

[Issue 4/2024, June 27th]

IUBS BioNews

Dear colleagues and members of IUBS,

We wish to draw your attention to the opinion article titled **Politics, Religion and Sex: The Essence of Biology** by John Buckenridge (RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia). John, our former IUBS president, encourages us biologists to not avoid but seek for discussion on these topics ... topics that sometimes are considered as inappropriate and slippery like black ice.

The IUBS BioNews are an element of our efforts to inform you about current biology-related topics. To provide a more comprehensive overview of our IUBS activities we have developed a 10-page document where you can read about our background, mission and action plan 2023-2026 (released on April 24th). A table of contents and an index provide easy access by tailored searches.


In this IUBS BioNews #4 you can read more about the activation phase of the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (IDSSD 2024-2033). To this end IUBS has signed the memorandum of understanding and is part of the Earth-Humanity Coalition aiming to propel sciences for equitable wellbeing on a healthy planet.

A major effort of IUBS presently is dedicated to the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 16 to the CBD) to be held from 21 Oct. to 1 Nov. 2024 in Cali Colombia. It is a longstanding tradition that IUBS together with partners organizes the Science Forum to the COP. In preparation of this event, the 6th Science Forum, we organized four online Science Forum events in April (reports now available) and presently are advancing the program for the in person meeting taking place on the 26th/27th of October as parallel event to the COP.

IUBS will host Sara Beery, Assistant Professor at MIT EECS' faculty for AI and Decision Making and CSAIL in our centenary webinar series on 10th October.

Please enjoy reading these news and views and contact us whenever you wish more information or plan to contribute or get engaged with IUBS.

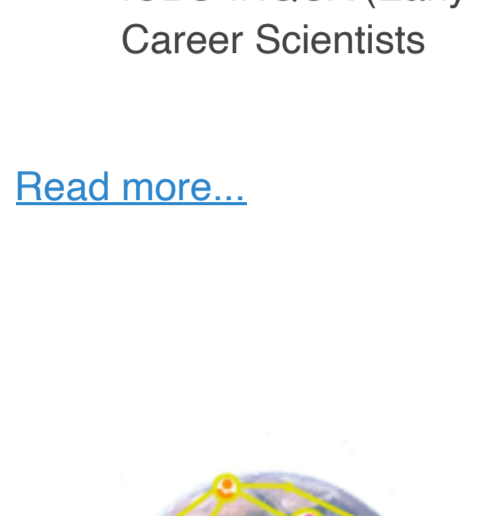
With our very best wishes,
Your IUBS BioNews Team



Updates

- MOU to support IDSSD
- New Statutes voted in (ISC)
- Politics, religion and Sex: An Opinion article


[Read more...](#)



News

- Open letter to WHO
- IUBS Action Plan
- IUBS-INQUA (Early Career Scientists)

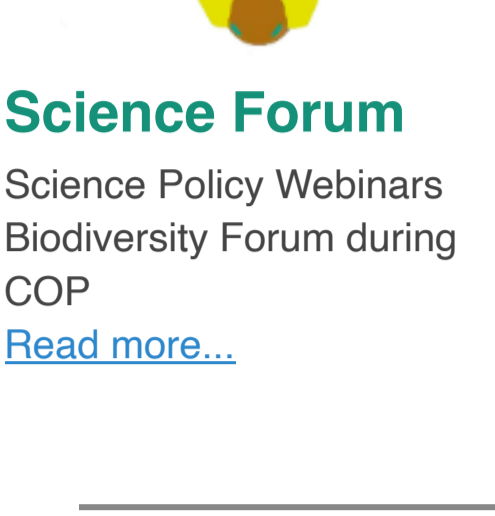
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Conferences

- Wildlife Parasites (ISZS)
- Photobiology congress (IUPB)

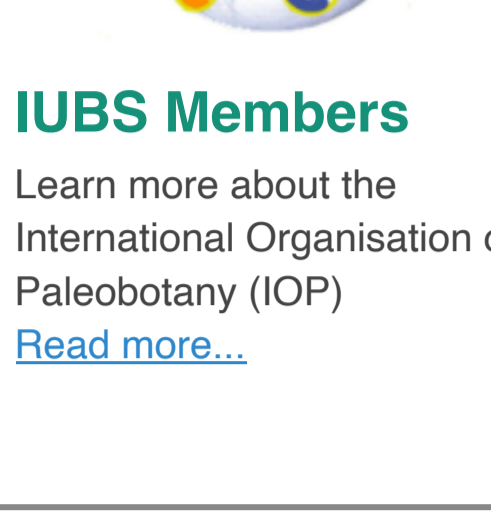
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Science Forum

