

# TREES FOR LIFE ANNUAL REVIEW

2016/2017





## a message from STEVE, CEO



**My first year as Trees for Life CEO has been amazing.**

I've been inspired by the enthusiasm of the hundreds of volunteers that join us each year to help restore the Caledonian forest. Hearing how volunteering has changed their lives for the better has shown me what a wild forest can do for people as well as nature.

I've been inspired by the kind donations we receive every day. Thank you to everyone who has helped to restore the wild forest of Scotland in this way. And I've been inspired by the lonesome 'Granny' pines that stand forlornly on the Scottish mountains. One day soon the next generation of trees will be growing around them because people care enough to get involved in making it happen.

It is our mission to ensure more forest is there in the future so nature can thrive in it and people can experience it. We want to share the joy of being out in the forest when the rare twinflower is in bloom; when the male black grouse are displaying for female attention in spring; and when the red deer are rutting in autumn.

I hope you continue with us on this journey to restore a wild forest in the Highlands for trees, nature and people.

**Steve Micklewright**

### Conservation base restored, Glen Affric

**Our Patron the broadcaster Vanessa Collingridge, opened the renovated bothy at the west end Glen Affric. This was our original base for working in the Glen. Volunteers can stay there again and help spread the forest further westwards.**

### Red squirrels on the move, Shieldaig

**We translocated 55 red squirrels from near Inverness to two forests in the north west Highlands, introducing them to forest that they could not reach on their own. The new squirrels have settled in, bred and baby reds have been spotted!**

### 1750 days restoring the forest

**Hundreds of volunteers helped to grow and plant trees at Dundreggan and Glen Affric, among many other challenging and rewarding tasks. As well as rewilding the Highlands, volunteers also 'rewild' their own lives by getting closer to nature.**

### Rewilding Allt Ruadh, Dundreggan

**Over 47,000 trees, including rare types of montane willow and birch, were planted in the Allt Ruadh (Gaelic for 'Red Burn') area of the estate thanks to hundreds of volunteers. This starts to restore forest in one of the wildest parts of Dundreggan.**



## Dundreggan tree nursery grows rare trees

Specialised tree species, such as dwarf willow and birch, can grow on high mountain tops but have been lost from most of the Highlands. We now grow these rarities in our tree nursery at Dundreggan Conservation Estate. We supplied over 30,000 of these hard to grow trees to Forest Enterprise Scotland for their Fasnakyle project to restore montane woodland in Glen Affric.

## Collections for the Kew millennium seed bank

Trees for Life made five collections of rare mountain tree seeds from a number of sites in the Highlands. We send the seeds to the Kew Millennium seed bank where they are stored in laboratory conditions – ready to be sown if ever they are needed in the future, so acting as an insurance policy in case we lose them from the wild.

## Project Wolf

In spring and early summer, deer often graze the young saplings that we are working so hard to encourage to become trees. A simple way to protect the saplings is to disturb the deer – a role which wild wolves perform in nature. Three groups of three dedicated volunteers spent every night for a month in the forest at Dundreggan acting as 'human wolves', disturbing the deer so they move away from the areas where the forest is recovering.

## Winning public support to rewild the Highlands

After a well fought campaign to garner public votes, Trees for Life won a very welcome £20,000 from the European Outdoor Conservation Association. The funding enables us to plant 50,000 trees at both Dundreggan and the Glengarry Community Woodland, helping to restore more wild forest for red squirrel, pine marten, golden eagle and Scottish wildcat.

## Understanding wild forest history

In September, two ponies and riders followed a historical track from Dundreggan to Fort Augustus, with trees for planting in places where the Gaelic names reference trees, such as Achadh-nan-darach (field of the oaks). The journey launched a project by poet Alec Finlay, who is gathering Gaelic place names in the Invermoriston area – with help from local people. The names often invoke natural habitats, helping to identify where the forest once grew – and could grow again.

## Founder talks rewilding

Alan Watson Featherstone, Trees for Life Founder, joined author George Monbiot on a lecture tour to explain the concept of rewilding. Packed audiences in Devon and other locations across the UK discovered the social, ecological and developmental benefits of rewilding, including the return of 'keystone species' to degraded habitats across the globe.





# Income

£1,212,000 total

# Expenditure

£960,000 total

## Membership & individual donations

£236,750

Our wonderful members and supporters from around the world show their care for the future of the wild forest in Scotland through generous donations. Thank you!

## Products

£198,250

People from all walks of life and locations have helped to restore and celebrate the Caledonian Forest – from planting a tree to buying a wall calendar.

## Other income

£275,250

Many donors choose to help the taxman restore the Caledonian Forest too by consenting to Gift Aid. We were also very grateful to receive a significant legacy.

## Companies

£63,750

Many companies are helping to bring back the wild forest through general donations or tree planting. Supergroup was our largest corporate donor this year.

## Grants and trusts

£438,250

Grantgivers continued to support us: from conservation weeks and red squirrel translocations to the completion of our Glen Affric bothy renovations.

## Generating income

£130,000

This includes our work to fundraise, through donations, appeals, membership, merchandise and applications for grant funding.

