



NEWSLETTER

// SUMMER 2026



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ON THE COVER

Black Grouse (*Lyrurus tetrix*)

Cover photo by **Grégoire Dubois**



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

EWDA Conference year, looking forward to meet you all in Novi Sad!

Finalizing two years as Chair of EWDA, stepping down but still on the board chosen by you, the membership, to carry on developing the association as a meeting place for us all.

The sections are WDA

Being a WDA member has for many outside North America a geographic section focus, whereas WDA is the big and maybe distant "Mother organisation". But the WDA is an international and worldwide association, all members are firstly members of WDA, then placed in a geographic section depending where your address is. WDA needs and works on increasing involvement from all members, so consider participating and contributing even more; make your voice heard!

I think... my thoughts

After over 30 years in the profession, with active participation in WDA functions the past 23 years, I see our association as the natural network to reach out to, find and disseminate knowledge through the science we do, also from multiple disciplines.

Our mission statement says the WDA mission is to *promote* healthy wildlife and ecosystems etc, but I think we need to do more than just promote. We need to inform to *reform*, using our knowledge and results to affect decision makers on all political levels, one step, one person at a time. To make noise, but a correct and polite noise. Downsized both funding and debate on climate- and environmental research due to relatively short-term defence- and conflict focus, is understandable with the ultra-short focus span of humans and news media. So, we need to endure and persist in raising our voices as megaphones for both wildlife and environment. And in our busy lives, the rarest commodity is time. So do remember to give yourself T T T, time to think, so we can become innovative, not only reactive, and hopefully find those ideas that result in transformative change.

EWDA2026

Since the very successful EWDA conference in Stralsund 2024 we are quickly approaching and looking forward for the next opportunity to meet many of you members again, during an intensive week in Novi Sad, Serbia, host for EWDA2026 in September. The EU Commission is working with rules to make travel by train through Europe easier, something that can help more people to choose train over plane! We hope to keep the carbon imprint low for EWDA2026!

See you soon in Novi Sad!

Your Chair 2024 – 2026

Erik

Erik Ågren

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Wildlife quiz 1. What species am I looking at this time? Time to think can help you solve tricky issues.



Wildlife quiz 2. Citizen science contributes with helpful reports and images on wildlife cases, but sometimes reports have the species is given as "unknown". What species is this?

Wildlife quiz answers
Quiz 1: Wild boar (tusks)
Quiz 2: Hedgehog (spines)



Notes from the Board

"EWDA membership update: expanding our network across Europe."

Dear EWDA members,

This EWDA Newsletter, I would like to share some numbers, as you might want to know how your association is doing. We currently (May '26) have 309 members, which is a small increase compared to the 284 members that we had in the previous conference year. Conference years always see increasing numbers, because people can benefit from the reduced registration fees that often outweigh the membership fees. The European country that is represented most is, like before, the UK, with an impressive 80 (!) members. Brexit sure didn't negatively impact the UK membership of the EWDA. Second country is Germany with 40 members. But not only the large countries matter!

We are equally proud of countries with only one member, because this member is vital to represent and promote the EWDA and its mission in his or her country.

Attentive readers from these countries may notice that the numbers in their country are lower than expected - this often has to do with members that need some reminding of renewals, of which some took place after May.

Let's say that life of an EWDA Secretary is not always a bed of roses.

I will present the latest membership numbers at our General Assembly at the EWDA Conference.

I invite all of you to join this meeting and to have your say in the various discussions that will take place. Your input is important, because in the end it is us who make this Association.

I wish all of you a great summer season and hope to see you in Serbia!

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



The Wild Future:
Challenges of Integrating
Health
Welfare
Biodiversity

So, those countries and its members are worth mentioning too, especially since some of them are new or have been going strong for a long time already: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (both 2 members), Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Turkey (all 1 member).

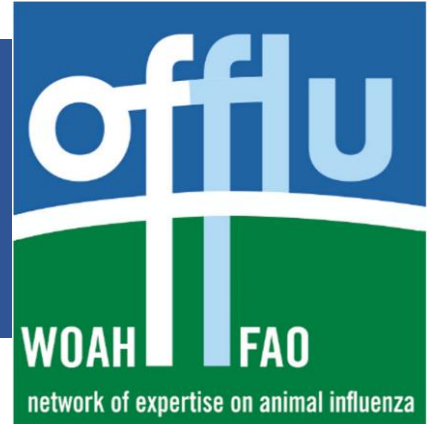
Miriam Maas

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Report on the global spread & impact of H5 clade 2.3.4.4b high pathogenicity avian influenza in wildlife, 2020-2024



“Since 2020, the HPAI H5 panzootic has shown an unprecedented geographic expansion and a continuously growing host range.”

In this OFFLU report, we summarise current HPAI H5 surveillance systems in wildlife per continental region, review global HPAI H5 spread and impacts in wildlife between 2020 and 2024, and provide recommendations for future preparedness and response.

Since 2020, high pathogenicity avian influenza H5 (HPAI H5) of clade 2.3.4.4b of the Goose/Guangdong lineage has spread rapidly to new continental regions and infected an ever-increasing number of species of wild birds and mammals. This expansion often has been associated with high mortality rates, representing an additional conservation threat to some wildlife populations. However, there was no globally representative overview of the HPAI H5 situation in wildlife, including its spread patterns and impacts, nor a high-level analysis of surveillance activities.

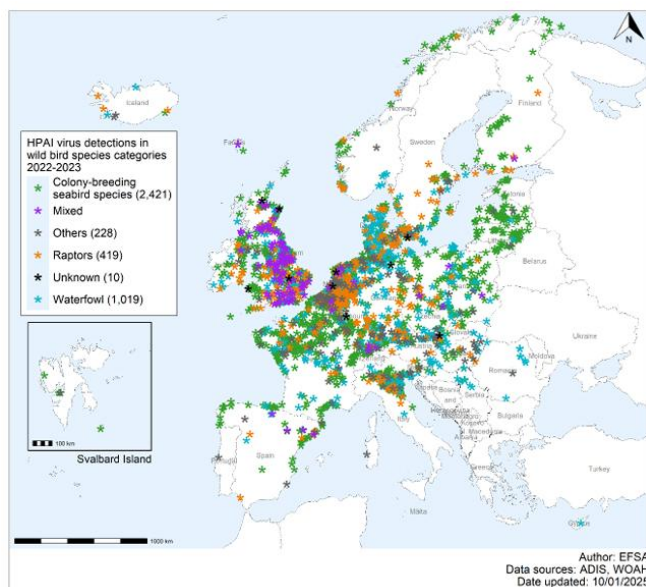
Therefore, the OFFLU Wildlife Activity brought together experts from different continents to summarise current HPAI H5 surveillance systems in wildlife per continental region, review HPAI H5 spread and impacts in wildlife between October 2020 and September 2024, and provide recommendations for future preparedness and response. [This review is publicly available from the OFFLU website.](#)

Current surveillance systems

In summary, the review showed that systems for surveillance of HPAI H5 in wildlife worldwide were based mainly on activities for detection of virus in wild birds found sick or dead, and much less on activities for detection of virus in apparently healthy wild birds or mammals. Analysis of viral genomes provided evidence to infer spread patterns, including the geographical sources of new introductions. Generation and analysis of serological data, which was not a core component of most HPAI surveillance programmes, provided complementary insights on the spread and impact of HPAI H5 not evident from virus detection and mortality data.

