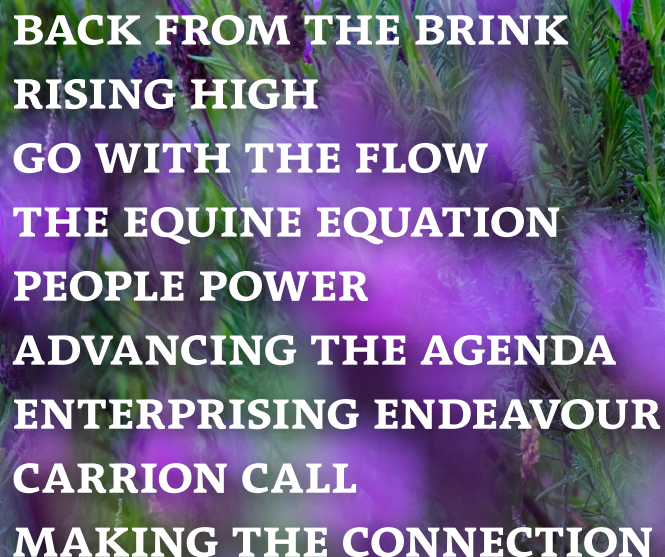


## Making Europe a Wilder Place



# ANNUAL REVIEW



**BACK FROM THE BRINK  
RISING HIGH  
GO WITH THE FLOW  
THE EQUINE EQUATION  
PEOPLE POWER  
ADVANCING THE AGENDA  
ENTERPRISING ENDEAVOUR  
CARRION CALL  
MAKING THE CONNECTION**



Rewilding Europe is a proud beneficiary  
of the Dutch Postcode Lottery



The Supervisory Board of Rewilding Europe formally approved this  
Annual Review 2017 in its meeting on 16 June 2018 in Abruzzo National Park, Italy

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# Moving forward

In April last year Rewilding Europe celebrated its fifth anniversary at “Wild Ways”, an inspiring event in Amsterdam where nearly all of our partners, supporters, rewilding teams and donors met for the first time. This event gave us all a tremendous sense of unity and reaffirmed our drive and optimism for the future. Five years on, the Rewilding Europe team is as dedicated to and passionate about rewilding as ever.

With 2017 now behind us, we can add one more year to our initiative’s young history. As Rewilding Europe embarks on a new five-year period of work, we feel that this is a good time to change the concept and design of our Annual Review. While last year’s review presented the results from our first five years, we will now continue by focusing solely on our year-by-year achievements. In this way we will build towards 2021, the celebration of our tenth anniversary, and a more extensive overview of our achievements at that time.

Having said all this, 2017 has certainly been a productive year. Very encouragingly, we have made more progress than ever and have

good traction in many areas. Our vision, ideas and efforts are scaling up in numerous ways, involving a growing number of people who are inspired by our work and who embrace the idea of more wild nature across our continent.

This Annual Review showcases our key achievements and results, presented in different forms and shapes. Central to this are nine stories that give readers a deeper insight into what we do, as well as providing a general overview of our progress. Infographics illustrate important facts and figures, based on our extensive system of monitoring.

We are proud of our accomplishments to date, but realise that we are still in the early stages of a long journey. Today the rewilding process in Europe has achieved great momentum, with Rewilding Europe acting as a pioneer. We will continue to take this new conservation movement forward, making sure to revel in Europe’s magnificent wild nature along the way!

We sincerely hope you enjoy reading this review.



**Frans Schepers**  
Managing Director

*Frans Schepers*

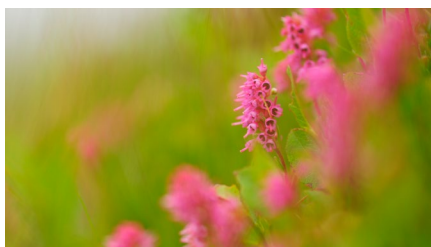


**Wiet de Bruijn**  
Chairman

*Wiet de Bruijn*

## REWILDING EUROPE'S MISSION

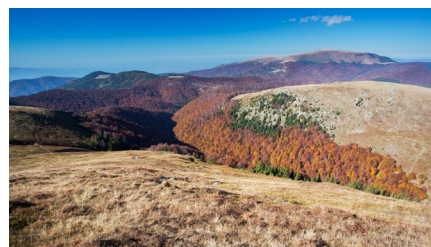
*We want to make Europe a wilder place, with more space for wild nature, wildlife and natural processes. In bringing back the variety of life, we will explore new ways for people to enjoy and earn a fair living from the wild.*



Rewilding Europe puts forward **a new conservation vision for Europe**, with wild nature and natural processes as key elements, and where rewilding is applicable to any type of landscape or level of protection. We view nature as something that is fully capable of taking care of itself. This concept should become the main management principle for many of Europe's natural areas in the future.



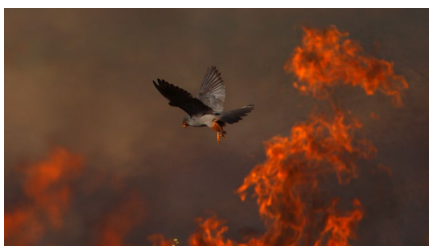
Rewilding Europe focuses on **transforming the problems caused by ongoing and extensive land abandonment into mutually beneficial opportunities** for man and nature, providing a viable business case for wild nature across Europe. The areas we select have the potential to become world-class destinations for nature tourism, and to offer a range of additional nature-based economic benefits.



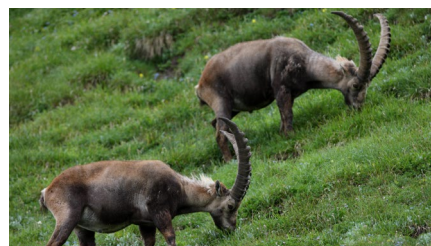
Rewilding Europe **aims to rewild at least one million hectares of land**, creating ten magnificent wildlife and wild areas of international quality, that will work as examples of a new competitive, sustainable rural economy. They will serve as inspirational role models for what can be achieved elsewhere.



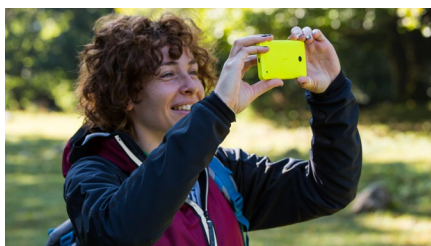
Rewilding Europe recognises the **crucially important ecological role of large carnivores**, as well as smaller predators, raptors and scavengers. The brown bear, wolf, lynx, Iberian lynx, wolverine, golden jackal, eagle, vulture and many more species are essential for the natural functioning of the ecosystems they live in.



Rewilding Europe wants **natural processes to play a vital role** in shaping landscapes and ecosystems in all of its selected areas. Such natural processes include flooding (erosion and sedimentation), weather (i.e. storms and avalanches), natural calamities (i.e. natural fires and disease), natural grazing (the role of herbivores), predation (the impact of carnivores), and scavenging.



Rewilding Europe recognizes **natural grazing as one of the key ecological factors** for naturally open and half-open landscapes, upon which a large part of Europe's biodiversity is dependent. We want to allow our native herbivores to return again in significant, naturally balanced numbers to the lands where they once belonged. It is here that they can play their vital ecological role.



Rewilding Europe **emphasizes the joy and the value of wildness**, and takes an active part in mass communication to stimulate a greater sense of pride in the wild and to spread a vision of a wilder continent. We aim to do this by using a broad range of media and partnerships to promote our natural heritage, showcasing the opportunities for rewilding to the people of Europe.



Rewilding Europe aims to **build an extensive network of rewilding initiatives across Europe** as part of its European Rewilding Network (ERN). Together, as showcases which share knowledge and experience to establish best practice, these constitute a burgeoning rewilding movement.



Rewilding Europe works with scientific and policy partners to **ensure rewilding is recognized in European and national policy as a relevant conservation approach**, contributing to achieving conservation targets as set out in international and national policy documents and agreements.





# Five specific, 10-year objectives

Rewilding Europe has given itself five specific, 10-year objectives that we work on both at the central and rewilding area level.

Operational work in rewilding areas is designed in a way that all activities and results contribute to these five European-wide objectives.

We employ a range of tools to help achieve these objectives.

**WILDER NATURE:** Creating enabling conditions and kick-starting the more natural functioning of nature across Europe, in particular in larger, connected landscapes, based on the Vision for a Wilder Europe.

**Main tools:** 10-year shared visions for each rewilding area, landscape planning and zonation, pilot sites in priority rewilding zones where user or property rights (grazing, hunting, management) are secured, partnership agreements with landowners and area managers.

**WILDLIFE COMEBACK:** Ensuring the continued comeback of wildlife, including large herbivores, large carnivores and scavengers across Europe, to service both nature as well as people.

**Main tools:** European Wildlife Bank, species reintroductions, wildlife population enhancements, wildlife corridors and population enhancements, hunting practices, mitigation of human-wildlife conflicts, local rangers, herd "keepers" or ambassadors of certain species.

**SCALING UP:** Inspiring the scaling up and replication of the rewilding approach across Europe.

**Main tools:** European Rewilding Network, providing support to rewilding initiatives wherever possible, exchange of knowledge and expertise with initiatives in Europe and across the world.

**NATURE-BASED ECONOMIES:**

Demonstrating that rewilding generates new business opportunities, jobs and income for society, thereby creating an alternative and competitive form of land (and sea) use for local people, landowners and communities.

**Main tools:** Rewilding Europe Capital, European Safari Company, technical support to rewilding enterprises.

**INTEREST IN THE WILD:** Generating pride, public support, new partnerships and a more positive attitude amongst stakeholders for a Europe with much more wild nature, wildlife and wilderness.

**Main tools:** Mass-media campaigns, photo missions and image purchase, high quality design products, media trips and press releases, website and social media, exhibitions, TV productions, local seminars and branding.



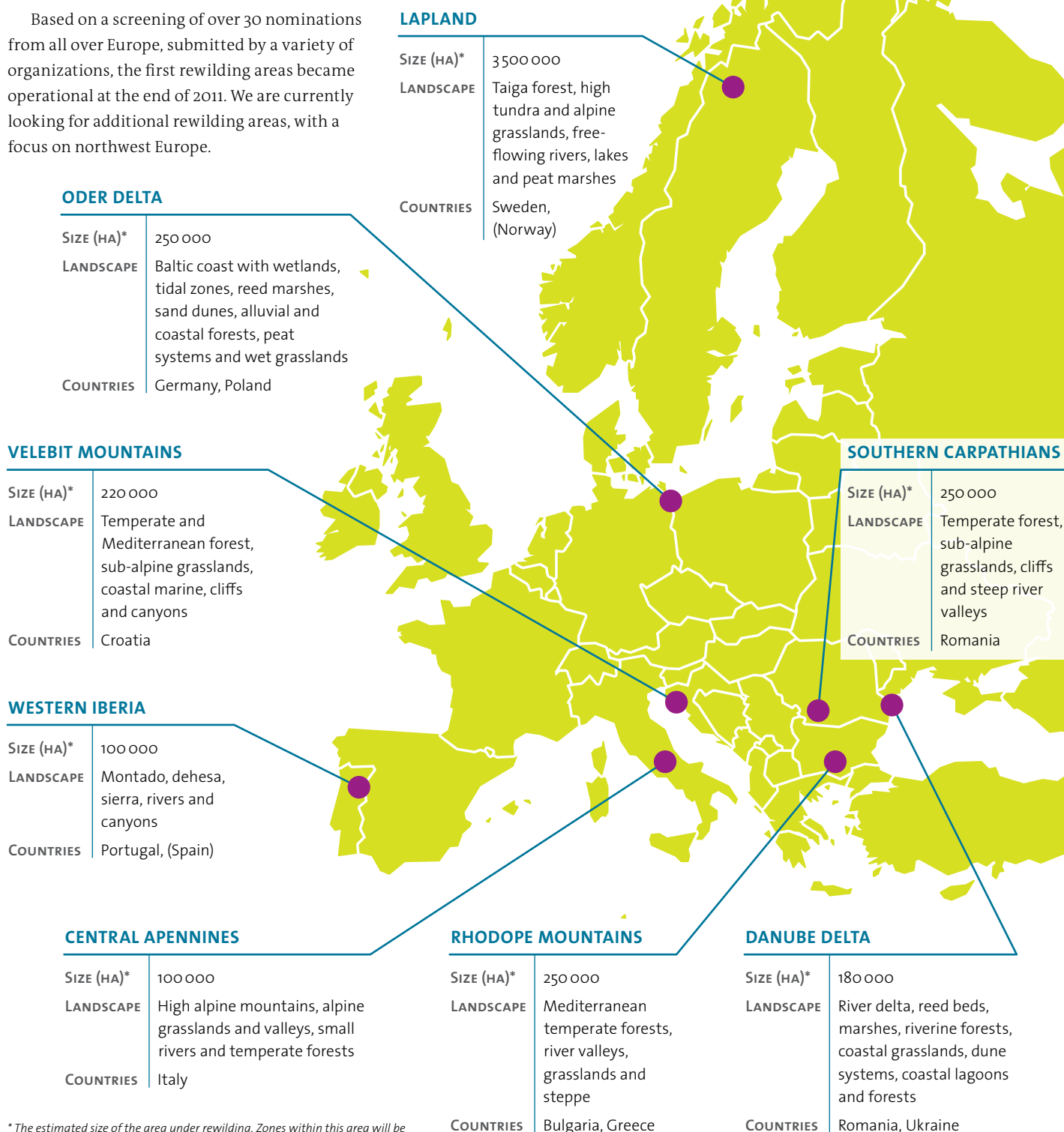


# Rewilding areas at the forefront

Rewilding Europe put its vision into practice through its work in large **rewilding areas** across Europe. These areas serve as role models and inspirational showcases of our vision. Expansion of our portfolio is done on a careful, case-by-case basis, taking into account what we have learned in the past, and by applying outcome and risk-related criteria.