## Supporting volunteers

£184,250

People from all walks of life come and get their hands dirty helping the wild forest to grow. We think they are amazing!

## Rewilding Dundreggan

£230,250

Our 10,000 acre Conservation Estate at Dundreggan is our flagship project where we're returning woodland wildlife and conducting research and education.

## Propagating the forest

£191,250

We grow around 60,000 trees per year at our tree nursery, including rare and hard to propagate native species such as aspen and species of willow.

## Restoring the forest

£224,250

Our wider conservation efforts are recreating wilderness in some of the most remote and beautiful parts of the Highlands, such as Glen Affric.

These income and expenditure figures were extracted from the full audited and unqualified accounts for the year ended 31 January 2017. Copies can be obtained from Companies House or by applying to the Charity's head office in Findhorn.



## Caledonian pinewood recovery project

Pinewoods should be at the heart of the Highlands forest, but there are only **80 fragments left** and 50 of those are at risk of being lost as the last Granny pines die of old age. We want to work closely with the owners of these pinewoods to ensure that the **precious Grannies** have successors. To do this, we plan to assess the condition of all the remaining pinewood fragments, make recommendations for their recovery and how to respond to climate change and the increasing risk of diseases to trees in the UK. **By 2021 we aim to have rescued 10 such fragments.**

## Skills for rewilding

When Trees for Life bought Dundreggan in 2008 there was just one employee managing the estate - today, there are nine. It's predicted that in 10 years time, across the whole of Scotland, we'll need **12,000 more people delivering rewilding work**. Building on our experience with volunteers, we have been offered a grant from the National Lottery to **train people** in the skills required to rewild the Highlands. Five people will join us per year until 2020; each trainee spending 12 months to learn how to restore the forest, grow trees and get more people involved in rewilding.

## Beavers

Whilst the future of the two populations of beavers established on the Tay and at Knapdale are now secure, this is not enough to **ensure the long-term survival** of this keystone species in Scotland. We will be working to assess whether beavers could be reintroduced to the Highlands by seeing where there is **suitable habitat** for them and where introduction can be managed to minimise the problems that can arise. We believe that the **benefits to forest wildlife** are so great, that beavers need a helping hand to come back.

## Caledonian forest research centre – Phase 1

Dundreggan is gaining a reputation for **innovative methods** of forest propagation. The tree nursery team is now able to force aspen, which rarely flowers in the wild, to flower and set seed. The team is also growing **rare willow and birch species** that have been lost from our mountain tops. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we ran out of space to keep pioneering but by the end of 2017 we will have built the **first phase of a forest research centre at Dundreggan** – improving facilities so we can grow more urgently needed species.





## TREES FOR LIFE in the spotlight

Local and national media are increasingly interested in the goings on at Trees for Life. Little wonder with all the projects, biodiversity finds, funding successes and research we're delivering. We found ourselves in the press frequently last year – our new species discoveries and aspen propagation work were featured nationally and we had wide coverage for our Skills for Rewilding win, Project Wolf, bothy renovation, red squirrel project and more.

### New phase in Scottish red squirrel relocation project

BBC

### Human wolf pack a howling success

Sunday Express

### New species of fang-free midge discovered on shores of Loch Ness

Daily Record

### What is left of the Old Caledonian Forest - and can it be saved?

The Scotsman

### £10m lottery boost for traditional skills in the heritage sector

The Herald

## TREES FOR LIFE in social media



We get a lot of five star ratings on facebook – here are some reviews from the year past:

#### Debbie Gatrill

*The week was unforgettable in so many ways. Walking up to the amazing mountain views and sitting in the peace absorbing the majesty of it all...*

#### CJ May

*Trees for Life considers the wider community of life as it plants, fences and otherwise seeks to restore the forest, not just the trees.*

#### Uma Prince

*I have just finished a hugely inspiring, educational and fulfilling conservation week. We planted 2081 tree seedlings on the hilltop at Dundreggan.*

#### Mena Kirmani

*I had such a wonderful experience at my conservation week in Dundreggan. It was eye opening and encouraged everyone to learn and explore in an open, safe, and inclusive environment. Can't express how wonderful it was.*

## TREES FOR LIFE volunteer experiences



#### Angus Rickman

An unforgettable experience. Lots of new experiences, great fun and educational. I highly recommend to anyone from any walk of life. Completely rejuvenating.

#### Anne Lancaster

I came here [to Dundreggan] to celebrate my 70th Birthday and have had the most incredible experience of my life. The scenery, the work and the whole experience has been very uplifting.



#### Elena Pearce

My week with Trees for Life has been extraordinary! The knowledge, passions and friendships I have grown will stay with me for life, and have shaped my future choices and aspirations inexplicably.

#### Millie Williams

Without a doubt one of the best weeks of my life! Incredible people who became family straightaway. This has changed my life...



#### Michael Wilson

As a returning volunteer, I again found my week concluding with the same sense of satisfaction at having contributed to restoring the native woodlands of Scotland, and inspired by the enthusiasm and passion expressed by all the Trees for Life team I met. I look forward to coming back again.

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