

EU Elections 2024: **IFAW** Manifesto



ifaw

Urgent threats & real solutions

In June 2024, citizens of the European Union (EU) will go to the polls to elect their representatives at the new European Parliament for the next five years. The Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) represent citizens' interests in the EU decision-making process, and EU citizens continue to urge policymakers to improve animal welfare and environmental protection.

Harmful human activities, such as illegal and unsustainable wildlife exploitation, underwater noise pollution, bycatch of marine species, and deforestation have contributed to significant biodiversity loss. During the next political term, key opportunities to address these devastating practices will be offered by the revision of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, and the revised EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking as well as by strong EU leadership on multilateral environmental agreements. Nature conservation and wildlife protection are important tools to restore biodiversity and tackle climate change.

IFAW calls on the EU to deliver the following actions in 2024 and beyond to contribute to a better world for animals, people and the planet.



A LAV volunteer, supported by IFAW, rescues one of five dogs trapped for days on the second floor of a flooded house in Solarolo, Emilia-Romagna, Italy.

Wildlife trafficking

The European Union is the third largest destination for illegal wildlife and a key transit hub. Wildlife trafficking constitutes one of the biggest threats to species conservation, negatively impacting the stability of ecosystems and regional and global security. The escalating trade in endangered animals via online marketplaces across Europe is a concern for both species conservation and animal welfare.

IFAW calls on the EU to:

► **Promptly and effectively implement the revised EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking (WTAP) adopted in 2022.**

The revised Action Plan is an important milestone in fighting wildlife trafficking in the next five years (up to 2027). If fully implemented by all the involved stakeholders, measures could make a significant impact within and outside of the EU. It is essential that sufficient funds are dedicated to the Action Plan's implementation, both at EU and national levels. Crucial actions include well-targeted, social science-based demand reduction activities focused on consumers' behaviour change, implementation of EU restrictions on ivory trade, the acquisition of specific equipment and competencies by law enforcement and judicial authorities, and improved care of seized and confiscated live wild animals through financial support for capacity development and animal placement facilities.

► **Adopt legislation to criminalise all trade in illegally sourced wildlife.**

Undermining national conservation measures, many threatened species

and their parts are traded in the EU in violation of wildlife laws in their home country, as they are not protected by EU or international legislation. As a result, wildlife traffickers are able to easily smuggle these animals in Europe. IFAW calls on the EU to adopt legislation that prohibits the importation, transshipment, purchase and sale of wildlife taken illegally in the country of origin.

► **Restrict the legal trade in exotic pets.**

The EU market for exotic pets and the range of affected species are growing both within the EU and internationally. Stricter regulation of the legal trade in exotic pets within the EU is urgently needed by applying a precautionary approach that safeguards biodiversity, public health and safety, and animal health and welfare. IFAW calls for the regulation of the exotic pet trade through the adoption of appropriate legislation, such as an EU Positive List of allowed species.

► **Adopt stronger measures to fight wildlife cybercrime and allocate adequate resources to detect and prosecute wildlife cybercriminals.**

Since the expansion of the internet, wildlife traffickers go online to reach a vast virtual marketplace, making wildlife crime a form of cyber-enabled crime. Dismantling wildlife cybercrime requires the acquisition of specific equipment and competencies by law enforcement and judicial authorities, strict regulation of the private sector (e.g., online platforms), and support from civil society organisations and academia to detect illicit online trade. Capacity-building efforts and financial



IFAW funded the rescue, care and transport of four lion cubs and one black leopard cub out of Ukraine. All of the cubs were bred at private breeding facilities for the exotic pet trade in Ukraine and abroad.

and political support are necessary to effectively fight wildlife cybercrime.

► **Improve access to care for seized or confiscated live animals.**

Efforts are urgently needed to improve the fates of countless animals seized from illegal wildlife trade. The implementation of the revised WTAP presents an opportunity for Member States to implement internationally recognised guidelines (CITES, IUCN) on the management of confiscated wildlife, support and expand networks of reliable and specialised rescue centres and increase efforts to rehabilitate and

reintroduce trafficked animals. Consistent and transparent reporting of all live animal seizures to CITES, Europol and countries of origin should be strengthened to inform enforcement initiatives and wildlife conservation policies. In addition, financing for capacity development and training of law enforcement agencies and for animal placement facilities should be incorporated into wildlife trafficking budgets to reduce zoonotic disease risks, protect law enforcers' safety, maximise chances of successful prosecutions, and safeguard animal welfare.

