Naturefriends International

GLOBAL NATUREFRIENDS DAYS





















2024

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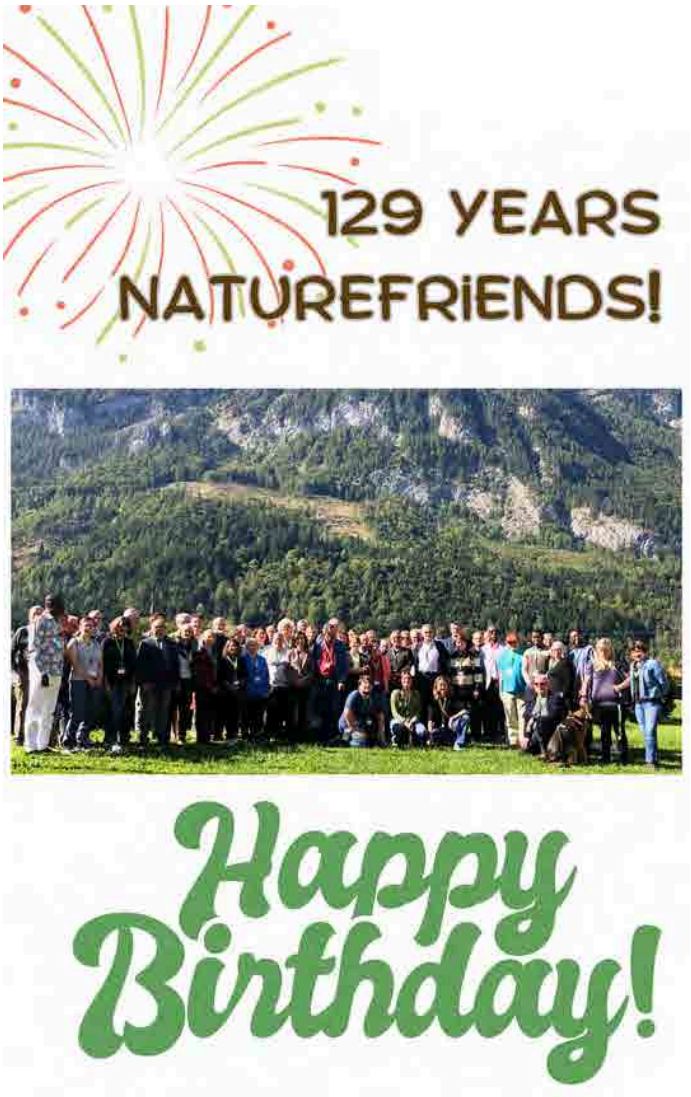
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Introduction

Around 16 September, the founding day of the Naturefriends movement, we aim to share our common ideals, set an example of solidarity, highlight the diversity and global reach of our organisation, showcase best practices, and create opportunities for experience exchange.



Facebook Link

In 2024, the Global Naturefriends Days took place from 6 to 22 September under the inspiring theme, "Nature and Solidarity."

We are delighted and proud that many Naturefriends groups and national organisations from different countries took part, with a range of inspiring meetings and activities. From hikes, promoting peace to community actions, Naturefriends from Greece, Finland, Romania, Germany, France, Italy, and the Netherlands demonstrated the values and spirit of our movement.

This report details their remarkable efforts and highlights three outstanding projects selected by the NFI Board. These are the Terra Lenta Festival of the Gran Pino Naturefriends (Italy), the Nivon international solidarity journey (The Netherlands Naturefriends) and the moorland conservation initiatives of the Nienburg Naturefriends (Germany).

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our members for their unwavering commitment and dedication to spreading the values of Naturefriends within their communities and across the globe.

Naturefriends Greece – Celebrating Peace and Solidarity!

This year, Naturefriends Greece (NFGR) marked Global Naturefriends Days with a remarkable initiative focused on peace, inspired by the theme "Nature and Solidarity" and recent peace-related activities within Naturefriends International (NFI).