Based on a screening of over 30 nominations from all over Europe, submitted by a variety of organizations, the first rewilding areas became operational at the end of 2011. We are currently looking for additional rewilding areas, with a focus on northwest Europe.

With their diverse geographical spread, our rewilding areas represent a wide selection of European regions and ecosystems, each with their own specific context. Different rewilding concepts and models are applied to each area, consistent with the wider vision and strategy of Rewilding Europe.



\* The estimated size of the area under rewilding. Zones within this area will be rewilded at different rates. For Lapland we have used a size of 1.4 million ha for the focal area, while the entire area is 3.5 million ha.

# Capturing hearts and minds

*OUR REWILDING EFFORTS IN EUROPE ARE UNDERPINNED BY THE BELIEF THAT WE SHOULD ALLOW AND TRUST IN NATURE TO GOVERN ITSELF. WE WANT TO SEE A EUROPEAN CONTINENT WHERE NATURAL PROCESSES OPERATE ON A FAR GREATER SCALE, WITH WILDER RIVERS, FORESTS AND OPEN AREAS, AND WITH MORE WILDLIFE AND MORE PEOPLE RECONNECTED WITH WILDER NATURE.*



**T**his vision is increasingly capturing the hearts and minds of people, organisations, companies, TV and film producers, printed and online media, scientific institutions and authorities. One of the best indicators of this is the growing number of publications (both scientific and popular), events and debates on the extent to which our continent can be rewilded, and how we can best achieve higher levels of wildness. While this growing interest in rewilding is very encouraging, we also believe that practical examples and experiences have to move centre stage far more to ensure such debates are well informed by insight derived from practical experience and realities on the ground.

Our burgeoning network of rewilding initiatives supports the idea that accumulating practical experience is the best way to make progress. By the end of 2017 the European Rewilding Network had grown to 61 members in 26 European countries. These members embody a wide range of rewilding activities and projects, including our own eight rewilding areas. The most influential tools that we have developed so far – Rewilding Europe Capital, the European Wildlife Bank, the European Rewilding Network and the European Safari Company – have all been helpful in supporting these rewilding initiatives across the European continent.

## **A GENERAL OVERVIEW**

This Annual Review presents the significant progress we have made with our rewilding area teams, European and local partners, financial institutions and other stakeholders.

With several important new steps taken in our development, you could say that 2017 was the year we advanced from a pioneering organisation to a respected partner in European conservation.

Additional working relationships and formalised partnerships at the European, national and local levels have been established. One of the most significant of these is the agreement signed with the European Investment Bank through our Rewilding Europe Capital loan facility, with a loan of 6 million euros helping us



NINO SALKIC / REWILDING EUROPE

to scale up our support of rewilding enterprises across Europe.

During the year we continued to strengthen our portfolio of rewilding areas, extending existing areas and identifying new ones. In the Danube Delta we successfully managed to extend into the **Ukrainian part**, providing new rewilding opportunities and transboundary cooperation with Romania. In Western Iberia we have started exploring a number of options for adding rewilding sites on the Spanish side, and we expect these to bear fruit in 2018. We have also explored new rewilding initiatives in the Netherlands and Scotland, but no clear outcomes have yet been reached.

We have continued to build and consolidate our joint rewilding initiatives with local partners in the eight rewilding areas across Europe. Collaborative fundraising efforts both at the European and national level have been an important activity, with a range of new financial partners and donors coming on board to support our efforts.

### MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

To give insight into our progress in 2017 we have selected the main highlights for each of our five main areas of work (see next spread).



BRUNO DAMICIS / REWILDING EUROPE

Furthermore, nine stories provide deeper insight into the work that is ongoing at both the central level and in rewilding areas.

In addition, the 2017 at a glance overview on pages 16 & 17 gives a complete overview of the most important milestones in our initiative in 2017.

# Main achievements in 2017 for each of our five main areas of work

## WILDER NATURE

### REWILDING PILOT SITES

#### *Showcasing rewilding models*

Within our rewilding areas we have selected pilot sites where we work with local partners on developing rewilding models. In 2017, 26 pilot sites covered 42,000 ha of land, where such new models focus on natural grazing, changing wildlife management and hunting, forest management, river and wetland restoration, reintroductions and others. An additional 71,000 ha of land was under some form of rewilding regime through agreements with authorities and land managers.

### SUPPORTING NATURAL GRAZING

#### *European Wildlife Bank growth accelerates*

The European Wildlife Bank (EWB) increased in size to 732 animals by the end of 2017, comprising 84 bison (35 free ranging), 348 horses and 300 Tauros. A total of 24 red deer and 84 fallow deer were reintroduced into the Southern Carpathians, Danube Delta and Rhodope Mountains. Increasing the number of large wild herbivores in areas being rewilded through the EWB showcases the important role these animals play in the landscape.

### BEYOND BORDERS

#### *Danube Delta now includes the Ukraine*

We were very excited when the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta joined the rewilding initiative here in 2017, providing huge opportunities for reflooding former polders and islands, introducing natural grazing, and reconnecting lakes with the River Danube.

The Ukrainian part of the delta has a long history in restoring wetlands, in particular on Danube islands like Ermakov and Daller, but also around some of the large lakes (limans) in this transboundary UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

**Read the story on pages 28–31**

## WILDLIFE COMEBACK

### VULTURES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

#### *Helping these majestic birds soar again*

In 2017 our support for the growth of black and griffon vulture populations in the Rhodope Mountains generated positive results, with stable or increasing numbers, increased understanding of vulture behaviour, and active anti-poison dog units in Bulgaria and Greece. These scavengers are the poster child of healthy food chains that we are restoring in this transboundary rewilding effort.

**Read the story on pages 24–27**

### BISON COMEBACK

#### *Expanding breeding sites*

By the end of 2017 breeding herds of bison had been established at five different European sites. Animals from these herds are used for reintroductions and restocking projects in the wild.

The largest bison reintroduction so far is taking place in the Southern Carpathians rewilding area in Romania. By the end of 2017 the number of free-roaming bison in the rewilding area had reached 30 (and has now reached 53 animals after a further reintroduction in 2018).

**Read the story on pages 20–23**

### REINVIGORATING THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

#### *The role of carcasses in nature*

With the launch of its Circle of Life initiative in 2017, Rewilding Europe is now working to support Europe's endangered scavengers by increasing the availability of wild herbivore carcasses across the continent. We want to help Europe's scavengers by encouraging a fresh look at how herbivore carcasses are managed across the continent.

**Read the story on pages 48–51**



## EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK DEAL

*Scaling up nature-based enterprises*

A landmark moment for our enterprise work was reached when, after a long negotiation period, we signed a loan agreement of 6 million euros through the European Commission's new Natural Capital Financing Facility. This will boost nature-based enterprises across the European Rewilding Network over the coming years.

**Read the story on pages 44–47**

## EUROPEAN SAFARI COMPANY

*The launch of an exciting business*

Launched at the beginning of 2017, the European Safari Company took off and hosted dozens of guests booked through its new online platform. Six rewilding destinations now offer a wide range of experiences, with additional destinations and offerings to be added shortly. Rewilding Europe is currently helping to incubate this business initiative in preparation for it to become fully fledged in the near future.

## SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

*First REC loans start to deliver*

The first Rewilding Europe Capital (phase 1) loans to 15 rewilding enterprises saw these businesses begin to flourish. Our main flagship area so far is Western Iberia, where six businesses are working closely together to provide safari-style experiences. With a loan from the European Investment Bank (see above) we are now able to scale up our enterprise work, focusing on six main sectors that can leverage rewilding impact.

These sectors are forest management, nature and wildlife tourism, wetland restoration and water management, biodiversity and CO<sub>2</sub> offsetting, land estates and wildlife breeding and management.

## WILD WAYS

*A milestone meetup*

On April 19, all of our partners, donors, team members, local teams and other stakeholders (a total of over 120 people) came together for the first time at a unique and inspiring gathering in Amsterdam. A fantastic event, which was hosted and moderated by Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands - a Rewilding Europe special advisor and member of the Rewilding Europe Circle - saw a great base developed for future work and cooperation.

## INVOLVING YOUTH

*Education becomes more important*

Our desire to involve the younger generation more in rewilding is gaining ground in the Southern Carpathians, Rhodope Mountains and Western Iberia. In 2017 hundreds of children in villages surrounding these rewilding areas were inspired through boot camps, classes, festivals and excursions into the wild. Through our educational work we want to involve this generation in the realisation of a new, nature-based vision for their local regions.

**Read the story on pages 36–39**

## REACHING OUT

*On the big screen and sharing our stories*

Beginning in September 2017, a new collaboration with global producer and distributor Off The Fence represented a major step forward. This has seen work start on a six-part primetime TV series about the rewilding of Europe. The production, which will be completed by the end of 2019, will air on Nat Geo Wild and other international broadcasters.

Our outreach numbers are increasing constantly, with 20% growth in our social media channels and an estimated 24 million people reached through our own and external media.

## RESTORATION AND REWILDING ON THE MAP

*Working together in Brussels*

At the beginning of 2017 we started a new project to promote restoration and rewilding principles on the policy agenda in Europe, working together with WWF, BirdLife Europe & Eurasia, the European Environmental Bureau and the German Institute for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv). This will result in a number of scientific publications and policy briefs, as well as a map of restoration potential in Europe that will be used to promote restoration and rewilding as part of an advocacy effort towards the EU post 2020 Biodiversity Strategy.

**> Read the story on pages 40–43**

## SCIENTIFIC UNDERPINNING

*Working with academia across Europe*

In 2017 relationships were developed with academia from numerous universities - this will lead to an increase in the number of scientific publications on rewilding. Within the policy project we built a network of academic partners with whom we are now working on scientific papers on rewilding for intended submission to renowned journals. With the Cambridge Conservation Initiative the 100 most important research questions on restoration were identified.

## THE EUROPEAN REWILDING NETWORK

*A growing movement*

The network continued to grow in 2017 and boasted 61 members from 26 countries across Europe by the end of the year. Four webinars, a number of exchanges and training sessions took place, demonstrating the burgeoning interest and efforts in the rewilding community across the continent.

**> Read the story on pages 52–55**



*The central team of Rewilding Europe at the Wild Ways event in Amsterdam on 19 April 2017.*

### CONTINUED FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

Following years of dedicated effort getting Rewilding Europe off the ground, we are now working to establish a solid financial base from which we can secure our operations in years to come. Continued fundraising efforts have delivered a growth in income since we started the initiative. Our income in 2017 grew to nearly 2.3 million Euros, a further increase compared to 2016.

In 2017 we signed a new three-year contract with Adessium Foundation, with a focus on the Velebit Mountains, Central Apennines and the general development of Rewilding Europe. With WWF Netherlands we signed contracts for another three-year period of general support, the policy project mentioned previously, and a contribution to the extremely exciting six-part TV series and feature length documentary now being developed. The Dutch Postcode Lottery continued its indispensable support and we have now become a regular beneficiary. Two major EU funded projects in Romania (LIFE Bison) and Bulgaria/Greece (LIFE Vultures) continued their work.

A new platform launched in 2017 is the Rewilding Europe Endowment Initiative. This exclusive and dedicated financial support initiative for private individuals is unique in its set up and engagement. A separate foundation, regis-

tered as a charity in the Netherlands, was established in 2017 with the purpose of managing and developing this new funding mechanism. This new initiative will substantially contribute to our work in the rewilding areas and the financial sustainability of Rewilding Europe over the medium to long term.

Last but not least, an extensive preparation period of nearly 18 months culminated in us signing an agreement with the European Investment Bank through the newly launched Natural Capital Financing Facility (NCFF), securing a 6 million euro loan.

### A EUROPEAN TEAM

With its home office in the Dutch city of Nijmegen, Rewilding Europe has a small central team of staff working from seven different countries (the Netherlands, Spain, Estonia, Croatia, Greece, the United Kingdom and Italy). The total capacity of the central team increased slightly to 10 full-time equivalents in 2017. Two executive directors (a managing director and business & finance director) lead a five-staff management team. The supervisory board consists of four members working from four different countries (the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain and Germany).

Launched at the end of 2015, the Rewilding Europe Circle, now active for two years, is best described as a group of high profile and respected individuals who share our passion for making Europe a wilder place. The now 12 members have provided important support, networks and expertise during the year.

In our rewilding areas an estimation of capacity shows at least 25 fte involved in 2017 – quite similar to the level of 2016. Overall, we estimate a total of 100 people were directly involved across 18 countries, as staff members, board members, volunteers or Circle members.

Apart from the central organisation, we work with local partners that have their own legal entities and local boards. Our main local partners are Rewilding Rhodopes (Bulgaria), Rewilding Lapland (Sweden), Rewilding Apennines (Italy), Rewilding Danube Delta (Romania) and Rewilding Ukraine. In the Southern Carpathians WWF Romania is our main partner, and in Western Iberia Associação Transumância e Natureza (ATN).



# Do you want to become part of Europe's rewilding movement?

Becoming a member of the European Rewilding Network is easy (and free) for rewilding-related projects, initiatives and businesses. Help others and your own organisation by sharing insight and experience with enthusiastic and dedicated peers across Europe.

