



NEWSLETTER

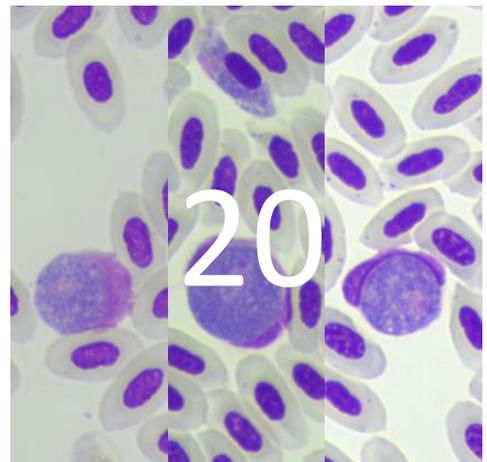
// WINTER 2025



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ON THE COVER

Iberian Lynx (*Lynx pardinus*).

Cover photo by **Grégoire Dubois**

Explore more remarkable photographs:



Disclaimer

The editors have tried to put this non-citable bulletin together as carefully as possible and apologise for any errors or omissions that may have occurred.

Chair's Corner



Holiday season and half-time for the EWDA biennial cycle

Rebranding. Aiming for WDA to become the go-to wildlife health expert organization.

The time is right – for change?

WDA officers have been for a long time and are still working hard on the rebranding of our association. The aim is to be the international go-to association for expertise in wildlife health. Part of this work is to understand and improve how WDA is viewed from the “outside”, by the lay-person, the politician or other policy-maker.

If a name-change and logo change of the WDA can improve the visibility and understanding of who we are and what we do, is not easy to foresee, but it is you as member who can and will decide how this will be moved forward, by your input and vote. The collective know-how within EWDA allows us to take the lead as experts on European wildlife health. Maybe the time for change is now? Keep informed and be part of the evolution of our association!



It's the weather... Or the climate? Another warm December with no snow or ice in middle Sweden. Not much of a winter if you like skiing and skating. The reindeer, vital for the typical Christmas imagery, is one circumpolar species adapted to an arctic climate that is affected by climate change and increasing extreme weather conditions. White reindeer are special for the Saami reindeer herders, and are extra visible in the snow-free forest.

Reindeer photos: Erik Ågren.

Fake

Using, and by some mostly abusing, the word fake has become a tiresome constant nowadays. For EWDA and myself, fake emails in my name have been sent to multiple EWDA members every now and then. Any email from me as chair of EWDA requesting urgent help or money is of course fake, just scam mail. The sender email-address is incorrect, so do not reply! Any financial issues go through the WDA, and any requests for tasks or input normally go through the EWDA secretary email. All scam mails come from various made-up addresses, so do note my correct EWDA email **ewda.chair<at>gmail.com** and be wary of fraud attempts!

EWDA 2026

We are looking forward to meeting many of you again in September at the EWDA 2026 conference in Serbia. We are now halfway between our conferences. Next time seems to be far away, but time flies and there are abstracts to prepare and travels to plan. A lot of voluntary work goes into organizing a conference, so huge thanks to all who contribute! But first, have some time off and enjoy the festive season, Happy Holidays!

Also, a big THANK YOU all EWDA officers and other volunteers for all your efforts and input during 2025!

Your Chair
Erik

Erik Ågren

EWDA Chair
Swedish Veterinary Agency
Sweden, erik.agren@sva.se





From the Editors

"Getting ready for 2026!"

As winter settles in and we reflect on a busy and productive 2025, we're already looking ahead with excitement to what 2026 will bring. The coming year promises a full calendar of conferences, workshops, field seasons, and collaborative initiatives that will continue to push wildlife health and research forward. From emerging technologies to new conservation challenges and opportunities, 2026 is shaping up to be a year of momentum, curiosity, and meaningful impact.

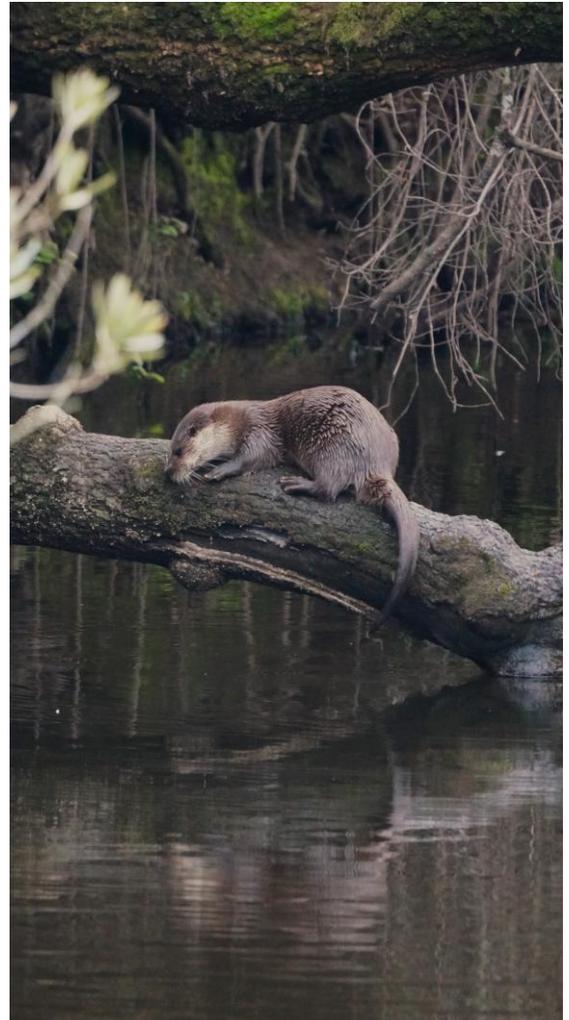
At the heart of this progress is our community. Networking is more than a professional exercise, it's how ideas evolve, methods improve, and solutions emerge. Conversations over conference coffee, collaborations sparked by a shared dataset, or a quick exchange of field lessons learned can lead to breakthroughs that none of us could achieve alone. Strong connections across disciplines, regions, and career stages help ensure that wildlife health remains innovative, inclusive, and grounded in real-world needs.

As we move into the new year, we encourage you to stay engaged, share your work openly, and seek out opportunities to connect. Exchanging ideas and research not only strengthens individual projects, but also builds a collective knowledge base that benefits wildlife, ecosystems, and the people working to understand and protect them.

The next pages show some events of interest coming up next year.

Here's to a collaborative, inspiring, and impactful 2026.

Your editorial team.



Eurasian Otter (Lutra lutra). Spain, 2025.
© Beatriz Rubio Alonso



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2026 Event Calendar



Here's our EWDA 2026 event calendar: Including EWDA and other events of interest.

