

Eurosite workshop

Living with wilderness in Europe: communicating non intervention management strategies and dealing with public perceptions of growing populations of large herbivores and carnivores

Haarlem, the Netherlands, 17 - 19 September 2014

Workshop Programme



For more information and updates,
please visit the Eurosite website:
www.eurosite.org



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Netherlands, 17 - 19 September 2014

Introduction

Eurosite, in collaboration with Staatsbosbeheer and FREE Nature, has developed this workshop dealing with public perceptions of wilderness areas and large herbivore and carnivore populations to contribute to the elaboration of a communication strategy, and to help site managers improve understanding of the wilderness management techniques they employ among the public and local stakeholders. The objective is to share examples of successful information campaigns to help site managers solve current challenges in public perceptions of their wilderness sites.

The workshop will use as a focus the showcase example of non-intervention management techniques in the Netherlands: the Oostvaardersplassen. The Oostvaardersplassen has been the topic of much national debate in the Netherlands due to negative public perceptions of animal deaths occurring during the harsh winter months, and last year received even greater publicity through the release of a new feature length documentary “De Nieuwe Wildernis” (“The New Wilderness”) shown in over 120 cinemas across the Netherlands and Belgium. Showing the natural processes and communities of the Oostvaardersplassen over the period of a whole year, the movie aims to inform the public of the life cycle of the different species that make up the ecosystem and improve their understanding of the effects of non intervention management techniques for nature and for landscapes. Particular focus will be given to the issue of natural grazing and the large herbivore populations found in the Oostvaardersplassen. This example will also serve as an example of communicating the benefits of natural grazing traditionally and currently in promoting and conserving Europe’s biodiversity – especially in terms of meadow and pasture plant and animal species.

Eurosite collaborated with member FREE Nature to produce a newsletter explaining natural grazing in further detail, which is available for download on the two organisations’ websites. Wilderness management techniques and wild areas in the different biogeographical regions of Europe are varied and numerous, ranging from zero-intervention to active re-wilding and the encouragement of the return of certain species. It is also a relatively new strategy and approach in many areas, and can be potentially conflictual, for example in areas where populations of large carnivores are returning or increasing, especially in areas bordering or overlapping farming and herding zones.

The European Commission publication “LIFE and human coexistence with large carnivores” was published in 2013. It will form a background document for discussion during the workshop and will inform the work of creating a communication strategy that can help improve engagement with local stakeholders and change negative perceptions of wilderness among European communities. FREE Nature is also currently working on the issue of large carnivores, and is a partner in the “Wolven in Nederland” = “Wolves in the Netherlands” project (see www.wolveninnederland.nl) to publicly promote scientifically sound information on wolves and to prepare the Netherlands for the expected natural return of wolves to the country.

There is clearly a strong need to exchange communication strategies among site managers to help them inform, educate and engage with other stakeholders, and to deal with the consequences of wilderness management in concert and active collaboration with these actors. This workshop will showcase successful wilderness management and communication measures and projects to exchange experiences and inspire others to evolve successful activities. It also aims to share knowledge on solutions for communicating wilderness management in Europe to stakeholders and the public and to jointly develop a communication strategy that can be shared with other site managers across Europe.

This workshop is organised in close collaboration with FREE Nature





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Speakers



Sarah Robinson, Head of Conservation Programmes, Zoological Society of Scotland

Sarah Robinson currently manages the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland's (RZSS) portfolio of conservation and sustainability projects in her role as Head of Conservation Programmes. The Society has been working to promote the awareness and conservation of rare and endangered animals for over 100 years. This is done through a combination of field conservation, research, and education. Through her role for RZSS she is part of the management team and steering group for the Scottish Beaver Trial, having initially inputted into the field work aspects of the project. This is the first reintroduction of a formerly native mammal to the UK. This project and other aspects of the Society's species restoration work come under the banner of rewilding. Sarah has participated in the recent formation of the Rewilding Britain charity and is part of the Rewilding Scotland group. Prior to working for the RZSS she worked for the British Antarctic Survey spending two and a half years on an uninhabited remote island in the sub-Antarctic studying seals, albatrosses and penguins. This exposure nurtured her interest and love of the wilderness. Sarah holds an honours degree in Zoology from the University of Aberdeen and a Master of Philosophy in Polar Studies from the University of Cambridge.