Science Policy Webinars Biodiversity Forum during COP

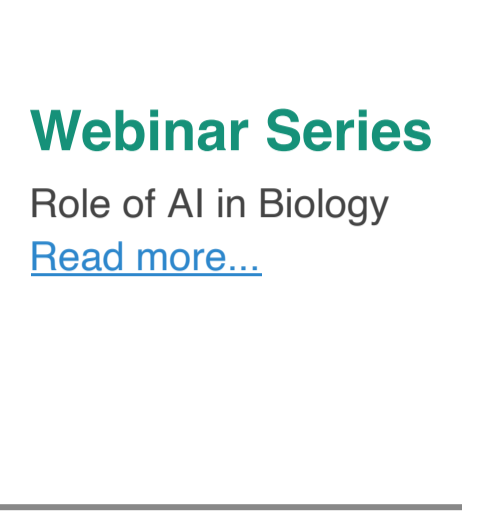
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IUBS Members

Learn more about the International Organisation of Paleobotany (IOP)

[Read more...](#)



Webinar Series

Role of AI in Biology

[Read more...](#)

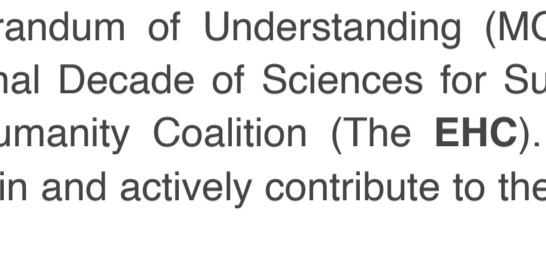
Updates from IUBS

IUBS Formally Supports IDSSD in the Activation Phase of the Earth-Humanity Coalition



THE EARTH-HUMANITY COALITION

Sciences for Equitable Well-being on a Healthy Planet



IUBS has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate the activation phase of IDSSD (International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development, 2024-2033) through the Earth-Humanity Coalition (The EHC). This MOU underlines strong commitment from IUBS to join and actively contribute to the objectives of the coalition and successful IDSSD outcome.

After successful completion of IYBSSD (International year of Basic Sciences for Sustainable Development, 2023) and IDSSD proclamation at UN GA (United Nations General Assembly, 25th August 2023), to support the implementation of IDSSD in most effective way, decision was made to establish the EHC as a large network of organizations with commitment towards a transformative IDSSD contribution. The aim of the coalition is utilizing international capabilities with similar effectiveness as IYBSSD, but at a higher level of scope, ambition, and commitment. The EHC work implementation in support of IDSSD will be carried out in three phases: 1) Activation, 2) Mobilization and 3) Expansion and Consolidation.

More information [here](#)...

