

# Stories of hope

**10 YOUTH**

WHO MADE A CHANGE



# About GYBN Europe+

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) is an international network of youth organizations and individuals from every global region who have united together with a common goal: preventing the loss of biodiversity and preserving Earth's natural resources through sustainable use.

In August 2019, around 50 young people participated in the GYBN Europe Youth Capacity Building Workshop close to Vienna, Austria, all incredibly committed and determined to change the existing relationship between society and the environment. With this shared determination, the GYBN Europe+ network was formed at the workshop with Jessica Micklem and Christopher Baierl as the initial coordinators. Over the next months the group kept in contact and participated in various international projects together including the All in for Climate Action and the World Wildlife Day Challenge. On World Earth Day, the 22nd April 2020, GYBN Europe+ became an official chapter of GYBN and opened its doors to the wider community.

6 months later, GYBN Europe+ has been able to gather members from across the continent and concretised various projects, such as a campaign on social media for Biodiversity Week, a position on the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and much more.



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GYBN Europe+



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# Stories of hope

The Stories of Hope evening was a side event to EU Green Week 2020 organised by GYBN Europe+. These stories of success were intended to rejuvenate and re-inspire youth who are often disheartened and disappointed by the challenges and because of not being able to see measurable effects of their work.



## THE SPEAKERS



IRIS



FLORIAN



ROXY



ELUJULO



IVANA



KORINNA



CHRISTIAN



ESMERALDA



FONS



JOYCE








**IRIS DEL SOL**


*Ukraine*

*“ While I was studying environmental law in university my father’s friend called me and asked for help. In his village a project of a huge ski resort was announced. ”*



My name is Iris Del Sol, I am 24 years old. I was born in a small village in the Carpathian mountains and I was always close to nature. While I was at university, studying environmental law, my father's friend called me and asked me for help. In his village they announced a new project to build a huge ski resort.

The planned Svydovets recreational complex includes a ski resort with 23 ski lifts and 230 km of ski slopes, 390 apartment buildings, 60 hotels, 120 restaurants, 10 shopping centres, 17 rental equipment units, 2 bank branches, 3 fitness centres and 5 multi-storeyed parking spaces for 6,000 cars. Altogether, the infrastructure is designed to accommodate 22,000 people and 5,000 employees at the same time. The total area of the ski resort would cover 1,430 hectares, whereby 800 hectares are dedicated to housing, commercial, economic and recreational infrastructure. And all this infrastructure in one of Europe's most pristine forest landscapes and a biodiversity hotspot in the Carpathian Mountains – Svydovets.



The massif is located in the Eastern Carpathians in Western Ukraine. The undisturbed ecosystem is a UNESCO World Heritage site for its exceptional biodiversity and primeval beech forests. Svydovets also includes two sites of the Emerald Network of the Bern Convention and critical parts of ecological network of the Transcarpathian region (Zakarpatska Oblast). It is home to at least 93 endangered species in the Red Data book of Ukraine (2009) including the European brown bear and the Eurasian lynx. More than half of Ukraine's glacial lakes are located on the mountain range. The Svydovets ecosystem feeds the climate and water cycle of the region as well as the source of the international Tysa river which is a main tributary of the Danube river.



Therefore we went to the Svydovets massif, with a fact-finding mission. We want this territory to stay as wild as it is now, and we don't want this beautiful landscape to be ruined by a new commercial city. In 2017 we created an environmental movement, called Free Svydovets. In Ukraine it is one of the first independent environmental movements, which unites different NGOs, activists, artists and people who love nature. Very quickly we realised that in Ukraine it's not easy to be an environmental activist, due to the corruption and safety reasons. That's why for us it's important to be transparent in all what we do to protect activists. Our main goal is to make sure that Ukrainian government stops this project and protects the Svydovets massif, by creating a nature reserve. For that we used lots of methods: we created petition, we wrote letters to the Ukrainian President, I went with the Free Svydovets delegation to the European Parliament and European Commission...

For me the success of our campaign is the fact that in 3 years they haven't started building the ski resort (just one road has been built so far) and other activists in the region used us as an example and started their own campaigns. After 3 years of fighting, Svydovets hosted a Green Camp, where activists and NGOs from all over Ukraine have joined the Free Svydovets movement.

The main idea of Free Svydovets is to fight against urbanization, privatization of mountains, illegal logging on the massif, and make sure that floods don't again destroy the houses and lives of local people. Free Svydovets it's about wilderness and nature! It is about fighting the blind system that still wants to pour lots of money into ski resorts in a world which is already feeling major impacts from the Climate Crisis!