Kazimierz Rabski (Chairman) and Małgorzata Torbé (Vice Chairwoman), Society for The Coast, Poland



Toby Aykroyd, Director, Wild Europe, United Kingdom

With a background in economics, business management and political lobbying, Toby became directly involved with conservation work in 2002. Roles have included: initially with the United Nations Development Programme in Central America. Founder of the Wild Europe initiative (2005) promoting protection and restoration of large-scale natural ecosystems. Trustee and Chairman of the Funding Support Group for the BBC Wildlife Fund, which financed 87 conservation projects worldwide. Trustee of the European Nature Trust in the UK and Romania. Trustee of London Wildlife Trust (2003-12). Large Herbivore Network ambassador. Education: studied economics, geography and development economics at St Catherine's College Cambridge (1977); Master of Business Administration at the Cranfield Institute of Technology (1982).



Glenn Lelieveld, Volunteer, Wolven in Nederland, the Netherlands

During his education Glenn has been to many fascinating nature areas where nature still dominates. In recent time, he has worked on several topics where social and ecological interests collide. From studies on releasing wild boar and red deer from hunting regimes to advising governments on the ecological and legal aspects of building sites.



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Roeland Vermeulen, Ecologist, FREE Nature, the Netherlands

Roeland Vermeulen has been working at the Foundation for Restoring European Ecosystems (FREE Nature) since its founding in 2007. His work at FREE Nature has a strong rewilding component; restoring natural processes, especially processes related to wildlife, natural grazing and predation. A key component of FREE Nature is its strong relationships with local communities. Projects include Natural Grazing schemes (both planning and practical; amongst other areas Schiermonnikoog NP, Mantingerveld, Horsterwold, Broekpolder Vlaardingen). In 2008 Roeland co-founded the Wolven In Nederland (Wolves in the Netherlands) platform, which prepares Dutch society for the natural return of the wolf.



Guillermo López, Project Director, Iberlince LIFE+ project Junta de Andalucia, Spain

Guillermo López has a bachelor's degree in Veterinary Medicine and a PhD in host-parasite ecology. As a researcher, he has worked both in avian ecology and in the conservation of threatened species. He has worked on the Iberian lynx conservation LIFE project since 2007. Monitoring the sanitary aspects of the Iberian lynx free ranging population is his major responsibility in the project.



Wouter Helmer, Rewilding Director, Rewilding Europe, the Netherlands

Wouter Helmer is the Founder and Managing Director of ARK Nature, one of the key rewilding partners of Rewilding Europe, in which he has implemented hundreds of rewilding initiatives since 1989 throughout the Netherlands and in other parts of Europe. He is the co-writer of several change-making visions like 'Living Rivers' and 'Growing with the Sea'. He is also the co-inventor of new concepts for nature conservation and management, such as natural grazing, cyclic rejuvenation of floodplains, and temporary nature in fallow areas. Wouter has set up campaigns about climate adaptation in natural buffer zones and 'Missing Lynx' about missing connections in nature conservation. His involvement in European nature conservation goes back to a study on ecosystems in Thracia, which ended up in a proposal for the Council of Europe to protect a biogenetic reserve in the northern part of Greece. Wouter Helmer is the winner of several prizes for nature conservation in the Netherlands and he is Honorary Lecturer at the Forestry and Nature Management Programme at Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, part of Wageningen University in the Netherlands. Wouter Helmer is one of the four founding members of Rewilding Europe.



Coralie Herbst, Science Coordinator, Wisent Welt Wittgenstein, Germany

Coralie Herbst completed her academic studies of Biology at the "Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel" with a focus on Zoology and Ecology. She wrote her diploma thesis in 2010 on "Stability and splitting of wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) family groups in Bialowieza Primeval Forest, Poland". In 2010 she also completed a 3 month training at the University of the Ryukuyus, Okinawa, Japan, participating in the projects on the Iriomote cat and Tsushima cat. Since 2011, Coralie has been employed as a wildlife biologist at the Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research at the University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Foundation. From 2011-2013 Coralie was involved in the project "Wild boar Management in Lower Saxony" as a PhD student and since 2013, she has been employed as a scientific coordinator of the project "Wisente im Rothaargebirge".