Marine conservation

In European waters, major shipping lanes are home to populations of cetaceans and other protected marine species, and they overlap with areas critical for feeding, birthing, nursing young, or migrating. This places these species at high risk of collision, which can result in horrific injury and, more often, death.

Underwater noise from shipping adversely impacts marine life: marine mammals rely on sound to find food, avoid predators, to communicate with one another, and to navigate. Noise pollution interferes with the ability of these animals to detect and interpret critical sounds, resulting in stress, avoidance behaviours, and disturbance.

In addition, many species, such as the common dolphin, Baltic Proper harbour porpoise, sharks, turtles, and seabirds, are threatened by incidental fisheries catches (bycatch), a key driver towards population loss and extinction.

IFAW calls on the EU to:

► **Adopt mandatory ship speed reduction measures and rerouting away from critical habitats to prevent adverse effects of underwater noise pollution and ship strikes on marine life.**

Both the number of ships and the speeds at which they can travel are increasing dramatically, contributing to global warming through increased emissions, the intensification of underwater noise pollution, and collisions with marine life (ship strikes). These threats to marine conservation need to be addressed urgently. Solutions already exist to reduce underwater noise and collision

risk: both ship speed reduction and rerouting are proven to be effective. For more information on underwater noise generated from shipping and the solutions, please visit our Blue Speeds Campaign website: <https://bluespeeds.org>



► **Ensure full implementation of current legislation, such as the Habitats Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Technical Measures Regulation, via the prompt adoption of effective measures by Member States to minimise and eliminate bycatch.**

Bycatch of threatened, endangered, and protected marine species is an urgent conservation priority. For example, a number of cetacean populations are at risk of extinction as a result of unsustainable fisheries in EU waters, with wider implications for the marine environment and ecosystem productivity and services. Current EU legislation has failed to address these pressures on protected marine species due to poor implementation by Member States. Effective mitigation measures, such as temporal and spatial fisheries closures, need to be urgently adopted to effectively minimise and eliminate bycatch.

► **Prioritise the implementation of international trade regulation for shark fins and meat.**

The international trade in shark products continues to threaten the existence of many shark species. The EU played a leading role in ensuring most shark species in trade were brought under



Blue whale breaching with cargo ship in background.

international controls at the last meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The EU must now ensure these measures are

implemented and enforced effectively, in the EU and globally, with support for developing countries.

Disaster preparedness and response

Europe has experienced an escalation in the frequency and severity of disasters and emergencies in recent years—from wildfires to severe flooding. These events damage infrastructure, cause significant economic losses, and claim lives. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused a humanitarian disaster resulting in millions of refugees and the largest activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, which aims to improve prevention, preparedness, and response to disasters.

Unfortunately, the current European disaster framework lacks components focusing on the protection and rescue of animals and the role of veterinary services. The lack of integration of animal welfare in disaster management responses within the EU leads to delayed economic growth, contradicts the One Health approach, and increases the time it takes vulnerable communities to recover.

IFAW calls on the EU and Member States to:

- ▶ **Integrate animal welfare into current emergency planning and management.**

Collaboration between civil protection, humanitarian, veterinary and animal welfare organisations is necessary to build capacity and conduct training and simulation exercises that can increase preparedness and successful response to a disaster. The implementation of goal 2 of the European Disaster Resilience Goals to prepare should include awareness raising on disaster risk and measures to evacuate and care for animals in an emergency.

- ▶ **Provide resources to handle animal welfare in an integrated manner within humanitarian emergencies.**

By ensuring appropriate resources, including financing to support the inclusion of animal welfare in capacity building, preparedness and management measures, both Member States and recipients of humanitarian aid outside the EU can amplify response capacity within the disaster management cycle.

- ▶ **Create an EU legislative framework for inclusion of all categories of animals in disaster management.**

The EU and its Member States should integrate animals into the instruments, policies and tools to better prepare for and manage disaster risks and to reduce their impact on people and their property. Guidance should be provided by the European Commission to Member States on management provisions for animals and the people they support to protect citizens' livelihoods and well-being during and in the aftermath of extreme events.



