

IUCN Regional Conservation Forum for Europe, North and Central Asia

*30 September -
3 October 2024*



**IUCN Regional
Conservation Forum**
Europe, North and
Central Asia
Bruges 2024



BRUGGE

VISIT BRUGES
CONVENTION
BUREAU



Flanders
State of the Art

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Foreword



On behalf of the Government of Flanders and the IUCN Belgian Focal Point, we are delighted to welcome you to the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum for Europe, North, and Central Asia (RCF24ENCA) in the historic city of Bruges, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Together with the IUCN family, Visit Flanders, and over 20 local partners, we have worked hard to ensure this Forum is both impactful and inspiring, setting the stage for the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2025.

This gathering presents an excellent opportunity to reimagine conservation in response to today's pressing environmental challenges, marking a significant milestone in interregional conservation efforts. Thanks to IUCN's convening power and the support of the first-ever interregional committee, we are creating a space for everyone to come together, share ideas, and learn from one another.

We look forward to discussing how IUCN can enhance inclusivity and equity in its work, and how the One Programme Approach can make an even greater impact in the years ahead. We are also committed to ensuring that youth leaders receive

the recognition they deserve as key partners in our collective journey towards sustainability.

Thanks to the excursions offered by our local partners, we are excited to provide you with a dynamic glimpse into Flanders' ongoing conservation efforts. We also hope you will engage with our citizens and share your stories, leaving Bruges both inspired and inspiring the city with your passion for nature.

As we move forward together, we are confident that the ideas and connections forged here in Bruges will help shape conservation efforts over the next four years. We hope the Regional Conservation Forum will be a transformative experience, empowering us all to build a future where both people and nature can thrive.

Welcome to Bruges!

Hilde Eggermont, Director General, Flemish Institute of Nature and Forest, IUCN Vice-President
Divija Jata, Coordinator of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, IUCN Belgian Focal Point

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum for Europe, North, and Central Asia. This unique gathering unites us in our shared vision and commitment to conserving nature across diverse landscapes, from Central Asia to Europe.

Focusing on five key Themes and Pathways, organised through numerous Thematic Sessions and incorporating a strong youth perspective, RCF24ENCA offers an invaluable platform to foster partnerships and present innovative solutions to the urgent challenges facing biodiversity and society.

Your participation is vital to the success of this Forum. Whether you represent government, civil society, or one of

our expert Commissions, your contributions will help shape the 20-year Strategic Vision, the 2026–2029 Programme, and set the direction for IUCN's work in the region ahead of next year's IUCN World Conservation Congress. Together, let's build on our collective knowledge, strengthen our connections, and showcase the full potential of the Union.

Thank you for joining us on this important journey.

Boris Erg, Director of the IUCN European Regional Office
Oliver Avramoski, Director of the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia



Welcome to the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum for Europe, North, and Central Asia, on behalf of the IUCN Interregional Committee for Europe, North, and Central Asia (ICENCA). This is the first quadrennial Regional Conservation Forum supported by ICENCA, which was only approved by the IUCN Council in June 2022, following extensive consultation with Members in the regions.

ICENCA aims to add value by providing a legitimate IUCN mechanism to enhance cooperation and collaboration between all IUCN entities in Europe, North, and Central Asia. As a voluntary initiative led by Members and part of the global IUCN Regional Committee structure, ICENCA promotes and demonstrates the IUCN One Programme Approach, with the backing of the IUCN community in these two regions.

Though still in its early stages, ICENCA has already played an active role, convening Members at a significant regional gathering in Yerevan, Armenia last year, holding quarterly Steering Committee meetings, and contributing to the development of this important forum in Bruges. There is no better opportunity to demonstrate our added value than in preparing for the IUCN World Conservation Congress next year in Abu Dhabi, where building connections and improving communication will be key to achieving the outcomes we all strive for in nature conservation.

So, welcome to RCF24ENCA! I hope you make valuable connections, forge strong partnerships, and enjoy learning from each other's company, creating lasting friendships along the way. We have a big task ahead, and we must achieve it together.

Chris Mahon, Co-Chair Interregional Committee for Europe, North and Central Asia (ICENCA)

About the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum for Europe, North, and Central Asia

Every four years, in the lead-up to the IUCN World Conservation Congress, the IUCN Regional Conservation Fora (RCF) are held worldwide as a unique platform for IUCN Members to exchange ideas, network, and shape the agenda. This key event enables the IUCN constituency—including Members, Commissions, National Committees, and the Secretariat—to prepare for the upcoming IUCN World Conservation Congress and ensure that regional priorities are adequately addressed during its planning.

Jointly organised by the IUCN Belgian Focal Point and the IUCN Regional Offices for Europe, North, and Central Asia (the IUCN European Regional Office and the IUCN Eastern Europe and Central Asia Office), the Forum will take place in Bruges from 30 September to 3 October 2024. It is supported by the IUCN Belgian Focal Point, the Flemish Government, Visit Flanders, and the City of Bruges.

RCF24ENCA will bring together around 400 delegates, including IUCN Member organisations from the region (State Members, government agencies, and NGOs), experts and scientists from IUCN Commissions, IUCN staff, private sector representatives, partner organisations, donors, foundations, and Host City officials.

The first day of the programme will be open to all audiences and will feature the official opening of the Forum, high-level talks, poster exhibitions, knowledge cafés, and discussions focused on RCF24ENCA priority themes and transformational pathways. The following two days will be reserved for IUCN Members and Commissions, with a focus on preparations for the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, including discussions on the Motions process, the draft IUCN Programme, and regional priorities. On the final day of the Forum, participants are invited to join one of seven excursions offered by IUCN Members in Belgium and local partners.

Key elements

Guided by the five themes and transformational pathways, RCF24ENCA will feature the following key elements:

Keynotes and High-Level Pitches: High-profile speakers from IUCN and beyond will address global and regional priorities, challenges, and the transformative pathways needed to tackle them.

Thematic Sessions: These sessions will focus on the five RCF24ENCA themes, discussed in a structured and facilitated manner to provide direction for IUCN's future work.

