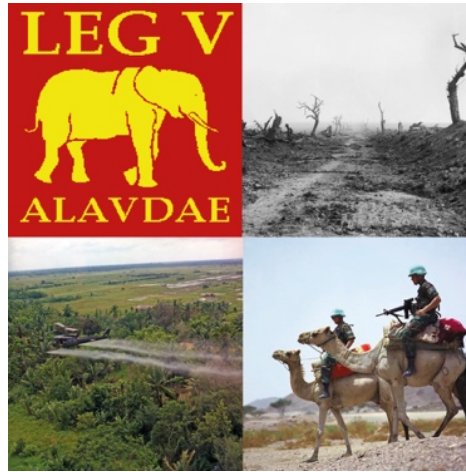


Call for Papers  
**Nature – Animals – War.**  
**Relations and Interactions from Antiquity to the Present Day**

*Natur – Tiere – Krieg*  
*Beziehungen und Wechselwirkungen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*



Source: public domain / Imperial War Museum (IWM Q 1163) / Photographer: Brian K. Grigsby, SPC5 / Photographer: David Rezene

### **Organisers**

Jannes Bergmann, Humboldt University of Berlin; Dr Friederike C. Hartung, Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences, Potsdam; Dr Kerrin Langer, TU Dortmund University; Dr. Alexander Reineke, Ruhr University Bochum; PD Dr Mieke Roscher, University of Kassel

### **Venue**

TU Dortmund University, 44227 Dortmund, Germany

From 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> September 2026, the international conference “**Nature – Animals – War. Relationships and Interactions from Antiquity to the Present**” will take place at TU Dortmund University. The aim of the conference is to bridge the previously distinct fields of environmental, animal, and military history, and to provide a forum for innovative research that focus on both the effects of military violence on nature and wildlife, and animals and nature in the context of the military, war and violence.

### **Topic and objectives**

Armed conflicts and the military have always been closely intertwined with nature and wildlife. Both in the maintenance of military capabilities during peacetime and in times of war, the military not only exerts a direct impact on the natural environment, for example through the production of weapons, their use and the destruction of habitats, but is also shaped by it, as factors such as weather conditions and terrain can significantly influence military operations. Environmental destruction can therefore be described as one of the constants of war (Jensen 2005). This destruction caused by military action can be unintentional or sometimes consciously accepted, but it can also be actively pursued – either using the environment as a weapon (*environmental warfare*) or through its active targeting as an ‘enemy’.

In addition to the short-term consequences of military environmental destruction, the long-term consequences of military action are also increasingly coming into focus. *Environmental warfare*, the extraction of raw materials for weapons production, military greenhouse gas emissions, and highly toxic ammunition residues can have serious impacts on ecosystems even decades or centuries later. In an age marked by climate and biodiversity crises, as well as by environmental devastation in contemporary conflicts such as those in Ukraine and Gaza, it is all the more vital for military history to engage with new insights from environmental and climate research and to contribute to the development of interdisciplinary research approaches.

### **A multi-species historical perspective**

Based on the assumption that history is not made exclusively by humans, but unfolds in co-constitutive relationships between species, the conference aims to promote a multi-species historical perspective. It asks how animals and nature appear not only as objects, but as actors in historical processes – as participants, as resonating bodies, as resisters. This perspective understands animals (and nature) not only as passive resources, but as beings with scope for action, emotions, bodies and histories – embedded in asymmetrical but real relationships with human actors. Such a questioning of anthropocentric and binary patterns of interpretation – between civilisation and nature, humans and animals, subject and object – allows us to reconfigure narratives of military history: it reveals the mutual vulnerability of all bodies in war, the dependence of military logistics on animal-natural resources, but also the cultural significance of animal bodies in military ideologies.

