



# Trees for Life

## Annual Review 2020-21

Thank you to everyone who supported rewilding in the Scottish Highlands this year.

This is our annual review covering the period from 1 February 2020 to 31 January 2021. The Covid-19 pandemic presented challenges, not least the loss of our Conservation Weeks. But we found alternative ways to continue with our rewilding work.

Below you'll find our highlights and biggest achievements of the year, as well as our plans for the future. We have also included an annual financial breakdown, so you can see how we raise income and where it is spent.

This year we made fantastic progress in raising funds for the Dundreggan Rewilding Centre, growing aspen in the nursery, and progressing with Affric Highlands. We welcomed golden eagles to Dundreggan, launched the Lynx to Scotland study, and carried out the West Affric Woodland Habitat Expansion project. We also petitioned the Scottish Government to reconsider its beaver management policy, advocating a more nature-friendly approach.



## Highlights and Achievements

### Aspen project takes root

The outbreak of Covid-19 meant that we had to put much of our in-person work, including Conservation Weeks, on hold. But we continued to run the Dundreggan tree nursery, where the team enjoyed success growing hundreds of aspen trees from seed. Growing aspen from seed is tricky, but it is worth the time and effort. Trees grown from seed, rather than root cuttings, are genetically unique. This means that future aspen populations in the Highlands will be more diverse and resilient.

### Dundreggan Rewilding Centre

In 2020 we secured key support and planning permission for the Dundreggan Rewilding Centre, while carrying out community consultation to make sure the centre fulfils local needs. The ideas and feedback gathered will help inform the centre's interpretative design, and its inclusion of local culture, history and Gaelic as it relates to the landscape.

### Rewilding Carn na Caorach

With support from the Biodiversity Challenge Fund we were able to erect a fence to secure a new planting area at Dundreggan – Carn na Caorach. At 700 acres it is our biggest enclosure yet. Trees will be planted on Carn na Caorach at a height between 450 and 600 meters above sea level. We intend to turn this area into a rich wild forest.

### Golden eagles returned to Dundreggan

In the summer of 2020 we welcomed golden eagles to Dundreggan, where a pair successfully reared a chick. This was the first time the birds of prey had nested on the estate for 40 years, a fantastic result that was thanks to the work of renowned conservationist Roy Dennis. Roy worked with the team at Dundreggan to set up a nest at a prime location. It was exciting for us to play a small part in the wider effort to help restore the population of this magnificent native species in Scotland.



## Taking action to protect Scotland's beavers

In 2020 we took a lead role in protecting Scotland's beaver population. With the support of 16,785 people, we petitioned the Scottish Government to relocate, rather than kill, beavers in Tayside. The issue was brought before the government's Environment Committee for review.

## West Affric Woodland Habitat Expansion

In late 2020 we started working with the National Trust for Scotland to protect rare montane trees in Glen Affric. Covid-19 and a harsh winter presented challenges but we still made great progress. We extended deer fences around three areas of high-altitude 'wee trees.' By helping this scrub habitat recover from over-browsing, we have helped create a seed source for the future.

## Affric Highlands launches

November saw the official launch of Affric Highlands, an ambitious project to rewild a large area of the north west Highlands centred around Glen Affric. The project's main ambition is to show that nature, people and business can not only co-exist, but support one another to thrive.

## Lynx to Scotland

We started off 2021 with the launch of 'Lynx to Scotland'. The study is a collaborative project with the Vincent Wildlife Trust and SCOTLAND: The Big Picture to begin a respectful and open conversation about the potential reintroduction of the Eurasian lynx to the Highlands. While the Cairngorms and Argyll have been identified as two areas that could sustain lynx populations, successful reintroductions often depend on local community support as much as ecological viability. Talking to local stakeholders and communities is therefore a vital first step in an interesting journey.



## **Looking to the future – Our plans for 2021/2022**

### **Keeping beavers on the agenda**

Thanks to an increased understanding of the amazing role beavers play in restoring ecosystems, there is growing support to prevent this protected species from unnecessary lethal control. In agricultural areas where beavers do cause damage, we will continue to advocate relocation as a preferred option to culling.