ISC Members Approve Changes in Statutes



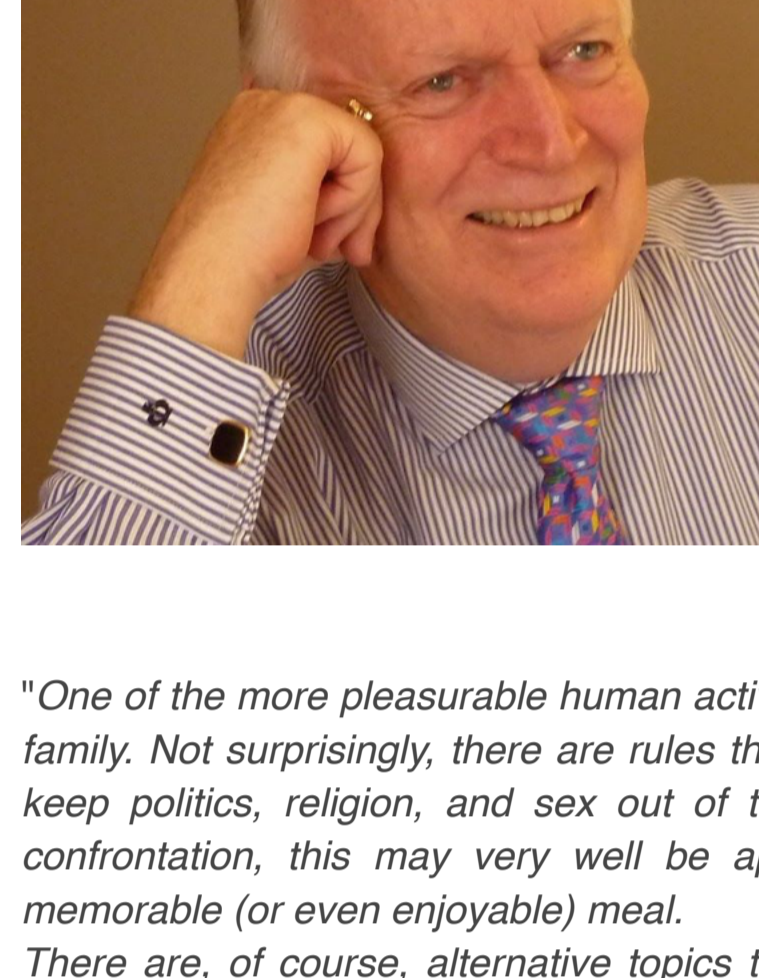
International Science Council

The global voice for science

International Science Council (ISC) Members participated in the extraordinary General Assembly held between 28 February to 6 March. Members voted on proposals for revised ISC Statutes and Rules of Procedure and the introduction of staggering terms of office for ISC Governing Board members. Out of 123 eligible voters, 89.6% approved the revised Statutes and Rules of Procedure, and 90.6% approved the staggering terms proposal.

The dates for the next ordinary ISC General Assembly, previously scheduled for 22-26 January 2025, have been changed to 26-30 January 2025 Muscat, Oman.

Politics, Religion, and Sex: The Essence of Biology



Prof. John St James Stewart Buckenridge

John, former President of IUBS, is Professor Emeritus in the Earth & Oceanic Systems Group at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia and a Research Fellow at Museums Victoria, Australia and President Emeritus of ISZS. He is internationally recognized for his research into both the biogeography and evolution of barnacles and in the promotion of environmental stewardship through environmental ethics. He is member of the IUBS steering committee for the promotion of equal opportunity.

"One of the more pleasurable human activities is to partake of a dinner with friends and/or family. Not surprisingly, there are rules that guests are expected to follow, in particular to keep politics, religion, and sex out of the dinner conversation. If we are to minimise confrontation, this may very well be appropriate, but it may not be conducive to a memorable (or even enjoyable) meal.

There are, of course, alternative topics that may be employed, such as regaling guests with details of one's last holiday... especially with the use of social media like Facebook. But risk of a mind-numbing evening then becomes alarmingly high. What I contend here is that politics, religion, and sex quintessentially embrace the very essence biology, especially for our species, and that we should encourage discussion on these.

So, let's start with ethics – which, in part, drives politics and religion..."

Read the full opinion article by John St J. S. Buckenridge, IUBS President (2007-2009) [here](#)...

News section of IUBS BioNews

Addressing drivers of Zoonotic Diseases Emergence

IUBS joined forces with 142 international organizations and 54 experts to co-sign an open letter addressed to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB, WHO) to highlight the need for prioritization of pathogen spillover prevention and in general identify the drivers of zoonotic disease emergence. The initiative was taken in the light of the concerns raised after the 8th INB meeting in Geneva (19th Feb. – 1st March 2024), where, as per expert opinion, the agreement does not adequately consider the drivers of disease emergence and primary prevention as well as the increased risk of disease spread, especially through wildlife trade and markets.

The letter highlights how after brief period of critical discussion at the start of global Covid-19 pandemic, the current shift in focus away from central issues surrounding the origins and transmission of infectious diseases might be detrimental in long term. The letter becomes more apparent in light of estimates that from 1.7 million undiscovered viruses of mammals and avian hosts, 30 to 50% could be infectious to humans. The continued higher risk that wildlife trade and markets pose in this perspective, require stringent regulations. The letter also highlight how important international agreements like CITES falls short in addressing the nexus between wildlife trade and risks posed to human/animal health. Towards the goal of preventing future pandemics, it has been strongly emphasized that any pandemic agreements without meaningful commitment to risk of pathogen spillover would be wasteful.