The objective of the European Rewilding Network is to establish a living network of rewilding initiatives, supporting them and facilitating the adoption of best practice in rewilding. Rapidly expanding, it currently boasts 61 members from 26 European countries.

Visit [rewildingeurope.com/european-rewilding-network/](https://rewildingeurope.com/european-rewilding-network/) to apply for membership

# 2017 at a glance

**23 January**

*Nijmegen, the Netherlands*

- The rapidly growing European Rewilding Network (ERN) is joined by its 50<sup>th</sup> member, the Czech Republic-based Carnivores.cz initiative.



**1 February**

*Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

- Adessium Foundation commits to supporting Rewilding Europe for another three years, focusing on rewilding activities in the Velebit Mountains and Central Apennines, and the identification of new rewilding areas.

**8 February**

*Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

- Rewilding Europe receives 500,000 euros from the Dutch Postcode Lottery.



**14 March**

*Nijmegen, the Netherlands*

- The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Netherlands through the WWF Rewilding Europe Family Circle commit to continuing their support for Rewilding Europe for another three years.

**24 March**

*Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria*

- More than 30 participants take part in a second nature- and culture-related tourism development training session, organised by Rewilding Rhodopes and the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB).

**4 April**

*Nijmegen, the Netherlands*

- A coalition of five organisations launches the Policy Project - a new initiative to strengthen the EU restoration agenda and work towards the creation of a European Green and Blue Infrastructure.

**11 April**

*Brussels, Belgium*

- The European Investment Bank provides Rewilding Europe Capital with a 6 million euro loan finance contract, representing the first project of the European Commission's "Bank on Nature" initiative.



**3 May**

*North Karelia, Finland*

- The first loan provided by Rewilding Europe Capital to a member of the European Rewilding Network enables Snowchange Cooperative to purchase the 110-hectare Linnunsuo wetland area.



**9 May**

*Oxford, United Kingdom*

- Paul Jepson, directing Oxford University's MSc in Biodiversity, Conservation and Management, becomes a member of Rewilding Europe's Supervisory Board.

**17 May**

*Studen Kladenets, Bulgaria*

- With the slogan "Become an Explorer", the annual Kartali Nature Camp inspires more than 60 people to explore the Rhodope Mountains and learn more about local rewilding activities.

**16 June**

*Nijmegen, the Netherlands*

- The European Rewilding Network welcomes 3 members: PROYECTO M.A.R.E.S. (Spain), the Dragoman Marsh Restoration Project (Bulgaria), and European bison introduction in the Veluwe National Park (the Netherlands).

**20 July**

*Danube Delta, Romania*

- Rewilding Europe launches a study to examine golden jackal behaviour and gauge people's attitudes towards this resilient carnivore, whose numbers are on the increase in the area.

**17 August**

*Central Apennines, Italy*

- Nature-based tourism outfit Wildlife Adventures welcomes the firsts guests to the Bisegna Mountain Refuge, refurbished with a loan from Rewilding Europe Capital.



**7 November**

*Nijmegen, the Netherlands*

- The European Rewilding Network welcomes three new members: Scotland: The Big Picture (UK), Froxán Common Woodlands (Spain), and the LIFE European bison project (Poland).

**15 November**

*Danube Delta, Romania*

- A second shipment of ten Tauros arrives in Sfântu Georghe, which should result in a free-roaming, well-adapted herd of these bovines.



**16 November**

*Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria*

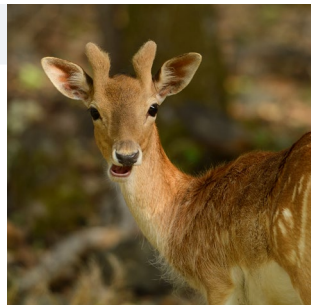
- Two European bison arrive and join the existing herd of animals based there, now making up a small breeding herd of five animals.

**10 February**  
*Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria*

- Five fallow deer are equipped with satellite transmitters by the Rhodopes rewilding team.

**19 February**  
*Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria*

- The Rewilding Rhodopes team releases nine red deer in the Studen Kladenets nature reserve, and a group of fallow deer near Tintiava.



**28 February**  
*Nijmegen, the Netherlands*

- The Rewilding Europe Circle welcomes two new members: Paula Sarmiento from Portugal and Ignace Schops from Belgium.

**19 April**  
*Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

- “Wild Ways”, Rewilding Europe’s first ever gathering, takes place in Amsterdam, bringing together 120 people from nearly 20 different European countries.



**20 April**  
*Nijmegen, the Netherlands*

- Unveiled at the Wild Ways event, the 2016 Annual Review looks back at Rewilding Europe’s major achievements over the period 2011-2016, and outlines our ambitions for the future.

**23 April**  
*Țarcu Mountains, Romania*

- A group of nine European bison arrive at the Southern Carpathians rewilding area, representing the fourth consecutive annual bison release carried out by Rewilding Europe and WWF Romania.

**25 May**  
*Sofia, Bulgaria*

- A visually stunning photo exhibition “Lords of the Rhodopean Skies” wows visitors by making the Bulgarian capital a wilder place.

**30 May**  
*Danube Delta, Romania/Ukraine*

- Rewilding activities in the spectacular Danube Delta, Europe’s second largest wetland, are extended into Ukraine.

**Rewilding  
Ukraine**

**31 May**  
*Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria*

- Ten griffon vultures are fitted with satellite transmitters with the aim of collecting data critical to the regional conservation of the species.



**2 September**  
*Nijmegen, the Netherlands*

- Rewilding Europe and ARK Nature present the Circle of Life, a new way of supporting Europe’s scavengers by boosting the availability of wild carrion. This is accompanied by a practical and informative brochure.

**12 September**  
*Southern Carpathians, Romania*

- A collaborative workshop in the Southern Carpathians sees the construction of a beautifully designed building for wildlife watching and related events.



**20 October**  
*Nijmegen, the Netherlands*

- The European Rewilding Network welcomes Marker Wadden, one of Europe’s largest, most ambitious and innovative nature restoration projects.

**23. November**  
*Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

- A documentary featuring TV presenter and Dutch Postcode Lottery Ambassador Humberto Tan is released in Amsterdam, showcasing Tan’s visits to the Velebit Mountains and Central Apennines.



**13 December**  
*Nijmegen, the Netherlands*

- The European Rewilding Network welcomes four new members: Wild Ennerdale (UK), Restoring the Caledonian Forest (UK), Nemunas Delta (Lithuania) and Lille Vildmose (Denmark).

**21 December**  
*North Karelia, Finland*

- A six-month study by two University of Lille students reveals the huge scaling up potential of the Linnunsuo wetland restoration in this former peat mine, bought by Snowchange Cooperative with a loan from Rewilding Europe Capital.

# Facts and figures

8



rewilding areas spanning seven countries are part of the Rewilding Europe portfolio

Truly European – our team is working from

**18** EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

- Belgium • Netherlands •
- Spain • Sweden • Greece •
- Estonia • Croatia • Italy •
- France • Portugal • Romania •
- Bulgaria • Germany • Poland •
- Sweden • Ukraine • Slovakia •
- Switzerland

**100**   
PERSONS

- were directly involved in the Rewilding Europe team, a
- substantial growth since 2016

- The central team had a capacity of nearly

Our income in 2017 was

**2.27**

MILLION EUROS

- while our estimated budget for 2018 is about

**2.44**

MILLION EUROS

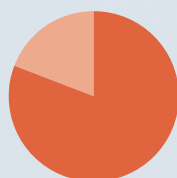
**120**

people from 20 countries participated in

**WILD WAYS**

in Amsterdam on 19 April

**81%**



- of the overall expenditure in 2017 was spent on our 5 main objectives

**10** FTE  
(full time equivalent)

**24** MILLION PEOPLE

- reached through our communications work in 2017

Our main partners in the rewilding areas worked with at least

**55**

LOCAL PARTNERS

**32**

**FISH SPAWNING GROUNDS**

restored in the Swedish Abrahamson river



**17** INTERNATIONAL MEDIA VISITS to our eight rewilding areas

**6**

MILLION EUROS

- as a loan from the European Investment Bank to scale up Rewilding Europe Capital

**15**

**GRIFFON VULTURES**

- were tagged with GPS transmitters in the Rhodope Mountains to follow their movements



AND

**21**

**BLACK VULTURES**



**5**

wild horse natural

**GRAZING SITES** in

**3**

**COUNTRIES** involving

**6**

different **HORSE BREEDS**



# 53 REWILDING INITIATIVES

in the European Rewilding Network across 25 countries, apart from our own rewilding areas

# 15

new rewilding enterprises received

**TECHNICAL SUPPORT**  
from our enterprise team

# 6

**BISON BREEDING AND PRE-RELEASE SITES**

for European bison, in 3 different countries: Romania, Bulgaria and Netherlands



A total of

# 133

**RED AND FALLOW DEER**  
released in the Rhodope Mountains

# 42,000

hectares covered with rewilding agreements in 26 pilot sites

A coalition of

# 5

**PARTNERS**

working together to influence EU policy on restoration and rewilding



# 20%

growth of social media outreach on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram



**ANTI-POISONING DOG PATROLS**

held in the Bulgarian Rhodope mountains, with

# 2

incidents reported

# 15

**FINANCIAL LOANS**

currently active through Rewilding Europe Capital

The Rewilding Europe Circle welcomed **3** NEW MEMBERS, now counting **12** in total

# 30

free-roaming and



# 9

newly introduced

**EUROPEAN BISON**  
in the Southern Carpathians



Hundreds of local children participating in

**CAMPS, FESTIVALS AND CLASSES**

# 3

in rewilding areas

# 6

**TAUROS BREEDING SITES**

with a total of 333 animals involved across 5 countries



# 761

**ANIMALS**

in the European Wildlife Bank, consisting of 3 species

# Back from the Brink

*A CENTURY AGO THE EUROPEAN BISON STOOD ON THE  
EDGE OF EXTINCTION. TODAY, WITH REWILDING EUROPE  
PLAYING A PROMINENT ROLE, THIS MAJESTIC ANIMAL  
CONTINUES TO MAKE AN INSPIRATIONAL COMEBACK.*





Bison rangers Daniel Hurduzeu and Matei Miculescu mount camera traps as part of the wildlife monitoring programme in the Southern Carpathians.

For Florin Halastauan it was the prolonged effort which made the end result even sweeter. In July 2017, after crawling through dense undergrowth in the Southern Carpathians rewilding area for nearly an hour, the LIFE Bison project manager finally glimpsed the animals he'd always dreamed of seeing.

"There, in a small glade right in front of me, were two bison calves, with their mothers standing close by," he says. "To see these creatures, born into a reintroduced yet now fully wild Romanian bison herd, was a magical moment. It was the culmination of years of hard work and the overcoming of many challenges."

The European bison, which closely resembles its North American cousin, once populated much of Europe. With males standing two metres tall and tipping the scales at over 1000 kilogrammes, they were all but immune to predation.

Yet just as the American bison was hunted to the very edge of extinction in the nineteenth century, its European relative suffered a similar assault. When the last wild bison was poached in the Caucasus in 1925, there were less than 60 European bison alive in zoos and private parks.

“TO SEE THESE CREATURES, BORN INTO A REINTRODUCED YET FULLY WILD ROMANIAN BISON HERD, WAS A MAGICAL MOMENT.”



One of the first bison calves that was born in 2017 in the bison release site in the Southern Carpathians.





STAFFAN WIDSTRAND / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE

“WITH KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPECIES INCREASING, THE EUROPEAN BISON’S UPWARD TRAJECTORY LOOKS TO BE LONG-TERM.

It is from this low point that Europe’s largest living land mammal has come back from the brink. Halastauan’s calves are one more milestone in a remarkable resurgence.

#### PIVOTAL PROGRESS

Today the population of wild and captive European bison stands at around 7000 individuals. By reintroducing bison in some of its operational areas, and facilitating the animal’s return at other rewilding sites, Rewilding Europe is playing a major role in this wildlife success story.

In 2017 bison **calves were born** into bison herds reintroduced in both the Southern Carpathians (Romania) and Rhodope Mountains (Bulgaria) rewilding areas. In the Carpathians, our flagship bison reintroduction area, this proves that ongoing efforts to restore a viable free-roaming bison population have a real chance of success.

Rewilding Europe and WWF Romania have been reintroducing bison into the Southern Carpathians since 2014, and as part of the European Commission-funded LIFE Bison project since 2016. With the number of bison in the rewilding area reaching 30 by the end of 2017, the plan is to eventually release a total of at least 100 animals, divided between two sites.

#### WIDE-RANGING IMPACT

In a rewilding context, the benefits of bison reintroduction go way beyond the simple survival of a species. The grazing of these huge herbivores opens up landscapes and creates new habitats for other fauna such as insects and birds, while their integration into dynamic food chains is boosting the comeback of predators such as wolves and bears.

In the Southern Carpathians the high-profile status of the European bison is also breathing new life into a depressed local economy. Young people have been employed as bison guides and rangers, while the rewilding area is becoming increasingly well known as a wildlife tourism destination, with bison watching and tracking



Remodeled and redesigned Bison Visitor Centre in Armeniș.



The community of Armeniș is producing locally branded products related to bison.



BOGDAN COMANESCU

*Nature tourism guide Georg Messerer, exploring the bison release area in the Tarcu Mountains in Romania.*

experiences offered through the European Safari Company.

“The LIFE Bison project creates a unique opportunity for local community support through the development of nature-based tourism and other nature-friendly enterprises, research and education,” says Rewilding Southern Carpathians team leader Marina Drugă.