**FLORIAN WIESER**

*Austria*

*I started a protest march together with WWF against a planned ski resort, which fortunately was never built. On this protest march, however, there was even more to come, I met my current best friends and, together with them, a new youth movement called Youth Wilderness Ambassadors was born.*






*Florian Wieser studies environmental, process and energy engineering in Austria. Besides his studies he is committed to the preservation of the last really wild places in Austria and is firmly convinced that it is urgent that people all over the world rediscover their roots in nature. Together with his team of Youth Wilderness Ambassadors, he works on this goal every day.*


*I started my working life with an apprenticeship as a bricklayer. But I was never happy with it and just wanted to be out in nature all the time. All my life I have been fascinated by nature, simply because I grew up in a national park and could always be in untouched mountains. Shortly after finishing my apprenticeship as a bricklayer, I accidentally came across the Youth Empowerment Programme organised by WWF Austria.*

*In this one-year programme, I was given the tools to implement and design my own projects. Interestingly, it was only there that I really came into contact with the topic of wilderness and biodiversity conservation. With these new impressions and the knowledge of how I can help to protect the last untouched wilderness, I started a protest march together with the WWF against a planned ski resort and managed to stop it from being built. But there was more to come. On this protest march I met my current best friends and together with them, a new youth movement called Youth Wilderness Ambassadors was born, which is dealing with these exact issues.*



*The Youth Wilderness Ambassadors have made it their mission to speak for the wilderness in Austria to give the wilderness a voice. We have built this organisation on two basic pillars. On the one hand, we are involved in activism, for the protection, and against the destruction of Wilderness in Austria. The second pillar is the education of young, motivated people, for we want to make these people aware of the importance of a diverse nature, following the amazingly simple principle: "You protect what you love".*





*At present we have two active projects underway. In our project, Call of the Wild, we convey a deep awareness of our nature to young, committed people and show them how important it is for our lives. These young people then form the new generation of Youth Wilderness Ambassadors and thus constantly increase the movement. In our second project we are actively fighting against a planned hydroelectric power plant that would destroy an incredibly important area for Austria. We have already succeeded in motivating some local people to join our fight for the protection of this area.*

*In the meantime, together with the organisation Rewilding Europe and friends from all over Europe, I have founded a new Europe-wide youth rewilding network, which aims to support committed wilderness conservationists and to make rewilding better known in Europe. You could say that my success story lies in the fact that I have been able to set all these projects and developments in motion largely independently.*







## ROXY THE ZOOLOGIST

*United Kingdom*

*I work as a freelance photographer / content creator, with the goal of reconnecting people with animals and inspiring them to get outside, have fun, and get involved with conservation initiatives themselves.*



*My name is Roxy, I am a wildlife filmmaker and digital content creator. You can find me online @roxythezoologist, and I am passionate about how our everyday actions have such a vast impact on our planet. Through my wildlife photography and filming, I want to tell the stories of those who aren't given a voice in our society and encourage people to act, whether that be by donating, changing every day actions, or feeling inspired and following a similar career path themselves. I truly believe that if you love something you cannot hurt it. Due to this, a lot of my images that are directly aiming to be a form of animal activism, show my love and connection with other sentient beings, hopefully inspiring others to want to connect to these individuals in a similar way. One of the most heart-warming stories that I have been lucky enough to share is that of the rescued calf, Ferdinand, at the Gentle Barn in California.*

*As soon as I arrived here I felt emotional at just how special this place was. I went into one of the pens to meet the newest rescue, a calf called Ferdinand. I was immediately informed that he was still (rightly so) very untrusting of people, so to just sit calmly and watch him. Unfortunately they had been unable to save his mother, but he had been adopted by his foster Mum, Lucy. Lucy actually loved him so much that she began producing her own milk for him – something that was not even known to be possible! Whilst I sat in the enclosure, Ferdinand began feeding from Lucy, which was an incredibly touching moment in itself. After he'd finished he looked at me and started walking my way, I was concerned at first due to what I was told when I first entered their pen, but I sat very still. Then he began to lick my entire body with slobbery kisses. The volunteer that looks after him, who was sat next to me, began to cry, telling me that normally he doesn't even like people touching him, and that I was part of his healing process. This magical story warmed the hearts of so many people and is the perfect example of how you can put out vegan activism in a very gentle way.*

*But I truly believe that people need to go on that journey for themselves: reaching a place of care and understanding for our planet happens through a journey, a journey that differs for each and every one of us.*



Mine started at only 6 years old whilst on a holiday to Bird Island in the Seychelles, a place renowned for its conservation work with sea turtles. One day, we joined a group of people to release turtle hatchlings from their nest back into the ocean (as the journey down to the sea is when they are typically predated on by birds, crabs, and other animals). The conservationist working on the island, Robbie, asked everyone to wait whilst he went to collect the hatchlings from their nest. Instead of waiting, I kicked off my shoes and ran after him. He picked me up, put me on his shoulders, and let me go with him. Upon returning, I said to my parents "I want to be a conservationist" and ever since that day, I have done all that I can to achieve that.

