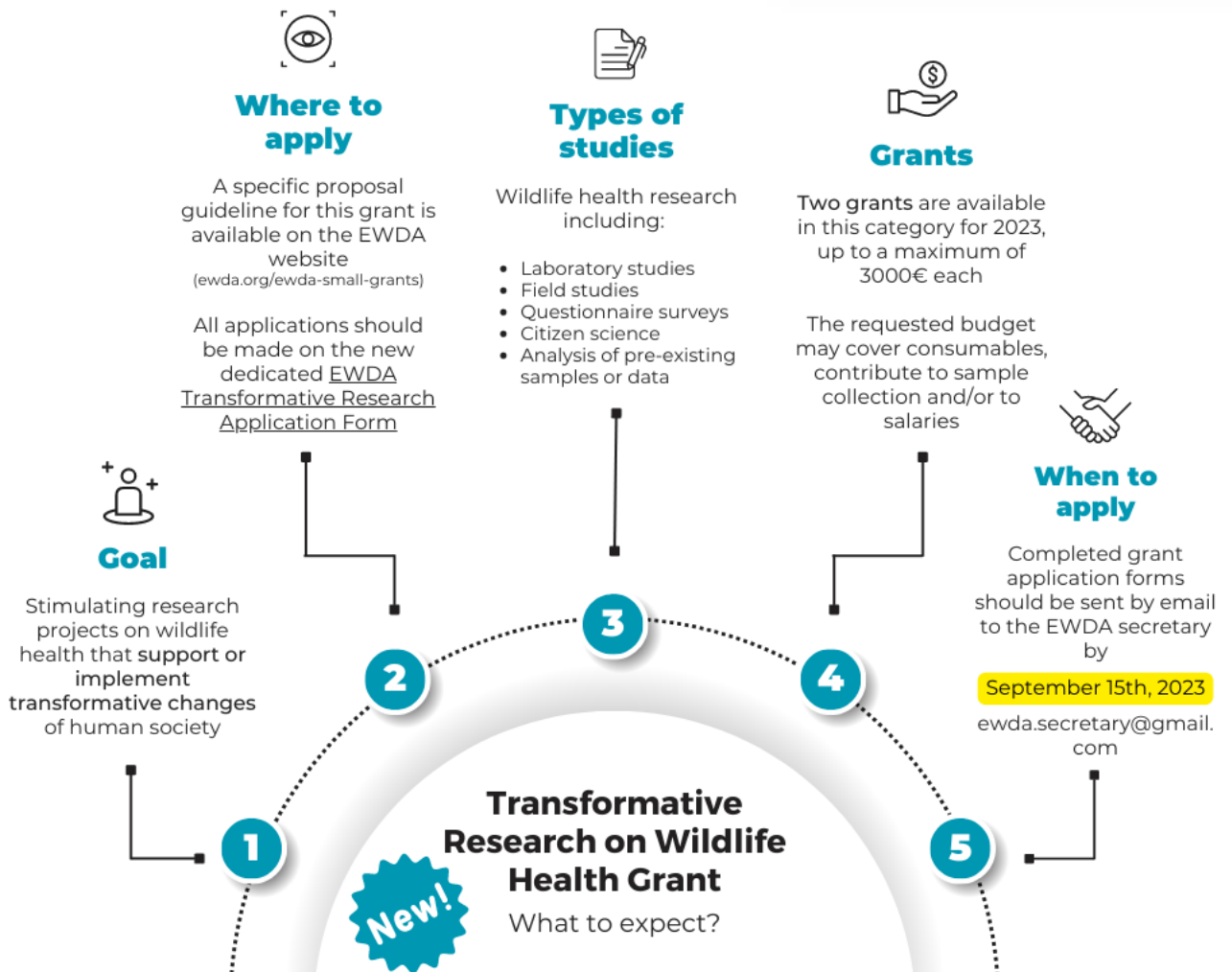
Paul Holmes, Animal and Plant Health Agency, England
On behalf of the EWDA Small Grants Committee:

Helle Bernstorff Hydeskov, Gábor Czirják, Emmanuelle Gilot-Fromont, Ignasi Marco, Alessandra Gaffuri, and Đuro Huber

NEW! Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Grant

"The journey of transformative change begins with a single step—a commitment to challenge the status quo and work towards creating a world that nurtures and protects all living beings."
Jane Goodall Institute

The Sustainability Committee together with the Small Grants Committee have created a new grant to support research projects on wildlife health that support or implement transformative changes of human society. Find out more about it and the application process!