#### SCALED UP SUCCESS

Rewilding Europe is far from the only organisation involved in European rewilding, and we always strive to support like-minded conservation partners. Through our pioneering **European Wildlife Bank** and European Rewilding Network initiatives, this has seen European bison reintroduced at a growing number of sites across the continent, with bison-related insight and expertise shared between numerous network members.

Three European Rewilding Network sites in the Netherlands - Kraansvlak, Maashorst and Veluwe - currently host European bison, with all animals part of the European Wildlife Bank. Launched in 2013, the bank is designed to facilitate the reintroduction and restocking

#### BY THE NUMBERS



By the end of 2017 there were **6** European bison rewilding sites with Rewilding Europe’s involvement, with **35** free roaming bison and **51** animals in a pre-release or fenced area. **5** bison calves were born in Rewilding Europe’s operational areas in 2017.

of herbivores to rewilding areas across the European continent.

**Kraansvlak**, a 340-hectare area of coastal dunes and old-growth forest located west of Amsterdam, is now home to over 20 European bison. A **recent study** at the site showed that the European bison is perfectly capable of living in half-open areas without supplementary feeding. Until recently it was thought that the animal preferred to inhabit forested areas.

“Right now there is a lack of release sites for the future reintroduction of European bison,” says Rewilding Europe’s Rewilding Director Wouter Helmer. “This study, which shows that these animals can live in relatively compact, diverse habitats alongside other herbivores, means that far more sites can now be considered suitable for bison rewilding. We should aim to celebrate 10,000 European bison in a few years.”

With knowledge of the species increasing, the European bison’s upward trajectory looks to be long-term. Committed to the comeback of this iconic animal, and to harnessing the full range of benefits that it can bring, Rewilding Europe will continue its work on bison comeback.



# Rising High

*TODAY VULTURES ARE SOME OF THE MOST ENDANGERED SPECIES IN EUROPE. REWILDING EUROPE IS WORKING TO MAKE THESE MAGNIFICENT BIRDS A MORE COMMON SIGHT IN SKIES (AND CAMERA VIEWFINDERS) ACROSS THE CONTINENT.*

**D**isgusting yet fascinating. Endangered yet hugely beneficial. Clumsy on land yet possessed of an unrivalled aerial grace. Vultures might be paradoxical creatures, but they are nevertheless loved by wildlife enthusiasts and photographers the world over. There is nothing quite like the sight of a soaring squadron of these majestic raptors, their finger-like primary feathers clawing the air as they rise higher and higher on the day's thermals.

Stoycho Stoychev, team leader of the Rhodope Mountains rewilding team, has spent much of the last 15 years working to keep Bulgaria's endangered vultures from disappearing forever.

"These birds are the true lords of the skies," says Stoychev. "I've always been interested in raptors, but vultures are my favourite species.

Natural-born paragliders, they are perfectly adapted to life on the wing. And they are also devoted parents, which surprises many people."

#### LIFE SUPPORT

Two of Rewilding Europe's rewilding areas are home to significant vulture populations: the Rhodopes Mountains in southern Bulgaria, and Western Iberia in Portugal.

Straddling the border between Bulgaria and Greece, the eastern part of the **Rhodope Mountains** represents the last stronghold of Balkan vultures. The Eastern Rhodopes host the only griffon vulture breeding site in Bulgaria, while the most important Balkan breeding site for the globally endangered Egyptian vulture is also found here. On the Greek side, the only black vulture colony on the Balkan Peninsula is situated in Dadia National Park.

*"THERE IS NOTHING QUITE LIKE THE SIGHT OF A SOARING SQUADRON OF THESE MAJESTIC BIRDS, THEIR FINGER-LIKE PRIMARY FEATHERS CLAWING THE AIR AS THEY RISE HIGHER AND HIGHER ON THE DAY'S THERMALS."*



Wildlife watching operator Marin Kurtev with his vulture hide in the Rhodope Mountains.



Flight route of black vulture Helena (A7) in April 2017.



Starting in 2016, the five-year LIFE Vultures project was developed by Rewilding Europe, in collaboration with the Rewilding Rhodopes Foundation, BSPB/BirdLife Bulgaria and a range of other partners. Focusing on the Rhodope Mountains rewilding area, as well as a section of the Rhodope Mountains in northern Greece, the aim of the project is to support the recovery and further expansion of local black and griffon vulture populations, mainly by improving natural prey availability, and by reducing mortality through factors such as poaching, poisoning and collisions with power lines.

#### KEEPING TRACK

The tagging of black and griffon vultures with GPS transmitters is critical to the success of the LIFE Vultures project. As GPS and other data is fed into a Geographic Information System (GIS), so the rewilding team and their partners are gaining groundbreaking insight into the movement of vulture populations, the various threats that they face, and the best ways to support the birds' comeback.

Last year saw 10 **griffon vultures tagged** in the Rhodope Mountains rewilding area. Over a two-day period the tagging team also fitted the birds with coloured rings and numbered wing tags, enabling easier and quicker identification, and collected blood and biological samples. With five black vultures also fitted with transmitters in Dadia National Park in Greece in 2017, this took the total number of tagged griffons to 15 and black vultures to 21 by the end of the year.

"The more vultures we can track the more effective the GIS system becomes at checking for bottlenecks in their flight paths," explains Jelle Harms, Rewilding Europe's GIS Data Man-

ager. "This helps us to identify and mitigate risk from pylon and power line collision. It has also helped us to pinpoint the best locations for artificial nests, which will hopefully result in black vultures breeding again in Bulgaria."

#### FANTASTIC FLIGHT

Black vultures are renowned for their aerial prowess. What they are far less well-known for is their nomadic behaviour - adult birds are generally thought to be sedentary, rarely straying far from their home territory.

It was therefore quite a surprise when "Helena", a tagged juvenile black vulture, was found to have **travelled nearly 2200 kilometres** over 11 days in April and May last year. Taking in five countries, this is by far the longest recorded journey of any black vulture tagged as part of the LIFE Vultures project. What is even more remarkable is that Helena actually flew directly over both the Southern Carpathians

*The Rhodope Mountains anti-poison dog unit – handler Nikolay Terziev and his dog Bars.*



“....VULTURES ARE SPECTACULAR BIRDS THAT CAN BENEFIT BOTH MAN AND NATURE.



STAFFAN WIDSTRAND / REWILDING EUROPE

rewilding area in Romania, and the Rhodope Mountains rewilding area in Bulgaria!

Readers will be saddened to hear that Helena, who was into her fifth calendar year and seemed to have curbed her wanderlust, was recently discovered dead in Dadia. Her amazing flight shows just how much we can learn from GPS tagging, while her death, which was probably caused by poisoning, goes to show how much more we need to do to stop this callous practice. As part of the LIFE Vultures project, anti-poison dog units now carry out essential operations in both Bulgaria and Greece.

#### CLOSING THE CIRCLE

Vultures are perhaps the most iconic examples of scavengers; the sight of these birds feeding at a carcass can be truly captivating. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, wild carrion has today become a rare commodity in Europe.

One of the ways Rewilding Europe is working to support vultures is by reintroducing wild herbivores at its rewilding sites, thereby closing the so-called “Circle of Life”. These reintroductions increase the availability of carrion, as a result of herbivore predation by carnivores such as wolves, and through natural death. In 2017 30 red deer and 64 fallow deer were released in the Rhodope Mountains rewilding area, itself home to a stable population of wolves.

In the Western Iberia rewilding area (Faia Brava Reserve), home to populations of Egyptian, griffon and black vultures, the reintroduction of wild horses and bovines (Tauros) is also helping to boost the availability of carrion.

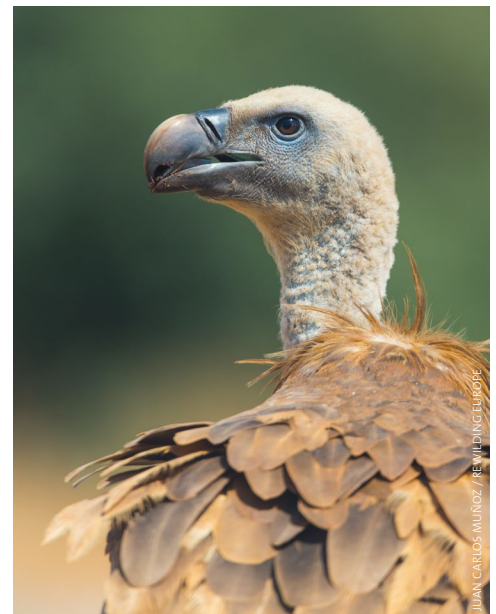
Vultures are one of the primary draws of the Faia Brava reserve; with its steep cliffs, the site boasts prime vulture nesting habitat. Support-

#### BY THE NUMBERS



In 2017, as part of the LIFE Vultures project, **19** griffon vultures were tagged in the Rhodope Mountains rewilding area, with **23** black vultures also fitted with transmitters in Dadia National Park in Greece. This took the total number of tagged griffons to **15** and black vultures to **21** by the end of the year. **108** fallow deer and **25** red deer were released

in the Rhodope Mountains rewilding area in 2017, boosting the availability of carrion for vultures to feed on. Anti-poison dog patrols were carried out in the Rhodope Mountains rewilding area in 2017, with **2** instances of poisoning being found.



JUAN CARLOS MUÑOZ / REWILDING EUROPE

ing the comeback of vultures and other raptors in and around the reserve is not only good for nature itself, but good for the area’s thriving nature-based economy too.

Loans from Rewilding Europe Capital, Rewilding Europe’s pioneering enterprise facility, have so far helped a quartet of nature-based businesses become established in and around Faia Brava. **Wildlife Portugal**, a wildlife photography company, opened its second hide in the reserve in 2017, with vultures the star attraction.

“As recyclers of nutrients and an essential part of the food chain, vultures are spectacular birds that can benefit both man and nature,” says Fernando Romão, owner of Wildlife Portugal. “With Rewilding Europe and partners leading the way, we need to continue supporting their comeback.”





**A**t Rewilding Europe we trust in nature. When left to manage itself, natural processes begin to function more effectively, interacting with each other to create constantly evolving habitats that are home to ever-shifting wildlife populations.

Across all of our operational areas, implementing the rewilding philosophy means creating space for such self-governing dynamics to impact ecosystems. In addition to letting processes such as forest regeneration, flooding and natural grazing reshape landscapes, we are also working to restore rivers to their free-flowing state, or as close to this state as we can achieve.

A free-flowing river is a fully connected ecosystem, from source to river mouth. Water, sand, gravel and silt can move along it, unobstructed. Animals, such as salmon, eels and freshwater mussels can move up and downstream at will. Insects, larvae and plant seeds that travel downstream, in particular during times of flood, can recolonise and replenish river forelands in the lower reaches. And the river itself can swell and shrink naturally, flow at an organic volume and rate, and replenish groundwater sources. It is, essentially, a wild river.

“In many of our operational areas rivers are a vital part of the local ecosystem,” says Alexandros Karamanlidis, one of Rewilding Europe’s regional managers. “In these areas it is critical to rewilding efforts that we restore these waterways to a natural state as much as possible, and prevent free-flowing rivers from being obstructed by any dams, dykes and other infrastructure that could diminish their natural behaviour.”

#### **OBSTACLE COURSE**

Humans, including those living in Europe, have interacted with and depended on rivers for millennia. Over time, as environmental pressures have changed, so our perception of these waterways has changed too. Today, thanks to man’s desire to govern and harness nature, less than 20% of European rivers and floodplains remain physically unaltered.

# Go with the Flow

*TODAY MOST EUROPEAN RIVERS HAVE HAD THEIR ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION DISRUPTED. ACROSS ITS OPERATIONAL AREAS, REWILDING EUROPE’S EFFORTS TO RESTORE WATERWAYS AND BOOST FISH MIGRATION CAN BENEFIT BOTH MAN AND NATURE.*



GRECCO/ISTOCK/USA

In addition to changing the entire course of rivers, man has left a legacy of obstacles in virtually every European waterway. According to Dam Removal Europe, a European-wide partnership of organisations working to revitalise European rivers by removing obsolete dams, more than 5000 large dams were constructed on European rivers between 1900 and 1970. A recent study by an initiative called AMBER (Adaptive Management of Barriers in European Rivers) estimated that European watercourses now contain an average of one barrier per kilometre of river.

While many of these barriers provide energy and water and facilitate leisure activities, a significant percentage are completely redundant. Aside from presenting a potential flood hazard, many have a substantial and negative impact on river ecosystems and block the natural swimways of migrating fish.

*“IT IS CRITICAL TO REWILDING EFFORTS THAT WE RESTORE THESE WATERWAYS TO A NATURAL STATE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.”*

#### PRACTICAL PROGRESS

In 2017 Rewilding Europe conducted river restoration in two of its operational areas: Lapland and the Oder Delta.

Criss-crossed by countless waterways, Swedish **Lapland** is defined as much by its rivers and lakes as it is by its sprawling forests. While many of these rivers have been dammed, the 210 kilometre-long Råne and 400 kilometre-long Pite, which pass through the heavily forested Lapland rewilding area, remain relatively unimpeded.

Yet even on the Råne and Pite a variety of anthropogenic factors have negatively impacted fish migration. Both witness annual runs of salmon and sea trout way below their natural carrying capacity.

“In the past logging companies artificially raised water levels in these rivers by constructing stone and timber dams,” explains Håkan Landström of Rewilding Sweden. “This negatively impacted fish spawning grounds and the rivers’ normal functioning. Large ditches, dug to divert water for pine plantations, also overburdened them with sediment.”

In collaboration with local fishing associations, Rewilding Sweden is now working to boost fish migration in the Råne and Pite



through activities such as spawning ground restoration and small-scale dam removal. This, in turn, should drive the development of a local nature-based economy by increasing opportunities for sustainable fishing.