I began volunteering at 16 and have since worked with a range of different species including wolves, elephants, snakes, meerkats, koalas, and much more. I then went on to obtain a 4-year degree in Zoology, which included a year out in Australia, with my final year research project focusing on social learning and pack structure in African painted dogs. After graduating, I picked up a camera to share the beauty of the natural world with others, and had my work featured by BBC, BBC Earth, the Metro, the Guardian and much more. I worked as a presenter. Then I returned to Uni to do an MA in Wildlife Filmmaking, and now, amidst the global pandemic, I am working for Silverback Films, the makers of Our Planet. Anything is possible for passionate individuals who want to make a positive difference to the world in which we live. Helping to change our systems to improve the quality of life for all.

I feel like the word 'conservationist' has a lot of stigma attached to it, often being associated and/or limited to scientists, biologists, something that is not within the skillset of every single person. However, the dictionary definition of the word 'conservationist' is simply "someone who works to protect the environment from the damaging effects of human activity". So, the way I see it is that every single person can be a conservationist. It is just about using your unique skillset, whether as a scientist, artist, lawyer, personal trainer, whatever that may be, to help other humans, non-human animals and the environment in some way shape or form.









**ELUJULO OPEYEMI**

*Nigeria*

*I could not bring myself to imagine how future generations would have to compete for so many things that our parents enjoyed when we first lent them this environment, or how wildlife might be forced into extinction should the current rate of deforestation continue.*



*My name is Elujulo Opeyemi, I am a 29 year old climate and conservation activist in Nigeria, and the National Director of Youth for the Environment.*

*I grew up to understand the relationship between human and nature; how trees as they grow absorb the carbon dioxide emissions in our environment, and at the same time provide many essential services to human survival, while man's strategic position in the evolutionary ladder automatically registered him as a land manager, one that should protect and conserve nature. A relationship structured to be beneficial to both parties, rather than the existing parasitic one in favour of man, that continues to destroy the bio-physical features of forest and forest resources; our ally against climate change. Unfortunately, this one-sided relationship, like in many other nations of the world, is also observable in Nigeria as we make attempts to meet the demands of the most populous nation in Africa.*

*This unwelcomed reality in my community forced my empathy for nature, as its survival gets challenged daily by the same people who are supposed to care for and protect it. I could not bring myself to imagine how future generations would have to compete for so many things that our parents enjoyed when we first lent them this environment, or how wildlife might be forced into extinction should the current rate of deforestation continue. The reality of climate change daily stares right into my eyes and shows me how much we are losing the race; as the local farmers in my community lamented the poor yield, as the irregularities in rainfall pattern intensifies, as coastal dwellers getting ransacked of their lives and livelihoods, as the increased ocean took everything for nothing, and the early morning sun that once refreshed my skin has just become one that burns it. At this point I realized my responsibility to protecting our environment had to become a priority for me. I knew I had to contribute my quota to change the narrative. I knew I had to play my part in making our world a sustainable one. So I began to ask some questions that eventually shaped the activities of Youth for the Environment.*



*Rural farmers who basically feed Nigerians had little or no knowledge of climate change even though they suffer the most from its effects. So I decided to promote the agroecological farming approach that mimics the natural diversity of the forest ecosystem among farmers. I also started working with youth and children to restore degraded forest lands by replanting trees that are indigenous to the area, and to ensure the sustainability of our cause. Youth for the Environment began to establish green enthusiast clubs in secondary schools in South-West Nigeria to promote knowledge sharing, cultivate the culture of tree planting in children, and also, promote the inclusion of youth and children in discussions relating to the achievement of the goal of sustainable development.*

*This year, our action plans are aimed at restoring degraded lands in local communities, and forest reserves in South-West Nigeria, featuring the planting of 3000 trees, raising 5,000 conservation and climate actors, and working with existing youth-led local community organizations to improve forest management, to respond to the dire state of both people's health, and our planet. The project is structured to provide 'multiple wins', with direct and indirect livelihood benefits to rural communities and smallholders in a way that allows for nature conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation.*