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Yvonne Kemp, Project Coordinator, ARK Nature, the Netherlands

Yvonne Kemp holds an M.Sc. in Ecology from VU University, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Yvonne works at ARK Nature as Project Coordinator of the Dutch European bison project. In this role, she is actively involved in outgoing communication towards nature managers and the public. Yvonne also coordinates the research taking place as part of the project. She is the co-author of a report covering the first five years of the project's experiences (available in Dutch). In addition, Yvonne is involved in Rewilding Europe as Coordinator of the European Rewilding Network (ERN), an initiative launched by Rewilding Europe. The ERN aims to establish a living network of many rewilding initiatives, to support rewilding in Europe as a conservation tool. Yvonne organises and stimulates the exchange of knowledge and experiences between members.



Frans Vera, Guest Lecturer Nature Development, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

Since 1979 Frans Vera has been involved in the development of the Oostvaardersplassen. He proposed to have the system developed by natural processes, such as the grazing of Greylag geese in combination with a dynamic water table in the marshy part and grazing wild herbivores such as wild cattle, wild horses and red deer in the dry part. The Oostvaardersplassen inspired his PhD thesis, of which an advanced version was published in 2000 as the book *Grazing Ecology and Forest History*. The main message in it is the re-establishment of the ecologically functional role of all large indigenous herbivores in natural ecosystems, that is, wild cattle, wild horses, European bison, red deer, moose and wild boar. Together with five colleagues he wrote the "Plan Ooievaar", which proposed to restore natural processes, such as flooding the floodplains of our big rivers. Frans Vera started his career at Staatsbosbeheer in 1979. He has also worked for the Ministry. Frans retired in June, 2014.

Karin Eckhard, European Wilderness Society, Austria



Frank Zanderink, Project Leader, the New Thracian Gold (Bulgaria), ARK Nature

Frank Zanderink has been employed by ARK Nature since 2004. Frank has worked on red deer introduction in the Netherlands and climate buffers, and was Project Leader of "Natural grazing in Kopacki rit" (Croatia, 2007-2011), "Letlands - Natural grazing in Latvia" (2005-recent), "Dviete river restoration in Latvia" (2010-recent), and "New Thracian Gold", for which Frank worked on wilderness development, sustainable tourism and organic farming in the eastern Rhodopes (2009-2014).

Chris Braat, Director, FREE Nature, the Netherlands



Originally educated as an ecologist (vegetation science), Chris Braat gradually took a growing interest in the natural processes that shape landscapes and ecosystems. From 1990 to 2008 Chris worked as an ecologist and later as programme manager at Vereniging Natuurmonumenten. In 2008 Chris started working for FREE Nature, a foundation that had just been set up at the time. Since 2010, Chris has been Director of FREE Nature. FREE Nature (www.freenature.eu) works on 3,000 hectares for very different land owners, doing what is needed and interfering in nature's ways as little as possible. The Foundation has herds of in total 1,100 horses, cattle and about 20 European bison.



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Tuesday 16 September 2014

Arrival participants

17:00 - 19:00 **EuroCocktail - a Eurosite tradition!**

Participants are invited to bring along a small sample of local produce - something to eat or drink, which typifies your part of Europe - to share with the other participants.

Wednesday 17 September 2014

9:00 - 10:00 **Registration**

10:00 - 10:15 **Welcome to & introduction to the workshop**

10:15 - 11:45 **Presentation 1**

Communicating The Scottish Beaver Trial

Sarah Robinson, Head of Conservation Programmes, Zoological Society of Scotland, United Kingdom

On the cold spring morning of Thursday 28th May 2009, over 400 years after beavers were hunted to extinction in Britain, the first animals in a scientific trial were released at Loch Coille Bharr. Since that morning, these remarkable ecosystem engineers have been steadily transforming the landscape of Knapdale Forest – constructing dams, creating canals, felling trees and building lodges. The trial has attracted interest and support from over 150 countries and engaged local people and businesses through events, talks and workshops. It has also engaged young people through school visits right across Scotland, and international visitors through the website, social media, TV and press coverage.