Spread among continents

HPAI H5 was present in wildlife during the entire reporting period in the continental regions of Asia, Middle East, Europe and Africa. During this period, HPAI H5 was first reported in North America in November 2021. The disease spread southward to South America in October 2022, and to the Subantarctic/ Antarctic region in October 2023, disseminating rapidly in wildlife of those regions. HPAI H5 had not been reported in Oceania by September 2024.



Map of Europe showing locations and categories of wild birds in which HPAI was detected in epidemiological year 2022-2023. Numbers in brackets in the figure legends indicate the number of HPAI virus detections per bird category. Source: cited OFFLU report.

Virus dynamics in birds and mammals

The highest number of detections of HPAI H5 in wildlife in the Americas were made in the first year after incursion. In subsequent years in North America, and during the entire reporting period in Europe and Asia, there were seasonal peaks of HPAI H5 detection in waterfowl during autumn migration and winter aggregation, and in seabirds during spring and summer breeding. The seasonal dynamics of HPAI H5 in wildlife could not be inferred for other affected continental regions because of insufficient data. In the northern hemisphere, high numbers of HPAI H5 detection in wild birds were associated with more virus detections in wild mammals.

Severe mortality events

Severe mortality events due to HPAI H5 impacted populations of many wild bird species (mainly waterfowl, seabirds and raptors) in all affected continental regions. There also were mass die-offs from HPAI H5 in populations of several pinniped species in the Americas, and the Subantarctic/Antarctic region.

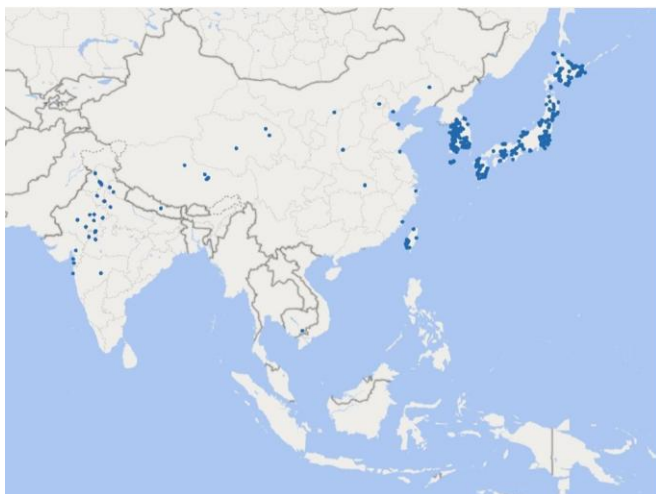
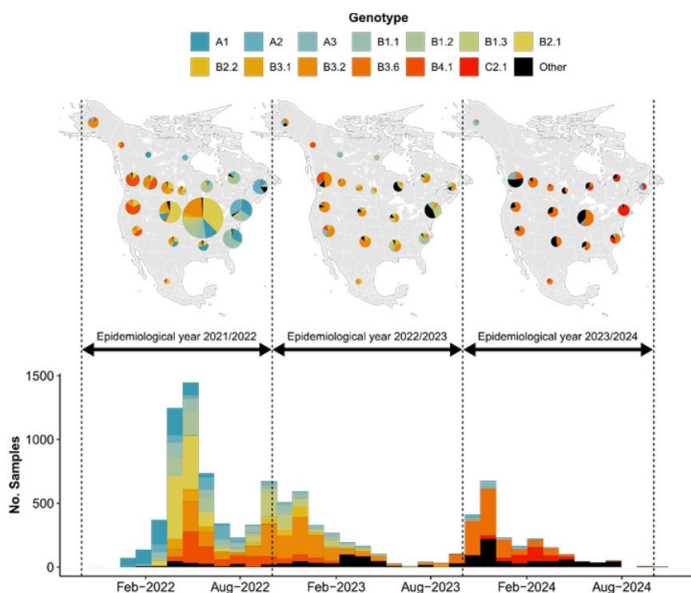


Photo: HPAI H5 detections in wildlife in Asia from October 2020 to September 2024. Data from EMPRES-I. Source: cited OFFLU report.

News from EWDA Network Committee

- For those interested, it is still possible to [register for the EWDA Network Meeting "Improving wildlife mortality reporting to better understand population-level disease impact"](#), 28 September 2026, online or in person.
- We encourage any EWDA members who are interested to join the EWDA Network Committee to us by email (ewda.network@gmail.com), at the EWDA Network meeting or during the rest of the EWDA conference in Novi Sad in September.



Distribution of HPAI H5 genotypes in North America over three epidemiological years. Maps (top panel) summarize the relative proportion and distribution of genotypes across discrete geographic regions for each epidemiological year. The histogram (bottom panel) summarises the number of viral genomes collected in each epidemiological month over the outbreak, stratified by viral genotype. Source: cited OFFLU report.

Recommendations

Worldwide recommendations for improving surveillance and understanding impacts include: developing collaborative (flyway-based if appropriate) HPAI surveillance programmes in wild birds and mammals; better estimation and reporting of wildlife mortality events associated with HPAI to an international database such as the World Animal Health Information System; improving sharing of surveillance data; and conducting long-term monitoring of severely impacted wildlife populations. Recommendations for better outbreak prevention and supporting wildlife population resilience include: increasing surveillance efforts and timely reporting of detections, reducing additional threats to, and improving conditions for, wildlife populations at risk or impacted from HPAI H5; and developing policies to prevent recurrent outbreaks of HPAI in poultry and farmed mammals, and spillover into wildlife.

On behalf of the members of the OFFLU ad-hoc group on global impact

Thijs Kuiken

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Small Grants Committee



"Every two years we offer grants to EWDA members to support various types of wildlife research. The next call for applications will be in 2027."

Applications have risen over the last three cycles, and we have been lucky to secure extra funding and start two new grants, The Amanda Hawkswood Wildlife Health and Welfare Research Grant and the Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Grant.

Number of applications for the different EWDA Small Grants:

	2021*	2023	2025
Wildlife Conservation Research Grant	15	7	19
Wildlife Health Research and Education in Eastern Europe Grant	2	3	4
The Amanda Hawkswood Wildlife Health and Welfare Research Grant	7	2	2
Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Grant	N/A	1	5
Total	18	13	30

*in 2021, applicants could apply for more than one grant

The Vic Simpson Conference Attendance Fund

Three [Vic Simpson travel grants](#) have been awarded to enable members to attend and present at the 2026 EWDA conference in Novi Sad Serbia. The Vic Simpson Conference Attendance Fund was initiated and made possible thanks to a generous donation by Dr. Vic Simpson in 2017, who also defined the purpose and guidelines for the attribution of corresponding grant(s). The fund and grant were called after his name after he sadly passed away early August 2018.

William R Lance Award

Congratulations to Jacopo Morelli and Friederike (Fidu) Pohlen who have been awarded the first [William R Lance award](#) (see the WDA newsletter May 21st 2026).

Jacopo was also awarded the EWDA Amanda Hawkswood Wildlife Health and Welfare Research Grant in 2025 and he describes some of his work on page 15.

The following pages feature research updates from recipients of our 2023 and 2025 grants, highlighting recent findings, achievements, and project developments.