*Youth for the Environment works and hopes to one day see the Nigerian environment and the world at large become resilient and on a sustainable path, with more youth involvement in conservation and environmental protection, and to ensure that the generations to come enjoy at least the same benefits and beauty that our environment offers, even as human and nature live in harmony, that current and past generations.*









**IVANA MARIN**

*Croatia*

*The first dream I remember is a deer standing in front of my baby cot not moving his eyes from me. Around him, there were other animals sitting or standing on the fence of my baby cot. In that moment only this reality existed for me, I didn't know what a dream was. Today, I'm Head of Natural Heritage and Environment Protection in Argonauta association located in Croatia.*



*The first dream I remember is a deer standing in front of my baby cot not moving his eyes from me. Around him, there were other animals sitting or standing on the fence of my baby cot. In that moment only reality existed for me, I didn't know what a dream was. Today, I'm Head of Natural Heritage and Environment Protection in Argonauta association located in Croatia. Tomorrow, who knows what I will be... But, I'm sure in this: I committed myself to help those animals who came into my dream, and I committed myself to educate others about the insights that nature is giving to us. I'm also Ivana, the one who's constantly trying to balance between dreams and reality in order to use dreams to build a better reality.*

*Have you ever play the Green Bingo? For sure not the one I'm telling you about today, but I'm also quite sure that each of you here today is playing your own Green Bingo. Each of you is fighting for your own green goals to make some difference to climate change, conservation, biodiversity protection, sustainable development, education of kids, adults, and all other goals I didn't mention. And what do we expect from playing the Green Bingo? To win of course! To win, to make a difference! To achieve our goals and make the world better.*

*With that attitude, I also started my internship four years ago. I started to work in an ecological association called Argonauta where my main task was running the Eco-patrol workshops for kids. So, each Saturday around 15 kids age 11 to 14 were my responsibility for 3 hours. Each Saturday we were exploring nature, learning about the principles of ecology through various non-formal methods. We were doing experiments, going to visit local beekeepera or fisher people, playing educational treasure hunts and lots of practical work where we recycled, made some videos for campaigns, built insect hotels, etc. Kids were learning by doing, and learning by having a lot of fun.*



*So what did I expected after one year of doing it? Results of course... Not materialistic, but in the shape of change, in the shape of making difference. Even if that difference happened I couldn't measure it, I couldn't touch it so I felt ANXIOUS of course, like many environmentalists today. I felt like I planted a seed, gave it a lot of fertilizer, watered it carefully and in one year I didn't see even a small plant while I expected a BIG tree or in the worst case, a *little* tree. Frustration and anxiety were pushing me to find another job, find something easier where results are measured on a daily scale. But luckily my love for kids, education, and nature brought me to a future I hoped for.*

*So today, three years later I can proudly say that we got funding for a project called Blue Eco-patrol where we expand our Eco-patrol programme to seven schools. We educated 20 people, and 7 of them are teachers that are implementing workshops about sustainability with 140 kids that are engaged in this project. Up until now, we have invested more than 2500 hours that kids have volunteered in order to learn about the ecological footprint, renewable sources of energy, food, and sustainability, 7 R concept of recycling, reusing, etc, about the acidification of the sea and its influence on sea creatures, about the sea biodiversity and the organization of an exhibition where their work will be seen.*

