

European Sustainable Use Group (ESUG)

General Meeting of Members

Thursday, 5th June 2025

09.00 – 11.00 (EET)

Tallinn University of Technology (Taltech) campus
Room U02-108, Ehitajate tee 5, 19086, Tallinn, Estonia

Minutes

The meeting was opened by the Chair Julie Ewald. She welcomed to the meeting those ESUG members present in Tallinn and online: Present in Tallinn - Perline Bastid (left to join PRO-Coast meeting upstairs partway through), Elena Bužan, Sándor Csányi, Mari Ivask, Ben Kenward, Bridget Kenward, Robert Kenward, Heidi Krüger, Janusz Sielicki, Jane Raamets. Online were - Stratos Arampatzis, Matt Ellis, Tetiana Gardashuk, Véronique Herrenschmidt, Adrian Lombard, Julian Mühle, Paul Robinson, David Scallan, Riccardo Simoncini, Boukje Tuinhout, Frank Vorhies. Apologies were received from Ömer Borovali, Scott Brainerd, Tim Geer, Niels Kanstrup, Krešimar Krapinec, Lene Midtgaard, Keiya Nakajima, Madeleine Nyman, Simon Poitier, Peter Robertson, Michael Romanov, Viktor Šegrt, Robin Sharp, Despina Symons, Risto Tornberg, Piet Wit. Invites were also requested by Kakha Nadiradze & Osayomwanbo Osarenotor.

Statement on Quorum and adoption of the Agenda:

Robert reported on behalf of Perline Bastid, Nominating Officer, that the meeting had not reached a quorum (14 needed, 11 present in Tallinn) and that elections for Chair and Committee therefore could not proceed. However, Chair and Committee had all agreed to continue until elections could be held at a meeting in Brussels in 2026 to occur at the time of the PRO-Coast final conference.

The agenda for the current meeting was proposed by Robert, seconded by Janusz, and agreed.

Minutes of 2023 meeting:

The Minutes for the meeting on 31 May 2023 in Brussels were approved.

IUCN update:

SUME/CEM:

Adrian Lombard report: IUCN Group for Sustainable Use and Management of Ecosystems (SUME). SUME remains the largest group in the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management. We link to the IUCN officially with the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia - also called the 'Raptor MOU' with the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) – as well as the IUCN MoU with the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF). IUCN-SUME has asked for stronger linkage to Pro-Coast and are considering a bid with Anatrack and ESUG for a new contract to restore saker populations in the long run. After the meeting in Cape Town in 2023 there is also a project on Black Harrier as a flagship

for the Renosterveldt ecosystem and to create a threatened single species action plan with CMS recognition to gain support from the relevant Government agencies.

IUCN membership application update:

Robert Kenward reported on ESUG membership application to IUCN. This process goes back to the 2007 IUCN regional meeting in Bonn at which Chair of Species Survival Commission (SSC) suggested that ESUG become an independent NGO. To try to avoid marginalising of Sustainable Use (SU) in IUCN (where the European region was most active), a Motion at WCC4 suggested that SU activities in IUCN be across two Commissions (SSC and Commission on Environmental Economics and Social Policy). The unfortunate consequence was that the resulting group on Sustainable Use and Livelihoods (SULi) decided to operate at Global level rather than regionally. European Sustainable Use Specialist Group of SSC was required to change its name, which proved a complicated legal process not completed until 2017. ESUG had then applied for IUCN membership in 2019 and thought it had been admitted, as fees had been accepted, and it was listed on the IUCN portal. However, when PRO-Coast provided funding for applying to pay backdated fees, IUCN reported that ESUG membership of IUCN had been rejected but asked for reapplication with a 3-day deadline. This was done, with two follow-up questions answered subsequently. IUCN membership has not yet confirmed. If refused ESUG might consider an emergency motion to WCC8 or go for another application in the future with conditions for International Membership better established. The second approach will incur costs for more offices.

Matt Ellis reported that the British Association for Shooting and Conservation had also applied for IUCN membership but had been told they were not doing enough conservation. They were re-applying in next quadrennial.