Forum Fair: Led by IUCN members and commissions, the Forum Fair will showcase a wide range of innovative ideas, activities, and achievements in a dynamic, interactive setting.

1. Sustainable growth: Working with nature

Sustainability lies at the core of all development patterns. Existing approaches to growth have proven inefficient and highly detrimental to natural resources. These are not only environmental targets: they have a very strong social and economic angle. Approaches like the circular economy or natural capital will be crucial in this transition.

Example topics include: Best practices from local communities, nature inclusive cities, circular economy and biodiversity, nature positivity, biodiversity health and well-being.

2. Sustainable food systems: a needed balance

Biodiversity positive food systems are ones that ensure food security and nutrition for everyone, everywhere, in a manner that supports economic, social, and environmental wellbeing for current and future generations. Identifying new and innovative tools, approaches and best practices are key to achieving these goals.

Example topics include: Biodiversity credits, sustainable agriculture and food production, sustainable land and ocean food pathways, soil health and the food-energy-water nexus.

3. The climate challenge

Climate change ranks amongst the biggest challenges our planet faces today and it cannot be tackled in isolation from the biodiversity crisis. Biodiversity and the ecosystem services it underpins are essential to both climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. Designing climate-smart policies and solutions require cooperation and coordination across multiple sectors.

Example topics include: climate policy, Nature-based Solutions, impacts of climate on biodiversity, cross-sectoral cooperation and synergies, technology-based measures effective for both climate change and biodiversity threats.

4. Conservation outcomes

Conservation outcomes remain at the centre of our effort to curb the tide of biodiversity loss. The Global Biodiversity Framework and EU Biodiversity Strategy set ambitious goals which require bold decisions and concerted action at all levels. Examples of successful policies and activities on the ground are essentially important to keep momentum and boost ambition.

Example topics include: marine and terrestrial protected and conserved areas (OECMs), good governance and effective area-based management, species conservation, indigenous knowledge, conservation finance and habitat restoration (rewilding).

5. Nature restoration

Nature restoration implies taking proactive measures to restore and conserve ecosystems that have been degraded or destroyed. Apart from providing multiple environmental benefits, it has great potential for the development of new tools and technologies, resource mobilisation, community engagement and private sector involvement.

Example topics include: Wetland restoration, Nature-based Solutions, private sector engagement, nature restoration tools, ecosystem monitoring, community action, nature restoration policies and regulation, as well as post-conflict recovery.



Sessions are required to incorporate transformational pathways in their structure and discussions, addressing the following issues. Specifically, each of the five questions below should be asked at some point during the session:

Civic spaces

Strong civic engagement is an indispensable part of norm-making and healthy and sound decision-making processes. Civic forums, civil society organisations, citizens' assemblies, and similar forms of civic engagement are becoming more important for good and fair environmental governance. This follows the "whole of society approach" from the Convention on Biological Diversity Global Biodiversity Framework.

Generative Artificial Intelligence and technology

Generative Artificial Intelligence is expected to revolutionise human society and life on Earth. Still, there are many unknowns as to how it will unfold and mean to nature conservation.

Next generation leadership

Promoting a new generation of leaders is a timely investment into an inclusive, diverse and sustainable future. It should not be understood as the question of generational transition, in fact it is a whole set of values, attitudes and operational principles which would enable young professionals to be fully integrated into all decision-making processes.

Innovative tools and standards

Science, knowledge and standards have always been the backbone of IUCN's work, recognition and credibility. The question we want to address is how to stay relevant and keep the knowledge edge while embracing emerging new technologies, knowledge management systems, and approaches to data generation and governance.

Securing investments in nature

The needed resources to make actions happen are still -after decades of discussions about them- not secured. New promising targets (from the CBD side - \$200bn/year-, and also from the EU -10% EU budget-) point in an ambitious direction, but it is to be seen if they will be achieved.

Keynote speakers



Goedele Van der Spiegel,
Director General, Flemish
Agency for Nature and
Forest (ANB)



Razan Al Mubarak,
IUCN President



Dr Grethel Aguilar,
IUCN Director General



Hilde Eggermont, IUCN Vice
President/Director General
of the Research Institute for
Nature and Forest (INBO)



Stewart Maginnis, IUCN
Deputy Director General



Musonda Mumba, General
Secretary of the Ramsar
Convention on Wetlands



Diana Garlytska, Chair of
the IUCN Youth Advisory
Committee



Mirela Kumbaro,
Minister of Tourism and
Environment of Albania



Atte Jääskeläinen,
President of Sitra



Penélope Gómez, Advisor on Sustainable Environmental Development of Malaga Municipality



Jurgen Tack, Secretary General at European Landowners' Organization



Jochen Gebauer, Director-General for Nature Conservation, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Nature-Based Climate Action of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV)



Madhu Rao, Chair, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas



Humberto Delgado Rosa, Director for Natural Capital, DG Environment



Boris Erg, Director of the IUCN European Regional Office (EURO)



Oliver Avramoski, Director of the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO)



Chris Mahon, IUCN NCUK Chief Executive, ICENCA Co-Chair

Monday, 30 September

PROGRAMME

Venue: Bruges Meeting and Convention Centre (BMCC), Beursplein 1, Bruges, Belgium