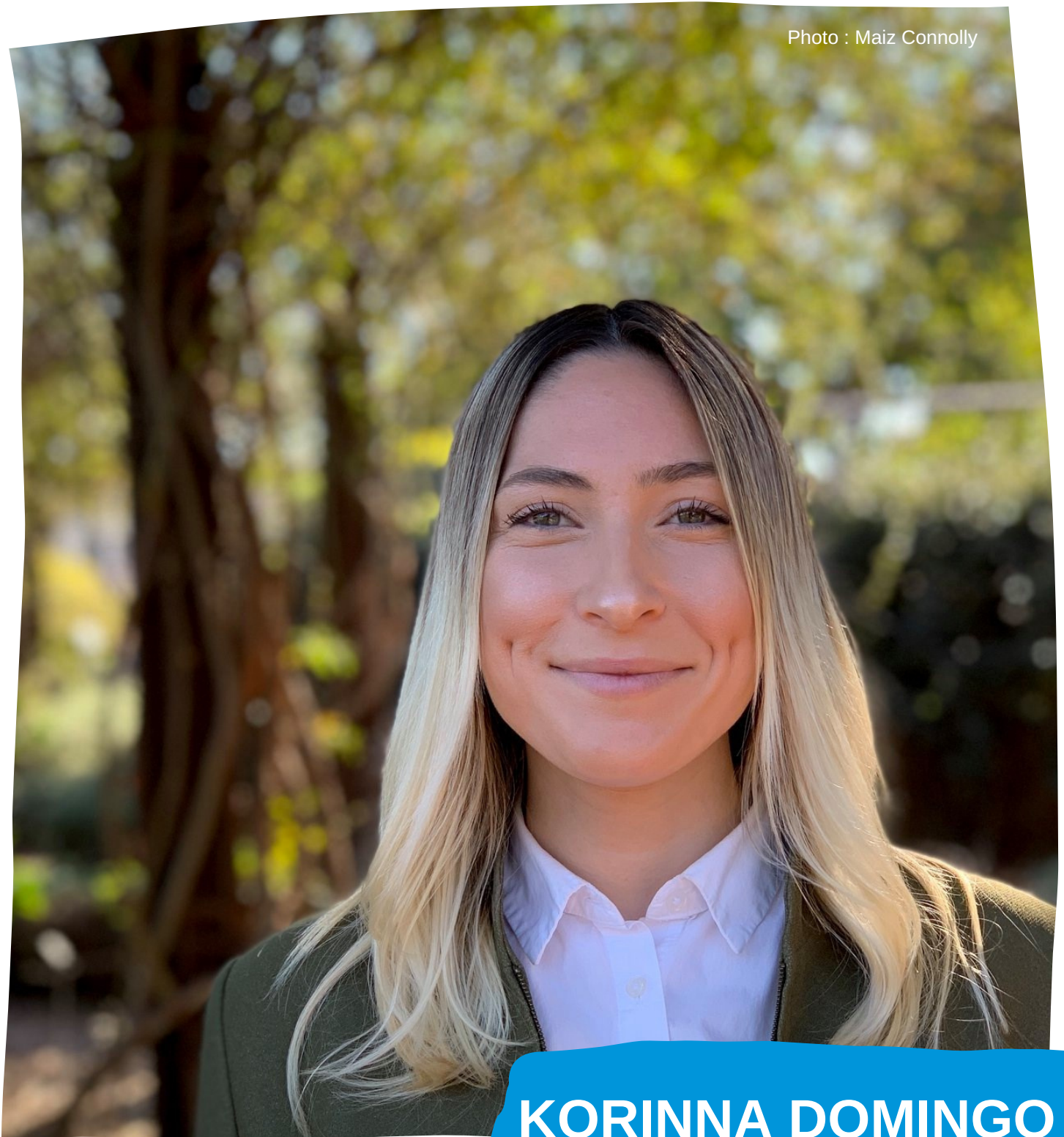
*Metaphorically speaking, we planted more than 150 seeds, that are growing, little by little. And who knows how big the forest of small ecologists will grow in the future.*







Photo : Maiz Connolly



**KORINNA DOMINGO**

*United States*

*I founded the Cougar Conservancy on April 20th, 2020 after the legal killing of mountain lion P-56 caused a major uproar in the conservation community.*

*Korinna is a wildlife biologist from Los Angeles, California, USA. Before founding the Cougar Conservancy, she worked on a variety of wildlife projects in the field that include species such as Roosevelt elk, black bears, cougars, North American porcupines, and river otters. She received her B.Sc. in Wildlife Management & Conservation from Humboldt State University.*

*Korinna has worked throughout the western U.S. to enhance human-cougar relationships through education, outreach, conflict management, and science-based policy.*

*In 2016, Korinna was part of the team that pushed for Assembly Bill 8, introduced by Assembly Member Richard Bloom, which would authorize, rather than require, the issuance of depredation permits. Out of this came the 2017 amendment to the depredation policy—also known as the “stepwise permit policy” or the “three-strike policy”—that added protections for cougars living in the Santa Ana and Santa Monica Mountains in Southern California. Korinna was honored by California Senator Anthony Portantino in 2019 for her “dedication in educating the community about living with mountain lions.” During the same year, she co-led efforts to list Southern and Central Coast mountain lions under the California Endangered Species Act. In 2020, these imperiled populations were granted temporary protected status.*



*Korinna founded the Cougar Conservancy on April 20th, 2020 after the legal killing of mountain lion P-56 caused a major uproar in the L.A. community. She works collaboratively with state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and private partners to prevent, manage, and reduce human-cougar conflicts. She is a passionate science communicator and her interviews and photography have been featured on BBC, CBS, ABC, The Wildlife Society, and more.*