Paul Holmes & Katharina Seilern-Macpherson

On behalf of the EWDA Small Grants Committee: Gábor Czirják, Emmanuelle Gilot-Fromont, Ignasi Marco, Đuro Huber, Anna Meredith, Rosa Jolma and Stephanie Gross



Causes of morbidity and mortality in European brown hares in England



"We are enormously grateful to the EWDA for funding this research that has provided contemporary pathology data on diseases circulating in European brown hares in the UK. We look forward to continuing to study hare pathology, including utilising the legacy tissue archive from this project as a valuable ongoing research resource."

Kate Hughes provides a final report on the research funded by a 2023 EWDA Wildlife Conservation Research Grant.

The European brown hare (*Lepus europaeus* Pallas, 1778) has become a naturalised staple of British wildlife since its presumed introduction two millennia ago. However, in the late 90s, UK populations were estimated to have dropped by 80% over the last century, mirroring trends seen across Europe. The species is of "principal importance" in England, Wales and Scotland, meaning it is regarded as a conservation priority under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. Yet, its status as a game animal grants it little legal protection and various drivers of population decline have been identified. These include structural modification of habitat, illegal hare coursing, loss of food sources and increased predation of leverets.

The values and challenges of citizen science

Using reports of deceased hares garnered from the general public, we have performed comprehensive post mortem examinations on 100 leporids. Although the project is officially completed, we are currently still collecting deceased hares to reach our target of 100, due to a few rabbit misidentifications by members of the public.

Causes of hare morbidity and mortality

We have identified a number of key causes of mortality in English hares including *Lagovirus*

europaeus GI.2 (rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus 2; RHDV2) and GII.2 (European brown hare syndrome virus; EBHSV), *Yersinia* spp. infections, and enteric coccidiosis. We have also identified direct impacts of human activity, such as shooting and road traffic accidents. Importantly, this project has allowed us to collect histopathological samples to better understand the disease pathogenesis of several infectious agents including *Lagovirus europaeus* in hares. Preliminary data has been presented at the American College of Veterinary Pathologists Annual Meeting 2024, and will be published in the peer-reviewed literature. Through collaboration, we are now undertaking molecular characterisation of the *Lagovirus* strains we have detected.

The project has also revealed valuable data regarding presumed subclinical pathology in European brown hares. We have identified a sub-cohort of animals with multi-organ system amyloidosis and histopathological samples are allowing us to characterise patterns of deposition in detail to better delineate disease progression.

A recent invitation to the Davis Thompson Foundation Eastern European Veterinary Pathology Meeting allowed me to present data from this project, focusing particularly on gross and microscopic lesion identification. It provided the opportunity to share experiences and ideas with colleagues working with this amazing species in other parts of Europe. We uncovered very interesting commonalities and differences in disease presentation that will hopefully inspire future collaborations and enabled all of us to learn new things.

Kate Hughes

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European brown hare – Norfolk, UK. Photo: Kate Hughes.



Clinicopathological and microbiological aspects of respiratory disease associated mortality in European hedgehogs presented for rehabilitation

Yannick Van de Weyer provides a report on the research funded by the 2023 EWDA Amanda Hawkswood Wildlife Health and Welfare Research Grant.



The first part of our investigations into respiratory disease in rehabilitating European hedgehog is now formally concluded. This resulted in two publications, one on [nasal cavity anatomy](#) and another on [upper respiratory tract diseases](#) in the species, of which the references can be found below. Currently, we are interpreting data regarding diseases of the lower respiratory tract in more detail. A final publication with this information as well as some epidemiological data will follow within the next year, and the findings will be presented at the Novi Sad conference.

Thank you!

Assessing toxicological and infectious disease threats to Cinereous vultures in the Spanish Pyrenees

María Escobar González provides an overview of the research funded by the 2025 EWDA Wildlife Conservation Research Grant.

Coordinated by the Wildlife Conservation Medicine Research Group (WildCoM, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) and supported by an EWDA Wildlife Conservation Research Grant, this project will investigate toxicological and infectious threats affecting the reintroduced Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) population in the Catalan Pyrenees (NE Spain). In collaboration with Trenca NGO, IRTA-CReSA, IREC (CSIC-UCLM), and the Catalan Government, we will assess exposure to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), lead, rodenticides and several pathogens to better understand the health challenges facing this recovering population. The findings will support evidence-based conservation strategies and long-term health monitoring of European vultures. The fieldwork campaign for this year is currently being planned.



Mitigating adverse effects of wildlife capture and anaesthesia

"This is my mission and the reason why I became a vet. Today, I am privileged to fulfil my passion at the service of wildlife."



Jacopo Morelli provides an overview of the research funded by the 2025 EWDA Amanda Hawkswood Wildlife Health and Welfare Research Grant.

A committed journey

As a veterinarian with postgraduate training in anaesthesiology, emergency and critical care, Jacopo has spent the past ten years developing a unique profile at the intersection of clinical medicine and wildlife research. While currently working full-time as a small animal emergency vet and seasonally as a freelance wildlife vet, he has persistently pursued wildlife anaesthesia research as a parallel, self-motivated endeavour. His work is now culminating in a self-funded research and PhD project, the Wildlife Anaesthesia and Welfare Research Project (WAWRP) in collaboration with the University of Inland Norway and other academic and zoological institutions. The project, across all its international and multi-species studies, has one mission: to increase safety and improve the welfare of free-ranging wildlife during and after the anaesthetic events, should they be necessary.

The WAWRP also aims to deliver broad benefits to the veterinary, conservation, and wildlife management fields. The project is heavily focused on the 3rd R of animal research: refinement of the clinical procedures to uphold animal welfare as much as possible.

Since the start of the project in 2023, the following grants have been awarded: the William R. Lance Award, the Amanda Hawkswood Wildlife Health and Welfare Research Grant, and the Zebra Foundation Research Grant. These prizes were awarded for the constant dedication and effort towards wildlife health, welfare and anaesthesia by the Wildlife Disease Association, the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians, the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians, the American College of Zoological Medicine and the Zebra Foundation. These prestigious grants, together with a [crowdfunding campaign](#) and Jacopo's clinical salary from his emergency veterinary role, are key to keeping the project alive and ensuring better outcomes for the wild animals under our care.



Three wildlife species, one goal

Currently, the WAWRP is focusing on three mammalian species present in Scandinavia: the grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) and the moose (*Alces alces*). The anaesthesia studies pursue the same goal: to assess the anaesthetic risk and mitigate the adverse effects of capture and anaesthesia. Each study focuses on an adverse effect or a health risk in a different animal species and aims to alleviate or resolve it with targeted interventions.

Grey wolves are darted from a helicopter and anaesthetised with a combination of tiletamine and zolazepam in Scandinavia. Despite the wide safety margin of the drugs, emesis and nausea are

Anaesthetic monitoring in a free-ranging grey wolf in Scandinavia. Photo: Alexandra Thiel

common during the recovery period. To reduce the risk of aspiration pneumonia, physical restraint during recovery is often required, with associated human safety concerns. To prevent such complications, the antiemetic maropitant has been tested via a blinded randomised controlled trial (RCT), with the physiological variables continuously measured and a blinded observer to score the post-anaesthetic nausea and emesis. Not only did the treatment group not vomit and physical assistance was not required, but the wolves showed fewer signs of nausea compared to controls.