8.00 4th floor	Registration/Fair set up	
9.00 – 9.05 1st floor	Welcome and Introduction	Moderated by Divija Jata, IUCN Belgian Focal Point
9.05 – 9.25 1st floor	Opening Speech	Goedele Van der Spiegel , Director General, Flemish Agency for Nature and Forest (ANB) Razan Al Mubarak , IUCN President (recorded) Grethel Aguilar , IUCN Director General
09.25-10.25 1st floor	Global Transformations Dialogue <i>Moderated by Boris Erg, Director IUCN European Regional Office</i>	Grethel Aguilar , IUCN Director General Musonda Mumba , General Secretary of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Mirela Kumbaro , Minister of Tourism and Environment of Albania Diana Garlytska , Chair of IUCN Youth Advisory Committee Atte Jääskeläinen , President of Sitra (online)
10.25 – 11.00 4th floor	Coffee / tea break	
11.00 – 12.30 4th floor	Introduction to the Forum Themes <i>Moderated by Alberto Arroyo Schnell, Head of Policy and Programme Development, IUCN European Regional Office</i>	Penélope Gómez , Adviser on Sustainable Environmental Development of Malaga Municipality Jurgen Tack , Secretary General at European Landowners' Organization Jochen Gebauer , Director-General for Nature Conservation, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Nature-Based Climate Action, German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMUV) Madhu Rao , Chair, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas Humberto Delgado Rosa , Director for Natural Capital, DG Environment
12.30 – 14.30 4th floor	Lunch and Forum Fair	
14.30 – 15.30 3rd floor	Parallel Thematic Sessions 1 IUCN Contributions for Nature Platform IUCN Climate Change Adaptation in Action - The Conservation Challenge The Wildlife Trusts IUCN Youth Strategy: A dialogue for all IUCN YAC One Health in Nature Conservation IUCN ECARO, Camp Alattoo Europe's Key Role in Advancing Global Implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change Wildlife Conservation Society EU Office Pathways of Protected and Conserved Areas to Meet Target 3 IUCN WCPA-Europe Genetic Diversity Indicators for Long-term Conservation of Biodiversity Copenhagen Zoo Nature Restoration – Joint Efforts and New Endeavours in the Alpine Region Federal Agency for Nature Conservation - BfN	

Natural Capital Accounting and Nature-based Solutions: Synergies for Transformative Change
VITO, Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO)

Challenges, Solutions and Policy Impact of National Red Listing in the ICENCA Regions
(Europe, and North and Central Asia) (ICENCA, IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands, Zoological Society London, Leo Foundation, Floron Foundation and other partners)

Parallel Thematic Sessions 2

What Can IUCN Members Do For World Heritage Conservation?
IUCN – World Heritage Team

Protected Areas Management Effectiveness and how to measure it against the 2030 goals?
EUROPARC Federation

NL2120: The Green Earning Capacity of the Netherlands
IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands - IUCN NL

Advancing Biodiversity Conservation in the Western Balkans: Collaborative Efforts of BDTF WB and IUCN
IUCN ECARO, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of North Macedonia

Central Asia: Spotlight on wildlife trade, sustainable use and community management of wild resources
TRAFFIC

Recognising the Role of Youth in Driving the Transformation We Need: A European Perspective on Pathways, Strategies and Accountability.
WWF-Netherlands

Species Survival Commission Members Meeting
IUCN SSC

Connecting to the Knowledge and Intelligence of Animals – A Novel High-Tech Approach for Research and Conservation
Zoological Gardens of Berlin, Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research in Berlin

Passing a Warming Baton – Intergenerational (Inter)Action for Effective Leadership
Global Youth Biodiversity Network (Europe)

Pollinators Conservation: Advancing the National Red List Initiative
IUCN NL / IUCN SSC Specialists Group Hoverflies & Wild Bees / IUCN Med

15.30 – 16.30
3rd floor

16.30 – 17.00
4th floor

Coffee / tea break

Parallel Thematic Sessions 3

Life Prognoses: Bridging Science and Policy for the Protection of Europe's Old-Growth Forests
Stichting Zoniënwoud

Innovative Technology and Digital Solutions to Scale Fair and Effective Area-based and Species Conservation
IUCN, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Turkey, Nature Conservation Centre (Doğa Koruma Merkezi, DKM), Barcelona Provincial Council

Taking the Next Steps: Moving from Species Assessment to Planning and Implementation of In Situ and Ex Situ Species Management Actions - Examples of Tools, Processes and Programmes
European Association for Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) in collaboration with IUCN SSC CPSG

Youth Involvement for Next-Generation Leadership
Jane Goodall Institute Belgium

Ecocide Law and Financial Responsibility: Uniting for a Safe and Regenerative Future
Stop Ecocide International

17.00 – 18.00
3rd floor

	Species Survival Commission Members Meeting IUCN SSC (continued)
	Mining and the Energy Transition: Protecting Forests, Biodiversity, and People IUCN NL
	The Green List Value Proposition for Protected and Conserved Areas in Europe and Central Asia French Committee of IUCN
19.30 – onwards	Opening Reception at De Halve Maan Brewery Walplein 26, 8000 Brugge

Tuesday, 1 October

Venue: Bruges Meeting and Convention Centre (BMCC), Beursplein 1, Bruges, Belgium

8.00 – 9.00 4th floor	Intergenerational Breakfast Sessions. Young professionals meet: Grethel Aguilar , IUCN Director General Boris Erg , Director of the IUCN European Regional Office Hilde Eggermont , Director General of the Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO) Madhu Rao , Chair, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas John Samaranda , IUCN Regional Councillor for East Europe, North and Central Asia	
09.00 – 9.05 1st floor	Welcome and Introduction	Moderated by Aleksandra Nikodinović, Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO)
9.05 – 10.00 1st floor	IUCN 20-year Strategic Vision Grethel Aguilar , IUCN Director General Hilde Eggermont , IUCN Vice President/Director General, Flemish Institute of Nature and Forest Oliver Avramoski , Director, IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia Boris Erg , Director, IUCN European Regional Office	
10.00 – 10.40 4th floor	Coffee / tea break	
10.40 – 12.30 3rd floor	IUCN Vision and Programme - discussion	
12.30 – 14.30 4th floor	Lunch /Forum Fair / Youth Oasis visit	
13:00 – 14:00	Lunchtime meeting: IUCN and shrinking civic spaces: network consultations with membership from Europe, North and Central Asia	

Parallel Thematic Sessions 1

Protected and Conserved Areas for a Sustainable and Secure Europe

IUCN WCPA Europe

Scaling Finance of High Integrity Tropical Forests

Wildlife Conservation Society - Europe

Land Stewardship: A Great Opportunity to Boost Public-Private Collaboration and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures for Nature Conservation

Fundación Biodiversidad, Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, Spain

Empowerment of Volunteers as a Driving Force for Nature Conservation in Flanders: Grassroots in Action

Natuurpunt

The C2C: Conflict to Coexistence Approach - For Integrated HWC Management

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

Nature-based Solutions for Agriculture and Climate

IUCN French Committee

Update on IUCN resolution on Synthetic Biology

IUCN

Environmental Conservation of Protected Areas: Law Enforcement and the Role of Civil Society

Urban Research Institute

Biodiversity Policy and Polarisation

Research Institute for Nature and Forest INBO

14.30 - 15.30

3rd floor

Parallel Thematic Sessions 2

Protected and Conserved Areas for a Sustainable and Secure Europe

IUCN WCPA Europe (continued)

Illegal Wildlife Trafficking: How Is the EU Coping?

