



# UNA ★ USA

## NEWSLETTER

JOHNSON COUNTY CHAPTER  
MAY 2023

### Addressing the Loss of Biodiversity at COP15

BY BARBARA ECKSTEIN

In 2022, the UN convened Conference of the Parties 15 in Montreal to address biodiversity loss, building on the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity agreed upon in Rio. The meeting was chaired by China. Slowing—reversing—biodiversity loss is a goal requiring attention to multiple causes of the problem.

The UN identifies 5 drivers of “nature loss.” The biggest is how people use the land and sea, specifically conversion of forests, wetlands, and other natural habitats for agricultural and urban development. Our global food system, agriculture alone, accounts for 85% of the 28,000 species at risk of extinction. Rethinking the food system and restoring degraded agricultural lands is one way to address species loss.

Global warming is the second driver of biodiversity loss. Since 1980, global greenhouse gas emissions have doubled and the planet has warmed at least .7C and probably closer to 1.2C. Already, the most vulnerable ecosystems—coral reefs, mountains, and polar regions—have suffered significantly. 1 in 6 species is threatened globally. But forests, peatlands, and wetlands are carbon stores. Working with nature, up to 40% of the carbon emissions reduction needed to curb global warming could be achieved.

The third driver of species loss is pollution from chemicals and waste that especially affects fresh water and marine habitats. The use of dangerous, non-selective insecticides has had a major impact on plant and insect species. Also, plastic pollution in the oceans has increased 10 times since 1980, affecting some 267 animal species. Air and soil pollution levels are also rising. Nitrogen deposition in the atmosphere is one of the greatest threats to global biodiversity.

The fourth driver of species loss is unsustainable use of natural resources. It threatens the survival of millions of species and the livelihoods of billions of people. However, focusing especially on recovering and protecting 15% of ecosystems in key areas could cut extinctions by 60%. Also, focusing on saving plants, animals and microbes whose genetic



Honored at Night of a 1000 Dinners were, left to right, Field to Family, represented by Olivia Bohlmann; Grow: Johnson County, represented by Claire Zabel; and Great Plains Action Society, represented by Sikowis Nobiss. See President’s Column on page 2.

## Addressing the Loss of Biodiversity at COP15 cont.

material is foundational to life-saving medicines and other products is possible. It's called "access and benefits sharing." The role of indigenous people in these processes and negotiations is key.

The final driver of species loss enumerated by the UN is Invasive Alien Species, a problem affecting the global economy since the 17th century. Since that time, invasive alien species have contributed to nearly 40% of all animal extinctions. International agreement on detection and control of these species at borders is less costly than detection and eradication once they are spread.

COP15 set out to address the five drivers of species loss. After difficult negotiations, the participating nations agreed on 4 goals and 23 targets to achieve by 2030: an equitable and comprehensive framework matching needs and resources; clear targets to address overexploitation, pollution, fragmentation, and unsustainable agricultural practices; safeguards for indigenous peoples recognizing their contributions as stewards of nature; and biodiversity finance—driving support toward sustainable investments and away from environmentally harmful ones.

Specifically, the Parties agreed to protect 30% of the world's land, water, and marine areas by 2030; mobilize at least \$200 billion USD **annually** in domestic and international biodiversity-related funding from all sources, both public and private; reduce subsidies deemed harmful to nature by at least \$500 billion USD by 2030 with **developed** countries committing to provide **developing** countries with at least \$20 billion USD annually by 2025 and \$30 billion annually by 2030.

In the drivers of biodiversity loss and the means to reverse them, and also in the goals of COP15, it is not difficult to see the role Iowa has played and can play. We have our work cut out for us.



BARBARA ECKSTEIN

### PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Night of a Thousand Dinners (N1KD), 2023, was a success thanks to all who planned and executed it and all who donated to it. But it could be better. As its debriefing meeting, the planning committee agreed on several changes for future N1KD planning\*:

- Designate a N1KD committee which may or may not overlap with the planning committee (**Any JCUNA member can be on the N1KD committee or the general JCUNA planning committee as well as in the JCUNA writers' group. Please join us.**)
- Start the planning process in late August
- Identify a JCUNA member with the necessary knowledge of technology relevant to the event to facilitate the presentations of videos and slideshows and audio (*Could this be you?*).
- Ensure that all areas of planning (for example, fundraising and food acquisition) have at least two volunteers, necessitating, in the short run, that new volunteers learn the ropes from seasoned volunteers
- Clarify our categories of fund-raising—sponsor, donor, ticket purchaser—and keep our messaging consistent

Night of a Thousand Dinners is a signature event that serves our community and the UN well and does our chapter proud. We want to protect this legacy while making the planning process as smooth as possible. A recording of this year's event can be found on YouTube (type Night of 1000 Dinners 2023 in the search box).