Despite its numerous advantages and globally widespread use in brown bear anaesthesia, the sedative medetomidine can induce remarkable adverse cardiorespiratory effects (i.e., hypertension, bradycardia, hypoxemia and hypoperfusion). Vatinoxan is a peripherally acting α_2 -adrenoceptor antagonist known to alleviate some of these adverse effects without affecting sedation in mammals. Jacopo's blinded RCTs in free-ranging Scandinavian brown bears involve three treatment groups receiving vatinoxan at different doses and a control group receiving saline. A comprehensive physiological monitoring of rectal temperature, direct blood pressure, blood-gas analysis, regional oxygen saturation, and more, is revealing promising results for the safety of the bears, without compromising the anaesthetic depth.

Because of its efficacy and reversibility, etorphine-xylazine is the standard protocol for chemical immobilisation of moose in Scandinavia. Disadvantages include respiratory compromise with hypoxemia, hypercapnia, and acidosis. These



Direct blood pressure monitoring in an anaesthetised free-ranging brown bear. Photo: Jacopo Morelli

adverse effects, if medical oxygen is not supplemented, are life-threatening. Butorphanol is a mixed partial opioid agonist-antagonist widely used in African ungulates due to its efficacy in alleviating etorphine-induced respiratory effects. Jacopo's ongoing pilot dose-titration study based on blood-gas analysis and spirometry in captive moose suggests that administration of butorphanol could elicit similar effects in free-ranging moose, improving animal welfare and perhaps reducing the supplemental oxygen requirements. A RCT in free-ranging individuals based on the optimal butorphanol dose is set to start in 2027.

What next?

Dissemination of these findings among wildlife professionals is vital for the project's mission. No advancement in veterinary medicine is useful if it does not reach the right audience via the appropriate channels. For this reason, the results will be published in relevant journals in Open Access form and presented annually at national and international wildlife conferences of different wildlife and veterinary associations, including WDA. Less technical updates on the WAWRP findings for the general public are released on the crowdfunding [website](#) on a monthly basis.

Finally, with new collaborations and studies in the pipeline for the near future, the humble WAWRP is steadily growing and is projecting its ambitious goals beyond the requirements of a PhD project.

Jacopo Morelli

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Spirometry monitoring via an equine mask in a chemically immobilised moose. Photo: Jacopo Morelli



Panacea or poison? Supplemental feeding for wild birds

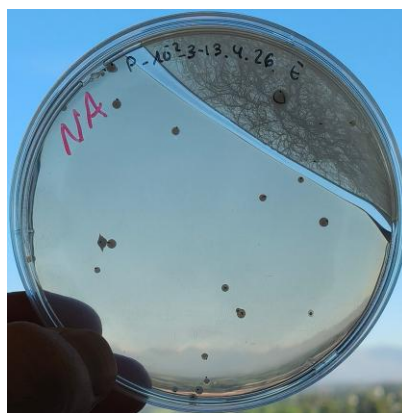


"With approximately 200,000 tonnes of feed provided annually to wild birds in the UK, understanding potential pathogen exposure from feeders is increasingly important. Wild bird feed yielded surprisingly rich microbial growth."

Richard Williams provides an overview of the research funded by the 2025 EWDA Transformative Research on Wildlife Health Grant.

Supplemental bird feeding is a harmless hobby, right? Millions of people feed wild birds, often with the best intentions. It helps birds survive, especially in winter, and it helps people connect with nature, which makes them feel good. Harmless, maybe even helpful? But feeding may also carry costs for birds: poor nutrition, increased predation, making bird communities more uniform, and, my focus, increased disease transmission. Birds flocking around feeders can fuel pathogen circulation. Studies show pathogens on feeders, and in bird microbiota, but rarely examine the feed. My EWDA-funded pilot project asks a simple question: could the feed itself also be a source of microbes?

We cultured microbes from four common bird feeds — fat balls, mealworms, peanuts and sunflower seeds — to see whether viable bacteria and fungi were present.



Several colonies were isolated from the peanut sample grown in the generalist medium, nutrient agar. The distinctive mycelial growth of the upper colony is suggestive of *Bacillus mycoides*, though formal identification by sequencing is required. Photo: Marta Rodríguez Ayala

Preliminary Results

Microbes were isolated from all sample types, which were all commercially sold feeds. Microbial abundances varied in the different seed types. Both fungal and bacterial colonies were isolated.

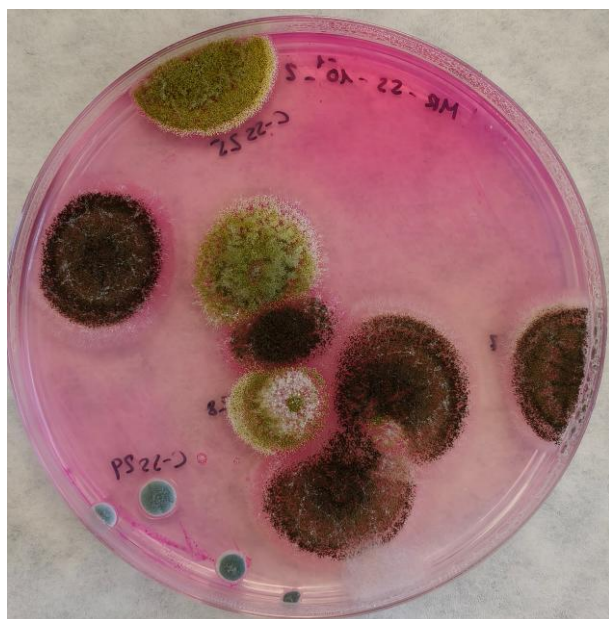
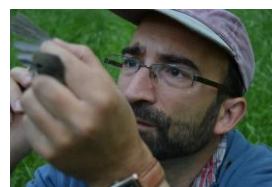
Some fungal isolates resembled *Aspergillus* moulds, which are known to produce harmful mycotoxins. Preliminary screening determined that three isolates produce aflatoxins, though further confirmation is needed.

The majority of bacterial colonies isolated were consistent with low-risk *Bacillus* types. However, some colonies grown on selective medium resembled potential pathogens, including *Listeria*, *Salmonella* and *E.coli*, though formal identification using sequencing is still underway.

The next stage of this project will use sequencing and expanded sampling to determine which microbes are present and whether commercially sold bird feed poses a disease risk to wild birds.

