



Trees for L_Yfe

Annual Review | 2024-25

We stand at the forefront of rewilding in the Scottish Highlands. Hopeful and bold, we are committed to creating nature-rich landscapes that include and support people. Focusing on Scotland's spectacular Caledonian forest, we foster biodiversity and encourage natural processes essential to life.

Thank you to everyone who supported rewilding in the Scottish Highlands this year. This is our annual review covering the period from 1 February 2024 – 31 January 2025.

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 brought people together to help secure the future of Scotland's Caledonian pinewoods, hosting the country's first Pinewood Conference in 20 years and launching a new partnership for their recovery. We also celebrated a record-breaking year for our Tree Seed Collection Project, with volunteers collecting 2.2 million rare seeds – enough to grow 1.5 million trees for rewilding across Scotland.

We launched new projects to strengthen aspen networks and return red squirrels to parts of their former range, while the Dundreggan Rewilding Centre and Common Ground Forum were recognised at the Nature of Scotland Awards.

Highlights and achievements

Scotland's Pinewood Conference

The summer survey season culminated in Scotland's first Pinewood Conference for 20 years in Fort William, where we highlighted the critical condition of these unique places and launched a partnership to help save them. Our Wild Pine Project also surveyed the largest Wild Pine site to date, with over 100 pines recorded within the woodland. The conference brought together 160 experts, landowners, managers, and enthusiasts who are interested in Caledonian pinewoods to examine how landscape scale management can lead to ecosystem recovery, focusing on western pinewoods. Read more [here](#).

Nature of Scotland Awards 2024

Both the [Dundreggan Rewilding Centre](#) and the Common Ground Forum won awards at the Nature of Scotland Awards 2024 which recognises the very best in Scottish nature conservation and highlights excellence, collaboration and action for nature. Dundreggan Rewilding Centre was awarded the Nature Tourism Award, in recognition of its pioneering achievements in rewilding landscapes and people. The centre – the first of its kind in the world – received the prestigious accolade “for bringing people and nature together” at a ceremony held at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre.

Read the press release [here](#).

Tree Seed Collection Project

Our volunteers collected over 2 million rare seeds to boost native woodlands and rainforest across Scotland. In partnership with Woodland Trust Scotland, we're increasing the country's availability of rare native tree seeds and smashed our first-year target. A team of more than 80 volunteers has collected 2.2 million seeds, enabling 1.5 million trees to be grown for rewilding across Scotland, hugely exceeding an initial target of 500,000 trees. The project focuses on rare tree species from Scotland's surviving fragments of ancient woodland, including on Skye, the Western Isles and Orkney, and west coast temperate rainforest.

Read more [here](#).

Cairngorms Aspen Network

Launched our Cairngorms Aspen Network Project in partnership with Cairngorms National Park Authority to develop an exciting aspen network in the Cairngorms. Aspen is a scarce yet ecologically important tree. We are initially working on the development phase which involves mapping the location, condition and health of the current aspen trees in order to identify key sites and management priorities (e.g. fencing, growing and planting plans) for the delivery phase. The mapping will be essential for enabling an effective and strategic approach to aspen conservation. Read more about the project [here](#).

Red Squirrel Reintroduction Project

The Scottish Highlands are the largest remaining stronghold for red squirrels in the UK, home to around 75% of the population. However, this population has traditionally been confined to the central and eastern Highlands, and red squirrels remain absent from much of their former range in the northwest. Since 2016, we have been working to reintroduce red squirrels to areas of their former range, with two new release sites created on the remote Drimnin Estate overlooking the Sound of Mull, and Ratagan on the Glenelg peninsula. Find out more about the project [here](#).

Tauros Project

Launched the Tauros Project which could see the first introduction to the UK of a breed of huge wild cattle called tauros – effectively reintroducing the aurochs, the wild ancestor of all domestic cattle, four centuries after its extinction. We're currently scoping the potential, drawing baselines of biodiversity, and establishing the feasibility of returning the muscular, long-horned tauros. They have been bred to be as similar as possible to the ancient aurochs – a mega-herbivore which for millennia played a vital role in shaping landscapes and boosting biodiversity across Europe, including Scotland.

Read more about the project [here](#).



Black Grouse Surveys

The first year of a new citizen science study in the Affric Highlands rewilding landscape near Inverness has found black grouse populations are recovering well at sites carrying out large-scale nature recovery, including restoration of native woods, peatlands and wetlands. The community-focused programme was launched by the Affric Highlands initiative and RSPB Scotland, working together with Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) and local landowners. The project builds on previous surveys by RSPB Scotland in the area since 2007, and included a team of volunteers for the first time. Read more about the surveys [here](#).