“In 2017, 32 spawning grounds were created on the Abramsån, a tributary of the Råne,” says Landström. “We also checked spawning grounds made in 2016 and almost all the gravel was left. This was a relief as high water levels and ice can sometimes flush it away.”

Despite such progress, Landström is aware that much more work needs to be done before fish migration is normalised.

“We carried out an electrofishing survey in four sections of the Abramsån in 2017 and only caught two trout,” he says. “The log dams that remain in rivers such as this one are almost certainly still impeding migration and need to be removed.”

### BORDER BOOST

Many streams and smaller rivers on the north-eastern Baltic Sea coast of Germany are currently in very poor condition. The reintroduction of fish species (such as salmon, sturgeon and sea trout) here means that aquatic habitats urgently need to be improved.

The Rewilding Oder Delta team is now working to **restore fish populations** and fish migration in the Stettin Lagoon and associated rivers, in collaboration with local communities and the State Office for Agriculture and the Environment in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Activities, which focus on rivers in the Vorpommern-Greifswald district, include the rewilding of river banks, the restoration of natural hydrodynamics, the removal of obstacles to support fish migration, and the re-wetting of areas adjacent to waterways.

Efforts are slowly starting to bear fruit. Juvenile sturgeon have been released into Oder trib-



“A FREE-FLOWING RIVER IS A FULLY CONNECTED ECOSYSTEM, FROM SOURCE TO RIVER MOUTH.”

utaries for the last 10 years; last year a German angler caught a 2-metre long sturgeon in the Oder River for the first time in about 40 years, with sonar monitoring by the local rewilding team helping to measure results.

The rewilding team also worked in 2017 to support sustainable fishing in both the Polish and German parts of the Delta. Collaborating with local fishermen, a technique to improve fyke nets was developed and will be implemented in 2018.

“Commonly used in shallow water, fyke nets are essentially long cylindrical netting bags with cones fitted inside to make entry easy for fish (and exit difficult),” explains Artur Furdyna, a water ecology expert attached to the Rewilding Oder Delta team. “We have added outer nets and entrance sieves to these nets to stop otters and seals becoming entangled in them.”

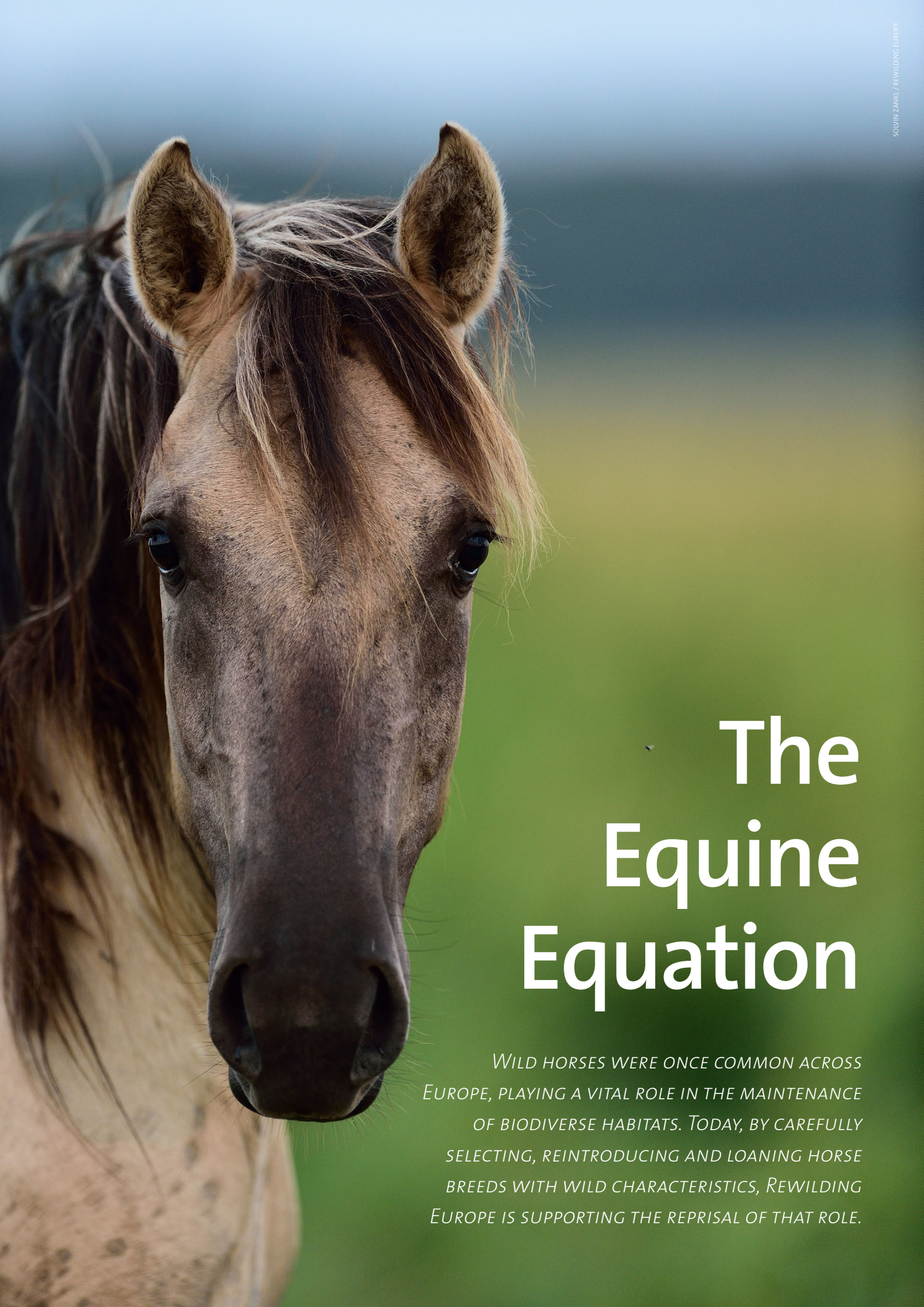
Going forwards, Rewilding Europe will continue its work to restore rivers across its operational areas. It will also collaborate with partners to ensure river restoration efforts are scaled up across the continent.

“There are so many European waterways which would flourish ecologically if they were given the chance,” says Karamanlidis. “Healthy, unimpeded rivers simply make good sense from both an economic and environmental viewpoint.”

### BY THE NUMBERS



In 2017 **32** fish spawning grounds were restored along the Abramsån River in Swedish Lapland. In the Oder Delta **12** drainage ditches were closed and **6** hectares of land rewetted to improve habitat for the lesser-spotted eagle. **2** no-take zones covering approximately **70** hectares were established in the Oder Delta at the end of 2016 / beginning of 2017.



# The Equine Equation

*WILD HORSES WERE ONCE COMMON ACROSS EUROPE, PLAYING A VITAL ROLE IN THE MAINTENANCE OF BIODIVERSE HABITATS. TODAY, BY CAREFULLY SELECTING, REINTRODUCING AND LOANING HORSE BREEDS WITH WILD CHARACTERISTICS, REWILDING EUROPE IS SUPPORTING THE REPRISAL OF THAT ROLE.*

Growing up in contemporary Europe, most of us have never conceived of the horse as a wild animal. Yet long before horses were engaged in transport, warfare or agriculture, wild horses roamed the European plains in large numbers, integrated into food chains and shaping environmental conditions for myriad plant and animal species through their natural grazing.

Historically, horses were once one of the most successful animal species on the planet. Until 10,000 years ago herds not only roamed free in Europe, but also across large parts of North Africa, Asia and the Americas. Since then, however, hunting and domestication have seen truly wild populations decline drastically, until today only a few scattered remnants still exist.

Yet while the European wild horse is officially extinct, its genome still lives on, particularly in those breeds living in feral or semi-feral conditions. From Exmoor ponies in the United Kingdom to the Karakachan horses of Bulgaria, these primitive animals still boast many of the characteristics and genetics of their ancestors. Traits such as winter hardiness and a wariness of predators make them particularly suitable for rewilding and the grazing of wild habitats.

#### **FIT FOR PURPOSE**

But why would we even want to reintroduce wild or semi-wild horses?

A large part of Europe's biodiversity is based around open grassland, mosaic landscapes and their transition to forest edges, which all rely on herbivorous grazing for their existence. Yet rising levels of land abandonment, leading to a reduction in livestock numbers, mean that such grazing is now increasingly absent. As large



areas become overgrown with shrubs and forests as a result, so their biodiversity is declining.

Rewilding Europe wants to reverse this decline by returning Europe's native herbivores – such as horses, as well as bison, deer, bovines, chamois and ibex – in significant and naturally balanced numbers to the lands where they once belonged.

**Rewilding horses** means working towards a future wild horse and should not be mistaken with rebuilding extinct wild horses from the past.

“Rewilding horses means using current and future scientific knowledge to select and conserve the best descendants of the original European wild horse and re-adapting them to

“THESE MAJESTIC HORSES WILL  
THEN BE ABLE TO PLAY THEIR FULL  
ECOLOGICAL ROLE IN NATURE.”

modern natural environments,” says Wouter Helmer, Rewilding Europe's Head of Rewilding. “These animals are not necessarily identical to their extinct ancestors, but they are very capable of surviving and reshaping Europe's ecosystems in a beneficial way.”

## CHANGING STATUS

Rewilding Europe is currently reintroducing wild horses in three of its pilot areas: the Rhodope Mountains in Bulgaria, the Velebit Mountains of Croatia, and Western Iberia. In all of these locations the animals are helping to create biodiversity-rich mosaic landscapes and providing a new food source for predators and scavengers.

In the Rhodope Mountains Rewilding Europe has introduced both Konik and Karakachan breeds across multiple sites. With a shimmering silver-grey coat, the sturdy Konik is an ancestor of the Tarpan, a now extinct subspecies of forest and steppe-dwelling wild horse.

The hardiness of the Konik is tested to the full in the Rhodopes. With extreme winter and summer temperatures, climatic conditions are a severe challenge. Reintroduced animals are initially provided with food and shelter until they acclimatise to their new environment.

“Despite the rigours of the Rhodopes the Koniks are thriving,” says Hristo Hristov, a rewilding officer with the Rewilding Rhodopes team. “These animals have a very well-developed social behaviour and can even defend themselves against wolves.”

Since 2014 the Rewilding Rhodopes team have been working hard on “Status Wild” – a campaign to have the Konik legally recognised as a wild horse. Their efforts were beautifully captured in 2017 by two Dutch students in their short “Status Wild” film.

“These reintroduced horses still have a formal owner, who is obliged to chip, count and register them, castrate males and regularly take blood samples,” explains Hristov. “As the animals become wilder, this is increasingly difficult and unnecessarily stresses them.”

## BY THE NUMBERS



At the end of 2017 there were

**62** Koniks and **84**

Karakachans in the Rhodope

Mountains rewilding area, with **16** foals born (not all survived).

In Western Iberia there were

around **70** Garranos and

**20** Sorraias. In the Velebit

Mountains there were a

combined total of **57** Koniks

and Bosnian mountain horses.



STAFFAN WIDSTRAND / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE

When the mission of the Status Wild campaign is realised, Bulgaria will become the first European country where a formerly domesticated animal species has been recognised as wild. Other countries will then hopefully follow suit.

“These majestic horses will then be able to play their full ecological role in nature,” says Hristov.

## A PORTUGUESE PERSPECTIVE

In the Western Iberia rewilding area the reintroduction of horses is bringing an array of benefits. Reintroduced herds here number around 70 Garranos and 20 Sorraias. Both of these ancient horse breeds were once found wild across the Iberian Peninsula, but their populations decreased dramatically under



JUAN CARLOS MUÑOZ / REWILDING EUROPE

“WILD HORSES  
SPEAK TO OUR  
IMAGINATION.  
SONGS AND  
LEGENDS PAY  
TRIBUTE TO THEIR  
NOBILITY AND  
FREEDOM



pressure from hunting and the rise of domestic livestock.

Extensive land abandonment and the close plantation of pine and eucalyptus trees means the landscape in Western Iberia is very susceptible to forest fire. Although fire is a natural process, the current frequency and intensity of these fires causes severe environmental degradation and economic losses, and endangers human life.

The mosaic landscapes created by wild horse grazing feature open spaces that act as effective firebreaks. They also boost populations of species such as rabbit and red-legged partridge, which in turn increases the availability of prey for predators such as the Iberian lynx and Bonelli's eagle, and scavengers such as griffon and Egyptian vultures.

#### FUTURE FOCUS

Rewilding Europe is also helping to scale up the rewilding of horses across Europe through the European Wildlife Bank, its pioneering live-asset lending model for large herbivores. Exmoor ponies and Koniks have both been loaned from the bank to rewilding sites in the Netherlands and Ukraine. It has also published a free brochure on rewilding horses, a living document intended to inform and guide rewilding practitioners.

"Wild horses speak to our imagination," says Wouter Helmer. "In many European countries songs and legends pay tribute to their nobility and freedom. While the cultural value of these animals is beyond doubt, Rewilding Europe is committed to boosting their impact on the natural landscape across the continent."



# People Power

*SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS A CORNERSTONE OF REWILDING EUROPE'S WORK.*

**R**ewilding isn't only about nature - it's about people too. The support, trust and passion of local communities will always be vital to the success of rewilding projects, regardless of scale and location. Gaining that support means ensuring that people can earn a fair living from the wild, and reaching out and building relationships through effective stakeholder communication.