What is transformative change?

Transformative change refers to a **fundamental and significant shift or transformation** in various aspects of society, organizations, or individuals. It involves substantial changes in systems, structures, values, behaviours, and norms, leading to a new and improved state.

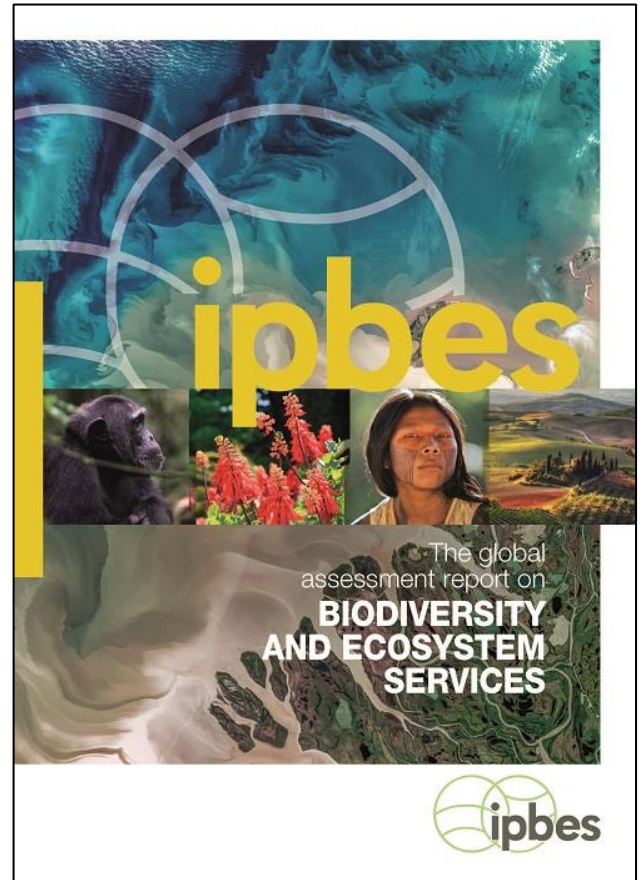
It is driven by a recognition that the current situation is no longer sustainable or desirable, and that a radical shift is needed to address complex challenges, achieve specific goals, or create a better future. It goes beyond incremental or superficial changes and aims to create deep and lasting impact. In the context of societal or global issues, transformative change is necessary to address issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pandemic risk.

IPBES

The IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: <https://www.ipbes.net/>) concluded in its 2019 report, that:

“The goals for conserving and sustainably using nature and achieving sustainability cannot be met by current trajectories, and goals for 2030 and beyond may only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors”.

This Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services serves as a **wake-up call to the urgent need for action to address the ongoing biodiversity crisis**. It highlights the interconnectedness between biodiversity, ecosystems, and human well-being and provides a scientific foundation for decision-makers to develop effective policies and strategies to safeguard and restore biodiversity.