Richard Williams

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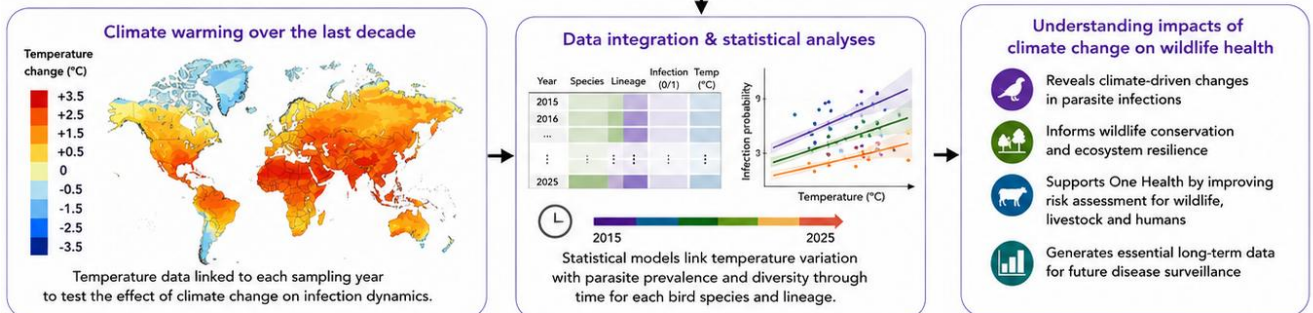
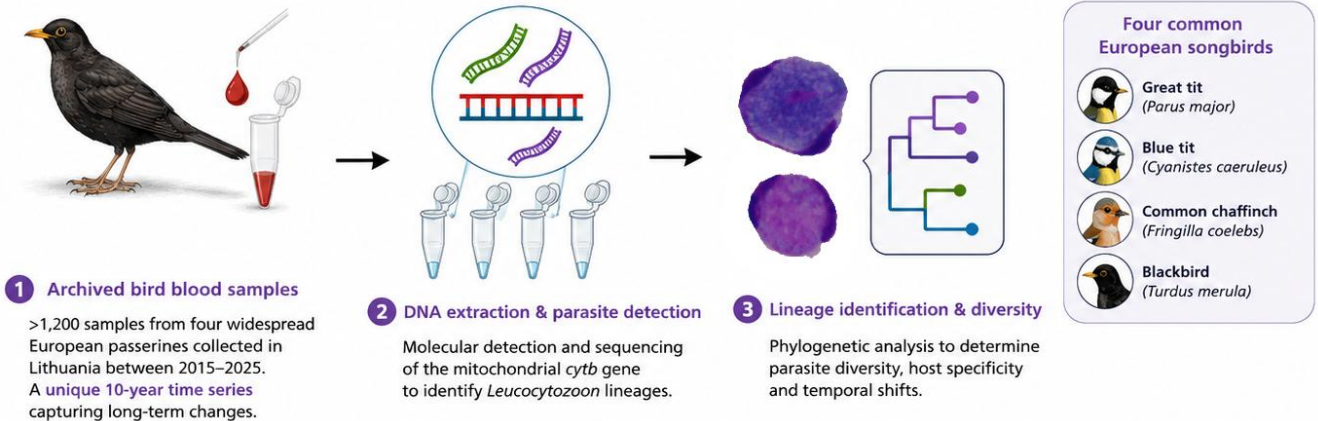
Aspergillus-like colonies growing on Rose Bengal (sunflower seeds). Photo: Marta Rodríguez Ayala and Mercedes Martin-Cereceda

Temporal trends in *Leucocytozoon* infection dynamics under global change scenario

Carolina Chagas provides an overview of the research funded by the 2025 EWDA Wildlife Health Activities in Eastern Europe Grant.

Temporal trends in *Leucocytozoon* infection dynamics under global change scenario

Using 10 years of archived bird blood samples to understand how climate warming shapes parasite diversity and infection patterns



A 10-YEAR ARCHIVE. A CHANGING CLIMATE. NEW INSIGHTS.

Unlocking the value of a decade of archived bird blood samples to understand how warming temperatures reshape parasite diversity in European songbirds.



Bending the curve of biodiversity loss

NATURE Impacts

National Assessment Tool for Understanding Relative Environmental Impacts

The National Assessment Tool for Understanding Relative Environmental Impacts (NATURE Impacts) is a global initiative led by the University of Oxford, UK, and the WWF that consists of an assessment platform designed to help countries identify and prioritise the actions that will have the greatest positive impact on biodiversity, climate, and sustainable development.

Rather than simply tracking whether nations meet existing commitments, the NATURE Impacts initiative focuses on what actions are needed next to achieve meaningful nature recovery and “bend the curve” of biodiversity loss by 2030 and beyond.

Why this initiative?

Despite international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the Paris Agreement, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), biodiversity continues to decline globally. Current monitoring efforts often focus, for example, on whether commitments have been met or provide limited guidance on where future efforts should be concentrated.

The NATURE Impacts aspires to become a dynamic, science-based decision-support tool that helps governments, businesses, and civil society answer the following questions quickly:

1. Where we are now? – current biodiversity trends, commitments, and actions,
2. What needs to change? – the gap between current efforts and what is required to achieve global goals,
3. How to get there? – which actions should be prioritised to maximise positive outcomes.

In a nutshell, the NATURE Impacts aims to highlight future priorities and promote evidence-based, bottom-up strategies to help countries identify the most effective actions for biodiversity recovery while simultaneously supporting climate goals and sustainable development.

Its ultimate ambition is to accelerate coordinated global action and ensure resources are directed where they can deliver the greatest benefit for nature.

What's next?

The project will develop an interactive dashboard that allow users:

1. to explore country-level biodiversity status, commitments, and actions;
2. to identify priority areas for investment and policy action;
3. to compare progress and opportunities across countries;
4. to upload and integrate additional datasets.

Phase 1 of the project was conducted in 2025 and resulted in the presentation of the NATURE impacts at COP30 in Belém, Brazil. The second phase is ongoing and consists of the expansion of the tool to cover nature-related aspects of all major global goals at national scale and demonstrate the utility and potential applications of the tool.

If you would like more information on the NATURE Impacts initiative, please visit this page: [NATURE Impacts: National Assessment Tool for Understanding Relative Environmental Impacts - Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery](#)

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On behalf of the Sustainability Committee: Thijs Kuiken, Graham Smith, Ana Vale, Beatriz Rubio Alonso, Lineke Begeman, Anja Globig, Kim van de Wiel.



Student Chapter News



"Join our EWDA Student Webinars, come to the Conference and let's all talk wildlife health together!"

The EWDA Student Chapter board has been keeping happily active and busy preparing activities for all our students at the coming EWDA Conference, as well as running monthly webinars, and cooking up more ideas for the future!

Hello again EWDA colleagues and friends,

The EWDA Student Chapter Board is back with some news for this Summer Newsletter! Since we took over the past board we have been busy bees stepping into their great legacy, and coming up with our own twist of ideas.

Our new activities: monthly webinars

Since November 2025 we have started a series of monthly webinars. We thought this was a great way to bring more wildlife health and disease topics to our student members all over Europe. And we have to give a big thanks to all the presenters who were so kind to give away their time to share their experience with all of us.

So far, we have hosted a total of seven webinars between November 2025 and June 2026 (there was a little Easter break in April). These sessions have covered a wide range of topics, such as amphibian health, manatees and translocations, wildlife disease surveillance, seal rehabilitation, field work and rescue of raptors, wildlife forensics, and behavioural ecology.

We invite all student members to attend and participate in these webinars, but also open them up to whoever is interested in attending. It has been quite an exciting and rewarding journey because each webinar has attracted between 175 and 700 registrations, with live attendance ranging from about 46 to 121 people per event. Quite the turn out if we can say so ourselves!

Most participants joined from Europe, but there has been some attendance from Asia, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Oceania. Depending on the webinar, between roughly 57% and 74% of people registering already knew about EWDA, showing that the webinars serve both existing members and reach new audiences.

We would like to thank all our speakers once again:

- 12 November 2025 – Dr. Sara Grau Camps
- 18 December 2025 – Dr. Natalia Rożniewska
- 22 January 2026 – Prof. Andrei D. Mihalca
- 25 February 2026 – Dr. Ana Rubio-García
- 25 March 2026 – Dr. Endre Sós
- 14 May 2026 – Dr. Grant Thomson
- 11 June 2026 – Vlad Vancia, MSc

Overall, this webinar series has been a great way to share up-to-date knowledge on wildlife health, bring together professionals and students, and hopefully increase EWDA's visibility inside and outside Europe. As this is an ongoing effort, we will continue organising webinars in the coming months (with a little summer break), keeping the goal of hosting one each month until the end of our mandate. Stay tuned!



Webinar with Dr. Endre Sós on March 25th 2026.