Wildlife and wild nature are now in decline across much of Europe, with many habitats impacted by unsustainable commercial practices in agriculture, forestry, mining and fishing. This decline is compounded by socio-economic trends, which in many of Europe's rural areas are characterised by land abandonment, rural exodus and fading cultural tradition.

Through its work and results in operational areas, Rewilding Europe is today demonstrating that rewilding can reverse this negative dynamic. By generating significant new business opportunities, jobs and income for local people of all ages and backgrounds, it can provide a viable and sustainable alternative to the economic status quo, and help communities retain their cultural integrity.

Very often, getting communities interested and invested in rewilding is all about effective



communication and genuine dialogue. If done well, this can bring people together, preempt problems, and generate synergy and a sense of pride.

"Communication can engage everyone from potential donors through to local schoolchildren," says Rewilding Europe's Communications



Manager Mei Elderadzi. "But it's about more than just articles in magazines or social media. Face-to-face discussions, gatherings and meetings are absolutely critical, especially in the areas where Rewilding Europe works."

#### **DELTA OUTREACH**

Situated in eastern Romania and southwestern Ukraine, the **Danube Delta** is a natural paradise in the truest sense of the term. As one of Europe's most extensive wetlands, it is home to over 5,000 animal and plant species, including endangered migratory birds such as the great white pelican, the natural icon of the region.

With as little as 15,000 human residents, the delta is sparsely populated by man. Local communities are made up of myriad cultures and ethnicities, but all share one common trait

*“VERY OFTEN, GETTING COMMUNITIES INTERESTED AND INVESTED IN REWILDING IS ALL ABOUT EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION.*

– a strong bond with their local environment. People here love the wild nature that surrounds them, but suffer from a lack of economic opportunity, poor infrastructure and transportation networks, and ageing demographics.

Serban Ion, team leader in the Romanian part of the Danube Delta rewilding area, knows



the communities of the region intimately. He also knows that making rewilding work in this unique environment is all about developing a mutually beneficial relationship between a land and its people.

"For Rewilding Europe working on this dynamic has been both a challenge and an opportunity," he says. "Many communities have had disappointing experiences with NGOs in the past. When someone new arrives, they're naturally sceptical."

As he works to gain people's trust, Ion has developed a simple methodology.

"Be transparent at all times," he says. "Respect the community hierarchy. Don't overwhelm with information. Above all, be patient and spend time with people, and really listen to them."

#### COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

Rewilding Europe has been working to grow nature-based tourism in the Danube Delta, allowing residents to make a living based on the sustainable use of their wild resources. So far this "community conservation" approach has focused on the remote village of Sfântu Gheorghe.

Following informal interviews and focus group meetings with Sfântu Gheorghe residents, the Danube Delta rewilding team first drew up a comprehensive stakeholder map. Illustrating the complexity and dynamic nature of local stakeholder relationships.

Working with the Sfântu Gheorghe community the team has created a tourist trail map. Placed in the centre of the village, this has given residents a real sense of pride and a better understanding of rewilding and its benefits. Local entrepreneurs willing to become part of

a small-scale tourism association have been identified, with many trained up on how to offer visitors birdwatching tours.

Last but not least, last year also saw the Sfântu Gheorghe community surveyed on the return of the golden jackal to the area. Perhaps a little unexpectedly, many villagers revealed a quiet admiration for the jackal and its capabilities; most were curious to know more about this resilient carnivore, which is now making a comeback across Europe and has recolonised the Danube Delta.

"The results of the survey offer good prospects for preempting human-jackal conflict and further development of Sfântu Gheorghe's nature-based economy based on wildlife watching opportunities," says Razvan Crimschi, a Rewilding Danube Delta team rewilding officer.

As Rewilding Europe looks to step up its rewilding efforts in the delta, which include the reflooding of several areas near the village, the support of the Sfântu Gheorghe community will continue to be essential.

*Serban Ion, team leader Danube Delta (Romania).*



#### BY THE NUMBERS



In 2017 **9** meetings were held with members of the Sfântu Gheorghe community in the Danube Delta, and **12** people surveyed for their thoughts on the local return of the golden jackal. On the Ukrainian side of the delta a **150**-hectare area of wetland was restored near the village of Orlovka and talks held about establishing an angling collective. In the Southern Carpathians rewilding area **80** guests visited through the European Safari Company in 2017. The money they spent (nearly 10,000 euros) benefitted over **20** local families.

### THE UKRAINIAN ANGLE

Rewilding Europe was very excited when the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta joined our rewilding initiative in 2017, providing huge opportunities for reflooding former polders and islands, introducing natural grazing and reconnecting lakes with the River Danube.

Ukrainian members of the Rewilding Danube Delta team also carried out significant community work in 2017. In Orlovka, a village of around 3500 residents, 150 hectares of wetland was restored and a herd of 14 water buffalo reintroduced. Consultations were held with residents about setting up a community-owned angling collective.

In the 8000-hectare Tarutino Steppe, the only surviving remnant of original steppe habitat left in the Danube Delta (and the second largest area of steppe in the Ukraine), consultations were held with residents of the large village of Veselaya Dolina. Villagers took the decision to have the steppe declared a national park and approved the future reintroduction of kulan (wild ass) as a natural grazer.

"The idea is for the community to own the animals," says Rewilding Ukraine team leader Mykhailo Nesterenko. "They will become emblematic of this beautiful and precious steppe habitat and hopefully encourage wildlife tourism."

Talks were also held with people from several communities around the Danube Biosphere Reserve with a view to helping nature-based economies here develop further, establishing a forestry park, and potentially reintroducing red deer.

### CARPATHIAN CONNECTIONS

In the Southern Carpathians rewilding area in Romania, where Rewilding Europe has been reintroducing European bison since 2014, our approach to community development has focused on creating demand for products and services from visitors. In this way wild nature is increasingly connected to local livelihoods.

With experiences in the Southern Carpathians offered through the European Safari Company for the first time in 2017, the visits



*Photo exhibition of the LIFE Bison project in Bucharest, Romania.*

“ABOVE ALL,  
BE PATIENT  
AND SPEND  
TIME WITH  
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AND REALLY  
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THEM.”

of around 80 holidaymakers benefitted local residents.

"Over 20 families provided traditional food, accommodation and guiding services to tourists, most of whom had come to see the bison," says Oana Mondoc, a communications officer attached to the Southern Carpathians rewilding team. "As a result, almost 10,000 euros were spent in the local community. Although this might not seem like a large figure, this demonstrates to local people the potential benefits of wildlife comeback."

In addition to this, 28 young professionals from six countries undertook field research in the area in 2017, providing part-time jobs to two local cooks for over half the year. A 10-day workshop also saw three local chefs prepare food with ingredients sourced from 10 local producers, while five local drivers ferried workshop participants around.

"We still have a long way to go, of course, but 2017 was the year communities around the rewilding area really began to appreciate that there is good business in wild nature," says Mondoc.



# Advancing the Agenda

*TODAY THE GROWING REWILDING MOVEMENT IS STARTING TO GENERATE POSITIVE RESULTS FOR WILD NATURE AND PEOPLE ACROSS EUROPE. A FAR MORE SUPPORTIVE EUROPEAN POLICY ENVIRONMENT IS NOW NEEDED TO TAKE THIS PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATION APPROACH TO THE NEXT LEVEL.*



*A green infrastructure is essential for a continued wildlife comeback in Europe. De Wildenberg ecoduct in the Netherlands connects the Kempen~Broek rewilding site with the Weerter Forest.*

## “REWILDING IS THE NEXT BEST STEP FOR EUROPEAN CONSERVATION.

Today biodiversity – the variety of life – is still in decline across much of Europe, as habitats and species are impacted by urban sprawl, unsustainable agricultural, forestry and fishing practices, infrastructure that limits connectivity, and commercial industries such as mining. We cannot allow these trends to continue, because life in a sterile, micro-managed Europe devoid of wild nature is unthinkable.

For too long, European nature has been widely viewed as something that needs to be managed and marginalised. As a fresh, visionary and innovative approach to conservation, the widespread adoption of rewilding would see wild nature regain a place at the heart of modern Europe. Rewilding Europe's eight operational areas, and many members of the European Rewilding Network, are already showcasing how this could work on a far larger scale.

Yet for rewilding to be as effective as possible, we need a policy environment under which it can really thrive. With the EU's post-2020 Biodiversity Strategy currently under preparation, now is the perfect time for a rethink on European conservation, with forward-thinking legislation backed up by more supportive funding regimes. This is what Rewilding Europe, together with a broad coalition of partners, is working towards.

“The big question is, will we continue to carry out conservation as we have done over the past three decades, or will we adopt a new, more positive narrative?” says Rewilding Europe's Managing Director Frans Schepers.

### RAMPING UP RESTORATION

As the EU's flagship nature laws, the Birds and Habitats Directives are vital for achieving the 2020 targets set out in the European Biodiversity Strategy 2011–2020. But even with these directives in place, Europe is still missing its

**M**ention the words “nature” or “biodiversity” to many Europeans and they automatically think of the rainforests of Amazonia or the open plains of the African savanna. Yet we, as citizens of Europe, have magnificent natural heritage right on our doorstep. You only have to navigate the vast reed beds of the Danube Delta or hike the sweeping pine forests of Swedish Lapland to understand that our continent is still home to an abundance of wildlife and expansive wild places.

But is Europe doing enough to safeguard this precious wild nature? While huge efforts and progress have undoubtedly been made over the last few decades, the answer is sadly no.



“FOR REWILDING TO BE AS EFFECTIVE AS POSSIBLE, WE NEED A POLICY ENVIRONMENT UNDER WHICH IT CAN REALLY THRIVE.”

conservation targets. Today less than a quarter of European species and just 16% of their habitats are classified as being in a good condition.

Habitat loss is a major barrier to nature conservation in Europe, and hampers achievement of the goals laid out in both the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Water Framework Directive, and international commitments of the EU. Boosting ecosystem connectivity – by restoring and maintaining large, inter-connected areas of high quality habitat such as wetlands and floodplains – is therefore critically important. This is something that rewilding can bring about.

At the beginning of 2017 Rewilding Europe – together with WWF, BirdLife Europe and Eurasia, the European Environmental Bureau and the German Institute for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv) – launched a **three-year initiative** to promote and support EU policy for restoration in Europe. The overall aim is to support the creation of a coherent ecological network in Europe through the widespread mobilisation of rewilding principles.

“The EU restoration agenda is lagging behind,” says Schepers. “We are now working to provide a substantial and well-coordinated input which will be shared with the European Commission and its Member States.”

#### FUNDING FOCUS

Of course, conservation is not only about rules and regulations – it requires money too. On its own, government funding will probably never be enough to effectively protect and restore European wild nature, which is why we need to look hard at how conservation and sustainable economic practice can work together profitably. But this doesn’t mean that more of the EU’s budget

shouldn’t be allocated toward conservation.

In December 2017 Rewilding Europe, together with nearly 25 other leading European conservation NGOs through the European Habitats Forum, called for the budget of the EU’s LIFE programme to be **significantly increased**, along with a range of other amendments.

The LIFE programme is the EU’s only financial instrument wholly dedicated to the environment, nature conservation and climate change. Since it began in 1992, it has received just 0.3% of the total annual EU budget, with LIFE Nature and Biodiversity Action Grants accounting for around 40% of the LIFE budget. Despite the great success of LIFE projects past and present, this level of funding falls a long way short of delivering effective nature conservation.

Rewilding Europe itself is currently involved in two LIFE projects – the LIFE Bison project in the Southern Carpathian mountains of Romania and the LIFE Vultures project in the Rhodope Mountains of Bulgaria. Both of these projects are now bearing fruit in terms of restoring wildlife populations and natural processes, community involvement and driving nature-based economic growth.

“We have seen first hand how LIFE projects can benefit wild nature and society,” says Schepers. “Together with a large number of fellow conservation organisations we are now calling for the LIFE programme to have its funding increased to at least 1% of the total annual EU budget.

#### A POSITIVE PARADIGM

The story of European wildlife and wild nature is not all doom and gloom. Today some species – such as the brown bear, Eurasian lynx, wolf, eagles and cranes – are making a comeback of their own

#### BY THE NUMBERS



At the beginning of 2017 Rewilding Europe and partners also launched a **3**-year initiative to promote and support EU policy for restoration in Europe.

In 2017 Rewilding Europe together with all members of the European Habitat Forum called for the LIFE programme to have its funding increased to at least **1%** of the total annual EU budget.



STEFAN WIDSTRAND / WILD MONIES OF EUROPE

accord (as shown by the Wildlife Comeback report commissioned by Rewilding Europe in 2013). Their return demonstrates the great resilience of wildlife, wild nature and natural processes.

Building on such resilience and placing far more trust in nature to manage itself, rewilding represents an increasingly compelling proposition for twenty-first century conservation. Right across Europe, a growing number of rewilding initiatives are now restoring trophic cascades, restoring floodplains, food chains and grazing dynamics, supporting the return and recovery of keystone species, and providing novel and workable solutions to both environmental and socio-economic problems.

With Rewilding Europe playing a pioneering role, these initiatives are contributing to a new conservation narrative that excites and empowers. As more and more Europeans engage with rewilding at all levels, we have a real opportunity, not only to make Europe wilder, but to develop thriving, sustainable economies based on natural values and the co-existence of people and wildlife.

In short, the rise of rewilding represents a timely opportunity for conservation policy in Europe to really **shift gears**. This is the moment to switch the focus from target-driven protection to restoration that upgrades entire ecosys-

tems, boosts connectivity and creates tangible, nature-based value for Europeans.