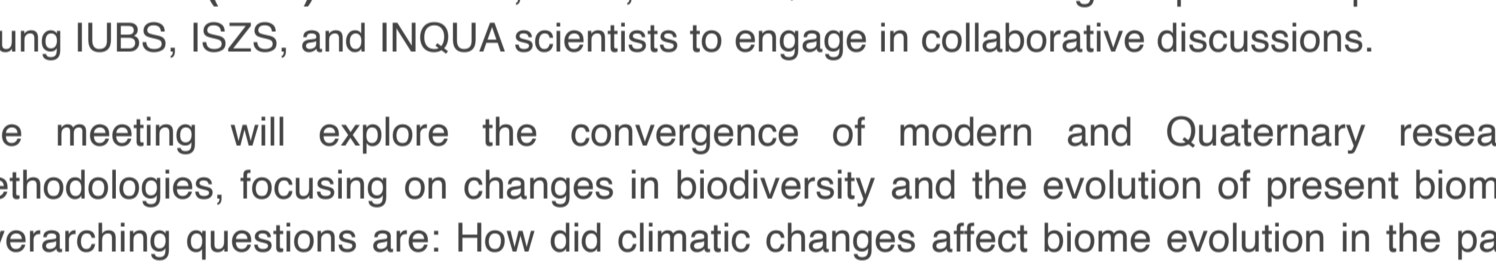
Read the complete letter [here](#)...

IUBS Action Plan

We are excited to announce that we have prepared our Action Plan for the triennium 2023-2026. This comprehensive plan outlines our strategic priorities and objectives, focusing on impactful scientific programs, support for early career scientists, promoting equity and representation, and more. We invite all members to download and share the Action Plan available [online](#) or in pdf form.

You can further explore IUBS [Vision and Objectives](#)

IUBS-INQUA-ISZS Collaboration



The International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS) and the International Union for Quaternary Research (INQUA), with the engagement of the International Society of Zoological Sciences (ISZS), a scientific member of IUBS, decided to organize an international event fostering dialogue and collaboration among Early Career Researchers (ECR) from IUBS, ISZS, and INQUA. The meeting will provide a platform for young IUBS, ISZS, and INQUA scientists to engage in collaborative discussions.

The meeting will explore the convergence of modern and Quaternary research methodologies, focusing on changes in biodiversity and the evolution of present biomes. Overarching questions are: How did climatic changes affect biomes evolution in the past? What can we learn from Quaternary research for current and future biomes evolution? Can measures be defined to ameliorate the impact of global change and foster conservation?

We plan to host a four- to five-day in-person meeting in China in November 2025, possibly in conjunction with the World Young Scientist Summit. We expect to welcome 50 to 70 participants from the three organizations. Part of the event will be online.