Presentation 2

Back to nature: reality or utopia? Odra Delta Nature Park experiences

Kazimierz Rabski (Chairman) and Małgorzata Torbé (Vice Chairman), Society for The Coast, Poland

Since 2005 the Society for The Coast has managed the Odra Delta Nature Park, the first private protected area of such a scale established by an NGO in Poland. The total area of the park is 4,000 ha, of which about 1,400 ha is land and 2,600 ha is part of the Szczecin Lagoon. In the Odra Delta Nature Park there are herds of about 170 Konik Polski and about 100 Scottish Highland cattle that graze all year round in an area of about 500 ha. After 10 years of working with animals as creators of open landscapes, there have been a number of effects on nature. The best example is enlarging of the number of bird species (Corn Crane, Common Snipe among others) as well as higher biodiversity of habitats. Using great herbivores also has an impact for nature education and as a tourist attraction. Of course even these free living animals must be under day-to-day control and veterinary monitoring, which raises some problems connected with general question about what it means in terms of actual legal obligations to have a “free” cow or horse. In the presentation there will also be a preliminary discussion about the possibility of Auroch implementation in the area of the Odra Delta Nature Park.



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Presentation 3

Cows: the story of grazing on Odra Delta lands (7 minute film with commentary)

Kazimierz Rabski (Chairman) and Małgorzata Torbé (Vice Chairman), Society for The Coast, Poland

The presentation is a 7 minutes film, which showcases two example of grazing as a tool for nature conservation in the Odra Delta lands. The first example is connected with the Back Delta Islands of the Swina River, which is under Wolinski National Park management. Thanks to good cooperation with local farmer, the group of islands is grazed from April to November by group of Lemusine cows. The second example is a story about a herd of Scottish Highland cattle, which graze areas of the Odra Delta Nature Park all year round. Both stories show the positive effect of grazing for biodiversity and richness of bird species in the region of Odra Delta in Northwest Poland.

11:45 - 12:00 15 minute coffee break

12:00 - 13:00 **Presentation 4**

Promoting non intervention to decision takers

Toby Aykroyd, Director, Wild Europe, United Kingdom

An overview of initiatives to profile the importance of non intervention management – supporting its adoption across the conservation sector and allaying concerns among landholders. This can be a highly cost-effective tool in management of protected areas, as well as being the underlying principle for the guardianship of wilderness areas, their wildlife and spiritual qualities.

Presentation 5

Dealing with emotion: Preparations for the return of wolves in the Netherlands

Glenn Lelieveld, Volunteer, Wolven in Nederland, the Netherlands

Wolves are returning to western European countries. Although the Netherlands does not have wolves living within its borders, “Wolven in Nederland” (Wolves in the Netherlands) has already been preparing the Dutch community for the return of wolves for several years. In this presentation, more insight will be given into how this group of organisations is preparing the public and how volunteers help where budgets are kept at zero.

13:00 - 14:00 **Lunch & networking**

14:00 - 15:00 **Presentation 6**

Rewilding as a social process: case study on public participation in planning of bison re-introduction in the Schiermonnikoog NP, the Netherlands

Roeland Vermeulen, Ecologist, FREE Nature, the Netherlands

Within ecosystem restoration or rewilding a lot of the debate is about the big wild animals. Many parties have pro or con arguments seen from their own interests, concerning reintroduction or the natural return of wildlife species. But if you take one step back, general agreement about landscapes and ecosystems is easily reached. Suddenly after the 95% agreement the last 5%, the wildlife part, doesn't seem such a big deal. This presentation showcases how mindsets can be rewilded creating a solid ground for the reintroduction of species such as European bison, wild cattle and horses to the Schiermonnikoog National Park.