### **A historiographical triad: environmental, animal and military history**

This conference is therefore an invitation to scholars from all eras, regions and disciplines to rethink the relationship between nature, animals and war, both empirically and conceptually, at the intersections of environmental history, human-animal studies (animal history) and military history. Instead of viewing animals and nature merely as objects of military violence or as passive backdrops, the aim is to systematically explore their historical roles and spheres of action in the context of war and violence. The focus will be on the following perspectives:

- How did animals and environmental conditions influence military strategies, decisions or disasters?
- How was nature conceived in war as a resource, weapon or obstacle – and what significance did this have for perceptions of the environment?
- Which animals were used in the military and in wars, when, how and why – and how did this change military practice, symbolism and knowledge production?
- What material, ecological or emotional traces did the military leave behind in relationships between people, animals, and landscapes?

The aim of the conference is to consider the historical dynamics between nature, animals and the military not in an additive but in a relational way. This is achieved by intertwining three established fields of research:

- **Military history** provides the structural framework for analysing military organisation, the use of force, technology, logistics and ideology.
- **Environmental history** examines how natural resources, geographies, climatic conditions and landscapes help shape wars and are transformed by them.
- **Animal history** focuses on animals as co-actors, as bred, trained, mobilised or killed bodies in the name of war.

The conference sees itself as a place where these three fields enter a mutually commenting dialogue – not to add disciplines, but to reveal the complex historical interrelationships between violence, the environment and interspecies coexistence. This encompasses not only methodological questions, but also conceptual clarifications (What does "agency" mean in interspecies contexts? What is a "military space" from an animal perspective?) as well as epistemological challenges (How do we historically capture non-human dimensions of experience?). The conference thus aims to contribute to a multi-perspective approach to military history research that questions the categorical divisions between humans, animals and nature and focuses on the asymmetrical but nevertheless effective relationships between them.

### **Call for Papers**

The call is aimed at researchers of all levels who are interested in the relationship between animals, nature, the military and war, as well as related topics. Scholars outside the field of history are also

welcome to apply. The conference languages are German and English. Digital participation is possible. Proposals for contributions may focus on the following topics:

- **War and the multi-species environment:** effects of military violence on landscapes, biodiversity and ecosystems (e.g. scorched earth, chemical warfare agents, radioactive contamination, munitions in the sea)
- **Nature as a co-actor:** terrain, weather, climate cycles, animals and microorganisms as factors of war (e.g. summer campaigns, typhus, animal disease carriers)
- **Wars as interspecies practice:** animals in the military and in war as labourers, means of transport, weapons, food, comrades, symbols or opponents – between mobilisation, abuse and agency
- **Environmental and animal policy of the military:** military training areas as protected areas, conflicts of interest between military use and nature conservation, green military strategy
- **Legal and ethical perspectives:** environmental law, animal rights, international law of war – what status do non-human entities have in the context of violence?
- **Long-term effects of wars:** Long-term climatic and ecological consequences of wars and military infrastructure (including the preparation for wars, e.g. the extraction of raw materials to produce weapons), contaminated soils, traumatised animal-human relationships
- **Narratives and representations:** Military imagery, symbolism, propaganda, cultures of remembrance and their treatment of animals and nature
- **Spaces:** access to raw materials, geopolitics and climate, climate change and imperialism, terraforming and geoengineering, the spread of animals and plants during military activities and imperial expansion

**We invite interested parties to submit a short abstract in German or English (approx. 500 to 750 words) for a 20-minute project presentation, as well as a short CV including the most important publications (max. 2 pages). Panel proposals are also possible. The panels are to be organised with comments from experts from the individual fields. The conference is bilingual (German/English) and international. Speakers will be asked in advance to submit thesis papers in English (also for German-language talks). We plan to distribute these to both the commentators and the co-speakers. We kindly ask you to take this into account when applying.**

**Please send your application by 31 January 2026 to:** [naw-conference2026.us.fk17@tu-dortmund.de](mailto:naw-conference2026.us.fk17@tu-dortmund.de)

Subject to funding, travel and accommodation costs (economy class flight or 2nd class train travel) can be covered for speakers.

#### **Contact**

[naw-conference2026.us.fk17@tu-dortmund.de](mailto:naw-conference2026.us.fk17@tu-dortmund.de)

#### **Conveners**

Working Group on Military History (AKM); TU Dortmund University;  
University of Kassel; Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences (ZMSBw)