Julie noted that mistakes by IUCN Secretariat in not notifying the refusal might work in ESUG's favour. David Scallan recommended acting after the IUCN World Conservation Congress 8 in Abu Dhabi (WCC8), if membership was again denied.

Sustainable Use Motions:

Frank Vorhies discussed the importance of sustainable use in IUCN motions for WCC8 and the need to ensure that sustainable use is included in conservation efforts, arguing that conservation efforts should not exclude sustainable use practices. He highlighted the challenges of embedding sustainable use in IUCN's thinking, noting that the term "conservation" is often used without considering sustainable use. He pointed out that this exclusion can lead to a narrow focus on preservation rather than a holistic approach. Frank called for coordinated efforts among sustainable use organisations to ensure that their perspectives are represented in IUCN motions. He suggested that these organisations work together to advocate for the inclusion of sustainable use in conservation policies.

Specific Motions: Frank mentioned two motions for WCC8 (Motion 66 and Motion 82) related to wildlife trade and the reopening of the IUCN policy on sustainable use.

Motion 82 is entitled: **Advancing the sustainable management, use and trade of wild species** and it is sponsored by the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation and others. Motion 66 is entitled: **Updating the IUCN Policy on the Sustainable Use of Wild Living Resources** and is sponsored by Natural Resources Defense Council (United States of America) and others.

He highlighted the need to promote motions (Motion 82 etc.) that support sustainable use and address the complexities of wildlife trade and exploitation. Frank noted that IUCN was increasingly failing to mention conservation without including, as established by CBD, “and sustainable use”. Motion 66 for WCC8 seeks to re-open discussion of the WCC2 IUCN Position Statement on Sustainable Use, saying that matters had become more complicated now as evidenced by the 2022 Assessment from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). The Motion claimed a need now to relaunch use of nature for human benefit.

Julie noted that another Motion (**003 Developing a unified global definition of 'peatland and peat'**) advocated a definition of peatland, of which work by IUCN UK needed to be better informed by science in UK. Frank noted that re-wetting peatland by whisky distilleries was a good example of creating sustainability through use. David noted importance of a good attendance by SU interests at WCC8.

Thanks to much work by Julian Mühle, a Motion for WCC8 on language culture and decision support had been accepted in combination with two other related motions.

Ben Kenward noted that the discussion was relevant for his interest in politics. Sustainable use was a ‘no-brainer’ as people had to use natural resources. However, users should be able to prove that use was sustainable. A search using Google found many papers on SU but mostly in small journals and 15 years old. More good publications were needed. Julie noted that such research could get bogged down in circular arguments, but better papers were needed. Robert commented that the 2022 IPBES Assessment had tried to pull the SU publications together, with Julian Muehle providing a useful improvement at the Plenary where it was adopted. However, protection-based-conservation had become big business based on the economics of rarity, which funds through loss of species and habitats and tends to steamroller the efforts of SU proponents to gain funds by promoting the economics of abundance despite a third of the world’s population still being dependent on wild species resources.

David welcomed the inclusion of more social scientists in ESUG and Julie agreed on the need to escape from silos based on ecological sustainability.

IPBES update:

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) was established in 2012 and is an independent intergovernmental body established by States to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development. Julian provided an update on the recent IPBES Nexus and Transformative Change assessments. Nexus Assessment: The Nexus assessment explores the interactions among biodiversity, water, health, and climate change. It highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates these sectors and promotes cross-sectoral governance. The aim of the Nexus Assessment had been to break down silos and examine the interactions (e.g. trade-offs) between human food and health with water, biodiversity and climate. Early drafts lacked enough on sustainable use but conservation through sustainable use and roles of hunters, fishers and gatherers

were eventually represented, including useful emphasis on need for multilingual tools, with 47% of government tools being in >1 language.