First semester (until July 2026)

January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

April 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2



10TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WILDLIFE FERTILITY CONTROL
 Bridging The Gap: From Science to Management
 April 23-24, 2026 Barcelona, Spain

May 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

June 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4



European One Health Association (EOHA)
 Annual Scientific Meeting
 May 18-20



International Symposium on Animal Mortality Management
 A Triennial Symposium Focusing on Animal Mortality Management



2026 Event Calendar

Second semester (from July 2026)

July 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

August 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

September 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3

October 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



ECCB'26
Leiden, The Netherlands

EWDA 2026
Conference
Novi Sad, Serbia
29.IX – 03.X 2026



The Wild Future:
Challenges of Integrating
Health
Welfare
Biodiversity

November 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5

December 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2

2026 AAZV 58th Annual Conference

Oklahoma City Convention Center
Oct 18 - 23, 2026

Notes from the Board

“Finding a balance between global curiosity and responsibility for our planet.”

I am writing this EWDA Newsletter contribution when we are well in December (being a Board Member gives the advantage of extended deadlines!). I haven't seen official data yet, but I expect this December so far to be one of the warmest in the last couple of decades. This weekend, I even saw a tree blossoming, which was a alienating moment. Climate change is happening right before our eyes and yet it is difficult to really adjust our behaviour and our societies to keep these changes within reasonable limits.

And I have to admit I also struggle with this. As you may have noticed, Gudrun had taken over the secretary duties for several months earlier this year, when I was away travelling with my family (big thank you for Gudrun!). We made a great trip in Asia, travelling from the Great Wall of China, to the foothills of the Himalaya, we saw Angkor Wat and “blue fire” when we climbed a volcano at night and we went snorkelling in the most amazing places. We met friendly people from all kinds of nationalities, tasted new dishes and saw animals that we had only seen on television or in zoos before and it was amazing. But we did fly several times, though we tried to limit it to a minimum. And travelling in itself is of course using relatively many resources, especially compared to our usual camping trips. The omnipresent use of plastic bottles, or plastic in general, was often quite depressing, though the attitude towards plastic bottles is changing (very) slowly: in Indonesia, all accommodation provided large water tanks to refill your own bottle.

Travelling widens your view on the world and challenges your own perspectives and prejudices- at least that was my experience this trip. I hope we can find a way to balance the costs of travelling with the benefits. For myself, I limit the “flights-for-fun” to once every five years. I am curious how you balance this and am looking forward to hearing your solutions in 2026 at our bi-annual conference. I have already checked train travel possibilities to Novi Sad...

For now, enjoy the festive season and wishing you and your loved ones all the best for 2026!



Miriam Maas

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and the Environment (RIVM),
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2026 Conference

**EWDA 2026
Conference**
Novi Sad, Serbia
29.IX – 03.X 2026



The Wild Future:
Challenges of Integrating
Health
Welfare
Biodiversity

“Save the date so you do not miss it!”

The 2026 EWDA Conference “The Wild Future: Challenges of Integrating Health, Welfare and Biodiversity” will be held in Novi Sad, Serbia from September 29th to October 3rd.

It is our great pleasure to welcome all colleagues and friends to the European Wildlife Disease Association (EWDA) Conference 2026, hosted by the Scientific Veterinary Institute “Novi Sad”, in the vibrant city of Novi Sad, Serbia. We are delighted to open our doors — and our hearts — to all the people interested in wildlife from across Europe and beyond.

The 2026 Conference theme, “The Wild Future: Challenges of Integrating Health, Welfare and Biodiversity,” highlights the deep interconnections between wildlife health, ecosystem integrity, and the well-being of our shared planet. While our work is grounded in science, we all share the same passion to understand, protect, and respect the natural world and all living systems. During the conference, we look forward to exchanging knowledge, ideas, and experiences, while fostering new collaborations and friendships that will continue well beyond the event.

Wildlife health is a challenge that transcends borders, species, and disciplines — and together, we can strengthen the bridge between wildlife, the environment, domestic animals, and humans, under the One Health framework. Besides the Conference, there will also be workshops scheduled as preconference days. More details and information are coming soon!

Conference location

Novi Sad is known for its hospitality, rich history, and welcoming spirit, and we warmly invite you to experience all of this during your stay. It is the second capital city in Serbia and 90 km from the city of Belgrade where international airport Nikola Tesla is. There are plenty of hotels and other accommodation services in the city of Novi Sad and many restaurants and cafes as well.

Discover Serbia

Serbia is known for its warm hospitality, excellent cuisine, and great beer and wine. Alongside an engaging scientific program, we are preparing a selection of social events and encourage you to explore Novi Sad’s cultural, historical, and natural attractions.

Conference dates at a glance

Dates: 29 September – 2 October 2026
Registration starts: January 15th 2026.
Abstract submission deadline: April 1st 2026

Sara Savic & Tamaš Petrović

Senior Research Fellows
Scientific Veterinary Institute Novi
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Novi Sad, Serbia



Explore the conference website [here!](#)

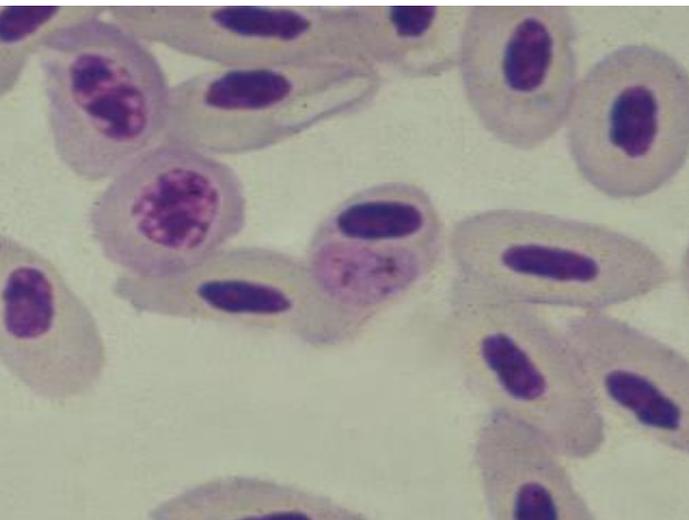
Network Committee



Emerging and neglected wildlife health issues in Europe – a summary of the online EWDA Network meeting

On November 24th, 2025, [the EWDA Network Committee for wildlife health surveillance in Europe](#), supported by the Zoological Society of London, organised an online meeting attended by one hundred and thirty participants from around 25 countries. The meeting focused on examples of wildlife health issues that have received limited attention and remained under the radar, being overshadowed by major diseases such as avian influenza and African swine fever. In line with the goals of the EWDA Network, it was considered important to raise awareness of lesser-known, emerging wildlife health issues to help ensure they are not overlooked. The meeting was chaired by **Becki Lawson**, who started with a brief overview of the EWDA Network Committee's work.