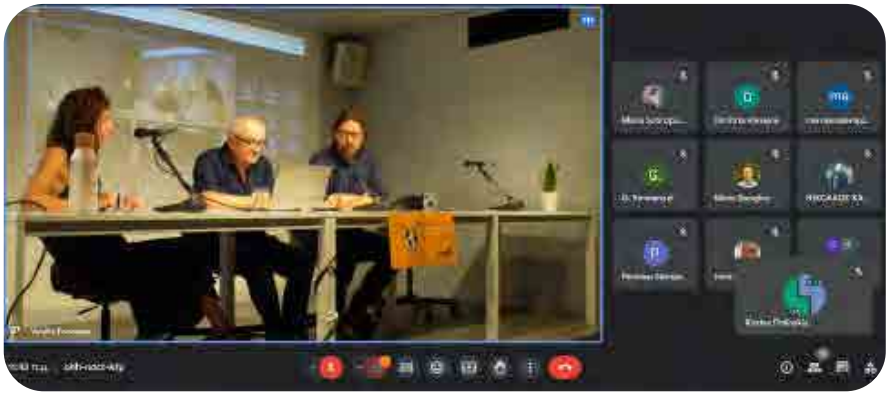


Recognizing that peace is essential for organizing events like ours, we dedicated this year's celebrations to promoting a culture of peace. As part of our commitment, we launched a new Greek-language publication, Naturefriends Greece for a Culture of Peace, which explores the connection between the Naturefriends movement and the global peace movement.

Additionally, we leveraged our communication platforms to amplify the message, using press releases, social media, and more. A key highlight was introducing our peace-themed logo: Naturefriends Greece for a Culture of Peace.

Collaborative Event: "Peace, Nuclear Weapons, and Climate Justice"

In line with the NFI Annual Conference motto, "Naturefriends for Peace," NFGR partnered with three organizations and ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) to host a hybrid event on 22 September 2024. Titled "Peace, Nuclear Weapons, and Climate Justice – Strengthening Nonviolence for a Sustainable Future," the event garnered significant attention through a press release sent to 400 journalists, full-page features in major weekly newspapers, and widespread social media coverage.



Event Highlights

The event, coordinated by NFGR board member Ms. Alkistis Vitsa, featured keynote addresses from representatives of the co-organising organisations. NFGR President Kostas Foteinakis delivered the main speech, "Five Proposals: Conditions and Pillars for a United Peace Movement in Greece." Additional insights came from four smaller interventions, enriching the discussion.





Outcomes and Future Steps

This initiative effectively conveyed NFGR's and NFI's values before, during, and after the event, particularly emphasizing the urgent need to end all wars and conflicts.

Notably, our event was the only one in Greece commemorating the International Day of Peace (21 September 2024).

Looking ahead, NFGR will meet with Mr. Dimitris Fatouros, UN Communication Officer for Greece, in October 2024.

We will present the NFI resolution, along with NFGR press releases and proposals, ensuring our message of peace reaches key stakeholders.

Naturefriends Greece remains steadfast in promoting peace, solidarity, and sustainability, contributing to a more just and peaceful world.

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Naturefriends Baden-Würtemberg Global (Germany) – 'Your right to a future' !

On 20 September 2024, more than 50 participants gathered at the Naturefriends House in Rastatt to discuss the urgent need to protect children and young people from the effects of the climate crisis on the occasion of the 70th World Children's Day.

Key Themes and Discussions:

Children's Rights and Environmental Protection:

- Uschi Böss-Walter, head of the GLOBAL department of Baden Naturefriends, emphasized the link between children's rights and environmental sustainability. She stressed that protecting the environment is essential to securing a livable future for younger generations.

Global Impact and Responsibilities:

- Mamadou Mbodji, representing Rastatt's climate partner city Saint-Louis, highlighted the devastating impact of the climate crisis on young people, particularly in Africa. He criticized industrialized nations for contributing to these challenges through harmful economic and environmental policies.

Ecological Violence Against Children:

- Prof. Dr. Barbara Schramkowski from the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University addressed the concept of "ecological violence" and its detrimental effects on children's physical and psychological development. She pointed out that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ties children's rights to environmental protection, emphasizing the urgent need to address issues like deforestation, air pollution, and water scarcity.



Education for Sustainable Development (ESD):

- Peer Giemsch, managing director of Pro Liberis daycare centers, underscored the importance of instilling sustainable values in early childhood education. He noted that young children are particularly vulnerable to environmental changes and must be taught sustainable practices from an early age.

Youth Participation:

- Enrico Schächtel, a 17-year-old from the Rastatt youth delegation, called for greater involvement of young people in political decision-making processes. He stressed that young voices should be heard and valued in all matters affecting their future.



Key Takeaways and Conclusions

The event reinforced the need for immediate political and social action to address the climate crisis, with a focus on safeguarding children's rights to a healthy environment.
Participants agreed that protecting the planet is integral to upholding these rights, as confirmed by the German Federal Constitutional Court in 2021.
Young people have not only the right to education, health, and participation but also the enforceable right to a sustainable and livable environment. This commitment ensures a foundation for a happy, self-determined future for generations to come.