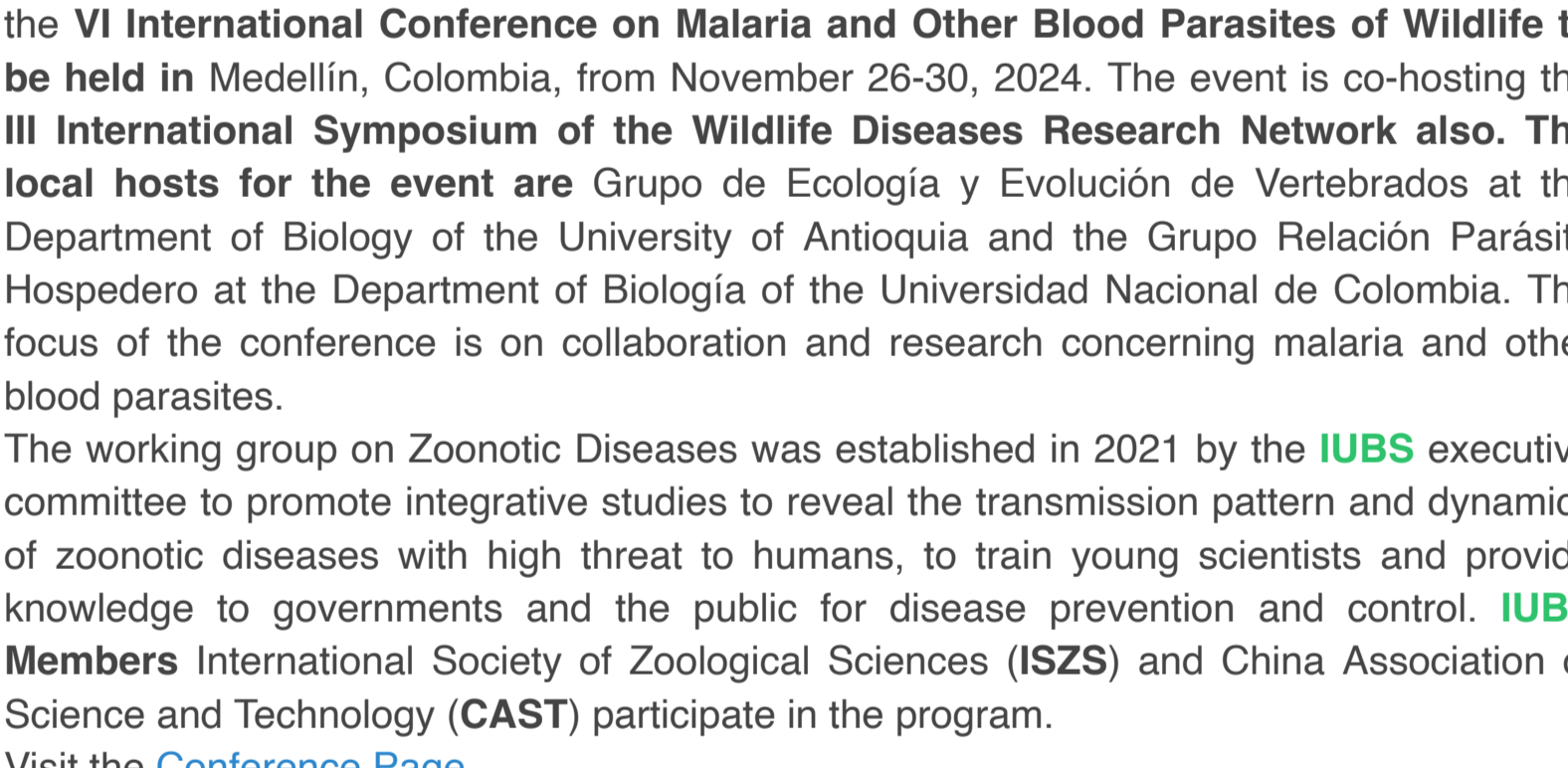
ECRs should play a major role in the organization of the meeting and the composition of the scientific program, including the selection of the keynote speakers. Therefore, we expect the ECRs to dedicate some time to contribute to the organization of the event. ECRs with a scientific interest in the meeting topic who would like to participate in the organization are invited to express their interest by sending an email with a motivation letter, a CV and the following application form to IUBS secretariat (secretariat@iubs.org) on or before 30th Sep. 2024.

[Download Application form](#)

Read more about IUBS collaborative projects [here](#)...

Conferences

Conference on Wildlife Parasites



The IUBS triennial programme Zoonotic Disease Coordination Network (ZNCN) invites for the VI International Conference on Malaria and Other Blood Parasites of Wildlife to be held in Medellin, Colombia, from November 26-30, 2024. The event is co-hosted by the III International Symposium of the Wildlife Diseases Research Network also. The local hosts for the event are Grupo de Ecología y Evolución de Vertebrados at the Department of Biology of the University of Antioquia and the Grupo Relación Parasito Hospedero at the Department of Biología de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia. The focus of the conference is on collaboration and research concerning malaria and other blood parasites.

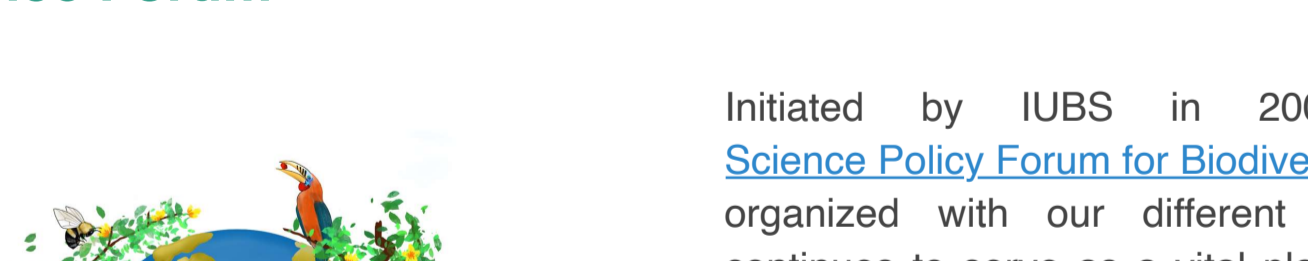
The working group on Zoonotic Diseases was established in 2021 by the IUBS executive committee to promote integrative studies to reveal the transmission pattern and dynamics of zoonotic diseases with high threat to humans, to train young scientists and provide knowledge to governments and the public for disease prevention and control. IUBS Members International Society of Zoological Sciences (ISZS) and China Association of Science and Technology (CAST) participate in the program.