The first talk by **Mattia Calzolari** presented surveillance results for the zoonotic mosquito-borne Tahyna virus in mosquito pools and wildlife spleens in the densely populated Emilia-Romagna region (Northern Italy). **Viola Haring** discussed the reservoir role of shrews (mainly *Crocidura* spp.) in Central Europe for a selection of protozoans, bacteria and viruses with potential animal and public health significance. **Miriam Maas** investigated the prevalence and genetic diversity of the nematode *Baylisascaris procyonis* in invasive raccoons in The Netherlands. *Ophidiomyces ophiodiicola*, which causes snake fungal disease, was discussed by **Rachel Marschang**, who also announced the founding of a European consortium for wild reptile health. Attention was drawn by wildlife rehabilitators in Belgium to an apparent increase in the prevalence of diphtheria caused by *Corynebacterium ulcerans* in European hedgehogs, leading to severe abscesses on the head and limbs, as presented by **Valérie Miserez**.



Plasmodium relictum in blood smear of a fieldfare. © Paul Tavernier



White-toothed shrew. © Matthias D'Haen
waarnemingen.be

After the break, continuing with the same species, **Katherina Seilern-Macpherson** discussed arterivirus infection causing neurological disease in hedgehogs. **Philippe DeSoye** reported on the increasing occurrence of haemoparasite-associated mortalities, mainly caused by *Plasmodium* and *Trypanosoma* spp., in passeriform and apodiform birds in Switzerland. **Tamara Szentivanyi** used citizen science to gain insights into the potential role of native and invasive wild carnivores in nematode parasite emergence in Hungary. The presentation of **Patrícia Xavier** focused on Crimean Congo Haemorrhagic Fever, which is now also seen in Europe, vectored by *Hyalomma* spp. ticks. Finally, **Rozenn Le Net** reported an unusual disease syndrome with mortality among roe deer in France in 2024, believed to be caused by a combination of non-infectious factors. A meeting [abstract booklet](#) was compiled and made available on [the EWDA network publications](#) page.

In conclusion, as summarized in the figure below, a captivating diversity of wildlife health issues were covered, highlighting the broad range of emerging threats in the field



European hedgehog. © Paul Tavernier

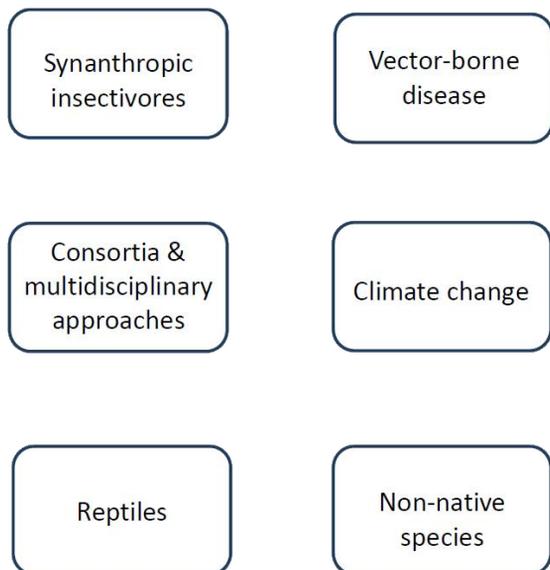
Given the large number of abstract submissions, and popularity of the online meeting format, the Network Committee hopes to organise similar online meetings in future non-EWDA conference years.

Upcoming activities of the EWDA Network Committee

At the coming [EWDA conference in Novi Sad, Serbia](#), the Network Committee will host a pre-conference meeting on Monday September 28th 2026, to which we invite you with pleasure. The theme of our 2026 meeting is **“Improving wildlife mortality reporting to better understand population-level disease impact”**. More details will soon become available on the [conference website](#).

EMERGING AND NEGLECTED WILDLIFE HEALTH ISSUES IN EUROPE

ONLINE MEETING
24th November 2025



Paul Tavernier
WILDPAD
Belgian Wildlife Disease Society
Belgium
paul_tavernier@skynet.be



Small Grants Committee

During the 2025 grant cycle, a total of 30 Small Grant applications were received. An overview of the successful grant recipients is provided below.

Wildlife Conservation Research Grants

María Escobar González	Assessing toxicological and infectious disease threats to Cinereous Vultures in the Spanish Pyrenees
Summary	This project will investigate toxicological and infectious threats to the reintroduced Cinereous Vulture (<i>Aegypius monachus</i>) population in the Catalan Pyrenees, a keystone bridge between Iberian and European colonies. We will assess exposure to NSAIDs and lead in fledglings, alongside serological surveillance for avian influenza (AI) and flaviviruses, whose epidemiology and potential impact remain unclear. Analyses will combine toxicology and serological tests. The results will inform adaptive management, strengthen conservation strategies, and provide an integrative framework for monitoring endangered avian scavengers.
Javier Millán Gasca	Molecular characterization of distemper virus in protected carnivores in northern Spain
Summary	Canine distemper is a potentially devastating disease for wild carnivores. The Iberian Peninsula hosts a rich diversity of carnivores, with up to a dozen present in the region of Navarra. For the past six years, we have been running a disease surveillance program there based on road-killed animals. We have collected over 400 carnivores. We aim to study the occurrence and genetic diversity of distemper virus in a selection of these individuals. This research will provide valuable insights into the health of wild carnivore populations and highlights the importance of long-term monitoring for the conservation of biodiversity.

Grant for Wildlife Health Research and Education in Eastern Europe

Carolina RF Chagas	Temporal trends in <i>Leucocytozoon</i> infection dynamics under global change scenario
Summary	This study investigates how climate warming influences <i>Leucocytozoon</i> parasite prevalence and diversity patterns in four widespread European passerine species in Lithuania over the past decade. Using molecular analyses of archived avian blood samples, we will identify parasite lineages, assess temporal changes, and examine their association with temperature variations. This long-term, ecological approach aims to uncover climate-driven shifts in host-parasite dynamics, informing conservation strategies and disease management. By elucidating the impacts of warming on parasite diversity and host specificity, the project contributes to understanding emerging health risks in wildlife, livestock, and humans, supporting ecosystem resilience and biodiversity conservation.

Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Grant

Richard AJ Williams	Panacea or poison? Supplemental feeding for wild birds.
Summary	Awareness of zoonotic disease is growing following outbreaks like influenza, and COVID-19, showing the need for a One Health focus. Supplemental bird feeding, common globally (198,000 tonnes per year in the UK), benefits some birds but also increases disease risk. Flocks at bird feeders spread pathogens (including bacteria, fungi, etc.), like trichomoniasis, and salmonellosis. Studies show pathogens on feeders, in bird microbiota, and sometimes in feed. Despite EU hygiene rules contamination occurs. Industrial-scale feeding may spread pathogens and fuel antimicrobial resistance, raising sustainability concerns. This study compares microbiota in feed to samples collected from bird feeders.