*The Cougar Conservancy is a non-profit organization based out of Los Angeles, California that provides expert recommendations and direct support to state residents seeking to prevent or resolve conflicts that may arise between our communities and cougars in the landscapes we share. Our Conflict Task Force collaborates with communities and individuals to implement reliable cougar conflict prevention techniques that serve people while conserving cougars. We aim to empower people with training and education that promotes coexistence with cougars and other wildlife essential to our ecosystems.*









**CHRISTIAN SCHWARZER**

*Germany*

*Thanks to the UN security personnel not taking me seriously – I bumped into then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and we discussed youth participation in these international conferences. I promised him that I would dedicate myself to become part of a youth movement for biodiversity.*

*I grew up in a mid-sized city in the west of Germany. Despite this region being one of the most heavily urbanized areas in Europe, I became more and more fascinated by the complexity of nature in the very fragmented and degraded forest behind my home. When I was 12 years old, I started my own research project and at age 16, I showed how the local trees will suffer due to the impacts of climate change, winning a prize at a science fair. Despite this, my parents demanded I study business as they could not believe that following my passion for nature would lead me to their perception of success: a steady well-paying job.*

*I finished my business studies, but then did an internship at an environmental NGO where I had the chance to participate in my first round of UN negotiations. Seeing government officials from all over the world (though mostly old, white men) running around, discussing text, and preparing global decisions about biodiversity and climate change was a revelation! Unfortunately, back in 2006 there was virtually no youth participation at all.*





*A month later, thanks to the UN security personnel not taking me seriously – I bumped into then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and we discussed youth participation in these international conferences. I promised him that I would dedicate myself to become part of a youth movement for biodiversity.*

*I tried to be everywhere, helping wherever I could. But one cannot start a movement alone. Luckily, I met Melina, Mirna and many other young people with the same passion, in 2010 we spent days and nights planning and together we presented our plan to the CBD Secretariat. At COP 10 the Global Youth Biodiversity Network was born and since then it has just grown from one success to another.*

*One of the great successes has been the establishment of national and regional chapters. GYBN recognises that to fight the Biodiversity Crisis we need action at all levels from local grassroot level to the CBD. The chapters work to support youth-led grassroot movements, conduct youth consultations and build relationships with national government focal points. All this builds up to GYBN bringing the youth perspective to the CBD processes and lobbying for the needs and wants of the youth to be included in the Global Biodiversity Framework*

*And the GYBN story is not over yet: While the COVID-19 global pandemic did not allow us to celebrate our 10th anniversary with a Global Youth Biodiversity Summit, the network has a lot in store for 2020 and 2021 – so stay tuned!*









**ESMERALDA WIRTZ**

*Belgium*

*The only option I had to get rid of organic waste, was to throw it together with the residual waste. I felt so bad and guilty doing it, that I had to do something.*

*After studying anthropology and environmental sciences, Esmeralda started to work for a nature park in Belgium. Besides her work, she started a community compost in her neighbourhood and was selected to represent belgian youth at the UN Conference of Parties on Climate Change in 2019. She also tries to reduce her impact on our planet and decided to move into an almost self-sufficient tiny house.*

*Esmeralda tries to make a change at a personal, local, national and international level.*

*In 2017, I moved out of my parents' house to live in a flat in a town in eastern Belgium. I quickly noticed that the only option I had to get rid of organic waste, was to throw it together with the residual waste. I felt so bad and guilty doing it, that I had to do something. Right in front of my place, there was this empty space where we could all compost together. After talking to my neighbours, I realised that I was not the only one looking for a better ending for my carrot peels.*



*Just a month after moving, I participated in a call supporting young people in my municipality. My project didn't get selected. However, just a few weeks later, the municipality called me back, saying that they were willing to support the project, both financially and logistically. Together with a non-profit organisation of my neighbourhood, we gathered citizens that were interested in conceiving the project. We decided collectively where exactly we would build the compost bins, what we would put inside, and who would be allowed to participate. In April 2018, we finally inaugurated the compost. Unexpectedly, more than 100 people gathered in the rain to attend the event and register to use the compost.*

*Within a week, enough people had signed up to reach the capacity of our compost. After a few months, we had a huge waiting list of people wanting to compost with us. We then decided to build another compost bin, to increase the capacity of our structure. I now moved to the countryside, and my main objective had always been that the project goes on after I move. After three months, the compost is doing really well, and three other neighbourhoods decided to launch their own composts, based on the experience of this initial project.*