“We want European policy to reflect the fact that rewilding is a new and important additional approach to European conservation,” says Schepers. “As tangible results continue to demonstrate the benefits of rewilding in initiatives across Europe, so Rewilding Europe and its partners will continue their concerted campaign for this to become a reality.”

*A workshop to discuss various aspects of promoting and strengthening the European Union's ecological restoration agenda was held at the German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research in Leipzig, Germany in September 2017.*



STEFAN BERNHARDT / IDIV



MAGNUS LUNDGREN / REWILDING EUROPE

# Enterprising Endeavour

*REWILDING EUROPE'S ENTERPRISE WORK IS NOW SEEING NATURE-BASED BUSINESSES MUSHROOM ACROSS EUROPE. THE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY THEY ARE GENERATING IS BENEFITTING PEOPLE AND WILD NATURE ON A GROWING SCALE.*



JUAN CARLOS MUÑOZ / REWILDING EUROPE



BRUNO DAMICIS / REWILDING EUROPE



JOHAN WILSTRAND / REWILDING EUROPE

Beyond the shuttered windows of the beautifully renovated shepherd's cottage the wind whips through the walnut trees. Fortified by a meal of delicious, locally prepared food and a few glasses of local wine, the guests inside sit back and contemplate a day of wildlife watching beside a roaring fire. Then, high above the noise of the wind, comes howling of a very different kind.

Where in Italy can nature lovers see a pack of wolves loping through the winter snow, or a brown bear ambling across a springtime hillside, all from the window of their accommodation? Thanks to a 40,000 euro loan from Rewilding Europe Capital (REC), the answer is the new **Bisegna Mountain Refuge**. Opening its doors in 2017, this is now one of the most spectacular properties in the Central Apennines.

"The financial and technical support we received from Rewilding Europe was a real game changer," says Umberto Esposito, a hiking instructor and nature photographer who founded Wildlife Adventures, the Pescasseroli-based company which runs the refuge. "Without it we wouldn't have been able to open this amazing property, which now benefits both wild nature and people in the local area."

#### THE BUSINESS OF REWILDING

In contrast to many other parts of the world, there is still very little awareness in Europe about the potential for developing businesses that engage with and support the conservation and rewilding of natural landscapes. In rural areas where the commercial value of wild nature is poorly understood, access to finance for enterprises working with nature is pretty much non-existent.

This is the reason **Rewilding Europe Capital** (REC) was founded in 2014. As the first conservation enterprise investment vehicle to focus on the rapidly expanding European rewilding movement, REC works to stimulate economic growth and development directly connected to the rewilding of natural landscapes. By the end of 2017 it had financed 19 businesses in six European countries, with a commitment totalling 520,000 euros and a portfolio of sectors including nature-based tourism, natural products, natural resource management and habitat restoration.



“IT’S ALWAYS INSPIRATIONAL TO VISIT ENTERPRISES WHICH HAVE RECEIVED FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM REWILDING EUROPE CAPITAL.”

Rewilding Europe's Western Iberia rewilding area in northern Portugal (the Faia Brava Nature Reserve) is a leading example of the impact that REC funding can have. The enterprising recipients of REC loans here, who are all pioneering nature-based tourism models, now welcome more than a thousand visitors annually, and revenue growth has already been substantial.

*Umberto Esposito leading a nature tour in the Abruzzo National Park, Italy.*





Karmenu Vella (left), European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and Jyrki Katainen (right), European Commission Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness watch Frans Schepers, Managing Director of Rewilding Europe, and Christopher Knowles, Head of Climate Finance at the European Investment Bank, signing a loan agreement contract.

"From a personal perspective it's always inspirational to visit enterprises which have received financial support from REC," says Timon Rutten, who recently joined Rewilding Europe as the Head of Enterprise. "Helping these businesses and watching them grow and have a positive impact on both the local community and wild nature is really why I chose to become involved with Rewilding Europe."

#### BY THE NUMBERS



By the end of 2017 Rewilding Europe Capital had financed **19** businesses in six European countries, with a commitment totalling **520,000** euros and a portfolio of sectors including nature-based tourism, natural products, natural resource management and habitat restoration. In 2017 Rewilding Europe's enterprise team had supported **124** businesses, of which **43** had received training and **38** had recorded sizeable business growth.

#### A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Nurturing enterprises which support rewilding isn't just about money, of course. Rewilding Europe's enterprise team provides technical and promotional support to rewilding-related businesses too. By the end of 2017, 124 enterprises had received support from Rewilding Europe, of which 43 had received dedicated training. Many have also received advice on promoting their business through social media and a well-targeted web presence.

"Our support for the Bisegna Wildlife Refuge started in 2016," says Simon Collier, Rewilding Europe's Wildlife Tourism Manager. "We visited the area three times to speak with Umberto about developing the project, and are still in contact with him regularly."

With a range of backgrounds, Rewilding Europe's international and highly experienced enterprise team boast a range of end-to-end skills. These are vital when it comes to helping enterprises get off the ground and establishing strong, long-term relationships with businesses owners. There is now an increasingly strong

tie-in between our enterprise work and the European Safari Company, with which Rewilding Europe enjoys a strategic partnership.

"Very often people have amazing nature-related business opportunities right in front of them, but they just don't see them," says Collier. "We help them see and realise the possibilities. In terms of tourism and natural products, we also help them bring their offering to the market and maximise revenue."

Very often business conceptualisation is simply about applying a knowledge of what would work best in a given situation.

"At first Umberto wanted a refuge solely for hikers," says Collier. "We helped him see that dividing the refuge between more basic accommodation for hikers and more upmarket accommodation for couples, with more focus on wildlife watching, would generate more profit."

#### INFLUENTIAL INVESTMENT

Rewilding Europe Capital experienced several milestone moments in 2017. The first was in early April when it became the first recipient of **funding from the Natural Capital Financing Facility** (NCF), established by the European Commission and managed by the European Investment Bank. The 6 million euro fund means REC can now provide loans of up to 600,000 euros to businesses across all 28 EU member states.

In the same month, empowered by NCF funding, REC disbursed a 75,000 euro loan to the **Snowchange Cooperative**. As the first such loan provided to a member of the European Rewilding Network, this enabled the Finnish nonprofit organisation to purchase the 120-hectare Linnunsuo wetland area.

*Taking analyses at the Linnunsuo wetland area.*





*The Fly Camp is one of the new local businesses that has been set up by Miles Away in Portugal with the help of Rewilding Europe Capital.*

Situated in the Finnish region of North Karelia, Linnunsuo was bought from Vapo, Finland's leading developer of bioenergy and the world's leading peat industry business. Using both local knowledge and the latest scientific techniques, the Snowchange Cooperative has started to restore the area to attract both birds and tourists.

Both the enterprise team and Snowchange view the Linnunsuo project as simply the first step in a long and fruitful partnership.

"We partnered with Rewilding Europe to find new ways of restoring natural systems that respect and benefit from Finnish traditional land use," says Tero Mustonen, Director of Snowchange. "The work at Linnunsuo is a showcase for the positive changes that such restoration can bring about. We now want to build on this and bring a wide-reaching 'northern' perspective to European rewilding."

"Several more ambitious projects involving Snowchange and REC are in the pipeline for 2018," adds Rutten. "Stay tuned."

#### **ECONOMIES OF SCALE**

Empowered with financial resources and expertise, Rewilding Europe's enterprise team are now looking to scale up their efforts across

“THE FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT WE RECEIVED FROM REWILDING EUROPE WAS A REAL GAME CHANGER.”

sectors. In terms of investment through REC, the focus is not only increasing the volume and size of loans, but the identification of business opportunities which can have a really sizeable positive impact on wild nature and nature-based economies.

"The scaling up of our partnership with Snowchange is a good example," says Rutten. "We now need to raise the profile of REC and our enterprise work in general to make sure that people are aware of the opportunities that exist."

Rewilding Europe wants to collaborate with entrepreneurs, corporations, investors, governments and municipalities as we take our enterprise work forward and scale it up.

"Our door is always open," says Rutten. "Prospective enterprises are welcome to contact us at any time."



# Carriion Call

*WITH THE LAUNCH OF ITS CIRCLE OF LIFE INITIATIVE, REWILDING EUROPE IS WORKING TO SUPPORT EUROPE'S ENDANGERED SCAVENGERS BY INCREASING THE AVAILABILITY OF WILD HERBIVORE CARCASSES ACROSS THE CONTINENT.*



*Fernando Romao, owner of Wildlife Portugal, next to a vulture watching hide in Western Iberia, Portugal.*

“IN AN IDEAL WORLD,  
SCAVENGERS ARE ENTIRELY  
SUPPORTED BY NATURAL PREY  
AND CARCASSES.

**A**s the bloodied head of a vulture disappears inside a carcass, a beech marten bares its teeth at a red fox intent on taking a bite of the same carrion. A closer look reveals a diverse cleaning crew of beetles and flies working diligently to process the remains of the large mammal. Within days most of the body will have disappeared.

This natural vignette is admittedly not the prettiest, but it should be a common sight across much of Europe. Unfortunately wild carcasses have now become a rare commodity on our continent. Wilderness has become arable land, populations of wild grazers are often managed at low densities, and legislation demands the immediate removal of dead animals.

As a result, much of the biological “waste” has disappeared from the European ecosystem and is no longer part of the natural cycle of life. Denied a natural food source, populations of scavengers are decreasing and dying out.

Rewilding Europe, together with partners, wants to help Europe’s scavengers by encouraging a fresh look at how herbivore carcasses are managed across the continent. This new approach, presented last year on International Vulture Awareness Day (September 2), is called **Circle of Life**.

“Through the adoption of Circle of Life we want to see large carcasses retake their place in nature, allowing Europe’s numerous scavengers to once again eat their fill,” says Deli Saavedra, one of Rewilding Europe’s regional managers.



Golden eagle feeding on a dead red fox in Central Apennines, Italy.

“THROUGH THE ADOPTION OF  
CIRCLE OF LIFE WE WANT TO SEE  
LARGE CARCASSES RETAKE THEIR  
PLACE IN NATURE.

#### A EUROPEAN-WIDE IMPERATIVE

The success of Circle of Life will rely on close cooperation and collaboration between a diverse range of partners. For this reason the launch of the initiative was accompanied by a brochure, co-designed with Dutch NGO Ark Nature, to provide relevant stakeholders – such as those managing nature, fauna and roads, as well as policy makers – with information and practical support.

“Action in the field is essential if the Circle of Life is to be a success,” says Saavedra.

Many people question the need for scavengers. In Europe, just as on other continents, they play a vital role, both as part of food chains and in recycling nutrients. Extensive areas of European land from which trees have been logged and wild and domestic herbivores removed are now depleted of essential minerals. Restoring free-roaming herds of grazers, whose carcasses are then scavenged and the locked up nutrients released, will contribute to the restoration of the natural nutrient cycle on a landscape-wide scale.

#### NATURAL IS BEST

Vultures are perhaps the most iconic examples of European scavengers; the sight of these majestic birds soaring overhead on thermals or feeding at a carcass can be truly captivating.

Two centuries ago, Egyptian vultures, bearded vultures, black vultures and griffon vultures were among the most common breeding bird species in central and southern Europe. Yet the decreasing availability of food, coupled with habitat loss, persecution and poisoning, then saw them gradually disappear from most European countries.

Thanks to reintroductions and species protection, European vulture populations are gradually recovering. Since the 1970s, so-called supplementary feeding stations have been set up in southern Europe to ensure they have an adequate supply of carrion.

As a means to an end, these so-called “vulture restaurants” are useful. Yet they still interfere with nature and cannot completely replace natural, randomly available carrion that would otherwise support a far more diverse range of species.

“In an ideal world scavengers are entirely supported by natural prey and carcasses,” says Helmer. “This is the ultimate objective of Circle of Life.”

#### CLOSING THE CIRCLE

Effective management, from a Circle of Life perspective, will often mean doing nothing.

#### BY THE NUMBERS



In 2017 Rewilding Europe reintroduced **145** wild herbivores into its operational areas, helping to close the Circle of Life by increasing the natural availability of carrion to scavengers.



Dead horse at a vulture feeding station in Spain.



**Leaving carcasses** where they are, instead of removing them from nature, provides food for the numerous scavenger species that currently face a dearth of carrion.

Rewilding Europe is already putting the Circle of Life philosophy into widespread practice. The reintroduction of wild herbivores such as Tauros, horses, bison, red deer and fallow deer across our operational areas is increasingly boosting the availability of carrion for local scavengers. In many cases the presence of scavenging species such as vultures is then being used as a basis for developing local nature-based economies that benefit both man and wild nature. We are also facilitating the introduction of herbivores on a wider scale through “loans” made by our European Wildlife Bank.

In the Rhodope Mountains rewilding area in Bulgaria, for example, a series of red deer and fallow **deer reintroductions** has led to the establishment of populations of more than 60 and 250 animals respectively. Deer carcasses – a result of predation by carnivores (such as wolves) or natural death – are now an important food source for griffon, Egyptian and black vultures.

Going forwards Rewilding Europe will continue to lead the way as we work to support



*Carcass of a Tauros, probably taken down by wolves in Lika Plains, Velebit Mountains, Croatia.*

Europe’s frequently overlooked yet essential scavenger populations. This includes vulture populations in three of our areas - the Rhodope Mountains, the Velebit Mountains of Croatia, and in Western Iberia. While artificial feeding may have a short-term role to play here, our main focus will always be to help scavengers by naturally closing the Circle of Life.