The Amanda Hawkswood Wildlife Welfare Research Grant

Jacopo Morelli	Evaluation of vatinoxan as treatment of the cardiorespiratory adverse effects of associated with field anaesthesia in free-ranging brown bears (<i>Ursus arctos</i>)
Summary	Despite its globally widespread use, medetomidine can induce severe adverse cardiopulmonary effects (i.e., hypertension, bradycardia, hypoxemia and hypoperfusion) in brown bears undergoing capture and field anaesthesia. Vatinoxan is a peripherally-acting α_2 -antagonist, known to alleviate these adverse effects without affecting the sedation in mammals. This prospective, randomized, double-blinded, controlled clinical study in free-ranging brown bears involves a treatment group receiving vatinoxan intramuscularly and a control group receiving saline. Several physiological and activity data are collected during and after the anaesthesia, respectively. The study started in April 2025 and the preliminary results suggest a remarkable impact on animal welfare and anaesthetic protocols. The project is part of a self-funded PhD project, and the grant recipient is organising a crowdfunding campaign .



Paul Holmes

On behalf of the EWDA Small Grants Committee: Gábor Czirjak, Steph Gross, Emmanuelle Gilot, Ignasi Marco, Rosa Jolma, Anna Meredith, Djuro Huber, Katharina Seilern-Macpherson



Carbon footprint of the Stralsund conference



“A goal of the Sustainability Committee is to help reduce the carbon footprint of the conferences by 30% by 2030”

To achieve our goal we need to measure the footprint of each conference. In Stralsund we asked everyone to complete a personal questionnaire, and we report the results here.

We made two estimates of the carbon footprint for this conference. One used the same assumptions as before about the travel and accommodation, only knowing the country of origin. The second used the data collected with the QR code – which was collected for 30% of all participants, and extrapolated to the other attendees. For those completing the forms, we know the cities they travelled from and to and which transport they used, improving our estimates.

Firstly, we need to note that 360 people attended Stralsund, which is an increase from previous conferences of 67%. This was partly due to the increase in local (German) attendees – more than double previous conferences at 108. The number of intercontinental attendees was 23, almost identical to the previous average of 22. Our SMART goal of reducing the carbon footprint of the conferences by 30% by 2030 therefore needs to be considered at both the total and per person level.

Generalised results

By using the earlier assumptions, the estimated footprint for Stralsund was above average at 276 tons CO₂ rather than 226 – an increase of 22%. However, the per person CO₂ was 0.77 tons, well below the average of 1.05 – a reduction of 28.2%. The CO₂ caused by flights was 85% of the total, a slight reduction from the 90% average..

If we now look at the actual travel data we can make a more refined estimate. The revised total for Stralsund was 265 tons CO₂ (or 0.74 per person), which suggests that the first approach provided a good estimate. However, this first approach relied on fixed assumptions about means of travel, and (1) we cannot be sure that the 2024 means of travel was representative of earlier years, and (2) fixed assumptions cannot capture any changes in travel behaviour for future conferences.

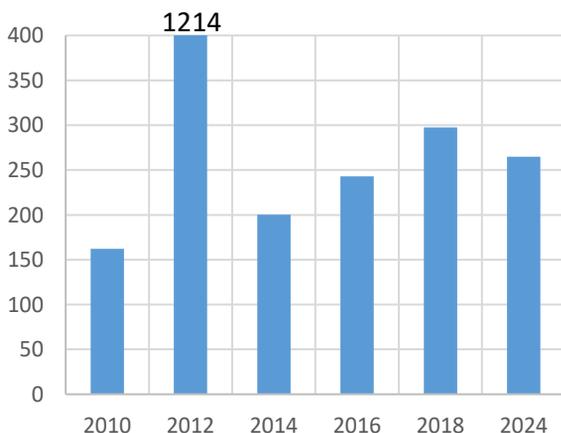
Individualised results

Using the more detailed data we can see that 41% of surveyed people flew which is less than the assumed 50% based on country of origin. However, this means that the CO₂ of other means of travel was about double that of the earlier assumptions. Overall, this accounted for 7 tons CO₂ of the reduction. The remaining difference was a 3.5 ton CO₂ reduction in accommodation, probably due to 46% of surveyed people using AirB&B and 4% camping.

How does this compare

How does Stralsund compare to our other conferences? The geographically closest previous conference was in Berlin in 2016. If we assume that 360 people attended that conference, then the footprint would have been about 310 tons CO₂. This may indicate that changes in personal travel and accommodation are reducing the footprint of our latest conferences.

Conference CO₂e



Carbon footprint of our conferences in tons of CO₂ equivalent. Note that 2012 was joint with the WDA.

We have to note that the 2012 conference in Lyon was a joint WDA/EWDA conference, which meant more international attendees than normal, and thus a much higher total footprint, and a higher footprint per person. If we ignore that one conference we can see that our 'per person' footprint has been increasing over recent years, despite the number of attendees being similar (198-234).

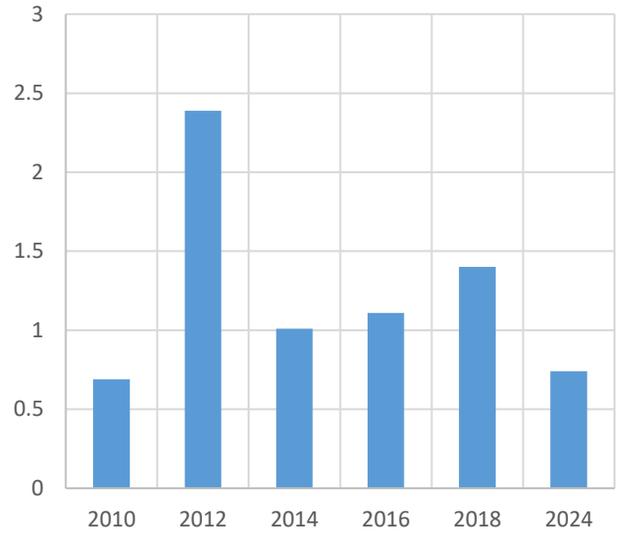
So it's good to see that even with an increase of 67% in the number of attendees at Stralsund, our total and per person footprint have both reduced from the last conference.

It's also encouraging to note that the overall percentage of the footprint due to flying has reduced to its lowest recorded level at under 80%.