**FONS JANSEN**

*The Netherlands*

*Back in my bedroom I wondered how we could connect the energy from thousands of young Europeans of the “Friday for the future” movements with young professional groups working on concrete sustainability projects all over Europe.*

*Fons Janssen is a Dutch biotechnology student. Besides his chemical work to connect molecules, he volunteers on various climate initiatives to connect people and organizations for climate action and nature restoration. Currently, Fons does an internship at the ClimateCleanup foundation and volunteers for GreenDeal4Youth and Jong RES Nederland.*

*Can you remember the last time you had a sleepless night? I sometimes have them on the end of the weekend. It is a feeling of anxiety telling me that I don't want to start my Monday. Normally it blows over when I listen to meditation music or when I simply write off my thoughts. However, exactly a year ago it didn't work. I kept feeling uneasy why the people on this planet are not taking enough action for climate and nature.*

*I didn't understand why I was so unsettled, as I know for myself I already do as much as I can. For instance I contributed to the national climate agreement in my country, and I was doing research on synthetic fuels. Still, I felt worried whether our global community is able to regenerate nature and reverse climate change. During my studies, I understood the numbers if humanity doesn't succeed, but during that night I realised it emotionally.*





*That emotional awareness resembled with what I had witnessed from secondary school pupils on the climate marches earlier that year. They showed an outcry of deep frustration in The Hague, the political heart of the Netherlands. It was an outcry, as if a baby deer was calling for its mother to get off the street, while the mother was standing paralyzed on the street, staring at an approaching car with big lights.*

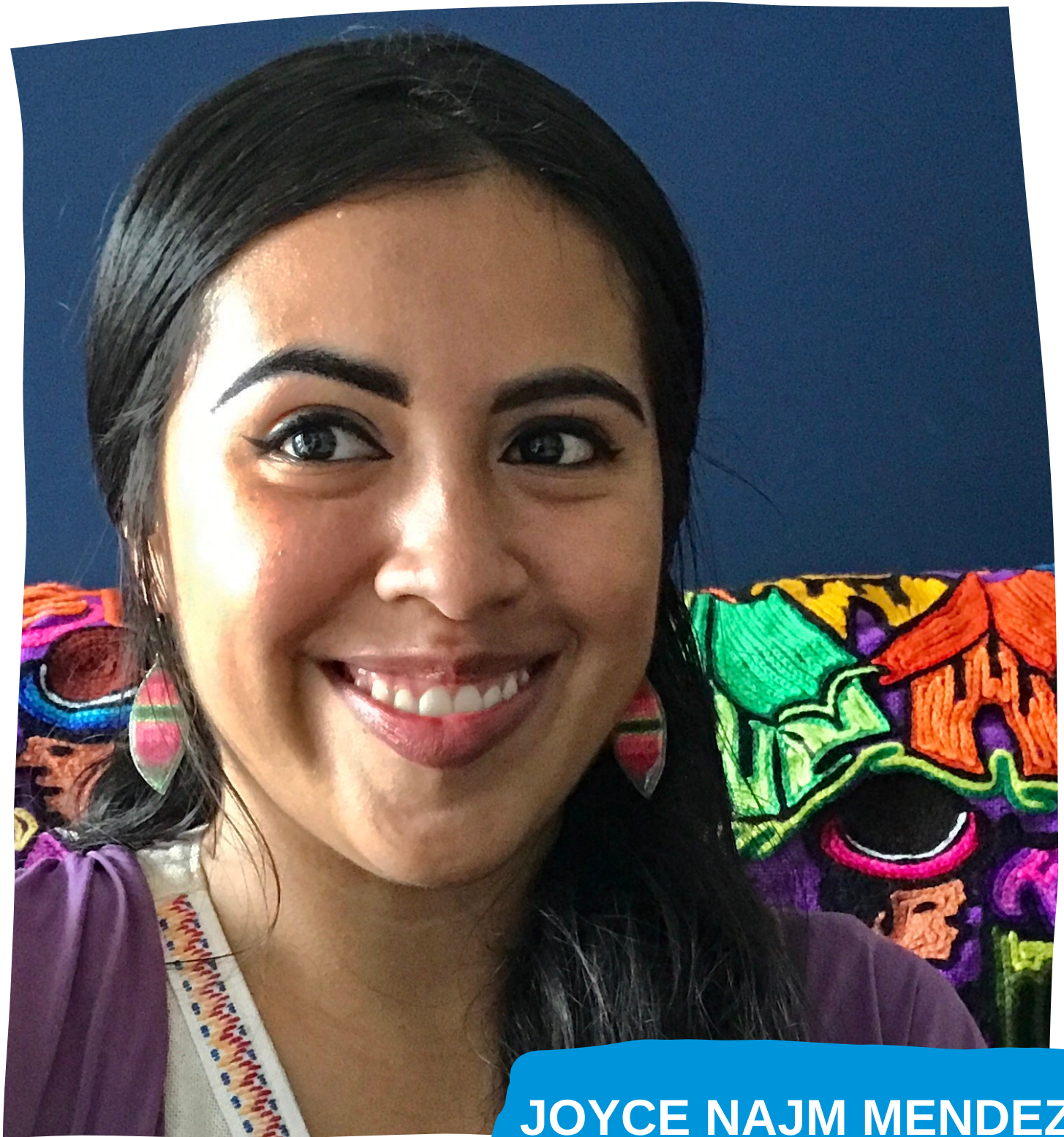
*So back in my sleeping room I wondered how we could connect the energy from thousands of young Europeans of the "Friday for the future" movements with young professional groups working on concrete sustainability projects all over Europe. The whole night I kept writing about this plan. And after writing I felt relieved and managed to get some sleep. That following Monday I decided to take a pause for my thesis and I started reaching out to young Europeans to work together on the European Green Deal. With a small team we managed to make an open letter, got one national TV station, convened a national youth summit and hosted a European brainstorm series.*

