



The 125th Anniversary Congress on 18-22 September 2017 in Freiburg, Germany, will offer a wide selection of scientific sessions highlighting innovative research and interdisciplinary research approaches of relevance to forests, and focus on the transfer of scientific knowledge on critical global forest-related challenges to national and international political agendas. In a series of “Congress Spotlight” articles individual sessions shall be showcased to give a foretaste of the richness and scope of research findings that will be presented at the Congress. Keep updated at: <http://iufro2017.com/>

IUFRO 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Congress Spotlight / Theme 4 - #53 / August 2017

## Humans and Wildlife: Sharing Space in a Crowded World

There’s a line in a song by U.S. singer-songwriter Dee Moeller that goes: “The wide open spaces are closing in quickly, from the weight of the whole human race...”

That line could well be the sub-title for a session to be held at the upcoming IUFRO 125th Congress in Freiburg, Germany entitled: **Co-existence of humans and wildlife in changing landscapes and climate.**

Current human population growth is causing an increasing demand for natural resources and a growing pressure for access to land which, among other things, affects wildlife habitat and the interactions between wildlife and humans, said Dr. Chabi Djagoun, of the Laboratory of Applied Ecology in Cotonou, Benin.



*Elephant dung found on a village farm, with crop damage, nearby Pendjari Biosphere Reserve (Northern Benin). Credit Dr Chabi DJAGOUN*

So it is clear that human-wildlife interaction – and conflict – will not be eradicated in the near future, said Dr. Djagoun, who is the session coordinator.

“A key question is: under what conditions is co-existence between humans and wildlife still possible in the 21st century, as population and resource pressures, economic growth and globalization become ever more intense?” he said.

One of the reasons he proposed this session is because human-wildlife conflict has important consequences for local populations in terms of food security, macro- and micro-economies, safety, well-being and wildlife conservation.

“Wildlife conservation issues can be peripheral to many IUFRO scientists, who may be more directly concerned with wildfire or tree diseases or stand dynamics, but this technical session is very important as a way of informing the IUFRO community of the importance of the co-existence of humans and wildlife in changing landscapes and climate,” he said.

“In addition to looking at policy implications, we want to discuss efforts to reduce human-wildlife conflict (HWC) and ways to harmonize peaceful co-existence between them to preserve biodiversity, including threatened wildlife populations, and to ensure sustainable use of ecosystem services,” Dr. Djagoun said.

As an example of harmonizing human-wildlife co-existence, he noted a recent study in the Southern Benin wetlands where fishermen were suffering loss of catch and equipment damage from native otters. The study suggested damage could be reduced – without reducing the harvest – by checking equipment twice daily and, since otter activity is primarily nocturnal, by fishing during the day.

Dr. Djagoun also noted that climate change can have significant negative impacts on the natural environment, including the loss of biodiversity and changes in ecosystems.

“Climate change can deeply modify the co-existence of humans and wildlife. In developing countries with a greater dependence on natural resource-based livelihoods, it can impact the socio-economic status of communities, hamper progress towards development goals and present an overall threat to sustainable development,” he said.

The IUFRO session will focus on trying to understand the dynamics of wildlife and human interactions in Africa and mechanisms of co-existence in multi-use landscapes.

While interactions between humans and wildlife are a significant problem in Africa, it is a central issue in conservation science and policy-making worldwide, Dr. Djagoun said.

As examples he noted that alligators are found in golf course ponds in the southern U.S.; tigers overlap spatially with people collecting natural resources in Nepal; and Australian dingoes are seen in a negative light when they prey on livestock, but are also seen as beneficial when they prey on rabbits, rats and other pests.

Two of several questions he hopes to have answered at the session are:

- How can local rural communities benefit more from sustainable use and conservation of wildlife, in order to enable co-existence and offset the costs of living with wildlife? And
- How can the voices of rural communities affected by HWC, as well as those of the scientific communities, be effectively heard among policy-makers and donors, to ensure that interventions address needs and interests and promote wildlife as assets rather than liabilities?

*The September 18-22 Congress in Freiburg will celebrate IUFRO’s 125th anniversary. Founded in 1892 in Eberswalde Germany, IUFRO has grown to unite more than 15,000 scientists (who cooperate in IUFRO on a voluntary basis) in almost 700 member organizations in more than 120 countries.*

*IUFRO promotes global cooperation in forest-related research and enhances the understanding of the ecological, economic and social aspects of forests and trees. It disseminates scientific knowledge to stakeholders and decision-makers and contributes to forest policy and on-the-ground forest management.*

*About 2000 scientists from 89 countries are expected to attend the Congress. The Human-Wildlife Co-existence session in Freiburg will be one of 172 that will cover a wide array of topics dealing with various aspects of forest research.*

**See you at the IUFRO 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Congress in Freiburg, Germany!**  
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*The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) is the only worldwide organization devoted to forest research and related sciences. Its members are research institutions, universities, and individual scientists as well as decision-making authorities and other stakeholders with a focus on forests and trees. Visit: <http://www.iufro.org/>*

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