### **Construction of the Dundreggan Rewilding Centre**

Building work on the Rewilding Centre gets underway in 2021. The centre will be an exciting step towards mainstreaming rewilding in Scotland and making its benefits more accessible to everyone. It will help to connect more people to nature, while creating jobs and opportunities in the local area.

### **Skills for Rewilding**

After a year out, the Skills for Rewilding programme will resume in 2021. We look forward to welcoming our final cohort of trainees to Dundreggan, where they will get involved in all aspects of our rewilding work, including tree nursery horticulture, conservation and landscape planning, deer management and estate maintenance, and digital marketing.

## Taking Affric Highlands forwards

Affric Highlands will charge ahead in 2021, creating more partnerships and conversations that increase nature connectivity and economic opportunity in Glen Affric and the surrounding area. Trees for Life will employ a small team to carry the project to the next level, working strategically across the landscape to ensure the best outcomes for nature, communities and livelihoods.

## Completion of Caledonian Pinewood Recovery

Our landmark study into the health of Scotland's Caledonian pinewoods will conclude in 2021. This follows two years of surveying pinewood fragments, and interviewing the people who own and manage them. The project's findings will inform future action to better protect, manage and regenerate these vital habitats, upon which so much of Scotland's native wildlife depends.



## Finances (1 February 2020 – 31 January 2021)

Take a look at how Trees for Life invested in rewilding this year. Our income has significantly exceeded our expenditure this year. This is because we are actively raising funds for ambitious new projects such as the Rewilding Centre and Affric Highlands. We will spend more on these projects once they fully get off the ground and begin to happen.

Income and expenditure figures were extracted from the draft accounts prepared for audit for the year ended 31 January 2021. Full audited and unqualified accounts can be obtained from Companies House or by applying to our head office. Figures have been rounded to the nearest £250.

### Income

*Donations £718,000*

More than 2,430 supporters from around the world give regularly to Trees for Life. Many hundreds more show their support for the future of Scotland's wild forest through generous one-off donations, by giving to our appeals, and donating GiftAid.

*Trusts and foundations £918,750*

Grant givers who share our vision for a revitalised wild forest in the Scottish Highlands continue to support our projects, tree nursery and Skills for Rewilding programme. These funders make much of our work possible. We remain very grateful for their continued support and partnership.

*Businesses £900,000*

Thousands of businesses of all sizes support Trees for Life, with a common goal of giving back to nature and engaging their staff with our key activities. Whether through Corporate Partnership, sponsorship, or tree planting, businesses help make rewilding happen.

*Gifts and products £436,750*

People from all walks of life support rewilding by planting trees with us and buying our ethical merchandise. We also generate income from private tree sales at the nursery, and from our own Dundreggan venison and timber.

*Other £57,250*

When it's not being used by volunteers during Conservation Weeks, rental of Athnamulloch Bothy in Glen Affric generates a small income. Bank interest from our carefully-managed savings also provides a return.

**Total income £3,030,75**

### Expenditure

*Involving people £124,000*

Helping people from all walks of life get involved in rewilding is a vital part of our work. We do this through the Skills for Rewilding and community engagement programmes.

*Rewilding Dundreggan £416,250*

Dundreggan is set within 10,000 acres of the Scottish Highlands. Trees for Life has been rewilding the estate since 2008, restoring native woodland to create a rich, biodiverse landscape. It's the home of our education programmes, community outreach, traineeships and future Rewilding Centre.

*Practical rewilding £249,000*

Every year we help return native wildlife, plants and trees to the Highlands. From creating new populations of red squirrels, to propagating rare tree species in the nursery, this is the practical rewilding needed to create a more nature-rich future.

*Collaborative rewilding £201,250*

Working with others means that our rewilding work can have a greater impact. Affric Highlands and Caledonian Pinewood Recovery are collaborative projects that bring in other charities, landowners, public bodies, businesses and communities, where the shared goal is nature-restoration that is long-term, large-scale and strategic.

*Raising funds £328,250*

This includes our work to enable supporters to help save the Caledonian Forest and its wildlife through donations, appeals, merchandise and applications for grant-funding.

**Total expenditure £1,318,75**