



Trees for L_Yfe

Annual Review | 2022-23

Thank you to everyone who supported rewilding in the Scottish Highlands this year. This is our annual review covering the period from 1 February 2022 – 31 January 2023.

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

This year we built our Dundreggan Rewilding Centre, the Affric Highlands project was recommended for UN flagship status, and our successful three-year skills development project, Skills for Rewilding, came to a close. We have also made fantastic progress for the reintroduction of beavers to Glen Affric, and for supporting the research into the feasibility of the return of lynx to Scotland. We were also pleased to welcome Lorna Slater MSP, the Scottish Government's Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, to Dundreggan in October to learn more about our rewilding work and plans for the future.

Highlights and achievements

Skills for Rewilding success

Our skills development project to help people from diverse backgrounds pursue a career in rewilding came to a close in July. More than 1,000 people registered their interest to take part in Skills for Rewilding across its three-year run, revealing the huge appetite among people to be part of Scotland's rewilding movement. We were delighted that one of our final-year trainees stayed on as a tree nursery assistant at Dundreggan. Others from the final intake went on to work for the Shieling Project, the National Trust for Scotland and the RSPB.

Lynx to Scotland study

The first-ever detailed study into the social feasibility of the return of lynx to Scotland was published in April. Commissioned by the Lynx to Scotland partnership (Trees for Life, Scotland: The Big Picture and Vincent Wildlife Trust), the research found a consensus among stakeholders to further explore the benefits of and barriers to lynx reintroduction. The study recommended setting up a Lynx Action Group to build trust between stakeholders and address concerns and areas of disagreement. While previous research has shown the Highlands has the habitat and prey for around 400 wild lynx, a successful reintroduction is ultimately dependent on the support of local people.

Affric Highlands recommended for UN flagship status

In June, our collaborative Affric Highlands rewilding initiative was recognised as a global example of helping nature, people and climate, following a recommendation for UN flagship status by the Scottish and UK governments. A partnership between Trees for Life and Rewilding Europe, Affric Highlands is a 30-year plan to create a vast nature recovery area of over half a million acres stretching from Loch Ness to Scotland's west coast, restoring woodland, peatland and riverside habitats to help save native species from extinction, boost biodiversity, and sustain new nature-based jobs and support re-peopling.



Relocating beavers to Glen Affric

Between July and October, we carried out a community consultation in partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland to help decide whether beavers should be reintroduced to Glen Affric. The consultation was followed by workshops with the community to develop a beaver monitoring plan to track the progress of the population if a release goes ahead. Trees for Life has long advocated for beavers to be translocated to suitable habitats if they are causing issues in agricultural areas – and have identified Glen Affric as an appropriate location for beavers.

Built the Rewilding Centre

The building of our Rewilding Centre is now complete and we look forward to opening in the Spring of 2023. Over the coming months, we will focus on attracting visitors from all walks of life, ensuring they have a great experience and learn something about rewilding along the way. The Rewilding Centre is an ideal place to draw visitors from home and abroad who are keen to spend time being active outdoors.

Red Squirrels reintroduced in Golspie

As part of our Red Squirrel Reintroduction Project to boost red squirrel numbers in the north-west Highlands, we released seven reds in Golspie. We safely captured five females and two males from a healthy population in Inverness-shire, before translocating them north – adding to the twelve squirrels we have already released there. If you live in the Highlands or are out exploring its woodlands, please report your squirrel sightings [here](#).

Ministerial visit

On 7 October, we welcomed Lorna Slater MSP, the Scottish Government's Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, to Dundreggan to learn more about our rewilding work and plans for the future. During the visit, we had the pleasure of showing the minister our progress at the Dundreggan Rewilding Centre and our tree nursery. [Read more here](#).



Dundreggan Rewilding Centre

The Rewilding Centre will be a gateway to the whole of Dundreggan. We are developing a mix of interpretation, including audio, interactive screens, animation, film, storytelling, live events, outdoor activities and knowledgeable staff on hand to help visitors get the most from their time at Dundreggan. We are also working on our network of trails that will guide visitors around the estate, allowing them to see rewilding in action and enjoy the nature surrounding them. As we move towards opening there is a whole team to recruit and train. We expect to create 20 full-time equivalent jobs, demonstrating how rewilding can be used to create economic benefits for the local community.

Affric Highlands

Over the coming years, Affric Highlands will bring landowners and communities together to restore nature on a grand scale. Alongside our ongoing work to expand woodland, create riverwoods, and restore peatland habitats, we are pleased to have started our youth engagement programme, Affric Highlands Change Makers. People under the age of thirty are the ones who will see Affric Highlands through its long journey of change. Engaging through schools and community organisations, Change Makers will enable the next generation to shape and develop the long-term direction of Affric Highlands.

Rewilding Weeks

Volunteering is back with our newly launched Rewilding Weeks at Glen Affric, Dundreggan and the tree nursery, and the uptake has been incredible. The Rewilding Weeks are an opportunity to spend a week in the Scottish Highlands, growing and planting trees, monitoring wildlife, and supporting other vital work. Involving and inspiring people in our work to restore the Caledonian forest is fundamental to its success, and we love welcoming people to share the joy of helping nature to flourish.

Tree Seed Collection Project

We will launch our new Tree Seed Collection Project which is a collaborative three-year project between Woodland Trust Scotland and Trees for Life to enhance the availability of native trees from western Scotland. We will work with volunteers and montane specialists to collect seeds from targeted areas, including temperate rainforest. Planting trees from locally collected seed is critical in supporting the expansion of Scotland's Caledonian forest in areas where natural regeneration is not possible.



Finances

Take a look at how Trees for Life invested in rewilding this year.

Our income 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. Funds have also been spent on capital developments which have not been shown in this year's accounts.

Income

Donations £1,054,000

Thousands of 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 Gift Aid.

Trusts and foundations £2,037,000

Grant givers who share our vision for a revitalised wild forest in the Scottish Highlands. These funders make much of our work possible. We remain very grateful for their continued support and partnership.

Businesses £623,000

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 £409,000

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 £39,000

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

Total income £4,162,000

Expenditure

Involving people £94,000

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 £691,000

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 our Rewilding Centre.

Practical rewilding £411,000

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 £291,000

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

Raising funds £387,000

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 £1,874,000



Thank you to all our many brilliant supporters who have helped make our work possible this year. Your continued support of rewilding makes us all incredibly hopeful for the future and what can be achieved for nature, people and climate when we work together.

Image credits

Scots Pine © Grant Willoughby

Skills for Rewilding trainees © Ashley Coombes Photography

Beavers © Scotland: The Big Picture

Dundreggan Rewilding Centre © Paul Campbell Photography

Rowan Tree © Paul Campbell Photography

Income and expenditure figures were extracted from the draft accounts prepared for audit for the year ended 31 January 2023. 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 £1k.

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