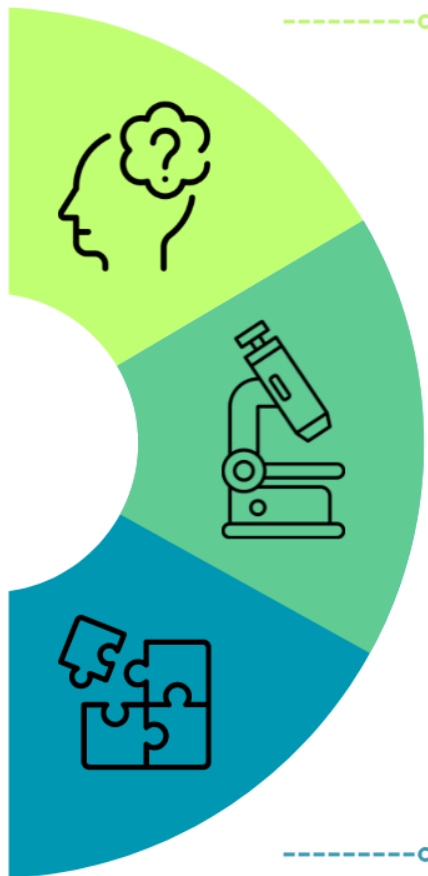


About the Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Grant

The Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Grant was created by the Sustainability Committee of the EWDA with the goal of **stimulating research projects on wildlife health that support or implement transformative changes of human society**.

This may be done by implementing as closely as possible the WDA's Mission Statement and Charter of Values. The formulation of these were a big step forward and the next step is to implement these values. These grants are made available to facilitate making transformative changes with our wildlife health research.

Putting transformative change into practice is not an easy task. For a better comprehension, it might be helpful to compare the current way of thinking to a potential new way of thinking about doing research:



Formulation of research problems

The formulation of research problems addressed in response to a wildlife disease might be **broader** than is usually done in the current situation, giving as much attention to inorganic nature, ecosystems, wildlife, and, if applicable, to domestic animals and humans. Also, when formulating the research problem, one should **consider ecological and social costs to society** as well as financial costs.

Methodology

The choice of methods employed to conduct scientific research should be determined not only by financial costs, but more importantly by their **environmental impact**.

Solutions

Solutions for addressing wildlife disease issues should include not only short-term measures like the development of treatments, but also **long-term measures** that address underlying causes of disease emergence and help to make the transition to a sustainable society and to reduce disease risk.

- **Two grants** are available in this category for 2023, up to 3,000 Euro each.
- The **cycle** for this grant will follow the one of the other EWDA grants.
- Applications should be made on the new **EWDA Transformative Research Application Form**.
- A **specific proposal guideline** is available on <https://ewda.org/ewda-small-grants/>
- The requested **budget** may cover consumables, contribute to sample collection, and/or to salaries (e.g., to encourage the analysis and publication of pre-collected raw data).
- **Deadline September 15th 2023**. Completed grant application forms should be sent by email to the EWDA secretary ewda.secretary@gmail.com
- If you have any questions about implementing transformative changes in research, please send an email to the EWDA sustainability committee ewda.sustainability@gmail.com and we will address them as soon as possible.

On behalf of the EWDA Sustainability Committee:

Beatriz Rubio Alonso, DVM MSc . Madrid, Spain

Thijs Kuiken, Lineke Begeman, Ana Vale, Graham Smith,
Barbara Vogler, Karin Lemberger

Contact: ewda.sustainability@gmail.com



15th Scientific Conference of the European Wildlife Disease Association

One Health

EWDA 2024



September 9th-13th, Stralsund, Germany

Challenges and Opportunities for the Surveillance and Management of Wildlife



FRIEDRICH-LOEFFLER-INSTITUT

FLI

Bundesforschungsinstitut für Tiergesundheit
Federal Research Institute for Animal Health

15th EWDA Conference

Stralsund/Greifswald, Germany

9-13 September 2024

One Health

EWDA 2024



Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut & Deutsches Meeresmuseum Stralsund
are pleased to announce the
15th EDWA Conference

Conference Topics include

- Wildlife-Livestock-Human Interface: One Health, ecosystem health and disease surveillance
- Disease ecology, emerging and re-emerging wildlife diseases
- Wildlife population health and management, conservation and policy
- Host-pathogen interactions
- Impact of climate change and urbanization
- Prevention and pandemic preparedness
- Non-communicable diseases in wildlife
- Aquatic animal health

Save the Date (preliminary)

16 October 2023

13 November 2023

15 January 2024

2 February 2024

Call for oral and poster presentations

Opening of early-bird-registration

Closure of the abstract submission

Notification of accepted presentations/posters

Closure of early-bird-registration

Conference Format

We go green and are hybrid!

Contact: ewda2024@fli.de

Conference URL