ⓒ All Photos and Graphics Naturefriends Baden-Würtemberg Global

Global Naturefriends Days Celebration in Lieksa, Finland

Järvenpään Retkeilijät ry celebrated Global Naturefriends Days with an unforgettable week in the scenic forests of Eastern Finland.

Based at the historic Ukonjoki cottage - once a lumberjack residence and now managed by the Finnish Naturefriends - the group enjoyed a range of outdoor activities while contributing to the local community.







Community Contribution and Sauna Building

One of the highlights was supporting the reconstruction of a sauna that had burned down a year prior. Volunteers came together to build a new facility, embodying the spirit of solidarity. Meanwhile, participants enjoyed traditional sauna experiences in a cozy trailer sauna, ensuring the Finnish sauna tradition remained part of the week’s festivities.

Nature Adventures and Berry Harvesting

The group embraced the natural abundance of the region by harvesting lingonberries, contributing to the sustainable use of Finland’s forest resources. With only a small percentage of Finland's wild berries being harvested annually, this activity highlighted the importance of utilizing natural resources responsibly.

Exploring Patvinsuo National Park and Karhunpolku Trail
Participants embarked on hikes across the vast marshlands of Patvinsuo National Park and explored the Karhunpolku Hiking Trail. Some adventurers undertook a 3-night backpacking expedition around Neitijärvi Lake, experiencing the tranquility and beauty of Finland's wilderness.



Whitewater Rafting in Ruunaa
The week concluded with an exhilarating whitewater rafting trip through the Ruunaa rapids. Despite low water levels, the group enjoyed the excitement and challenge, fully immersing themselves in the rugged beauty of Eastern Finland’s waterways.



Reflections and Gratitude
The celebration was a testament to the healing power and community spirit of nature. Järvenpään Retkeilijät ry expressed deep gratitude for the enriching experiences and the strong sense of connection fostered throughout the week.
Berg frei!

© All Photos Naturefriends Finland

Naturefriends Nienburg – Joined German Naturefriends Action Days with Moorland Excursion

Nienburg Naturefriends took part in the nationwide German Naturefriends' Action Days for climate justice, diversity and anti-racism that took place between 6-22 September with a moorland excursion.



The excursion took place at Bullensee, south of Rotenburg (Wümme), and followed the Nordpfad Dör't Moor (North Path through the Moor). The hiking trail goes around and through the 654-hectare nature reserve ‘Großes and Weißes Moor’, which is one of the best-preserved raised bogs in Lower Saxony.

During the hike, hiking guide Wilfried Hahn not only provided numerous insights into the formation of the moors, but also into their significance in terms of climate protection. ‘Although moors only make up one tenth of the world's forest area, they store twice as much CO2 as forests.’ Karin Makowka pointed out the contradiction when our society demands that the rainforest be protected, but at the same time moors are being destroyed on our own doorstep. Yasemin Küper therefore made it clear: “We must preserve both”.

The Nienburg Naturefriends have also spoken out strongly against the planned deepening of peat extraction in the Großes Moor between Borstel and Steyerberg. They emphasise the importance of preserving moors as important carbon sinks.



In cooperation with BUND and NABU, they called on local authorities to reject further permits for peat extraction. They advocate a shift towards genuine rewetting or sustainable moorland management practices such as paludiculture.







The protection of moors is not only crucial for achieving climate targets, but also for ensuring social and ecological justice on a global scale.

© All Photos Naturefriends Nienburg

Naturefriends Arad – Global Naturefriends Days celebrated in the Carpathian Mountains

To mark the Global Naturefriends Days, Naturefriends Arad embarked on an enriching week-long expedition through Romania's Carpathian Mountains, focusing on the spectacular Piatra Craiului Massif. The trip provided a unique blend of natural beauty and cultural heritage, offering participants diverse and memorable experiences.

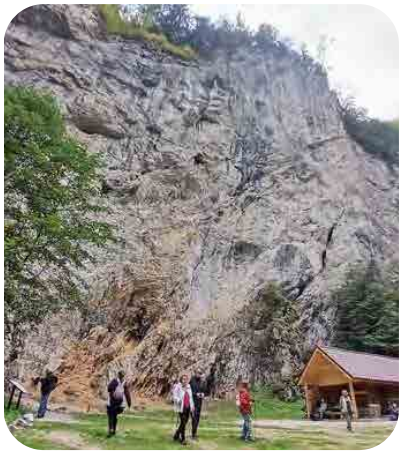
Hiking and Natural Wonders

The adventure began with a challenging hike through the steep and scenic Zărnești Gorges (Cheile Zărneștiului). This rugged landscape offered breathtaking views and tested the group's endurance, setting the stage for a deeper connection with nature.