Map showing where all our EWDA Student Country Representatives are present.

New Country Representatives

One of our recent efforts has been increasing the number and presence of EWDA Student Country Representatives (CRs) throughout Europe. We have so far run two open calls in September 2025 and in February 2026. These have paid off, because the number of CRs increased from 12 students in April 2025 to 19 in October of the same year, and 27 as of today! We are very happy about all our CRs, and this growing presence of the association in all corners of Europe.

This has been possible because we changed the guidelines to allow two CRs per country, provided both students came from different fields related to wildlife (e.g. Biology, Ecology, Veterinary Medicine, etc.), ensuring a new rule of not having two students from the same field to promote a multidisciplinary approach.

“ Looking forward to seeing you all at the EWDA conference in Serbia! ”



What's next?

The EWDA Student Chapter Board is currently focused on planning activities for the upcoming 16th EWDA Conference in Serbia. The Student Workshop that we are planning will focus on Transformative Change in Wildlife Conservation & Research. This workshop invites students to imagine a “perfect world” for wildlife health and conservation, and explore how to get there. They'll reflect on key barriers and identify practical ways to make their own actions more impactful.

Let's not forget the popular Student-Mentor mixer activity during the conference, which is always a fun and enriching experience for all students participating. For those who are not students, please consider joining as Mentor!

We are also already currently planning the Student Workshop for 2027, and we plan to announce more news during the Conference. More to come...

Feel free to connect with us across our social platforms or drop us a message in our 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

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[Our LinkedIn](#)

[Our Instagram](#)

Webinar Series on Invasive Species: Ecosystems, Health and Citizen Science



The Webinar Series “Invasive Species: Ecosystems, Health and Citizen Science” organised by EWDA Student Chapter Portugal for the Invasive Species Week Portugal & Spain 2026 counted with the presence of four lecturers working with Invasive Species and their impact on the ecosystems' health.

On the 2nd of June 2026, on the scope of the “Semana sobre Espécies Invasoras: Portugal & Espanha” (Invasive Species Week Portugal & Spain 2026), the EWDA Student Chapter Portugal hosted the webinar series Invasive Species: Ecosystems, Health and Citizen Science. This series brought together researchers from the University of Évora and the University of Lisbon to discuss the impacts of invasive species on ecosystems, biodiversity, wildlife health, and society. The event featured four invited speakers with expertise in biological invasions, conservation biology, citizen science, and disease ecology.

Prof. Dr. Pedro Anastácio and LIFE INVASAQUA

The first lecture, presented by Pedro Anastácio, focused on the LIFE INVASAQUA project and its achievements over the last five years. The presentation highlighted the ecological, economic, and public health risks associated with aquatic invasive species and discussed how these risks are perceived by different sectors of society. The importance of communication, public awareness, and stakeholder engagement for the prevention and management of invasive species was also emphasized.

Dr. Pedro Pereira and IBISurvey project

The second presentation, delivered by Pedro Pereira, introduced the IBISurvey project and demonstrated how citizen science can contribute

to the detection, monitoring, and understanding of exotic bird species. Examples were provided of how information collected by volunteers can support research, improve knowledge on species distribution, and help identify potential impacts on native ecosystems.

Prof. Dr. Rui Rebelo and Emerging Infectious Diseases

Rui Rebelo's lecture addressed the global decline of amphibians, focusing on the role of emerging infectious diseases, particularly those associated with the movement and trade of non-native amphibian species. The presentation also explored how invasive species may interact with pathogens and other environmental pressures, contributing to amphibian population declines worldwide.

MSc Elena Jiménez Soto and the Feral Cats

The final lecture, presented by Elena Jiménez Soto, focused on the impacts of feral cats on biodiversity conservation. The talk discussed the effects of predation, disease transmission, and hybridization on native wildlife, with particular emphasis on island ecosystems where these impacts can be especially severe. The need for further research and monitoring to better understand and mitigate these impacts was highlighted.

Overall, this webinar series, which counted with the participation of 30 attendees, provided an excellent overview of the challenges posed by invasive species and their interactions with ecosystem and wildlife health. It also demonstrated the value of citizen science, interdisciplinary research, and public engagement in supporting biodiversity conservation and addressing current environmental challenges.



Presentation of Prof. Dr. Pedro Anastácio. Photo: João Rato

João Rato & Joana Ferreira e Silva

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★ First Student Chapter webinar in Bosnia and Herzegovina ★

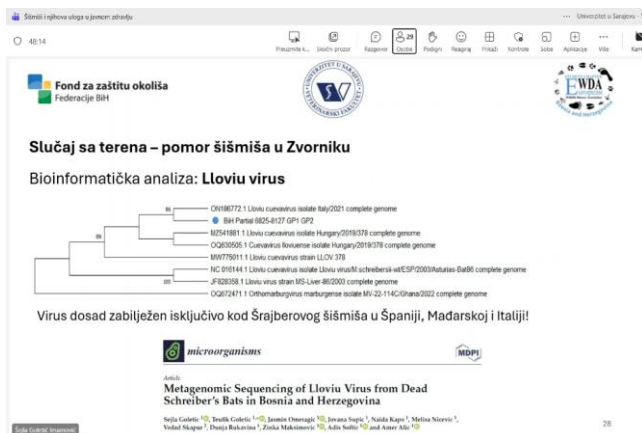
"Students' engagement in wildlife health is built by bringing local research closer to them."

EWDA Student Chapter Bosnia and Herzegovina recently organised a webinar which explored the role of bats in public health, thus introducing many new students to EWDA.

EWDA Student Chapter Bosnia and Herzegovina organised its first event on the 22nd of May 2026 in the form of a webinar called „Šišmiši i njihova uloga u javnom zdravlju“ (*Bats and their role in public health*) with the speaker Šejla Goletić Imamović, a teaching assistant and PhD student at the University of Sarajevo - Veterinary Faculty. The webinar was held in Bosnian on MS Teams and included 29 participants, the majority of whom were undergraduate students from different universities and faculties and a smaller number of professionals and teaching staff.

Launching EWDA activities through collaboration and research

This event was promoted by student associations and academic institutions through their social media channels, hence reaching a wider audience.



Field case study presented during the webinar.
Photo: Asja Bubić



Webinar attendees were introduced to the ecological importance of bats and their relevance within the One Health framework, along with research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina using non-invasive sampling and molecular methods.

The speaker presented a field case study as well, highlighting an investigation of a die-off of Schreiber's bats which resulted in the detection of Lloviu virus. Overall, the webinar gave Bosnian students an opportunity to learn more about local research through experiences from the field and the challenges of fieldwork.

Pleased and engaged participants

Several attendees actively participated in the discussion during the Q&A session, which marked a rewarding conclusion of the webinar. A short post-webinar feedback form was completed by fifteen participants, with overall very positive responses. A majority of them were also interested in being informed about future EWDA activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Such positive feedback certainly serves as an inspiration for planning future events in the field of wildlife health in Bosnia and Herzegovina!

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Student awards removed from the 2026 Conference

"The EWDA Board wants to promote a non-competitive atmosphere at the conference."

To decrease the competition between students, the EWDA Board votes to remove the student awards from the 2026 EWDA conference. The money will be given to the EWDA Student Chapter to benefit more students through student activities.

The EWDA Board has discussed the pros and cons of continuing having student oral presentation and poster competitions at the biennial EWDA conferences.