IUCN French Committee

Nature Conservation in Wartime: Ukraine's Experience

Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group

Shifting the Dial on Nature-Based Solutions: Temperate Rainforest Restoration in the UK

The Wildlife Trusts

Parasite Conservation: Importance, Assessment and Challenges

Hasselt University - Parasite Specialist Group

The Nature Inclusivity Agenda

Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food quality

Nature-Based Education: Empowering Children & Youth for a Prosperous Future

IUCN CEC

The Key Geoheritage Areas (KGA) Initiative: An Opportunity to Promote Geoconservation Worldwide

IUCN WCPA-GSG, Geoheritage Specialist

15.30 - 16.30

3rd floor

16.30 - 17.00

4th floor

Coffee / tea break

Parallel Thematic Sessions 3

Protected and Conserved Areas for a Sustainable and Secure Europe

IUCN WCPA Europe (continued)

Operationalising a Nature Positive Economy

Aarhus University/INBO

IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law Meeting

IUCN WCEL

IUCN Commission on Education and Communication Member Meeting

IUCN CEC

Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation

International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation

Peatland Restoration for Climate & Biodiversity - High-Impact Innovation

IUCN UK National Committee - Peatland Programme

Subnational Governments Accelerating Progress Towards Global Biodiversity Goals

Government of Catalonia

Flemish National Parks: From Ideas to Reality

Flemish Agency for Nature and Forest

IUCN CEM - CEESP Members Meeting

IUCN CEM - CEESP

Marine Spatial Planning Challenge

Department of Marine Environment, Belgian FPS Health

17.00 – 18.30
3rd Floor

19:00 –
onwards
4th floor

ICENCA Reception for National Committees (Invitation only)

20:00 –
onwards
BMCC

RCF24ENCA Movie Night

Wednesday 2nd October

Venue: Bruges Meeting and Convention Centre (BMCC), Beursplein 1, Bruges, Belgium

08.00 – 09.00
4th floor

Intergenerational Breakfast Sessions. Young professionals meet:

Oliver Avramoski, Director of the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO)

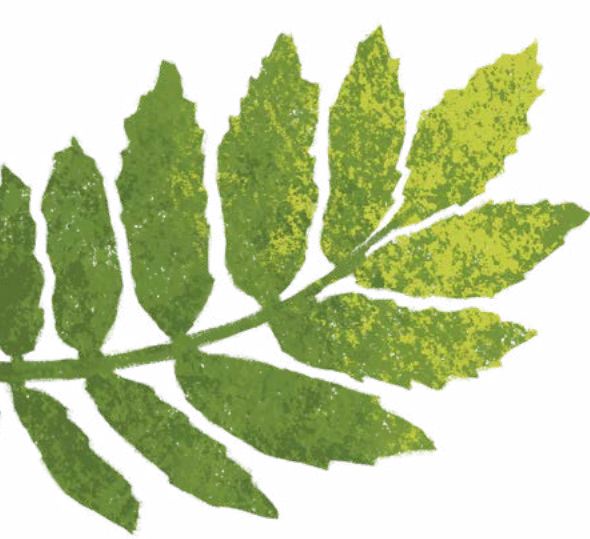
Ann-Katrine Garn, Chair – IUCN National Committee of Denmark

Chris Mahon, Co-Chair - IUCN Interregional Committee Europe, North and Central Asia

Christina Voigt, Chair - IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law

Thomas Brooks - Chief Scientist - IUCN (tbc)

09:00 – 09:05 1st floor	Welcome and Introduction Divija Jata, Belgian Biodiversity Platform
09:05 – 10:00 1st floor	IUCN Commissions Madhu Rao , IUCN WCPA Chair Christina Voigt , IUCN WCEL Chair Jon Paul Rodriguez , IUCN SSC Chair Luc Bas , IUCN CEESP Regional Vice-Chair for Europe, Central Asia and the Mediterranean Katalin Czippan , IUCN CEC Strategic Advisor & Nature Education for Sustainability Co-Chair Ian Convery , IUCN CEM Vice-Chair for Western Europe IUCN CCC (tbc)
10:00 – 11:00 1st floor	The IUCN Policy Cycle: From Motions to Resolutions David Goodman , IUCN Multilateral Policy Officer Jan-Olov Westerberg , Chair, IUCN National Committee in Sweden / National Property Board of Sweden
11:00 – 11:40 4th floor	Coffee / tea break
11:40 – 12:10	Process for nominating candidates from the regions for the IUCN Council Maud Lelievre and Karlo Amirgulashvili , IUCN Councillors
12:10 – 12:40	Road to Congress: Preparation for IUCN WCC, Abu Dhabi 2025 Iain Stewart , Director of Membership and Commissions, and Global Communications Vilmos Kizsel , IUCN Councillor
12:40 – 14:00 4th floor	Lunch / Forum Fair closing
14:00 – 15:00 1st floor	IUCN Governance processes including the changes to statutes and regulations and the membership model Sonia Castañeda and John Smaranda , IUCN Councillors
15:00 – 15:40 4th floor	Coffee / tea break
15:40 – 16:40 1st floor	Recap of vision and programme session and key Forum takeaways: Looking ahead Chris Mahon , IUCN NCUK Chief Executive / ICENCA Co-Chair Stewart Maginnis , IUCN Deputy Director General
16:40 – 17:00 1st floor	Closing remarks Chris Mahon , IUCN NCUK Chief Executive / ICENCA Co-Chair Boris Erg , Director IUCN European Regional Office Hilde Eggermont , IUCN Vice President/Director General, Flemish Institute of Nature and Forest Grethel Aguilar , IUCN Director General
18.00	Reception at Bruges City Hall with the Mayor (Invitation only)
19.00	Closing reception at the Concert Hall