Transformative Change: The Transformative Change assessment, which focuses on the systemic shifts needed to address the nature crisis. It emphasises the importance of equity, inclusion, and adaptive governance in achieving transformative change and emphasised important roles for different sectors and local stakeholders. Julian noted that the assessments emphasise the role of sustainable use in conservation efforts. They highlight the contributions of local communities and the need for context-specific responses to achieve sustainability. Julian mentioned that the assessments advocate for the use of decision support tools to facilitate adaptive governance and informed decision-making. These tools are essential for integrating local knowledge and scientific data in conservation efforts.

Robert noted that both Assessments were very relevant to PRO-Coast, with the Nexus Assessment stressing the importance of not only decision support tools but also adaptive management. The efforts of ESUG in PRO-Coast were aimed at making such tools and processes easy for local stakeholders to apply. David supported this approach and the importance of using terminology and languages understandable by local people.

PRO-Coast update:

Scientific overview:

Julie provided a scientific overview of the PRO-Coast project, which involves 20 partners across 14 countries and focuses on integrated bottom-up decision-making in coastal ecosystems. The project aims to empower local communities and inform adaptive governance approaches. The project includes 10 case studies, each addressing different conservation approaches and challenges in coastal ecosystems. These case studies serve as experimental units to test and develop transformative change models. They each include governance that is flexible, inclusive, and responsive to local needs and conditions. Local communities are involved in decision-making processes and provided with the tools and knowledge needed to manage their coastal ecosystems sustainably.

PRO-Coast case studies:

Robert discussed the 10 case studies (in 9 locations) within the PRO-Coast project, highlighting the different conservation approaches and challenges in each location. The case studies are found in Malta, the UK, Norway (2), Estonia, Romania, Montenegro, Slovenia, Italy, Ireland. The case studies are working on a wide variety of coastal challenges, including managing coastal lagoons, addressing tourism impacts, and controlling invasive species. He emphasised the importance of engaging local communities and developing useful tools for sustainable use.

Reciprocal Environmental Decision Support System (REDS):

Ben presented the REDS system, which creates a virtuous cycle between environmental decision support and citizen science. The system allows local users to provide information about their context, which is used to update models and provide tailored advice. The initial proof of concept focused on house sparrows in UK gardens. He invited proposals from those present with a good idea, aimed at any type of land manager, ecosystem service user, or community. The plan is to move forward with the best ideas in autumn 2025.

Financial Report:

Robert provided the financial report for ESUG, highlighting the fluctuating financial situation and the importance of patron support. He mentioned the significant funding received from the PRO-Coast project and the need for continued support from patrons – specifically to cover the cost of the hoped for IUCN membership.

Future Funding Opportunities:

Stratos Arampatzis discussed potential future funding opportunities through Horizon Europe and other programmes. He mentioned ongoing discussions with Julie and Robert about potential proposals and the importance of securing additional funding for future projects.

Chair's Report: Julie delivered the Chair's report, summarising the key activities and challenges faced by ESUG over the past two years. PRO-Coast has been the activity that has taken up most of ESUG members time but input into IPBES assessments and other actions in support of sustainable use have also been important. She thanked the ESUG team involved with PRO-Coast (Stratos Arampatzis, Perline Bastid, Elena Bužan, Sándor Csányi, Tetiana Gardashuk, Véronique Herrenschildt, Mari Ivask, Ben Kenward, Bridget Kenward, Heidi Krüger, Julian Mühle, Jane Raamets, Janusz Sielicki, Boukje Tuinhout). She gave special thanks to ESUG patrons (The British Association for Shooting and Conservation, together with FACE, Robin Sharp, and Anatrack) for their support and to David Scallan and his team at FACE for help with legal issues and highlighted the importance of continued collaboration and funding. Robert Kenward is the rock and the glue that kept everything on track through a very busy period – Julie reported that she relies on him for guidance and is very grateful for all he does for ESUG and PRO-Coast. Finally, she thanked Mari Ivask, Jane Raamets and Kaire Luuk for providing the facilities for the ESUG meeting as well as the PRO-Coast meeting.

Currently ESUG membership stands at 139, with 62 members of SULi and 43 members of SUME.

After a most productive meeting, there was **No Other Business**

The meeting ended at 11.15 EET