Going Forward

To measure the possible 30% reduction in carbon footprint of our conferences we need to continue to collect individual travel data, as most of this reduction requires a change in means of travel that would not be captured with the first approach. The similarity of the estimates for Stralsund suggests that this would be accurate enough, despite changing the methodology. This work suggests that more people are deciding not to fly where possible.

CO2e per person (tons)



Our Per Person carbon footprint showing the reduction during the Stralsund conference.

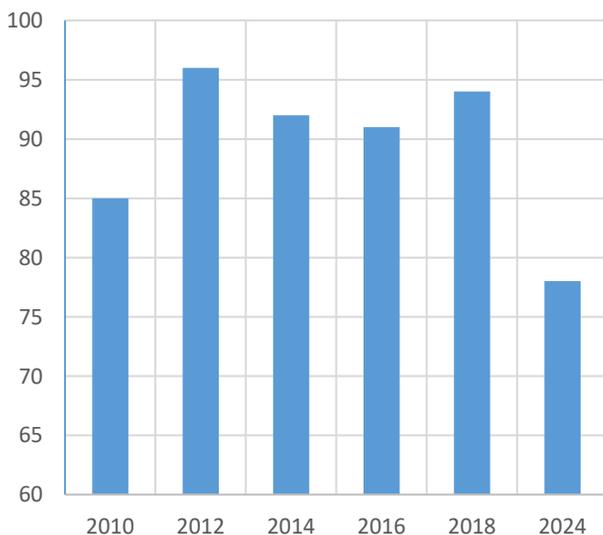
Thank you

We would like to thank you all for participating and completing the travel forms. This has really helped us understand our joint carbon footprint.

We have 5 more years to achieve our SMART goal of a 30% reduction. Our data from Stralsund suggests we are on track.

We will be repeating this endeavour in 2026 for the conference in Serbia, and we hope that the increased awareness of our footprint, and the EDWART travel challenge will encourage more people to consider their means of travel (and accommodation) for the next conference in Serbia.

Percent of footprint due to flying



The percentage of the total footprint due to flying has reduced for the Stralsund conference.

Graham Smith

On behalf of the EWDA
Sustainability Committee
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Student Chapter News



“Meet the New EWDA Student Board (2025–2027)”

The new EWDA Student Chapter Board for 2025-2027 would like to say hello to everyone in the EWDA community!

Hello EDWA colleagues and friends!

This past summer, the EWDA Student Chapter turned a new page when elections were held, and student members voted for the new board 2025–2027. Five new faces from across Europe were elected and are joined by a familiar advisor, all united by a shared love of wildlife.

We are excited to introduce the new group that will be steering the chapter over the next two years!

Who are we?

Our Chair of the Board is **Catarina Monteiro**. From the colorful streets of Porto to the sun-soaked classrooms of Lisbon, Catarina’s journey has always pointed toward wildlife health. After organizing countless webinars and representing Portugal in the EWDA, she now brings her sense of adventure and knack for bringing people together to the role of Chair. She’s eager to build new bridges and help more students take their first steps into wildlife medicine.

Inês Marcelino is our Secretary. Since starting out as a vet student in Lisbon, Inês has collected stories from the UK to the Netherlands (where she’s now deep in a PhD on Dutch large herbivores). Her experience in student organizations brings a collaborative spark to our board. As Secretary, she’ll be the engine behind our communications and help connect even the farthest-flung members in our network.

Our workshop coordinator is **Sofia Soares**, who comes to us with tales from European rescue centers, as well as in Central America, and Asia, and tick-borne disease research high in the Pyrenees, where she pursues her PhD. She’s our resident hands-on learning enthusiast, ready to craft workshops that inspire, teach, and connect students from every corner of wildlife health and medicine.

Remco Nederlof is our Communications Officer. If you like wildlife, zoos, or exotic species, chances are Remco’s already worked with them! Active in student boards and the EWDA Dutch community, he’s got a talent for bringing people together.



CHAIR
Catarina Botelho Monteiro



SECRETARY
Inês Marcelino



**WORKSHOP
COORDINATOR**
Sofia Soares



COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
Remco Nederlof



EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES REPRESENTATIVE
Geo Lupu



BOARD ADVISOR (PAST CHAIR)
Kim Van de Wiel

This year, he'll be helping country representatives organize events and spreading the word about opportunities (and good stories!) throughout our network.

All the way from Romania, our colleague **Geo Lupu** takes on the new role of Eastern European Representative. Geo is blazing a trail as our first ever board position dedicated to Eastern Europe. With a foot in both clinical wildlife work and academic research in Cluj-Napoca, Geo's determined to connect students from across the region with mentors, opportunities, and each other, making sure no one's path is too remote or too winding.

Last, but not least, we get to keep **Kim van de Wiel** in the group for two more years! Kim may be handing over the reins after leading the last board, but she isn't going far! Now in the advisor seat, she'll be sharing wisdom, cheering us on, and making sure the new team gets off to a roaring start.

We are a little bit scattered geographically, but one thing brings us together: a passion for wildlife health and the belief that community makes us all stronger. We can't wait to bring you new ideas, events, and opportunities—for everyone, from first-years to future researchers.

What's next?

The new Board has already started preparing activities for all the EWDA student members and friends. Alongside the classic highlights, such as the Student-Mentor Mixer and the Student Workshop at the future biannual EWDA Conference (planning is already underway!), we have kicked off our new term with a brand-new webinar. We were thrilled to have around 55 colleagues from all over Europe (and beyond!) join us and our fantastic guest speaker, Dr. Sara Grau Camps, who took us on a journey into amphibian populations in northern Germany and shared her exciting research into infectious agents.

We are already preparing for our next couple webinars, so keep your eyes peeled for coming announcements.

Feel free to connect with us across our social platforms or drop us a message in our email inbox. We are always happy to get new ideas, suggestions, and answer any questions!

EWDA Student Chapter Board 2025-2027

Catarina, Geo, Inês, Sofia, Remco & Kim
ewdastudent@gmail.com

[Our LinkedIn](#)

[Our Instagram](#)



“ Don't forget to follow our socials for the latest news! ”

EDWART the Reindeer and the Responsible Travel Challenge



EDWART is an adorable mascot created to encourage sustainable travel to EWDA events. At the 2024 EWDA conference, many participants travelled long distances using greener transportation and EDWART hopes to spark lasting eco-friendly travel habits.

One of EWDA's sustainability committee's goals is evaluating the environmental costs of our activities. Another important one is raising awareness of those costs, and ways to reduce it. By far, the activity with the highest environmental costs is the travel from our residences to the conference locations. This is not an activity to stop, but an activity for which the costs can be substantially reduced.