\*We heard other feedback, such as praise for and complaints about the venue. We aren't ignoring those comments, but considering them in our choice of venue in future does not require any fiddling with the structure of the planning.

# JCUNA, LCUNA Hold Earth Week Programs about Sustainability

BY CARYL LYONS

To commemorate Earth Day, April 22, 2023, both the Johnson County United Nations Association (JCUNA) and the Linn County United Nations Association (LCUNA) held meetings about climate action during Earth Week.

## **Lessons in Sustainability from Kerala, India and Costa Rica**

On April 17 in Iowa City, Jim Olson (JCUNA, Board Member) and Jim Throgmorton (Professor Emeritus of Planning and Public Affairs and former mayor of Iowa City, IA) presented ideas about climate gleaned from international travel. Olson hiked 174 miles in 13 days across Costa Rica, while Throgmorton joined class of 22 students in Kerala, India, for 18 days to study sustainable urban development. Both looked at their experiences as a chance to discover new ideas about climate and sustainability.

### **Sustainability in Costa Rica—Jim Olson**

Olson's hike traversed coastal plains, jungles, mountains, and rainforests and passed banana, pineapple, sugar cane, coffee, and palm oil plantations. This hike was a new rural development initiative, helping rural populations to profit from Costa Rica's tourism industry.

Reforestation in Costa Rica has taken place at a remarkable rate due to a government program that made payments to farmers whose land was reforested. Forested land rose from 26% in 1983 to 52% in 2010. Some sustainability lessons learned were that sustainability or the lack of it reflects cultural values and practices, and that sustainability anywhere is affected by globalization.

Go to [johnsoncountryuna.org](http://johnsoncountryuna.org) to see the slides from Olson's presentation, "Sustainability Lessons from Costa Rica" (Click on "About" and scroll down.)

### **Kerala, India—Jim Throgmorton**

Jerry Anthony's class examined low-cost housing, economic development, and ecotourism. Kerala, only marginally affected by colonialism, is known for defending democracy. Kerala's success may be partly because of (1) decentralizing power to local government, and (2) prioritizing the public over the private. It is developing its water resources, rehabilitating slums, and finding ways to include women, youth, farmers, and tribal people in its work force. Kerala emphasizes ecological sustainability, and they commit themselves to "doing good work for important causes."

### **A Tale of Two Organizations Empowering Citizen Climate Action: Citizens Climate Lobby and Iowa UNA**

At the April 20 meeting of the LCUNA in Cedar Rapids, Jane Shuttleworth introduced Phil Engen, state coordinator of Iowa's Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL), and Barbara Eckstein, retired UI English professor, current president of the Johnson County UNA, and also a CCL member.

#### **Phil Engen**

There are 150 chapters of CCL outside of the U.S. in addition to 420 in the U.S. The main thing, according to Engen, is to listen and to find common goals. CCL's focus is lowering the carbon level through federal action, possibly with a carbon tax. We need to make energy affordable, and we need to find out what people agree on and pass those things.

For more information about CCL or to become a member, see [citizensclimatelobby.org](http://citizensclimatelobby.org).

Johnson County United Nations Association  
308 E. Burlington St. #245  
Iowa City, IA 52240

## **A Tale of Two Organizations Empowering Citizen Climate Action: Citizens Climate Lobby and Iowa UNA cont.**

### **Barbara Eckstein**

JCUNA's Barbara Eckstein discussed the United Nations' role in addressing climate change. Eckstein talked about the UN Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings on climate that have met annually since 1995. Delegates to COP 27 held recently in Egypt, agreed to hold global warming to 1.5 degrees C and to create a new loss and damage fund for vulnerable countries, paid for by wealthier countries.

For more information about the UN and climate action, see <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/cop>.



---

---

JCUNA congratulates Prisca Namutchibwe who has served as our Communications Intern this year. Prisca is graduating this spring from the University of Iowa with a B.A. in International Relations. We send Prisca our gratitude and best wishes.

---

---

### **GO GREEN**

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please email [unajohnsoncounty@gmail.com](mailto:unajohnsoncounty@gmail.com). We will continue to send you a paper version unless we hear from you.

## **Thank You for Your Membership Renewal!**

We are most grateful to you for your ongoing support for our chapter. If you receive this newsletter by mail, your mailing label indicates when your membership renewal is due. Renew online at <https://unausa.org/join/renew> or mail your \$50 renewal check payable to UNA-USA to BWF/UNA-USA, United Nations Foundation, P.O. Box 96397, Washington DC 20090-6397. Many thanks.

You may update your contact information at any time by going to [act@unausa.org](mailto:act@unausa.org).