The highlight was an ascent to a historic monastery carved directly into the rock - a testament to the region's rich spiritual history and architectural ingenuity. Participants also explored other remarkable natural formations, including two cave monasteries and "God's Bridge" (Podul lui Dumnezeu), a rare natural rock bridge formed through millennia of geological processes. These sites underscored the awe-inspiring power and beauty of nature.







Cultural Exploration

The journey extended beyond natural wonders to include cultural landmarks. The group visited the Constantin Brâncuși Complex in Târgu Jiu, dedicated to the renowned Romanian sculptor and pioneer of modern sculpture. The complex features iconic works like The Endless Column, The Gate of the Kiss, and The Table of Silence, each symbolizing themes of life, sacrifice, and reflection.



This week-long expedition not only celebrated the spirit of Global Naturefriends Days but also fostered a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of natural and cultural heritage. Participants returned with renewed inspiration and a commitment to preserving these treasures for future generations.

ⓒ All Photos Naturefriends Arad

Celebration of Heritage and Community in Bas-Rhin, France

On the first day of autumn and Heritage Day (Journée du patrimoine), Naturefriends (Amis de la Nature) held their traditional Interdepartmental Meeting, uniting members from the Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin, Vosges, and Moselle federations.

This 10th annual gathering, hosted by the Bas-Rhin Federation, brought together around thirty participants for a day of exploration, reflection, and camaraderie.



Scenic Outing and Cultural Exploration

The event featured a picturesque 10 km hike, beginning with a climb to the stunning Chatte Pendue viewpoint, standing at 900 meters above sea level. The journey continued to the serene Étang du Coucou and concluded with a visit to the historic Les Quelles Mennonite Cemetery. This itinerary offered a perfect blend of natural beauty and cultural heritage, fostering a deeper connection with the region's landscapes and history.

Community and Camaraderie

After the hike, participants gathered at the Amis de la Nature Refuge in Fréconrupt, near Schirmeck, for a shared picnic. The atmosphere was filled with warmth and conviviality - a hallmark of the Naturefriends spirit.

Denise Wintz, President of the Bas-Rhin Federation, emphasized the importance of these gatherings, stating, “What unites a community, an association... are the moments we all share together!”

Special thanks go to François Septier, President of Naturefriends France (ANF), and Denise Wintz for their participation, as well as to the Schiltigheim Local Association and its President, Suzanne Kalb, for their exceptional organization.

A Tradition of Unity and Friendship
The 2025 Interdepartmental Meeting is eagerly anticipated and will take place in the Haut-Rhin region, promising another opportunity for connection and celebration within the Naturefriends community.
This memorable day reaffirmed the shared values of conservation, cultural appreciation, and solidarity that define the Naturefriends movement, leaving participants inspired and united.

ⓒ All Photos Naturefriends Bas-Rhin

Terra Lenta Festival 2024
A Celebration of Sustainability, Diversity, and Culture in Cecina

Terra Lenta Festival took place from 20 - 22 September 2024, at the Gran Pino Naturefriends House in Cecina, Italy.

The event celebrated nature, society, and the transformative economic changes essential for a sustainable future.

Designed for anyone interested in exploring the intricate link between sustainability and daily life, the three-day multidisciplinary event focused on themes including ecosystems, climate change, new economic models, energy, tourism, social inclusion, collaboration, and biodiversity.

The festival provided a platform for reflection and action, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a sustainable rhythm for our planet.

It featured an array of workshops, roundtables, and discussions, all geared toward fostering a systematic and holistic approach to living within and preserving our ecosystems.







Highlights included:

- Workshops: Interactive sessions covered various topics such as art, sports, dance, singing, and music, with a notable climate hiking workshop by Kim Ressar from NFI.
- Roundtables and Discussions: Experts and participants engaged in conversations about sustainable development, biodiversity, and new collaborative systems.
- Educational Activities: Special guests conducted educational games and documentaries, contributing to a dynamic learning environment.