The idea to start a Responsible Travel Challenge came up in discussions with EWDA's Student Chapter. One thing led to another, and then EDWART, the yellow Reindeer was born (see next picture). As proud parents (Sustainability Committee and Student Chapter) we now would like to brag about its amazing impact. We hope its name and actions will stick with you forever and make your travel more fun and environmentally friendly.

The rise of a yellow Reindeer

EDWART was born in Lyon 2019 at the Student Chapter meeting. Already then, at such a young age, its great powers to enchant a broad range of people from different disciplines, ages, sexes and cultures became clear, students being as enthusiastic as their tutors. We imagined an even greater role for EDWART in the future, to give him a part to play in the EWDA conference in the less centrally located Spain in 2021. Although probably the greenest conferences of the EWDA ever, EDWART did miss an opportunity to shine there – as the pandemic only allowed us to meet virtually. Therefore, EDWART's second time in action was at the Nordic Student Chapter meeting in Copenhagen.

From there he made the jump to Stralsund at the EWDA conference in 2024. Here he had the opportunity to make an even bigger impact: the numbers of participants are higher, and generally more seasoned. (It is well known senior people, rusty in their old, less environmentally favourable habits, need a little more convincing to do things in a different, better, way.) Exciting times for the parents... would he succeed?

A story to inspire millions

How he did! EDWART did inspire and here we like to summarise the competitors' endeavours, as they are impressive. Impressive in distance travelled not by plane, the use of creativity and fun.



EDWART in Lyon, France, for the 2019 Student Chapter meeting. © Kim van de Wiel.

Fifteen and half a person (in the form of a pregnant woman) took part in the challenge, either individually or in a group (largest group being 7.5 people travelling in one wondervan). Ages of participants were not asked, so detailed statistics are missing, but ranged from not even born to only grey hair. Countries participating were Norway (7.5), Sweden (3), UK (2), and the Netherlands (3). So, it seems the lovely yellow Reindeer appeals to Northern Europeans.

Total distance travelled more sustainably by all these participants combined one way was 16 116 km - over 32000 both ways! That is almost (namely 80%) of the circumference of the earth! - with participants' one way travel ranging between 536 and 1432 km per person.

Besides creative modes of travel (use of bikes, wondervans, hitchhiking) sustainability was sought in other ways too: multipurpose travel, e.g. by family/friend visits on the road or doing wildlife monitoring while traveling (dead: 7 raccoons, 1 hare, 1 debatable raccoon/fox; alive: 4 buzzards, 1 roe deer), drinking and eating from re-usable and self-brought cups, plates and cutlery, eating local, and ice cream with sustainable chocolate. The winners have brought EDWART to Uppsala, where he is feeling very much at home. We feel EDWART is already looking forward to a new destination, and fantasising to have winter with a bit more sunshine. Will you fight for him?

Be part of the change

We hope you will join the EDWART challenge for the Novi Sad 16th European Wildlife Disease Association conference. Hereby, EDWART would like to invite all the conference participants to join him in his challenge to make this world a better place.

For those of you who don't know him yet: EDWART (a.k.a. EWDA Responsible Travel) is bouncy, playful, happy, yellow, slightly dyslectic and dreams of the most beautiful worlds. He is a proud representative of wildlife in our far north and loves his cold habitat. EDWART, also, is very scared of planes. Therefore, he gladly offers himself to transport us around the world in the most sustainable way possible, and in doing this, he likes to progress with big jumps. EDWART is delighted to see so many of his friends meeting in one place again this year and all together improve the health of his companions. No online event beats being able to get back into the best herd.

LET'S SHARE THE RIDE!

Origin: Houten, the Netherlands
Mode of transport: car



Fun on the way: wildlife watching.	
	DEATH
Hare	1
Raccoon	+/- 7
Smashed-debatable-raccoon-fox	1
	ALIVE
Buzzard	>4
Roe deer	1




Miriam Maas & Anna Baauw

One of the travelogues made by the participants and their wildlife monitoring while on the road. Credit: Miriam Maas and Anna Baauw.

More information on how to take part of the challenge will be release closer to the 16th EWDA conference. Stay tuned!

NB. Indeed, EDWART's plastic skin and made-in-China-label represent that no good plan to save the world is void of a little bit of irony!



The eco-friendly journey of some EWDA members from Edinburgh to Stralsund, Germany, for the 15th EWDA conference. Credit: Katie Beckmann.

EWDA Sustainability Committee & Student Chapter

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Portugal lifting off



“Collaborations are essential to reach students from all fields!”

During the span of one and a half years, the newly reactivated Portuguese section hosted 15 webinars and one workshop, giving multiple students the opportunity to know the EWDA.

The Portuguese chapter was reactivated on the 31st of May 2024 with a webinar on “Brucellosis in Marine Mammals”, together with RALVT, the Stranding Response Network of Lisboa e Vale do Tejo area and FAUNA, the wildlife medicine focused student group of the University of Lisbon. Since then, 15 webinars were hosted as well as one in person workshop in collaboration with FAUNA.

Starting over

Most of the activities were free, held in Portuguese, highlighted Portuguese speakers and wildlife focused research developed in Portugal. However, given the international nature of the EWDA the goal was also to reach students from all over Europe so some of the webinars were hosted in English. Creating partnerships was essential to reach more students and to keep the high frequency of activities. Starting off, a partnership with FAUNA and RALVT was established for the first webinar and again in December 2024 for a workshop about Marine Mammal Strandings. In this workshop, students learned all about stranding events, practiced real life approach with help of an inflatable dolphin and discussed stranding scenario cases.



Marine mammals stranding workshop with RALVTS.
© Catarina Botelho Monteiro

In 2025, we continued pursuing new collaborations and in February, we joined efforts with the UK Country Rep., Sophie Cowne, on a webinar about “Health Risk Analysis” with Dr. Rosa Lopez Colom and later that month with the then Spanish Country Rep., Ane López Morales for a two-part webinar cycle about “In Situ and Ex Situ Conservation of the Iberian Lynx”.

New collaborations

In March 2025 we took things a step further, partnering up with WAVES Portugal and the Student Chapter of WDA Latin America. Our joint webinar with the Student Chapter of WDA-LA about “Xenarthra and Climate Change: Impacts in Health and Conservation”, with Dra. Flávia Miranda had over 113 participants from all around the globe, showing the potential of combining efforts with Student Chapter sections from other regions, contributing to a truly global association. With WAVES Portugal we launched a 4 month long partnership for a webinar cycle with two different webinar series: Career Path and Wildlife Medicine Cases sessions, supporting Portuguese wildlife rehabilitation centres along the way.

EWDA highlight in the news

Veterinária Atual, the only veterinary focused magazine in Portugal, interviewed us following a successful set of webinars focused on wildlife health in Portuguese archipelagos of Madeira and Azores ([read here](#)), highlighting the role of EWDA's student chapter in Portugal.