Excursions

Sonian Forest – UNESCO World Heritage site Ancient and primeval beech forests of Europe

Organised by the Agency for Nature and Forests

Discover the wonders of the Sonian Forest on an electric cycling tour, exploring points of interest and the UNESCO World Heritage Site's core zone. Expert guides and forest managers provide insights into conservation and sustainable management practices during the ride. Perfect for nature lovers and history enthusiasts alike, this tour offers a unique blend of exploration and education amidst the forest's serene beauty.

National Park Scheldt Valley – River Scheldt

Organised by the Agency for Nature and Forests

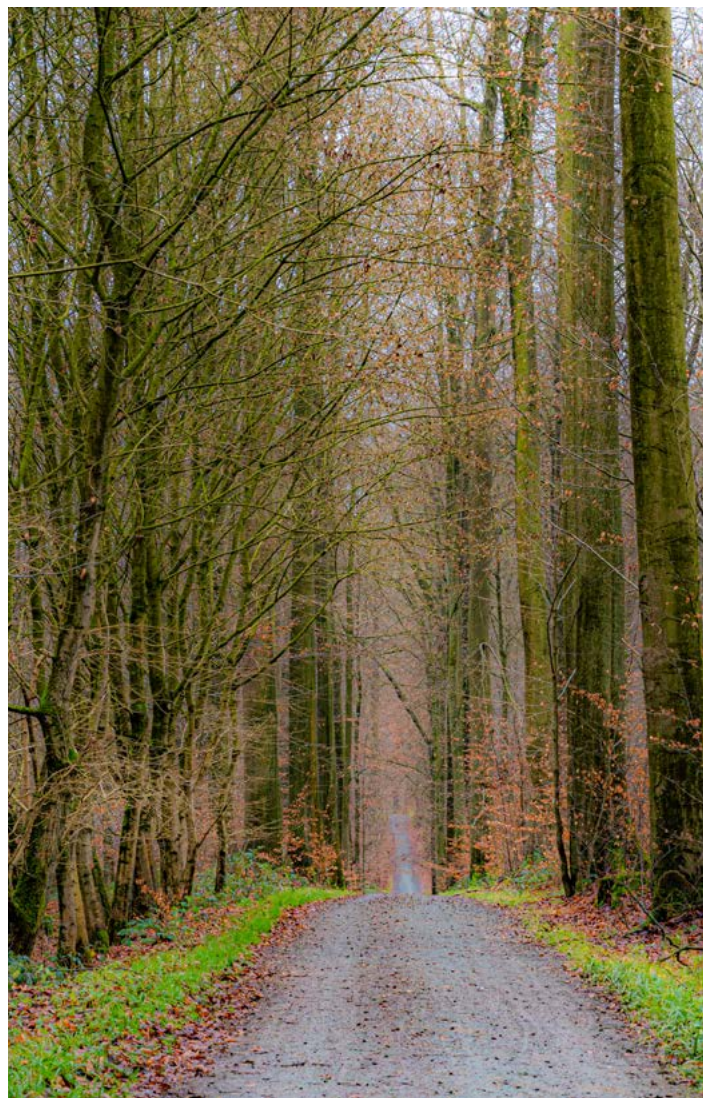
Embark on a journey along the scenic River Scheldt with our exclusive boat trip excursion. As we glide along the tranquil waters, prepare to be mesmerised by breathtaking views and natural beauty. This excursion includes two immersive stops, where we will disembark to explore restored tidal habitats and other wetland wonders. Guided walks through these pristine landscapes offer a rare opportunity to reconnect with nature and witness firsthand the remarkable restoration efforts taking place.

During our time on the boat, experts will deliver engaging presentations on two groundbreaking initiatives: the SIGMA Plan and LIFE Sparc. Learn how these innovative projects harness the power of Nature-based Solutions for climate adaptation and flood control, ensuring the resilience of our communities in the face of environmental challenges.

Polder and grasslands in Uitkerke

Organised by Natuurpunt

Nestled between the busy seaside resorts of Blankenberge and De Haan and the quiet village of Zuienkerke is where you'll find this ancient meadow landscape: the Uitkerkse Polder. Laced with canals and dotted with dozens of cattle ponds, this area is an oasis of calm along the bustling coastline. But looks can be deceiving – thousands of geese flock here in winter, and in spring it's the setting for hundreds of mating meadow birds. It is the largest reserve within West Flanders.



© Robin from Adobe Stock

Zwin nature park – dune restoration project DUNIAS

Organised by the Agency for Nature and Forests

Embark on a journey through coastal conservation as we explore the serene Zwin nature domain and the innovative LIFE DUNIAS project within it. Starting in the tranquil beauty of the Zwin tidal marsh site, expert guides will lead us through its diverse habitats, introducing us to its resident bird species and unique ecosystems. Continuing our exploration, we'll delve into the LIFE DUNIAS project, guided by Reinhardt Strubbe from ANB. Learn about dune nature, invasive plants, and ongoing restoration efforts in a relaxed and informative setting. Trip is combined with a small biking trip along the coastline.



© Margaux Ysebaert, IUCN

Grenspark Saeftinghe

Organised by the Agency for Nature and Forests

Discover the wonders of the Saeftinghe marshes during this excursion. Step into a world where nature and industry coexist in harmony as we embark on a guided walk through this unique habitat nestled within the bustling harbor. As we traverse the winding paths and meandering waterways, you will witness the breathtaking beauty of the marshlands, alive with the vibrant colors of flora and the melodious songs of native birdlife.