Cultural Enrichment

The festival was enriched by cultural performances, including a concert by Soleil du Faso from Burkina Faso and a performance by the De Soda Sisters, who showcased committed Tuscan folk music. Traditional Burkinabe rhythms brought a vibrant energy, reinforcing the festival's theme of global interconnectedness.



Community Involvement and Outreach

A significant aspect of the festival was the strong involvement of local schools. Participation grew this year, with five classes from three school branches:

- Three middle school classes
- Graduating class from the agricultural high school
- Upper school class specializing in design from the art high school

Stands representing environmental and human rights organizations, including Sea Shepherd Global, Survival International, Citizens Take Over Europe, Dimmi Storie Migranti, and Un Ponte Per, further enhanced the festival's impact.



Special Activities and Features

- Swapping Party: Encouraged sustainable consumption through exchange.
- Vegi Food Truck: Promoted environmentally friendly food choices.
- Nature Excursion: Concluded with a guided trek in the northern pine forest nature reserve, including visits to the Tombolo archaeological site and the white beaches of Vada.



https://granpino.it/it/festival-terralenta/

Terra Lenta Festival 2024 was a resounding success, fostering community, education, and cultural exchange. It underscored the importance of collaborative action and continuous learning in building a sustainable future, leaving participants inspired to carry forward the festival's values.
It succes marked by increased student participation and engaging workshops, sets a strong foundation for the next festival, scheduled for 19 - 21 September 2025.

ⓒ All Photos Festival Terra Lenta

A Journey of Solidarity: Global Naturefriends Days in Heerlen

This year, the anniversary of the Global Naturefriends Days unfolded in Heerlen, The Netherlands, during the Naturefriends International (NFI) Annual Conference. The event wasn't just a meeting of minds but a celebration of shared values - solidarity, community, and sustainability.

The social program on Sunday held a special significance. Nivon, the Dutch Naturefriends, invited all participants to a hike to the highest point in the Netherlands, where the borders of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany converge. But this was no ordinary hike; each participant's journey contributed something far greater than footprints on a trail. For every participant, €10 was pledged to the NFI Climate Fund, turning each step into a symbol of commitment to the planet's future.



A Call from the Past

Han Verschuur from Nivon reminded us of words written 20 years earlier by NFI President Herbert Brückner:

"What we need again is an old fundamental virtue of the Naturefriends movement: solidarity! Both sides benefit from joint projects and activities: first and foremost, those who experience solidarity, but also those who show solidarity and thus contribute to development in other parts of the world. Solidarity is even more important when it involves effort and sacrifice."

These words echoed through the air, a call to remember that true solidarity requires action, commitment, and sometimes, a little hardship. The hike was more than a physical challenge; it was a reminder of the collective effort needed to support each other and protect our shared environment.

The Hike Begins

As the group set off, the trail wove through rolling hills and dense forests, each step resonating with purpose. Conversations flowed - stories of environmental challenges in distant lands, personal commitments to sustainability, and shared dreams for a greener world.



At the summit, where the borders of three nations meet, the hikers paused. This symbolic place - a confluence of countries and cultures - reflected the interconnectedness of their mission.

Just as borders are invisible lines in the landscape, so too are the divisions between nations when it comes to protecting the planet.





CERTIFICATE

On September 15, 2024 on the occasion of International Naturefriends' Day 2024,

Elena Teutsch

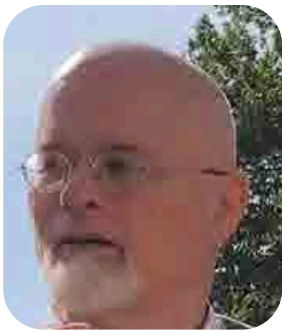
has contributed to climate justice by conquering the 322,4 m high Vaals' Mountain, the highest peak in the Netherlands.

The Naturefriends will transfer € 10 to the NFI climate fund for her achievement.

Principles of Climate Justice

All participants received their well-deserved certificates here, confirming their contributions to the Climate Fund.

Han Verschuur



"This social hike is a reminder that solidarity is not just a word but a practice. It's about understanding and supporting each other, whether in your local community or across the globe.Today's hike was no different; it was a social hike in every sense, offering both physical challenge and deeper social insights."

Each euro donated to the Climate Fund represented a step toward that mission, a tangible act of solidarity that would ripple out into the world.
In the end, the hike was not just a tribute to the highest point in the Netherlands but a celebration of the highest values of the Naturefriends movement: solidarity, effort, and hope.

ⓒ All Photos NFI

Thank you
to all Naturefriends
that participated in
the Global
Naturefriends Days!