Visit the [Conference Page](#)...

IUBS Sponsored Event

IUBS supports the organization of international Conferences and Workshops in IUBS member countries. Applications are reviewed every trimester by the IUBS Executive Committees. Conferences awarded should have women involved in the organizing/scientific committees and there should be a gender balance in the list of the invited speakers. Two conferences have recently benefited from IUBS sponsoring:

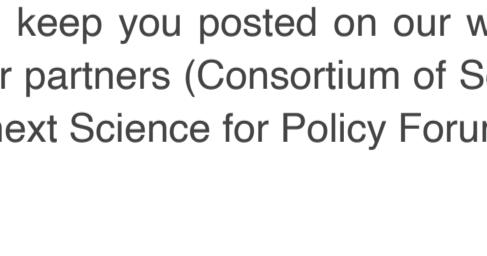
International Congress on Photobiology



IUBS member organization International Union of Photobiology (IUPB) in collaboration with the Molecular and Experimental Pathology Society of Australasia (MEPSA), and the Local Organising Committee are inviting for the 18th International Congress on Photobiology, which will be held in Perth (Australia) on 25-30th of August 2024. This conference in an IUBS-supported event.

Visit the [Conference Page](#)...

Science Forum



Science for Biodiversity

Initiated by IUBS in 2006, the Science Policy Forum for Biodiversity organized with our different partners continues to serve as a vital platform for fostering dialogue among scientists, policymakers, and stakeholders.

In preparation of the Science Policy Forum for Biodiversity that will be held on 26 and 27 October 2024 during the CBD COP in Cali Colombia, IUBS organized 4 online webinars from 6th April to 3rd May 2024.

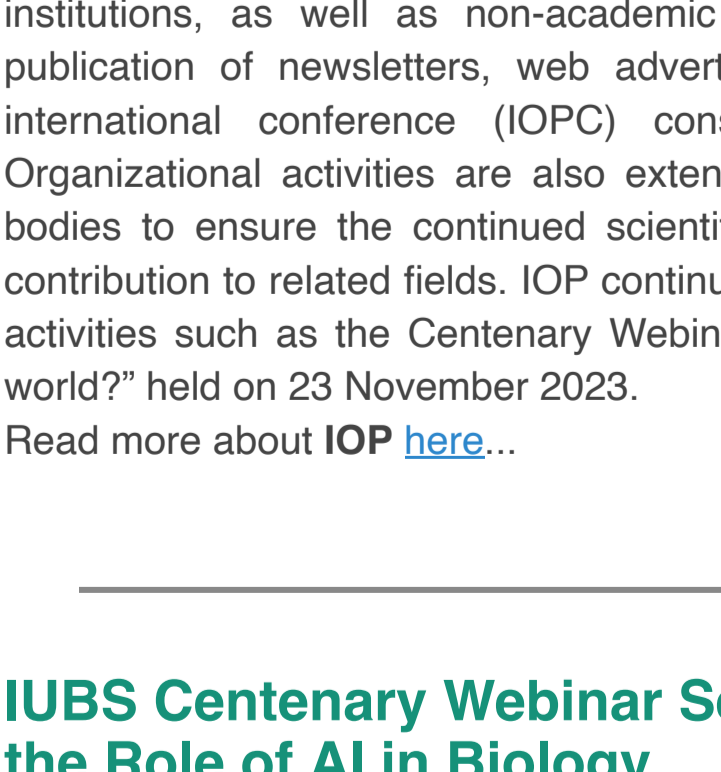
We have delved into crucial topics such as [Invasive Alien Species](#), [Digital Sequence Information \(DSI\)](#), and the [Intersection of Indigenous Peoples in Conservation Biodiversity and Indicators](#). The videos and the different presentations of renowned speakers are shared on [our website](#) together with a short report of the sessions.

We will keep you posted on our website on the sessions program that will be organized with our partners (Consortium of Scientific Partners - CSP of the CBD, Tokyo University) at the next Science for Policy Forum.