After our immersive marshland exploration, we'll venture to an ancient mill nestled within the heart of the site. Here, amidst the rustic charm of this historic setting, we'll unveil the secrets of a visionary project linked to harbor development and NATURA 2000 goals.

Marshes and wet polder grasslands around Damme

Organised by Natuurpunt

The wet grasslands near Damme are part of the larger polder area along the Belgian coast. Tidal flats and marshes, part of the former Zwin estuary, have been embanked gradually over several centuries and been used since as grazing land. Intensification of the agriculture in the last decades increased the pressure to drain these grasslands and convert them to arable land. Around the small city of Damme the grasslands Natuurpunt was able to protect many of these grasslands and now several projects are implemented to return to a more nature oriented water management. During this excursion the different habitats will be visited and attention will be given to the problems of water and nature management.

We combine this visit with a guided biking tour from the city center of Bruges along the typical Polder landscape to Damme.

What happens in Bruges?

Organised by True Bruges

We take you on a half-day walking adventure through the cobblestone streets of Bruges, where tradition meets innovation and sustainability intertwines with heritage. As we meander through the streets, we'll encounter more than just the typical tourist attractions. Our path will lead us to some local initiatives like Kopje Zwam, a circular city farm breathing life into urban sustainability. Here, we will learn about innovative approaches to agriculture and witness firsthand the harmony between nature and city life. But our exploration doesn't stop there. Along the way, we will uncover the hidden gems and iconic landmarks that make Bruges truly one-of-a-kind. From the towering Belfry of Bruges to the serene Minnewater Lake, each sight carries a tale of the city's rich history and cultural heritage.

Social events



Opening reception at the De Halve Maan Brewery

Welcome to the opening reception at the De Halve Maan Brewery in the heart of Bruges! We are delighted to have you join us in this historic brewery, where craftsmanship and tradition come together to create some of the finest Belgian beers. As you step into our 500-year-old brewery, you will experience the unique blend of heritage and innovation that defines the De Halve Maan. Enjoy a taste of our locally brewed specialities, take in the picturesque surroundings, and raise a glass to an unforgettable evening.

At the De Halve Maan Brewery, sustainability is at the core of their operations. They proudly run one of the most environmentally friendly breweries in Belgium. Their innovative beer pipeline, stretching over 3 kilometers, dramatically reduces the need for truck transport, cutting CO2 emissions and easing traffic congestion in Bruges. The brewery also prioritises energy efficiency, recovering heat during the brewing process and reusing water to minimise waste. By sourcing locally and using sustainable packaging, the De Halve Maan ensures that each bottle of beer is crafted with care for both quality and the environment.



Movie night

Join us on Tuesday, 1 October evening for a special movie night at the BMCC in Bruges, as part of the RCF24ENCA. This inspiring event will feature three thought-provoking environmental films to choose from. Each will highlight the beauty and challenges of our natural world and those that defend it. Seating is first come, first served, so arrive early to secure your spot. Enjoy an evening of cinematic storytelling dedicated to our planet!



Sisters in Arms (70'). Directed by Henri de Gerlache (Plenary room 1, 1st floor)

From the SunChild International Environmental Festival in Armenia.

In Greta Thunberg's wake, the young have commenced an unrelenting struggle to save our planet. At the front of these corteges, and making headlines in the media as well as on social networks, young women have become the movement's figureheads, sometimes in spite of themselves. Who are these young women? Why are they both acclaimed and belittled?

To better understand the commitment of Anuna and Adélaïde (Belgium), Luisa (Germany), Léna (France), Leah (Uganda) and Mitzi (Philippines), we decided to follow them but also compare their struggle to an extraordinary woman who preceded them: Julia Butterfly Hill. Twenty years ago, after having lived for 738 days at the top of a majestic California redwood tree, this young American militant managed to save the trees in an age-old forest from being felled. The film relates the pathway these young activists have followed, in each her own way, but always driven by remarkable energy that could move mountains. A picture emerges of a course shared by "sisters in arms" who are driven by hope, commitment and exceptional ideals.

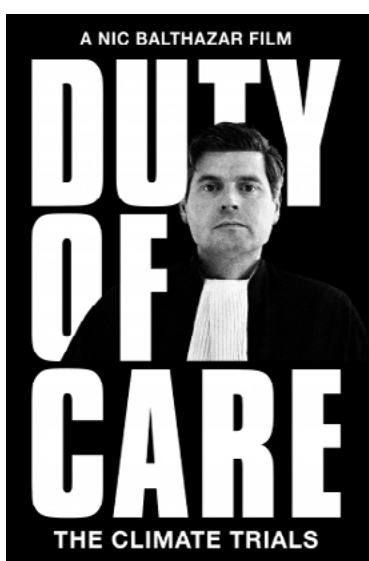


The Illusion of Abundance. Directed by Erika Gonzalez Ramirez and Matthieu Liettaert (Meeting room 6, 3rd floor)

Despite a deeply unbalanced game, Maxima, Bertha and Carolina share a common goal: they are leading today's environmental fight against modern corporate conquistadors. Whereas governments and corporations are trapped in a global race to get the cheapest raw materials, these three women tell us a story of tireless courage: how to keep fighting to protect nature when your life is at risk? When police repression, corporate harassment, injuries or even death threats are part of your daily routine?

THE ILLUSION OF ABUNDANCE is not only a film about those who pay the high price of 'development', it is above all a film about the globalization of their environmental resistance and their conviction to hunt down transnational corporations, wherever they hide.

The filmmakers are now in a 2 year-impact tour: 25 countries, 130 film festivals, 31 awards as best documentary, 25 high level political screenings (COP biodiversity, COP Escazu, OECD, EU Parliament, UN Business and human rights forum, etc.), 300 screenings with debate, TV broadcasting (Al Jazeera, Arte, etc) , 50+ community screenings in Latin America.



Duty of Care (57'). Directed by Nic Balthazar (Plenary room 2, 1st floor)

From the Innsbruck Nature Film Festival in Austria.

