



Trees for Life

Annual Review | 2021-22

Thank you to everyone who supported rewilding in the Scottish Highlands this year. This is our annual review covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2022.

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 protection of Scotland's native beaver and Caledonian pinewoods, while our campaign work through the Scottish Rewilding Alliance brought new people on board with the proposal to make Scotland a 'rewilding nation'. We welcomed five more people to Dundreggan to begin their Skills for Rewilding traineeships, and we broke ground on the Rewilding Centre there too.

The launch of our Affric Highlands initiative took us closer to realising a large-scale nature-rich landscape that supports people. We also continued to nurture young trees on our nursery, collaborating with partners to bring rare and hard-to-grow species to different parts of the Highlands.

Highlights and achievements

Affric Highlands launched

In September, our East West Wild initiative was relaunched as Affric Highlands, joining an inspiring family of Rewilding Europe landscapes that also includes the Rhodope Mountains and Oder Delta. Our launch event in Drumnadrochit set out the initiative's aims and aspirations - to enable nature, people and livelihoods to flourish across a vast landscape that connects Loch Ness to Kintail. Collaboration and inclusion are key to the success of the initiative, whose ambitious vision will take at least 30 years to realise.

Caledonian Pinewood Recovery

Our Caledonian Pinewood Recovery project aimed to assess the health of Scotland's native pinewoods. This year we completed surveying 72 of these pinewoods - speaking to landowners and managers along the way to learn more about how we can better protect and restore these incredible woodland habitats. Our project officer James Rainey walked more than 500 miles in the process!

Rewilding Nation

Trees for Life is a founding member of the Scottish Rewilding Alliance and this year our collaborative 'Rewilding Nation' campaign took a significant step forward. Thanks to a public campaign, MSPs across the political spectrum signed a motion calling for Scotland to become the world's first rewilding nation, recognising the social, economic and environmental benefits that this commitment would bring. An animation to support the campaign was widely shared online - helping generate further public support for a Scotland where nature recovers, wildlife flourishes and people prosper.

Return of Skills for Rewilding

Involving people is central to our work, and so it was a pleasure to see the return of Skills for Rewilding this summer for its final year. We received 213 applications for the skills development programme based at Dundreggan, the highest number to date. It is wonderful to see how many people want to help Scotland's nature recover. Five young people started their traineeships in August, working in tree nursery horticulture, deer management and estate maintenance, conservation and landscape planning, and digital marketing.



Dundreggan Rewilding Centre

In August we broke ground at Dundreggan to mark the beginning of the construction of the Rewilding Centre. Joined by the local community and stakeholders on a sunshine-filled day, we planted a ceremonial rowan tree to celebrate. A gateway to Glenmoriston's natural and cultural landscape, the centre will encourage visitors from all walks of life to explore Dundreggan's native woodlands, discover its recovering wildlife, and leave feeling inspired to connect with and help nature in their own communities.

Creating new woodlands

Our nursery team was busy as ever this year propagating native trees for planting across the Highlands, in collaboration with our partners. In addition to our own planting, we supplied 1,000 trees for the River Affric, owned by Forestry and Land Scotland, 15,000 trees for Carnach Mòr in West Affric, owned by National Trust for Scotland, and 10,000 trees for the John Muir Trust's Keppoch site in Skye. We also worked with partners at Cairngorms Connect to establish new high-altitude montane scrub, supplying over 3,000 downy willow saplings to RSPB Abernethy.

Protecting beavers

Getting involved in legal proceedings was new territory for Trees for Life, but in 2021 we won a legal case against the Scottish Government over its use of licences that had allowed beavers to be lawfully killed in Tayside. Our call to relocate rather than shoot beavers gained significant traction with the public. This unprecedented legal win helped move Scotland away from human-wildlife conflict towards a more humane and pragmatic beaver management approach.



Looking to the future – Our plans for 2022/2023

Skills for Rewilding

Summer 2022 will mark the end of Skills for Rewilding, our landmark three-year project to help 15 people to pursue a career in rewilding. In a bid to make the environmental sector more inclusive, we encouraged applications from local young people, women wanting to work in traditionally male-dominated roles, and those looking for a career change. We hope to see the programme evolve and grow in the future so that more people can get involved.

Lynx to Scotland

Next year we will complete our Lynx to Scotland study, a year-long consultation with stakeholders and communities in the Cairngorms and Argyll about the potential reintroduction of the Eurasian lynx. The results of the social feasibility study will help steer the future development of this exciting collaborative project, which we are delivering in partnership with Scotland: The Big Picture and the Vincent Wildlife Trust.

Affric Highlands

With a new team in place and an ambition to create a rewilding landscape with a long-term difference, next year Affric Highlands will really get going on the ground. Working with local people, we will bring together communities, businesses and landowners to restore woodland, peatland and riverside habitats. Next year, we will focus on building strong connections with different stakeholders and communities to help make that happen.

Dundreggan Rewilding Centre

2022 will be a year of behind-the-scenes activity at the Rewilding Centre as we recruit the people we need to make it a success, develop its interpretation information for both inside and out, build new accommodation for future visitors, and create an improved footpath network around Dundreggan so people can get into the heart of the forest.



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. We will spend more on these projects once they fully get off the ground and begin to happen.

Income

Donations £1,065,000

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 GiftAid.

Trusts and foundations £1,242,000

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 £763,000

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 £483,750

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 £48,250

When it's not being used by volunteers during Conservation 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 £3,602,000

Expenditure

Involving people £162,500

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 £522,000

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 future Rewilding Centre.

Practical rewilding £548,750

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 £124,500

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 £155,000

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 £1,512,750



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

Caledonian forest in Glen Affric © Louis McAllister

Skills for Rewilding trainee © Ashley Coombes Photography

Beavers © Scotland: The Big Picture

Dundreggan Rewilding Centre © Threesixty Architecture

Dundreggan landscape © Paul Campbell Photography

Income and expenditure figures were extracted from the draft accounts prepared for audit for the year ended 31 January 2022. 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.

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