Spotlight history – how IUBS shaped the self organization of biosciences

The history and activities of the international federations and societies in the various biosciences were always closely linked to IUBS. Close to 90 international societies nowadays are scientific members of IUBS. The new Executive Committee of IUBS wishes to strengthen its relationship with its scientific members. We are planning to contact you, the representatives of the scientific members, to explore ways of teaming up with you in times of urgent need for input of biology into policy making and for reaching the sustainable development goals.

International Organisation of Palaeobotany

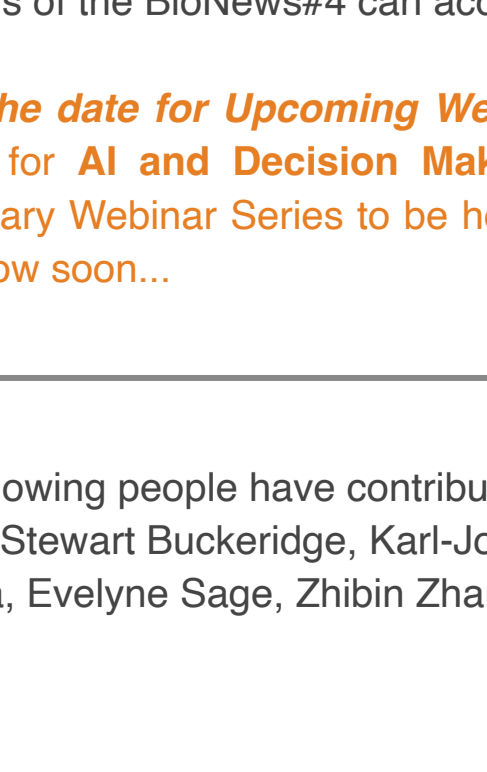


The International Organisation of Palaeobotany (IOP) was established in 1954 at Paris during VIII International Botanical Congress (IBC) as an independent body that collaborate with the International Association of Botanical and Mycological Societies. IOP is in charge of fossil plant naming in the International Code of Nomenclature of Algae, Fungi and Plants (ICN).

The aim of IOP is to promote the development of worldwide studies of all types of plant fossils, primarily based on the fields of biology and geology, and to disseminate research results to the public by strengthening communication between a wide range of disciplines in science and education. Currently IOP represents nearly 500 individual members, from universities, scientific institutions, as well as non-academic entities. Major business of IOP includes the publication of newsletters, web advertisements, and the organization of quadrennial international conference (IOPC) considering all aspects of fossil plant studies. Organizational activities are also extended to the collaboration with other international bodies to ensure the continued scientific development of palaeobotany and its further contribution to related fields. IOP continues to tightly cooperate with IUBS through various activities such as the Centenary Webinar Series: "How will plants adapt to a high CO2 world?" held on 23 November 2023.

Read more about IOP [here](#)...

IUBS Centenary Webinar Series: Sixth Lecture Addressed the Role of AI in Biology



Prof. Luisa Orsini

Luisa is a Professor of Evolutionary Systems Biology and Environmental Omics at the University of Birmingham, with affiliations in both Biosciences and the Institute of Interdisciplinary Data Science and AI. She also holds the position of an Alan Turing Fellow at the UK Alan Turing Institute, where she co-leads the 'Biodiversity monitoring and forecasting' interest group.

Luisa bridges research and innovation using environmental DNA and resurrected crustaceans. Utilizing cutting-edge high throughput sequencing technologies, data science methodologies, and artificial intelligence (AI), Luisa aims to comprehensively understand the ramifications of environmental change on freshwater ecosystems. Through these unconventional approaches, she strives to pinpoint the root causes of biodiversity loss and elucidate the evolutionary mechanisms that enable species resilience.

The webinar was held online on 30th April, 2024. The session was moderated by Dr Kaustubh Rau (School of Arts and Sciences, Azim Premji University, India).

Readers of the BioNews#4 can access the recorded video of the lecture [here](#)...

Save the date for Upcoming Webinar: Sara Beery, Assistant Professor at MIT EECS' faculty for AI and Decision Making and CSAIL will be the next IUBS guest in our Centenary Webinar Series to be held on 10th October 2024 (5 PM CET). Further details will follow soon...

The following people have contributed to the newsletter:
James Stewart Buckenridge, Karl-Josef Dietz, Nathalie Fomproix, Vijay Kumar, Harufumi Nishida, Evelyn Sage, Zhibin Zhang.

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IUBS
106th Floor
Bathurst 442, University Parks Road W
81-803 Ormsby
Perth
+61 8 9391 5007
secretariat@iubs.org

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