How can a global initiative significantly contribute to the study of vector-borne parasites? Diseases transmitted by vectors, such as malaria, have diverse impacts on fitness, reproduction, and survival in livestock, humans, and wildlife. The WIMANET COST Action is committed to advancing the understanding of vector-host-parasite systems by uniting researchers worldwide to collaborate. During our recent 2nd workshop from 20 to 23 of February in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, six specialized working groups presented and brainstormed ideas covering gaps in knowledge, experimental designs, protocols, and existing databases of wildlife malaria parasites, hosts, and vectors.

What is our agenda?

The agenda revolved around the collaborative efforts of six working groups (WG), each consisting of diverse researchers from institutions worldwide, spearheading and coordinating research in wildlife parasitology. Each WG is dedicated to specific research objectives, but we also identified several common goals that foster an interactive and collaborative approach in understanding vector-host-parasite systems across groups. Here are the key questions the WIMANET aim to address:

WG1: What are the key molecular markers for genomics and transcriptomic analyses in wildlife malaria research?

WG2: How to incorporate molecular markers and morphology to assign parasite lineages to species?

WG3: What are the major factors influencing vector transmission in wildlife?

WG4: How can the impact of anthropogenic activities and wildlife malaria on host hematology be measured?

WG5: What are the determinants of spatiotemporal variation in multi-host-parasite communities?

WG6: What strategies prove effective for sharing and publicizing the network findings with target audiences?

What's next?

One of WIMANET's primary objectives is to empower and train young and early-career researchers the essential skills required for wildlife parasitology research. In line with this commitment, the WIMANET will be organizing a series of short scientific stays and training schools aimed at teaching young researchers the methods used to study vector-borne parasites. Additionally, the network will work on developing standardized protocols for field, laboratory, and bioinformatic analyses. The announcement for the first summer training school this year will be coming soon, and all early career researchers interested will be warmly invited to apply and participate in these inspiring events.

For staying tuned for updates and upcoming activities as well as for any of your inquiries, please sign into our Newsletter, or visit our website at: https://wimanet-science.github.io/web/