



Rethinking Wild Europe: European Perspectives on Wilderness, Rewilding and Biodiversity

Conservation

The International Society for Environmental Ethics (ISEE) and the Center for Environmental and Technology Ethics - Prague (CETE-P) joint Winter Workshop 2025.

7-8 February 2025, University of Vienna, Austria

Call for Abstracts

The convergent climate change and biodiversity crises increasingly remind humans about the importance and precarity of their socio-ecological surroundings, thus shifting perspectives on nature, wild(er)ness and nonhuman others. This shift includes a renewed appreciation for 'the wild'. New responses to climate change and biodiversity loss such as rewilding, spearheaded by organisations like Rewilding Europe and Rewilding Britain, are rapidly gaining popularity in Europe. Simultaneously, conservationists applaud the recent return of large predators in many European regions. Other novel approaches to ecological restoration and biodiversity conservation reflect a similar desire to respect and restore wildlife, and to facilitate different human-animal or human-nature relations. Long associated with other parts of the world, wildness and wilderness appear to have made a come-back in the European landscape and imagination. But what is the meaning of these concepts in a European context? How do they influence the European approach to biodiversity conservation? Do Western and Eastern European approaches differentiate, or are they relatively similar?

This workshop will address the ethics and narratives surrounding wilderness, wildness, rewilding, and ecological restoration in Europe. We aim to assess the impact of these concepts and approaches on the European landscape, which has historically been a hybrid mixture of wildlife and human culture. The tension between, on the one hand, the desire to welcome wild animals and wilderness (back) to Europe and, on the other, preserving and rekindling cultural value and identity animates the debate on rewilding, biodiversity conservation, and land management. Wilderness, and more recently rewilding, have been criticised as colonial, patriarchal, and anthropocentric concepts. While much of this debate takes place in a North American context, Europe has its own challenges to face: among them, human-wildlife conflict; ongoing debates on land use, land access, and land sovereignty; divergent views on wild(er)ness between conservationists and local stakeholders; and concerns about animal welfare in rewilding projects. The event will address these (and other) issues arising within European conservation and rewilding.

Keynote speakers: Dr. Martin Drenthen, Associate professor in Philosophy at Radboud University (NL); second keynote speaker TBA

We invite abstracts (300 words) for 15-minute presentations addressing wild(erness) narratives and/or the ethics of rewilding, biodiversity, wilderness and wild animal conservation, and ecological restoration, with a primary focus on Europe. Possible topics may include (but are not limited to):

- The distinct European approach to rewilding and conservation,
- Novel and critical approaches to conservation and rewilding (e.g. place-based or community-led, decolonial, feminist, or compassionate conservation approaches),
- Central and Eastern European perspectives,
- Conflicts of interests between local stakeholders and conservationists,
- Coexistence with large carnivores,
- (Overcoming) colonialism and patriarchy in conservation,
- Indigenous perspectives on conservation and land use,
- Socio-ecological justice in a rewilding or conservation context,
- Wild animal ethics,
- The role of technology and AI in conservation and rewilding,
- Changing human-animal or human-nature relations,
- The concept of wilderness in European history and philosophy,
- Contemporary European representations and meanings of wild(er)ness,
- Comparative perspectives on European approaches and conservation in other parts of the world.

300-word abstracts, prepared for double-blind review, should be sent to rethinkingwildeurope@gmail.com by **October 31, 2024**. Please remove all identifying information from your abstract. **In a separate document, send us a cover letter** including your name, title, institutional affiliation, and a very short bio (max. 100 words). Notifications of acceptance will be sent out by November 30, 2024, at the latest. There will be a registration fee of approximately between 50€ and 100€ for the event. A special issue in a leading international journal is planned as a follow-up to the conference.

Organising team: Leonie Bossert (ISEE), Linde De Vroey (ISEE), Iwona Janicka (CETE-P), Petr Urban (CETE-P).



**Funded by
the European Union**