From the Innsbruck Nature Film Festival, we will be showing "Duty of Care", an inspiring courtroom drama that explores the trailblazers of climate litigation. "Duty of Care" offers an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at Roger Cox, the Dutch lawyer who spearheaded the historic climate lawsuits against the government and oil and gas giant Shell. These two pivotal rulings sparked a global surge of successful climate-related cases.

Closing reception

Welcome to the closing reception at the stunning Concert Hall in Bruges! We are thrilled to celebrate the conclusion of this memorable event with you in one of the city's most iconic cultural venues. As the evening unfolds, enjoy the captivating atmosphere, with the chance to connect with fellow guests in this beautiful space. It is the perfect setting to toast to the success of our time together in Bruges. Thank you for joining us, and we look forward to a delightful evening of music, conversation, and celebration!



Youth engagement

RCF24ENCA aims to serve as a platform for spotlighting and elevating the work of young conservationists in the region through strengthened intergenerational dialogue and knowledge transfer. These approaches are strategised and implemented in partnership with the IUCN Youth Advisory Committee (YAC).

For the first time, the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum for Europe, North, and Central Asia is sponsoring the participation of a volunteer cohort of six young conservation leaders from across the regions. They will participate in the programme designed to enhance their skills while empowering them to contribute to the programme and engage fellow young experts.

On the road to Abu Dhabi and the 2025 IUCN World Conservation Congress, youth inclusion and representation will be ever-powerful. Young professionals are strongly encouraged to participate in a range of RCF24ENCA youth-centred opportunities:

- **Insightful capacity-building sessions and workshops;**
- **Inspiring intergenerational breakfast meetings with senior conservation leaders;**
- **Networking opportunities with experts from across Europe, North and Central Asia;**
- **Youth oasis space to convene with fellow young professionals;**
- **Information on youth engagement at IUCN Commissions; and**
- **Cultural activities and conservation field trips.**

The RCF24ENCA youth engagement programme has been designed and will be delivered with the support of the six youth volunteers.

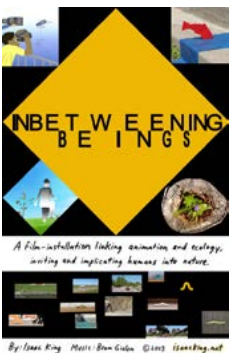
Youth oasis and Forum fair

The youth oasis programme is part of RCF24ENCA's Next generation leadership pathway. This pathway upholds promoting a new generation of leaders as integral to investing in an inclusive, diverse, and sustainable future. Supporting the next generation of leadership goes beyond the question of generational transition. It is a holistic set of values, attitudes, and operational principles that enable young professionals to fully integrate into all decision-making processes.
Location: 4th floor.



30 Sept - 1 Oct all-day	Vision for Nature Trees	<p>Join us at the oasis to share your vision for nature on our RCF vision for nature tree. Think ahead to what the future holds in 2030, 2050, or 2100 and note down your needs and priorities for a nature-rich future on the first leaves you add to the vision for nature tree. Revisit the tree through the week and see it flourish as more and more leaves are added. Let it inspire you to add thoughts throughout the Regional Conservation Forum and take a gander at what other attendees want for our future.</p>
30 Sept 13:30-14:30	Intergenerational world café	<p>Come to our intergenerational world café to share your insight, experience and ideas for intergenerational collaboration and the role of youth in biodiversity conservation! The oasis will host a collective space where all generations can share wisdom and experience, and young professionals are encouraged to contribute fresh perspectives and innovative ideas. The dialogue looks to foster mutual learning and empower youth to take leadership in conservation efforts, ensuring their voices shape the future of biodiversity.</p>
30 Sept evening, reception (brewery)	Youth oasis on tour	<p>At the reception look out for our 'youth oasis on tour' sign and come meet other young or/and early career attendees. Very informal - just show up and chat about all things youth at RCF24ENCA!</p>
1 - 2 Oct 08:00-09:00	Intergenerational breakfast sessions	<p>The Regional Conservation Forum intergenerational breakfast sessions are informal meetings between long standing IUCN leaders and youth participants attending the Forum. The tables will each be facilitated by a Regional Conservation Forum youth volunteer. Due to limited capacity these sessions are for registered participants only.</p> <p>Register now to join the discussions!</p>
1 Oct 13:30-14:30	Channelling creativity to empower and overcome eco-anxiety	<p>Unwind and get your creative juices flowing through 'zine making and informal discussions with each other. This is a time to work through feelings associated with eco-anxiety and find what gives you hope. Don't worry, we will have all the materials you need and will demo how to make a 'zine - but really is this just time and space to reflect on the Regional Conservation Forum and find empowerment within what can often be an overwhelming issue, nature and climate emergencies. You can either take your 'zine home with you or leave it in the oasis for others to look through throughout the Regional Conservation Forum.</p>

Short films that the Innsbruck Nature Film Festival will play on a loop in the youth oasis on the 4th floor:



INBETWEENING BEING



CIRCLES



PLSTC



CODE ROSE



SUNFLOWER

Sustainability

Bruges, with its picturesque downtown, historic architecture, and strong commitment to sustainability, provides an ideal setting for environmentally conscious conferences. As Bruges has emerged as a hub for sustainable events, the Regional Conservation Forum will adhere to specific sustainability guidelines to minimise its environmental impact, aligning with the city's commitment to sustainable practices. These guidelines have ensured that the event supports both the environment and the local community.

VENUE SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Choosing the right venue is crucial for hosting a sustainable conference. Bruges offers a range of eco-friendly venues such as the BMCC, Concertgebouw Brugge, and Brouwerij De Halve Maan. These venues are equipped with energy-efficient systems, including green roofs, solar panels, and heat pumps. For example, the BMCC has a green roof that buffers rainwater, purifies air, and regulates indoor temperatures. It also generates green energy for charging electric vehicles and produces honey from rooftop hives. Venues should ideally have green certifications such as the Green Key label, which is awarded for sustainable and responsible business practices. These venues prioritise energy efficiency, water conservation, waste reduction, and the use of eco-friendly cleaning products.