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Presentation 7

The conservation of the Iberian lynx in a 21st century human-dominated landscape

Guillermo López, Project Director, Iberlince LIFE+ project Junta de Andalucía, Spain

The Iberian lynx is an endemic felid of the Iberian Peninsula that depends on rabbit populations. By the early 21st Century, the Iberian lynx was nearly extinct, with less than 100 individuals present in two small, isolated populations. In 2002, the European Union began funding the conservation of this European treasure through LIFE-Nature projects. After 12 years, the Iberian lynx population has increased both numerically and in occupied surface. Nowadays about 300 individuals live in the wild and 100 more in the captive breeding program. In the last few years, the species has occupied areas inhabited by humans and thus human-felid conflict has risen. Both lynx depredation on livestock and interactions with hunting interests are currently affecting the Iberian lynx dynamics. Hence, social actions focused on awareness playing an essential role in the conservation of the Iberian lynx. Awareness actions will also be necessary in every future conservation plan.

15:00 - 15:15 15 minute coffee break

15:15 - 16:30 Presentation 8

Rewilding Europe's wildlife strategy and different action plans

Wouter Helmer, Rewilding Director, Rewilding Europe, the Netherlands

Wildlife plays a key role in Rewilding Europe's strategy to reconnect modern society with wild nature. Large herbivores, carnivores and scavengers structure European landscapes and facilitate a large part of European biodiversity, but they are also important to tell the story of a wilder Europe to a large audience. Last but not least, wildlife also attracts people and can contribute to new rural economies based on wild values. In 2013 Rewilding Europe published the Wildlife Comeback report, together with the Zoological Society of London. More than 100 million people took note of the spectacular comeback of many charismatic species in Europe, ranging from deer and wolves, to beavers and white tailed eagles. Rewilding Europe stimulates this process by reducing poaching and poisoning, creating no-take zones and leasing hunting rights to achieve these goals. When key species can't recolonise areas themselves, Rewilding Europe can set up reintroduction programmes. Rewilding Europe's Bison Rewilding Plan will be published this autumn.

Launch of Rewilding Europe's Horse Action Plan

During the Eurosite workshop Wouter will present the first copy of Rewilding Europe's Horse Action Plan. This action plan provides tools to communicate about wildlife and to show local stakeholders how they can benefit from more natural numbers of wildlife.

Presentation 9

Reintroduction of large herbivore in the Rothaargebirge, Germany: From vision to realisation and current progress

Coralie Herbst, Science Coordinator, Wisent Welt Wittgenstein, Germany

The European bison (*Bison bonasus*), the largest terrestrial mammal in Europe, was historically distributed almost throughout all of Europe. Overharvesting and increasing habitat loss since human settlement led to a continuous reduction of the European bison.

Until now, there has never been a serious attempt to reintroduce a population of free ranging bison in western Europe. The goal of this project is to sustainably reintroduce the bison into the cultural landscape. An area of more than 5000 ha in the “Rothaargebirge” in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany was found suitable for a free-ranging herd of ca. 20-25 European bison. The permission to release a starting population of 8 bison was given in October 2012 after almost 10 years of preparation, and on 11 April 2013 the bison were released. Ever since the free ranging bison have been continuously radio-tracked (GPS). The analysis of the spatio-temporal behaviour is an important base to adapt the management strategy.

Since the release of the bisons this management has had to adapt to new requirements that have appeared, especially concerning conflicts with land use in the region. Furthermore, surveys of the effects on the environment and spatial use of the herd are carried on. This project is singular in its complex interplay from politicians, private landowners, conservationists and scientists, it is a milestone in conservation efforts for this species and can be taken as an exemplar for further reintroduction projects elsewhere.

16:30 - 16:45 **Closing remarks**

16:45 - 18:00 Break

18:00 - 20:00 **Screening of “De Nieuwe Wildernis” (“The New Wilderness”) movie**

20:30 **Dinner**



Picture courtesy of Roeland Vermeulen



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Thursday 18 September

08:45 **Board the bus**

09:00 **Departure to visitor centre De Kennemerduinen from Van der Valk Hotel Haarlem**

09:30 - 10:30 **Coffee / tea at visitor centre De Kennemerduinen**

**Presentation “European bison in Kraansvlak: adding value to nature and recreation”
Yvonne Kemp, Project Coordinator, ARK Nature**

In 2007, a unique Dutch project with European bison started at Kraansvlak, a coastal dune ecosystem near Haarlem, the Netherlands. Initially six bison arrived in the fenced off area, to be accompanied by a group of konik horses at a later stage. Natural grazing with social groups of herbivores is set as a basis and both bison and horses are handled as wild animals. Beside the goal to gain knowledge of bison ecology when present under natural conditions, it was expected the species could play a significant role in counteracting the encroachment of the dune area. The public's perception of bison is a key aspect to address within the project. People are welcome to experience this endangered species in their natural setting at Kraansvlak, and by doing so awareness is raised about the projects principle on the occurrence of natural processes.