Rewilding Nation Campaign

We've increased advocacy in collaboration with the Scottish Rewilding Alliance through the [Rewilding Nation](#) campaign – urging the Scottish government to commit to nature recovery across 30% of our land and seas. We're thrilled this has been backed by actors Leonardo DiCaprio and Brian Cox, and Scottish sea shanty singer Nathan Evans. Our chief executive, Steve Micklewright, is the co-convenor of the Scottish Rewilding Alliance and we've worked with numerous other eNGOs to facilitate greater change.



Looking to the future

Missing Species Programme

We will launch a pioneering Missing Species Programme to bring back four of Scotland's lost keystone animals – lynx, beavers, red squirrels, and modern-day aurochs – to the Scottish Highlands. The plans aim to tackle the nature and climate emergencies while generating significant benefits for communities, including through nature tourism. Keystone species play a vital role in healthy living ecosystems. Many such species are now fully or mostly missing from Scotland, one of the world's most nature-depleted countries, where centuries of persecution and habitat destruction have caused localised extinctions or serious declines.

Beaver Reintroductions

Beavers have been missing for over 400 years after extinction in Scotland. In partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS), we will apply for a licence to reintroduce families of beavers to the Glen Affric National Nature Reserve. We will also work in partnership with the Beaver Trust to explore the potential of reintroducing beavers to the Loch Ness area. Read more about beaver reintroductions [here](#).

Lynx to Scotland

We will publish a major report on cross-sector discussions relating to potential reintroduction of lynx to Scottish Highlands. It will outline conclusions and recommendations agreed by a nine-month national discussion involving a diverse, cross-sector range of 53 stakeholders including farmer and landowner organisations, gamekeepers, foresters, tourism operators and conservationists. It will be the most detailed analysis yet of what a lynx reintroduction project in Scotland would need to do to ensure lynx and people could coexist.

Restoration of Athnamulloch Bothy

Set in the heart of beautiful Glen Affric, Athnamulloch is a traditional one-and-a-half-storey Highland cottage, now affectionately called 'The bothy' near Loch Affric. Owned by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS), it has served as a base for Trees for Life since the 1990s – a vital part of the infrastructure in our mission to save and expand the area's precious Caledonian forest. We will carry out vital restoration work using traditional skills to replace the lime mortar and apply a new lime render and limewash to return it to its historic and authentic appearance.



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

Income

Donations £926,000

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, donating Gift Aid and leaving legacies.

Trusts and foundations £820,000

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 £ 656,000

Businesses of all sizes support Trees for Life, supporting their ESG strategies, CSR commitments, and bringing their teams closer to nature. We partner with organisations that share our common goal of giving back to nature. Whether through advisory services, Business Partnerships, corporate sponsorship, or by supporting woodland creation, businesses help make rewilding happen.

Gifts and products £ 440,000

People from all walks of life support rewilding by volunteering on our Rewilding Weeks, growing and dedicating 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.

Other £105,000

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.

Rewilding Centre income £595,000

Visitors to our Dundreggan Rewilding Centre support rewilding eating in our An Nead café, staying at our An Spiris accommodation, buying merchandise and taking part in residential, workshops and activities.

Expenditure

Involving people £864,000

Engaging people from all walks of life in rewilding is a vital part of our work – from volunteering and employment opportunities to community engagement programmes. Our volunteer Rewilding Weeks, Rewild and Recover Weeks, and Rewilding Centre engagement are key ways we involve people directly in hands-on rewilding efforts.

Rewilding Dundreggan £935,000

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, and Dundreggan Rewilding Centre.

Rewilding landscapes £742,000

Beyond Dundreggan, 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 £597,000

Working with others means our rewilding work can have a greater impact – from influencing national policy with the Scottish Rewilding Alliance to delivering large-scale, long-term and strategic nature restoration through collaborative projects with partners like Affric Highlands, other charities, landowners, public bodies, businesses and communities.

Raising funds £368,000

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 £3,506,000

Total income £3,542,000

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

Dundreggan Forest © James Shooter

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Black Grouse © Azure AD

Dundreggan Rewilding Centre © James Shooter

Glen Affric © Trees for Life Volunteer

Income and expenditure figures were extracted from the draft accounts prepared for audit for the year ended 31 January 2025. 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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