CATERING

The RCF24ENCA will prioritise sustainable catering options by selecting services that provide organic, locally sourced, and seasonal food. The emphasis will be on vegetarian and vegan dishes to minimise environmental impact. Initiatives like using coffee grounds to grow mushrooms, a practice embraced by local businesses such as Kopje Zwam, highlight the circular economy in action. All catering supplies will be reusable, compostable, or recyclable, avoiding single-use plastics. Efforts to minimise food waste will include donating surplus food to local charities and initiatives such as Poverello.

TRANSPORTATION

Reducing the carbon footprint associated with travel is essential. Attendees will be encouraged to use public transport, bicycles, or to walk. Bruges boasts an efficient public transportation network and most hotels and conference venues are within walking distance of the train station. Providing walking maps of Bruges promotes exploration by foot, which is both healthy and eco-friendly. For those traveling to workshops or events outside the city, cycling is a popular option, given Bruges' flat terrain and proximity to nature reserves.

Bike Rentals: Bikes can be rented from various locations, including:

- **De Ketting:** Located in the city centre, this shop offers a wide range of bicycles, including electric bikes, for rent.
- **Blue Bike Brugge:** Available at the Bruges train station, offering easy and affordable bike rentals for getting around the city.
- **B-EASY Bike Rental:** This service provides eco-friendly, easy-to-use bikes and can deliver bikes to your accommodation.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

To achieve a low-waste event, we will implement waste reduction strategies by using recyclable materials, setting up marked recycling stations, and providing compost bins for organic waste. Partnering with caterers that follow a zero-waste policy and ensuring any production waste is composted will further support these efforts. Tracking waste production will help in striving for a more sustainable and circular approach.

ACCOMMODATION

Partnering with accommodations that are committed to sustainability is critical. We will work with hotels that have sustainability certifications, such as the Green Key label, which signifies adherence to environmental standards including energy-saving measures, water conservation, and waste reduction. Choosing local accommodations not only reduces travel distances but also supports the local economy.

MATERIALS AND PRINTING

Digital tools will be used for event programmes, schedules, and communication to minimise paper use. If printing is necessary, it will be done on recycled paper using eco-friendly inks, with a preference for double-sided printing and limiting the number of copies. Durable and reusable signs will be created for use in future events.

Our merchandise, including pins and tote bags, is designed with sustainability in mind.

The pins are made from 3mm MDF, sourced from recycled wood fibres and certified by FSC Mixed Credit standards. A full-colour print, applied on recycled paper and bonded to the wood, offers an eco-friendly yet stylish option. The production process prioritises environmental responsibility, using solar-powered green electricity for laser engraving. The pin and butterfly clasp are made from stainless steel, free from nickel and lead, ensuring safety and sustainability.

The tote bag is crafted from durable 180g/m² organic cotton and made in the EU, offering an eco-friendly option for everyday use.



WATER CONSUMPTION

Water consumption measures will be prioritised by choosing venues and accommodations with low-flow fixtures and linen reuse programmes. Water refill stations will be provided to reduce the use of bottled water, promoting a “bring your own bottle” mentality among attendees.

AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATION

Clear communication about the event’s sustainability initiatives will be provided to all participants, encouraging adherence to these guidelines and promoting a culture of environmental stewardship.

LOCAL PURCHASING AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Sourcing goods and services locally not only supports the local economy but also reduces the carbon footprint associated with transportation. Collaborating with local suppliers and showcasing local, seasonal produce will be a priority. Involvement with community initiatives, such as the Bruges Food Lab, and supporting projects like Foodwinners and The Food Squad, which aim to reduce food waste and promote sustainable food distribution, will further embed the conference within the local community. By engaging with local charities and cultural exchanges, the conference will contribute positively to the Bruges community.

LOCAL VEGAN AND ORGANIC RESTAURANTS

To further support sustainable dining, participants are encouraged to explore Bruges’ selection of vegan and organic restaurants:

- **De Bron:** A vegetarian and vegan restaurant offering daily organic and fresh meals.
- **That's Toast:** Known for its vegan-friendly brunch options made from locally sourced ingredients.
- **Réliva:** A fine dining experience offering organic and vegetarian dishes, with an emphasis on seasonal and local produce.
- **Books & Brunch:** Offers a cosy atmosphere with a variety of vegan and vegetarian options, all made with organic ingredients.

Help us spread the word

All the information on the Forum can be found on the [IUCN ENGAGE platform](#).

Media representatives, including journalists, editors and producers, are invited to attend the opening session of the RCF24ENCA. For media accreditation please email press@iucn.org.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Please use the hashtag **#RCF24ENCA** when tweeting, posting on Facebook, blogging, or sharing your experiences from the Forum in Bruges on social media. As a participant, you can help raise awareness about the Forum and promote its key messages and conclusions by posting news and updates on your websites and social media channels.

Please access the RCF24ENCA social media kit [here](#).

Acknowledgements

A heartfelt thank you to the incredible teams whose dedication and hard work made this event possible. From planning to execution, their attention to detail and commitment to excellence ensured that every aspect ran smoothly, creating an unforgettable experience for all. Their passion, creativity, and teamwork have been the driving force behind the success of this event, and we are deeply grateful for their efforts. Please join us in giving them the recognition they truly deserve for making this celebration a reality!

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Ute de Meyer, Agency for Nature and Forest
Vera Ameels, Flemish Heritage Agency

Local partners

We thank our Belgian IUCN Members and local partners who helped shape the programme.

- Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO)*
- Bos+
- European Federation for Hunting and Conservation (FACE)*
- European Landowners (ELO)*
- Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment*
- Flanders Heritage Agency
- Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO)*
- Jane Goodall Institute Belgium (JGI Belgium)
- Natuurpunt*
- International Association for Falconry (IFA)*
- Pairi Daiza Foundation*
- Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland (RLKM)*
- Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO)*
- VisitFlanders
- Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ)
- WWF Belgium*
- Zoo Antwerp (KMDA)*

(* IUCN Members)



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