10:30 - 13:30 **Bison pilot walking excursion Kraansvlak led by PWN (www.pwn.nl) foresters**



13:30 - 14:30 **Lunch & networking at visitor centre Kraansvlak**

14:30 - 16:00 **Transport to Oostvaardersplassen nature reserve**



16:00 - 17:00 **Coffee / tea at Buitencentrum Oostvaardersplassen (Staatsbosbeheer)**

**Presentation “The Oostvaardersplassen: Putting natural processes back on track”
Frans Vera, Guest Lecturer Nature Development, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen**

Frans Vera will present the history of the Oostvaardersplassen and how ideas developed and evolved in dialogue with the developments in the area, referring also to systems abroad that functioned as reference areas in order to understand natural functional ecosystems.

17:00 - 19:00 **Excursion into Oostvaardersplassen, including Red Deer Rut, led by Hans Breeveld**

19:00 - 20:45 **Barbecue and drinks at visitor centre**

21:00 - 22:00 **Travel back to main venue / hotel**



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Friday 19 September 2014

09:00 - 10:00 **Presentation 11**

What is the most powerful thing we can communicate about wilderness?

Karin Eckhard, European Wilderness Society, Austria

Presentation 12

Building on nature with local people

Frank Zanderink, Project Leader, the New Thracian Gold (Bulgaria), ARK Nature

The Eastern Rhodopes is one of Europe's regions with the highest biodiversity. In order to preserve this rich area ARK started the New Thracian Gold project in 2009. From the start of the project we reached out to the local inhabitants, asking them to listen to our ideas but at the same time to come up with their own ideas. This resulted in the founding of five local focus groups, where ideas were generated and shared between the members. People started off with organic farming and small touristic enterprises throughout the whole area, profiting from the attention the project received from the media by the reintroduction of red and fallow deer, wild horses, wild cattle and European bison. By building up media attention, political attention and transparent communication to all, people started to believe in the success of their own story resulting in cooperation with farmers, hunters, municipalities and entrepreneurs.

10:00 - 10:15 15 minute coffee break

10:15 - 11:45 **Mini workshop:** "How to build a successful communication strategy - what have we learned from the *"The New Wilderness"* campaign?"

Martijn van Triest, Marketing and Communication professional at EosWeb

Martijn van Triest was leader of the campaign around the movie *"The New Wilderness"*. He developed a campaign plan and carried out this plan together with Staatsbosbeheer employees. Martijn will lead an interactive workshop, beginning with an overview of the situation in 2010, when Staatsbosbeheer was facing strong criticism from the media and attention from the Dutch government. Workshop participants will then split into groups in order to develop their own "campaign strategy" to promote acceptance of the Oostvaardersplassen management techniques and raise awareness of Staatsbosbeheer. The groups will present their strategies and Martijn will provide feedback, comparing it with the campaign that he developed. This interactive workshop will provide participants with valuable practical experience that they can then go on to apply in their own work.

11:45 - 12:00 15 minute coffee break

12:00 - 13:00 **Working group & closing remarks led by Chris Braat, Director, FREE Nature, the Netherlands**

Our aim is to compile key messages (based on best practice examples shared by participants to the workshop) for the effective communication of wilderness conservation and for dealing with negative perceptions of wilderness (areas). This will form the basis for the further elaboration of a framework communication strategy for wilderness management.

13:00 - 14:00 Optional: **Lunch & networking**



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For more information and updates, please visit the Eurosite website:
Eurosite Wilderness workshop 2014

The network of organisations managing Europe's natural heritage - Le réseau des organismes pour la gestion du patrimoine naturel européen

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