While the competitions have almost become tradition and most people enjoy being recognized for good work done, the EWDA Board has experienced that it is very difficult to have fair and objective judging of the students' work, and the competitions add to an already overly competitive culture in academia/research.

The EWDA Board is convinced that all students presenting their work at EWDA conferences will do their best whether there are awards to win or not.



The EWDA Board wishes to promote collaboration over competition.



Instead of awarding €1,000 to a total of six students, the money will this year instead go to the EWDA Student Chapter activities to benefit more students.

After the 2026 EWDA conference, the EWDA Board will evaluate whether the competitions should return or not in the future.

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Outbreak of blue tit disease in Sweden

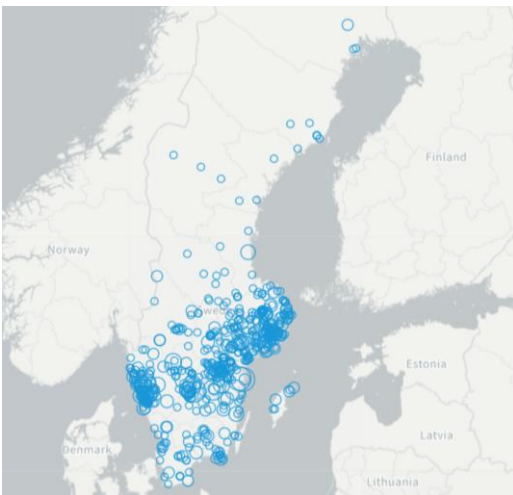


"Never have there been so many reports of dead passerines. Never has there been such media interest in garden birds."

In March 2026, the first reports of sick and dead blue tits appeared in the Swedish wildlife disease surveillance app. In the following weeks, report numbers rocketed to over 100 each day. Necropsy of submitted carcasses confirmed an outbreak of blue tit disease.

Blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) disease has been described from the 1990's, when localized outbreaks in the UK first occurred. The bacterium *Suttonella ornithocola* was isolated from diseased tits and the disease got its name due to mainly blue tits being affected. In the 2010's, *Suttonella* was isolated in both Finland and Germany. In 2020, a large outbreak with more than 20,000 dead passerines occurred in the western part of Germany. In Sweden, the first case of the disease was confirmed in 2020 at the Swedish Veterinary Agency (SVA), with occasional cases noted the following years.

The Swedish general wildlife disease surveillance program is largely based on citizen science reports on the reporting system **rapporteravilt.sva.se**. In March this year, the number of reports for dead blue tits increased from occasional, biweekly reports of single cases to daily multiple reports of one to ten sick or dead tits. Reporting peaked with over 100 reports per day for a period.



Map of reports on sick or dead blue tits submitted between March and May 2026.

From March to May 2026, approximately 1,200 reports of passerines were filed, comprising mainly of almost 900 blue tits. Reports were mainly from the central and southern parts of the country, with most birds reported in a zone stretching from Gothenburg on the west coast to Stockholm on the east coast (see figure).

The reporters were contacted and encouraged to submit dead birds to SVA for necropsy. In all, 29 blue tits, 4 great tits, 1 long-tailed tit, 1 coal tit and 1 nuthatch were diagnosed with blue tit disease. As the number of reports escalated and the outbreak was confirmed, people were no longer asked to submit carcasses, and ancillary testing was done more selectively, to confirm the disease in new areas. Genome sequencing on several bacterial isolates are ongoing for further epidemiology studies.

Outbreak management

To inform and bring awareness of the disease, and how to report observations were communicated on the SVA social media and webpage. A recommendation to stop feeding garden birds for at least three weeks was issued in mid-April, in hope of mitigating the outbreak. This created a massive media interest, increasing awareness and reporting, in part explaining the high number of reports. In early May, report numbers declined. If the outbreak would have ceased anyway in early summer, as noted in previous outbreaks in the UK and Germany, or if the termination of feeding influenced disease spread is up to debate. Negative effects on ending the feeding have yet to be seen.

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COST Action for Evolutionary Immunology

"Learning from evolution, to understand immune systems."



EVIM-NET is a new pan-European network bringing together wildlife disease researchers, evolutionary biologists, immunologists, geneticists, veterinarians, and more to understand how immune systems evolve and respond to infection.

The European Network for Animal Evolutionary Immunology (EVIM-NET) was established to bridge a gap between researchers studying immune variation in natural populations and those investigating the molecular and cellular mechanisms underpinning immune function. We strive to strengthen collaboration and research into how genetic and phenotypic variation shape host responses to infection. These efforts can advance our understanding of disease susceptibility, host-pathogen interactions, and immune adaptation, while fostering stronger links between fundamental research and applications relevant to animal health, wildlife conservation, and One Health.

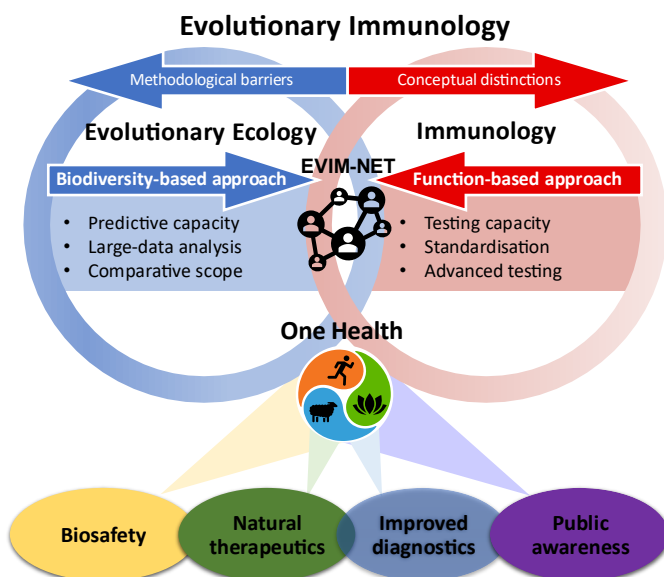
Connecting disciplines, connecting ideas

Infectious diseases continue to pose major challenges to human and animal health, food security, and biodiversity conservation. While important advances have been made within individual disciplines, many opportunities remain untapped because researchers studying immunity, evolution, and disease often work in separate scientific communities. One of the EVIM-NET goals is to create a forum for exchanging ideas, expertise, and methodologies among researchers studying immune variation and its consequences for infection outcomes across a wide range of disciplines and methodological traditions.

From a shared vision to a European network

The origins of EVIM-NET lie within a growing community of researchers working at the interface of evolutionary ecology and host-parasite interactions, who recognized the need for stronger connections with immunologists and other specialists in complementary fields. Inspired by similar initiatives elsewhere in the world, two symposia under the umbrella of the European Society for Evolutionary Biology were held in 2021 and 2022. These meetings helped consolidate the community and sparked discussions about creating a more structured network through the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) framework.

Although the first two attempts were unsuccessful, persistence paid off. Third time was the charm, and the EVIM-NET COST Action was finally launched in October 2025. To date, the network has attracted nearly 200 members from more than 30 countries across Europe and beyond!



Bringing together evolutionary ecology and immunology creates a unique platform for interdisciplinary collaboration, generating the knowledge and tools needed to advance One Health approaches to emerging global health challenges. Graph: M. Vinkler.