New faces

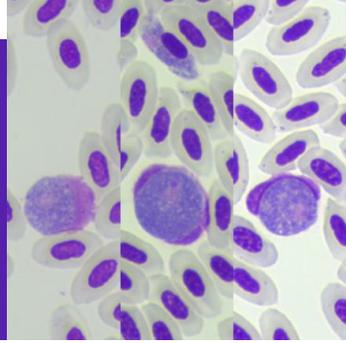
From October 2025 onwards, Joana Ferreira e Silva will be taking over as the new Country Representative for Portugal. We're certain she'll do a brilliant job!

Catarina Botelho Monteiro

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Working backwards: from host associations to parasite taxonomy



“When a thousand lineages look similar under the microscope, host associations become our guide to understanding parasite diversity”

Understanding parasite ecology requires fine taxonomic resolution, yet some parasites present true taxonomic puzzles. *Leucocytozoon*, an avian blood parasite, exhibits extreme cryptic diversity. Can we reverse the traditional approach and use host distribution patterns to help resolve taxonomic boundaries?

The challenge of combining morphology, genetics, and ecology for parasite taxonomy

Achieving high taxonomic resolution in parasites extends beyond systematic parasitology. Parasites with high genetic diversity often differ in infection dynamics even among closely related genetic variants. Without fine resolution, a seemingly generalist parasite may actually consist of multiple lineages with distinct host preferences. Yet some parasites are a true taxonomic challenge: they are morphologically cryptic but present a high genetic diversity making it difficult to disentangle the ecological strategies underlying their persistence.

This raises the question: Can host specificity patterns serve as distributional clues for delimiting taxonomic units? This is the premise of integrative taxonomy, which evaluates phenotypic and genetic variation together with ecological traits. In parasites, where the host provides the habitat, host associations can offer valuable insight for taxonomic classification.

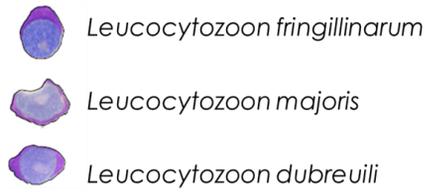
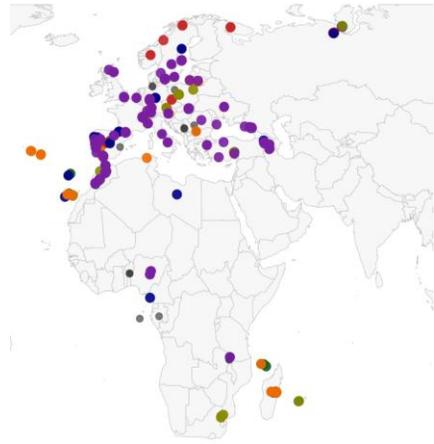
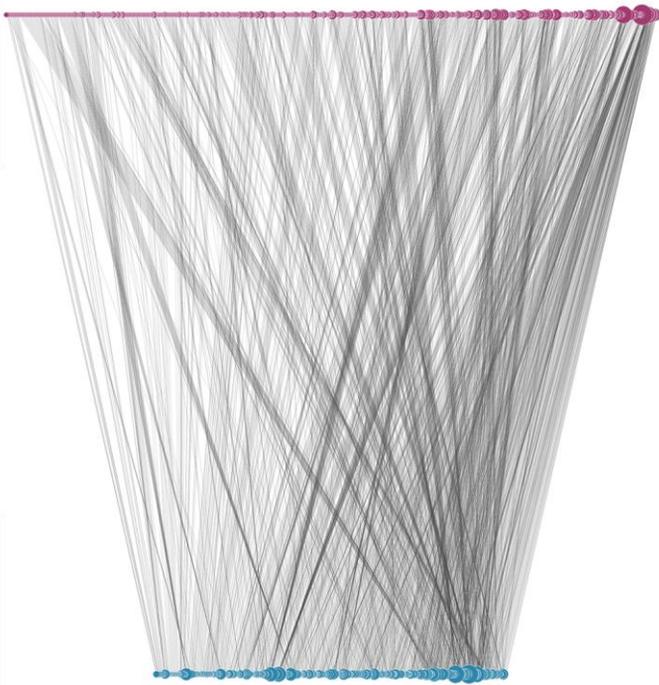


Leucocytozoon majoris morphotype primarily associated with Great Tits (*Parus major*) in Europe, can also infect other species such as Blackbirds (*Turdus merula*), illustrating why fine taxonomic resolution is crucial for understanding infection dynamics.

How studying avian *Leucocytozoon* parasites can help to solve this issue?

Leucocytozoon is a haemosporidian parasite, closely related to *Plasmodium* and *Haemoproteus*, which is transmitted by blackflies (Simuliidae). It exhibits traits typical of a host generalist, including high genetic diversity and broad opportunities for cross-species transmission. However, generalism exists on a continuum: some parasites infect multiple hosts with a few or single vectors, while others use multiple compatible vectors. Host specificity also varies between *Plasmodium* and *Haemoproteus*; even lineages with broad host ranges often reach their highest prevalence in only one or a few species, suggesting these act as primary hosts. For *Leucocytozoon*, such inferences are harder to assess because its species boundaries remain unclear, limiting accurate evaluation of host specificity.

To the best of our knowledge, *Leucocytozoon* shows specificity at the host Order level, with cross-order transmission being rare. Molecular evidence supports this view. Yet, in groups with well-resolved taxonomy, specificity can be even finer. For example, the *Leucocytozoon toddi* group infecting hawks (Accipitriformes) contains two morphospecies but divides phylogenetically into distinct clades: *L. buteonis*, infecting birds of the genus *Buteo*, and *L. mathisi*, for the genus *Accipiter*, indicating genus-level specificity. But what about an Order as diverse as Passeriformes? Despite roughly 900 molecular lineages infecting around 500 passerine species worldwide, only three morphotypes can be detected. This extensive cryptic diversity limits our understanding of infection dynamics, knowledge that is essential for assessing how global change may influence in parasite ecology and epidemiology.



Host-parasite bipartite network of *Leucocytozoon* lineages (red dots) infecting *Passeriformes* (blue dots) at a global scale. Despite this extensive genetic diversity, ~900 lineages represent only three morphotypes. Infection events in the Paelearctic-Afrotropical biogeographical region are showed as reference.

But how can we tackle this complexity?

Quantitative tools such as graph theory and network analysis make it possible to visualize host-parasite interactions as bipartite networks. Metrics like modularity, nestedness, and centrality can reveal patterns of host specialization and generalism. To advance this work, we must move beyond simply counting infected species and instead incorporate informative infection metrics of infection, such as prevalence and parasitemia, across space and time. These approaches help identify which hosts are central to parasite transmission and which interaction represent rare or incidental infections. In doing so, they distinguish competent hosts that sustain transmission, accidental hosts with low-level infections unlikely to do so, and dead-end hosts without parasitemia, and therefore unable to infect vectors or complete the parasite life cycle.