*After half a year turned this climate sprint back into a marathon. My thesis is finished just in time and currently I am doing my graduation internship on seaweed processing. Looking back at this year I am very hopeful about the future. Although physical gatherings are limited, various youth movements and organizations have professionalised digitally and converge into new strong coalitions. I think this will help to connect the UN with the EU and the EU with the national and local level. This way our generations thinks global, is connected and acts concretely on all levels.*







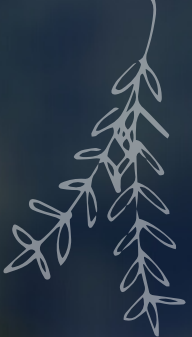


**JOYCE NAJM MENDEZ**

*Paraguay/Brasil*


“ As part of the Foz do Iguaçu Environmental - Educative Observatory, we work with practical and theoretical activities to engage the community to develop environmental public policies, towards research, education in conservation and climate action. ”





*Joyce is a technoxamanist, TEDx lecturer and social entrepreneur working on the water-energy-food nexus and transboundary cooperation. She is currently studying her MSc in Sustainability and Adaptation Planning through the Centre of Alternative Technologies in the UK.*

*She was one of the 30 young people selected by the United Nations Youth Envoy office to be part of the Abu Dhabi Climate Action Meeting, supporting the organization of the first ever United Nations Youth Climate Summit in 2019. Joyce has also been invited to join the group of leaders 'Women Rise for All' – a global effort to save lives and protect livelihoods, urging leaders worldwide to address the human crisis of the pandemic, to support the UN Deputy Secretary-General's call for solidarity and action in response to the impacts of covid-19.*



*Joyce is co-founder of several organizations like the Moema Viezzer Educative & Environmental Observatory, the The Binational Youth Collective of the Parana Basin 3, and the Latin American Observatory of Geopolitics of Energy where she acts as the President of the UNILA (Federal University of Latin American Integration) Chapter with the organization Student Energy. In Paraguay she co-founded the National Youth Network for Water, and the Youth Network for Climate Action Paraguay, organizing since 2016 the National COYs (Conference of Youth on Climate Change). Joyce is a member of the World Youth Parliament for Water (also part of the Blue Peace Initiative, promoting water transboundary cooperation), and the Climate Reality Project Brazil.*



*As part of the Moema Viezzer Environmental - Educative Observatory - Foz do Iguaçu, we work with practical and theoretical activities to engage the community to develop environmental public policies, towards research, education in conservation, and climate action. The main researchers and leaders of this Atlantic forest project are Luciana Ribeiro and Juan Orgaz At the beginning of July we got our Foz do Iguaçu Municipal Plan for the Atlantic Forest - PMMA approved, guaranteeing progress for the recovery and preservation of biodiversity. The policy, also known as the Atlantic Forest Law, complies with Federal Law 11.428 / 2006, integrates the city in national policies for the protection of the country's native biome vegetation, in addition to enabling access to national and international investment funds for the preservation of biodiversity. We are very happy!*

Likewise, our work in education is still active during this period, we had an online event on the transition to a sustainable society. We also work with several volunteers from at least 10 different Latin American countries.





# Stories of hope