1st Annual EVIM-NET meeting in Prague, January 2026. Photo: Michal Vais

EVIM-NET objectives and structure

By connecting expertise that rarely meets within the same scientific framework, EVIM-NET aims to strengthen research at the interface of evolution, immunity, and disease across wildlife and domestic animal systems. Consistent with the COST mission, we place emphasis on skills development for early-career researchers via Training Schools and Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs).

Our activities are organized around three scientific working groups:

- Evolutionary genomics, focused on identifying functional variation in animal immune genes.
- Functional diversity prediction, investigating how genetic variation translates into differences in immune responses and disease outcomes.
- Standards for immunological phenotyping in non-model species, where dedicated subgroups address transcriptomics and other omics approaches, cellular and functional immunology, and interactions between immune phenotypes and microbiota diversity.

Two additional groups coordinate training activities and communication and dissemination, helping ensure that expertise, resources, and opportunities are accessible across the network.

The first steps

While EVIM-NET is still a young initiative, we have already held several online meetings and an inaugural in-person meeting in Prague, Czechia in January 2026. It showcased network's diverse expertise and fostered new collaborations. Dedicated discussions focused on the role of evolutionary immunology as an interdisciplinary field and on setting priorities for future activities.

We have also launched the first edition of STSMs grants, supporting short research visits that facilitate knowledge exchange and skills transfer among network members.

Looking ahead, EVIM-NET is preparing a workshop in fall 2026 focused on moving from signals of selection in immune genes to functional prediction. Next, our first Training School planned for summer 2027 will provide early-career researchers with practical skills in Evolutionary Immunogenomics.

Join us!

We hope this brief introduction has sparked your interest and invite you to join us in building a truly multidisciplinary network. To get involved, simply visit the [COST Action website](#) and apply to the working groups of interest via the "Apply" button in the "How can I participate?" section. Once submitted, applications are reviewed by members of the Core Group.

To stay up to date, join our mailing list INFO@evim-net.com (contact zuzana.swiderska@natur.cuni.cz), [Discord community](#), or follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [Bluesky](#).

More information can be found on [EVIM-NET website](#). If you have any questions, please contact us at contact@evim-net.com.



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iMammalia: Watch wildlife for science!



iMammalia is a citizen science tool for enhancing wildlife disease surveillance and mammal distribution data.

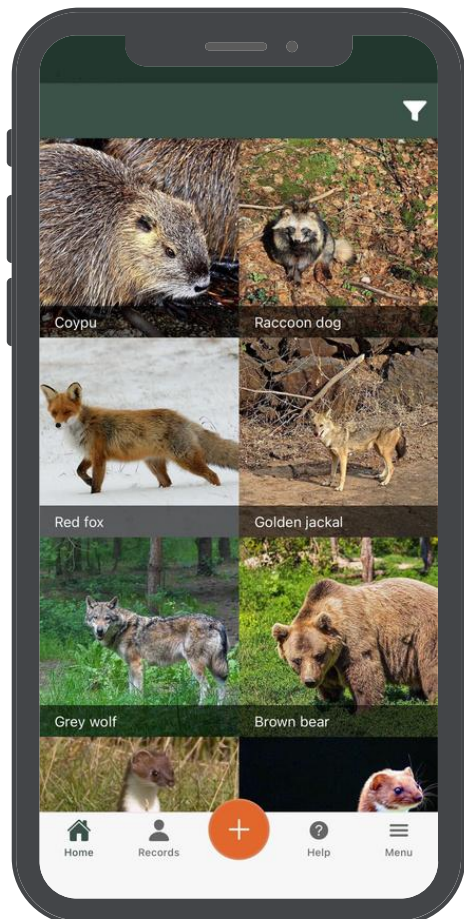
What is iMammalia?

As wildlife professionals, you are already well aware of the critical gaps in large-scale mammal distribution data. **iMammalia** is a free smartphone application that offers a practical, low-barrier mechanism to generate georeferenced occurrence records at a continental scale, leveraging citizen observers while feeding directly into authoritative scientific infrastructures.

Scientific and surveillance rationale

Most existing mammal datasets remain geographically constrained to well-studied localities.

iMammalia addresses this by aggregating standardised occurrence records from a broad observer network, allowing detection of range shifts, identification of absence zones, and modelling of species distribution in response to climate change and anthropogenic pressures, data directly relevant to both conservation planning and wildlife disease management.



iMammalia app.
Available for free for Android and iOS.



What are the benefits of its use?

Records are validated by regional mammal experts before submission to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) and, critically, the Enetwild Consortium uses the data to provide data-driven scientific advice to assess spillover risk at the wildlife-livestock-human interface.

The app allows direct notification of a wild boar carcass being reported in the App to the locally competent veterinary authority. Given the current trajectory of African Swine Fever across Europe, this feature represents a meaningful addition to passive surveillance infrastructure.

Data flow and validation

Validated records are archived at GBIF for open access by the global research community. All submissions are reviewable and correctable through the web platform at <https://european-mammals.brc.ac.uk/>, and datasets can be filtered by region or species to identify surveying gaps useful for directing field effort or designing monitoring programmes.

Practical integration

The app is available on iOS and Android. It supports GPS-based georeferencing, photographic documentation, and species identification guides.

For professionals working with hunters, field technicians, or community stakeholders, it offers a standardised reporting tool that can extend surveillance reach without proportional resource investment. Users are encouraged to provide a description to make validation easier.

All user records will be visible on the website for the user to examine, search, and plot, and if necessary, update or correct. The same login details can be used for the website. Regional mammal experts will then review each record and accept it as correct, ask for more information, or reject it.



Roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*).
Photo: Massimo Scandura



Subadult Alpine Marmot (*Marmota marmota*).
Photo: Stefania Zanet

How to use it?

From the App Store or Google Play, search for iMammalia and download the app. When you open the application, you can select the preferred language and region from the available options, or if you prefer, you can use the English version.

Photos of different species will allow you to locate the observed species easily, and you can upload or directly take a picture of the animal or of its signs of presence if available. You can use your mobile's GPS to enter geographic coordinates or use the map to locate your observation.

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The threat to birds of prey from second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides

[Wild Animal Health](#), in collaboration with UK CEH (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology), presented research findings on the threat posed by secondary poisoning from second generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) to birds of prey and other predators/scavengers in the UK at a conference at the Animal and Plant Health Agency on 24th April 2026.

Cases of toxicity associated with SGARs in mustelids, canids and birds of prey have been described in the literature, but the population level effects are less well known. Free-living, wild Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*) form a high proportion of the diet of red kites (*Milvus milvus*), a reintroduced species in England, and red kites will consume rats killed with SGARs. Recent research has identified the toxicity threshold for SGARs in red kites using a probabilistic approach (Ozaki et al., 2026), and it is hoped that this important information can be supported by a population model in the future, so that the population impact of SGARs on this species can be better understood. Other species known to be at risk from the widespread use of SGARs for rodent control include barn owls (*Tyto alba*) and kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) and there is published evidence that decreasing abundance of kestrels is correlated with increasing SGARs residues (Roos et al., 2021).

Mitigation measures to attempt to reduce secondary SGARs poisoning in England are being driven through the Campaign for Responsible Pesticide Use (CRRU-UK) (HSE, 2026) although the success of this campaign is yet to be fully evaluated. CRRU-UK is a stewardship scheme for professionals carrying out rodent control, such as gamekeepers and pest control agents, who are obliged to follow the CRRU-UK Code of Best Practice.



Tony Sainsbury from Wild Animal Health speaking at the APHA in April 2026

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WILD ANIMAL HEALTH