Veterinarian Andrew Kushnir with dogs belonging to Ukrainian refugee Tatiana—some of the dogs are in new carriers provided by IFAW.

International policy

The EU is the world's largest aid donor and a major actor with strong influence on global policies. With a 27-nation voting bloc, the EU can be a powerful force at many international environmental conventions.

IFAW calls on the EU and Member States to:

- ▶ **Demonstrate EU leadership in wildlife conservation by enhancing and delivering on commitments of multilateral environmental agreements.**

Urgent action is required to address the ever-increasing threat of extinction facing many species. EU leadership is needed more than ever at multilateral environmental agreements, such as CITES, Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), International Whaling Commission (IWC), and other intergovernmental agreements and institutions. The EU must promote precautionary and ambitious species conservation initiatives that address major drivers of decline, such as overexploitation and habitat loss. This work is essential to deliver on the European Green Deal and global commitments to climate and biodiversity, as well as disaster resilience, including the Paris Agreement, the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

- ▶ **Ensure the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework includes an ambitious target for climate and environmental spending.**

The external dimension of the European Green Deal is an important tool to align the EU's global development, climate and biodiversity policies. It is vital that the next Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument—Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe) instrument—provides adequate funding to ongoing and future global biodiversity, environment, and climate action.

- ▶ **Ensure implementation of strong ocean governance.**

The recently adopted UN High Seas Treaty enables the establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the high seas—the parts of the ocean that lie outside of national boundaries and cover half of our planet's surface. As the largest habitat on Earth, the high seas are home to millions of species and are our greatest ally against climate change. The new treaty charts a course to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030—a target agreed upon late last year as part of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. To achieve this ambitious target, governments must now adopt, ratify, and implement the new treaty without delay. The EU and its Member States must commit to ratification ahead of the Third UN Ocean Conference in 2025 and bring forward ambitious high seas MPA proposals to the first High Seas Treaty meeting.



A group of orphaned elephant calves enjoying time outside as they undergo rehabilitation at the Zimbabwe Elephant Nursery (ZEN) in Harare, Zimbabwe. IFAW and Forestry Commission of Zimbabwe supported Wild is Life and the Zimbabwe Elephant Nursery (ZEN) to establish The ZEN Project - www.ifaw.org/international/journal/the-zen-project.

Climate change

Species conservation and protection, restoration, and effective management of wildlife habitats and critical ecosystems are among the most effective and economical options for mitigating climate change. They must not replace necessary rapid reductions in greenhouse gas emissions nor the phasing out of fossil fuels. However, alongside such efforts, stopping biodiversity loss and accelerating the implementation of these types of natural solutions must be a top priority in the global effort to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.

IFAW calls on the EU to:

- ▶ **Support rewilding and nature-based solutions as vessels for climate change mitigation.**

There is increasing scientific evidence that the protection and restoration of wild animal populations can serve as natural climate solutions. Many species play an important role in helping enhance the ability of habitats and ecosystems to absorb more carbon. The value of wild

animals for enhancing carbon capture and storage should be integrated into the drafting and implementation of EU initiatives to support biodiversity conservation and combat climate change.

- ▶ **Commit to the rapid phasing out of fossil fuels, both in the EU itself and through international aid and trade.**

While wildlife and biodiversity can play a critical role in mitigating and adapting to climate change, global warming poses an accelerating risk to wildlife and biodiversity. The existential threat to people and wildlife posed by global warming can only be tackled first and foremost through rapid greenhouse gas emission reductions and phasing out fossil fuels. The EU must continue to enhance its ambition and implementation of its National Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement, and commit to a rapid phasing out of fossil fuels in the EU itself and around the world through its aid and trade.



About IFAW - IFAW is a global non-profit animal welfare and conservation organisation. IFAW rescues, rehabilitates, and releases animals and restores and protects their natural habitats. To address today's challenges, we partner with local communities, governments, non-governmental organisations, and businesses. Together, we pioneer new and innovative ways to help all species flourish.

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Cover photo: Tyson Mayr / © IFAW
Elephants with a young calf drink at
a watering hole in Hwange National
Park, Zimbabwe.

Back cover photo: © Tom Burns
A blue shark swims in the ocean.



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