In an era of global databases, host specificity can now be assessed at broad spatial scales. The realized niche documented in local field studies reflects only a subset of the fundamental niche, limited by geographic barriers, seasonal dynamics, and the local availability of hosts and vectors. By aggregating data across wide regions, we can approximate the fundamental niche and identify consistent host associations that persist across ecological contexts. These distributional patterns can provide evidence for distinct taxonomic units, even when morphological differences are lacking.

By working backwards from these patterns and using the host distributions of *Leucocytozoon* lineages as clues, we may finally begin to resolve one of avian parasitology's longstanding taxonomic puzzles. This approach embodies integrative taxonomy: combining molecular diversity with broad-scale ecological data on host use to delimit cryptic species that would remain undetectable through morphology or genetics alone.

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New *Haemoproteus* lineage detected in Hooded Vultures in The Gambia

The first molecular record of avian blood parasites in The Gambia and in Hooded Vultures — an important step for understanding the parasite diversity in the country



Investigation of avian blood parasites in The Gambia has begun to reveal the hidden parasite diversity in Africa

Haemoproteus parasites are common blood parasites of birds and closely related to *Plasmodium*, the agent of avian and human malaria. During their tissue stages, they can cause internal organ damage. These parasites are known from many bird species, especially from passerines, but little is known about their diversity or effects in raptors, particularly in Africa. *Haemoproteus* shows remarkable genetic diversity, and no single primer set has proven to work for all known species and lineages, making molecular studies challenging, especially in birds of prey.

Why Hooded Vultures?

Vultures are vital for healthy ecosystems, but populations are declining rapidly across Africa, with several species listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List. In The Gambia, Hooded Vultures (*Necrosyrtes monachus*) are facing similar sharp declines, but records about their blood parasites are scarce. The only previous record of avian blood parasites among Hooded Vultures dates back nearly a century, so we decided to focus on this bird species.

Collaboration between The Gambia, the United Kingdom, and Lithuania

Kartong Bird Observatory (KBO) in The Gambia is a centre for bird monitoring and ringing, conducting research projects studying the local vulture populations with survey visits and regular bird ringing.



Ringling team from the Kartong Bird Observatory, Dr Jenny Dunn (Keele University), and Misa Shimizu (Nature Research Centre) during the latest expedition to The Gambia in February/March 2025.

In collaboration with KBO, the vulture samples collected in The Gambia are being processed at the Avian Parasite and Pathogen Ecology Lab (initiated and led by Dr. Jenny Dunn) at Keele University, United Kingdom, while some morphological identification of these new parasite lineages is being conducted at the State Scientific Research Institute Nature Research Centre (NRC), in Lithuania. Thanks to the dedicated KBO ringers and all researchers involved, we have collected vulture blood samples from 2019 to 2025. During our analyses, we identified a new *Haemoproteus* lineage in Hooded Vultures and determined which primer sets work best for this group. This represents the first molecular record of avian blood parasites in both Hooded Vultures and in The Gambia.

What to expect for the future?

In the next few years, we aim to expand our studies to other vulture species and resident bird species in The Gambia. We hope this work will shed light on the parasite diversity in the country and contribute to future bird conservation efforts.

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Save the Date: OneBAT Training on Bat Sanitary Surveillance

The OneBAT Consortium is pleased to announce the upcoming OneBAT Training on Bat Sanitary Surveillance, which will take place in Padova, Italy, on 20–21 May 2025.

This one-day and a half event will offer the know-how on planning a bat sanitary surveillance starting from the European regulatory framework up to the possible applications and priority topics to investigate. In addition, representatives from the OneBAT consortium and other selected international projects will present their scientific approaches, the methodologies developed within the consortium, the results achieved so far, and the objectives set for the next stages.

Following the presentations, participants will take part in hands-on training sessions designed to simulate key activities carried out in the project. These sessions will give attendees the opportunity to engage directly with the OneBAT workflow and learn practical skills from the teams actively involved in the field.

This training marks the first of two planned within the project, with the second to be hosted in France in late summer 2025.

Both events are free of charge but have limited capacity. We invite you to join us in Padova to discover the OneBAT project, meet the people working behind it, and learn more about the tools and practices being developed to strengthen bat sanitary surveillance across Europe.

Further details on the agenda, the speakers, and the application procedure will be published in the coming weeks on the OneBAT website: <https://onebat.eu/>



Funded by the European Union

SAVE THE DATES

Padua, ITALY | 19-21 May 2026

EUROPEAN UNION
REFERENCE LABORATORY
RABIES

OneBAT

19-20 May	20-21 May
NRLs for Rabies Workshop	OneBAT training on bat sanitary surveillance

*The OneBAT Project is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HADEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



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Wild Animal Health

Wild Animal Health, launched in October 2025, supports the health of free-living wild animals involved in conservation interventions.

Wild Animal Health brings expertise in **disease risk analysis and management, disease surveillance, intervention planning**, implementation and evaluation, quantitative methods and monitoring of **chemicals in wildlife and environmental samples**. Dr Tony Sainsbury, Dr Chris Michaels and Dr Emmelianna Kumar have joined to form this new endeavour and are seeking collaborative ventures to support conservation and rewilding interventions.

Interventions such as **reintroductions and re-stocking programmes** carry inherent disease risks. Wild Animal Health assesses these risks prior to intervention, manages disease threats during implementation and monitors the health of wild animals afterwards, including post-release. **Post-intervention disease threats** may include the introduction of novel diseases via non-native parasites, as well as diseases associated with the inherent stresses of relocation that can compromise immune function and reduce the ability of wild animals to thrive post-release.

Wild Animal Health has the **technical capacity and resources to conduct disease risk analyses tailored to free-living wild animals**; to monitor health through clinical and pathological examinations; to implement comprehensive disease risk management measures (including quarantine, biosecurity and preventive medicine programmes); to analyse translocation outcomes; and to carry out detailed post-release surveillance and modelling. Its chemical monitoring and ecotoxicology expertise also enables the integration of contaminant assessments with infectious disease evaluations, providing a holistic understanding of disease-related risks to wild animal populations.

In addition, Wild Animal Health delivers capacity-building programmes focused on wildlife health within conservation intervention, including training in disease risk analysis.

We are **actively seeking partners!** Do you have a project that could benefit from collaboration with Wild Animal Health? For further details, please visit [our website](#).



WILD ANIMAL HEALTH



Tony Sainsbury



Chris Michaels



Emmelianna Kumar