# Making the Connection

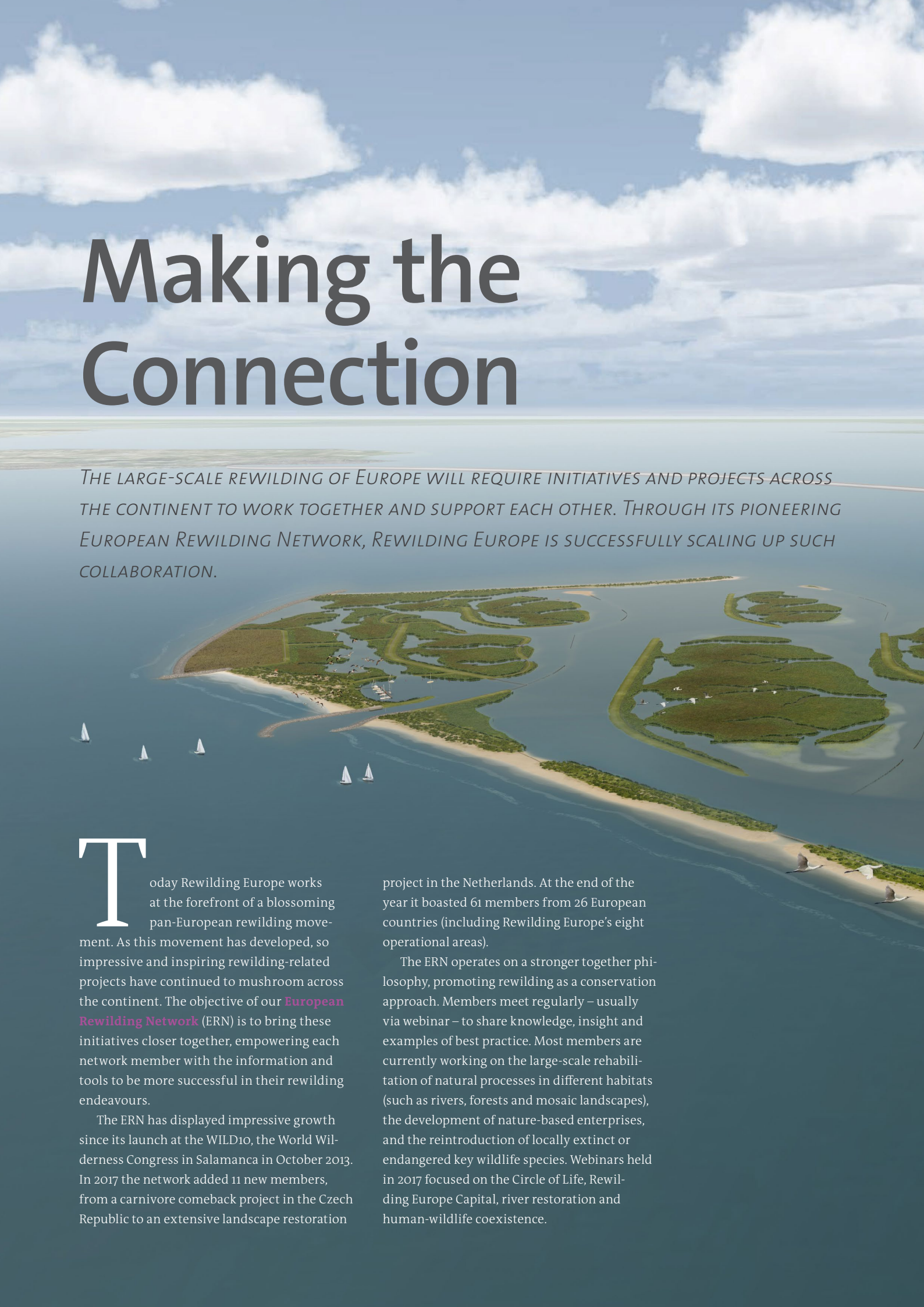
*THE LARGE-SCALE REWILDING OF EUROPE WILL REQUIRE INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS ACROSS THE CONTINENT TO WORK TOGETHER AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER. THROUGH ITS PIONEERING EUROPEAN REWILDING NETWORK, REWILDING EUROPE IS SUCCESSFULLY SCALING UP SUCH COLLABORATION.*

**T**oday Rewilding Europe works at the forefront of a blossoming pan-European rewilding movement. As this movement has developed, so impressive and inspiring rewilding-related projects have continued to mushroom across the continent. The objective of our **European Rewilding Network** (ERN) is to bring these initiatives closer together, empowering each network member with the information and tools to be more successful in their rewilding endeavours.

The ERN has displayed impressive growth since its launch at the WILD10, the World Wilderness Congress in Salamanca in October 2013. In 2017 the network added 11 new members, from a carnivore comeback project in the Czech Republic to an extensive landscape restoration

project in the Netherlands. At the end of the year it boasted 61 members from 26 European countries (including Rewilding Europe's eight operational areas).

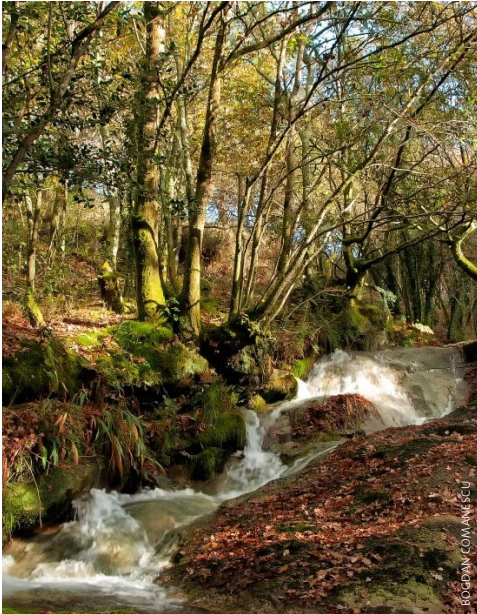
The ERN operates on a stronger together philosophy, promoting rewilding as a conservation approach. Members meet regularly – usually via webinar – to share knowledge, insight and examples of best practice. Most members are currently working on the large-scale rehabilitation of natural processes in different habitats (such as rivers, forests and mosaic landscapes), the development of nature-based enterprises, and the reintroduction of locally extinct or endangered key wildlife species. Webinars held in 2017 focused on the Circle of Life, Rewilding Europe Capital, river restoration and human-wildlife coexistence.



Current state of the new  
Marker Wadden archipelago  
(right) with and artist impression  
of the final vision (below).



“THE INSIGHT WE HAVE  
GAINED FROM THE EUROPEAN  
REWILDING NETWORK HAS BEEN  
INSTRUMENTAL TO OUR EFFORTS.”



European Rewilding Network member Froxán Common Woodlands in Spain.

The Brussels-based Sonian Forest project is working to reconnect fragmented habitats using green infrastructure. It has been a member of the European Rewilding Network (ERN) since the beginning of 2017.

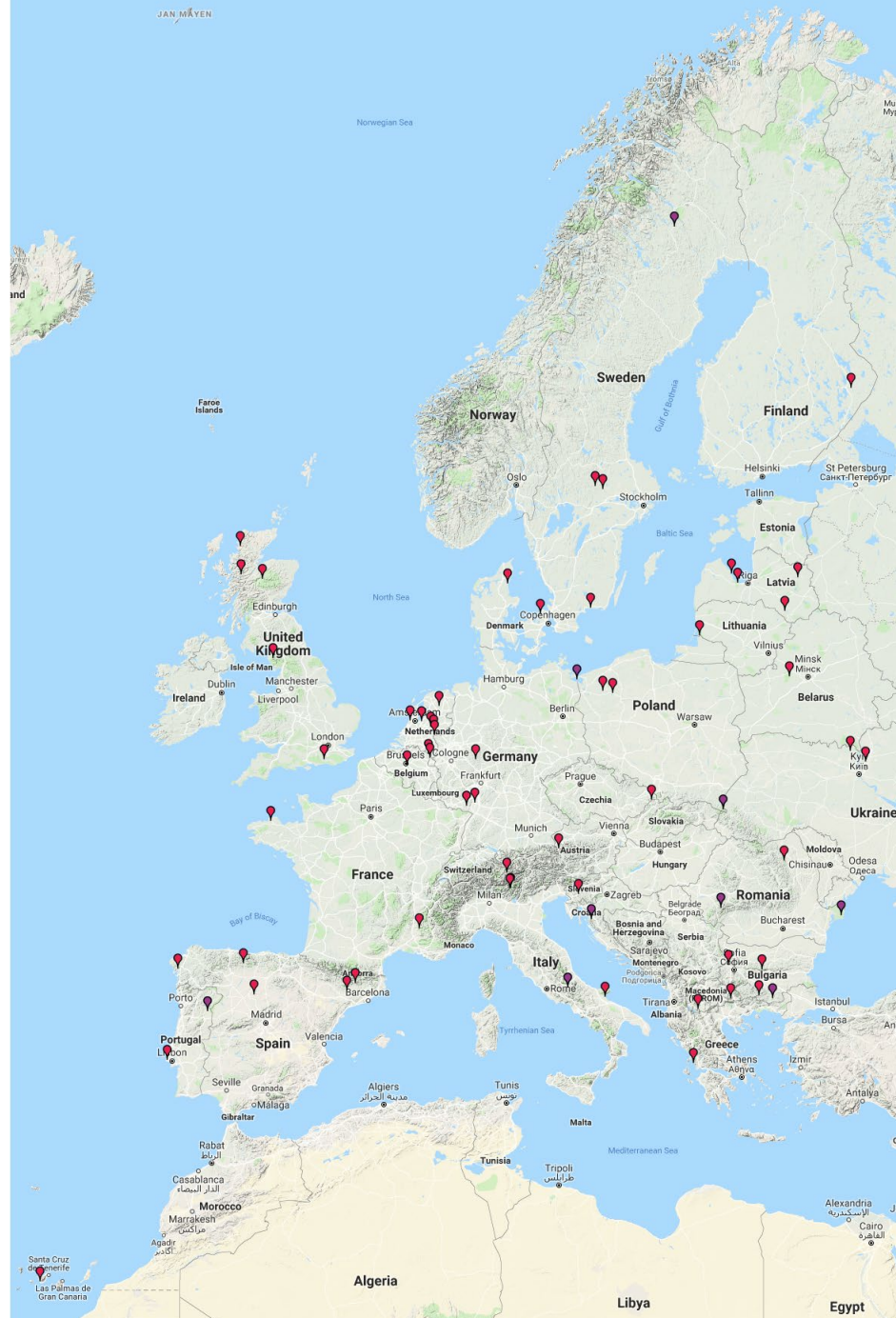
“Being part of the network and sharing knowledge with other rewilding initiatives has been really important for us,” says project assistant Andreas Baele. “It’s also nice to feel that you’re part of a larger rewilding movement.”

### PROGRESSIVE PLATFORMS

Collaboration between the swelling ranks of the ERN was given a further boost in late 2017 with the launch of the ERN Forum. Open and free to all members, this online platform can be used to post questions and information, interact at any time, and view previous webinars on a wide range of rewilding-related topics.

“The new forum will hopefully take exchange between ERN members to a new level,” says Mei Elderadzi, Rewilding Europe’s ERN Coordinator. “We want to get members discussing topics and problem solving amongst themselves on a more regular basis, enabling them to take advantage of their collective skills and experience.”

Last year also saw the launch of ERN Bridge,



a regularly updated open database of international students and other individuals interested in volunteering or engaging in internships on various rewilding-related topics. This allows Rewilding Europe to match interns and volunteers with the needs of ERN members and other partners. Those ERN members who are unable to find a suitable candidate in the database can advertise their requirements through Rewilding Europe’s social media channels.

### YIELDS IN THE FIELD

Aside from online exchange, real-world interaction between ERN members is also on the increase, with frequent field visits organised to other members’ operational areas.

“These kind of exchanges are the most beneficial in terms of their value to rewilding and

we want to facilitate them as much as possible,” says Elderadzi. “Eventually we are hoping to gather all ERN members together for a gathering on practical rewilding.”

In 2017 a number of ERN members attended a free workshop on nature-based education organised by Rewilding Europe and partner ARK Nature in the Southern Carpathians rewilding area in Romania. Last year also saw **representatives of the Polish LIFE Bison project** (based in the Western Pomerania region in the northwest of the country) visit Rewilding Europe’s LIFE Bison team in the Southern Carpathians. As members of the ERN, both teams exchanged practical advice and information on bison rewilding.

“The meeting was really productive,” says Magdalena Kwiatkowska, a bison specialist with the Western Pomeranian Natural Society (which oversees the Polish LIFE Bison project). “Our project is about 10 years ahead of the Romanian one, so we have a lot of advice to share.”

### CASES IN POINT

There were other milestone moments for the ERN in 2017 too. The decision was made to give all members access to the full range of supportive tools that Rewilding Europe has developed: Rewilding Europe Capital (our enterprise loan facility), the European Wildlife Bank (our live-asset lending model for large herbivores), and the European Safari Company (our online platform for nature-based trips to rewilding areas across Europe).

The Ukrainian NGO Foundation Beremyske Biosfera, an ERN member since 2016, introduced two herds of Konik horses from the European Wildlife Bank into its rewilding site in 2016 and 2017. The conditions of the loan mean the park, which is one of the first rewilding initiatives in Ukraine, has to return half of its herd after five years.

“I think the EWB is a great idea,” says Foundation Director Anton Nelip. “It makes a big difference to smaller ERN members that we can take wild horses and other herbivores according to such a system. I hope the number of animals in the bank increases quickly, as there is now a



Participants of the four-day international course on nature education organised by Rewilding Europe and ARK Nature.

### BY THE NUMBERS



**11** new members joined the European Rewilding Network in 2011, with their rewilding sites covering a total of more than **2.2** million hectares. By the end of 2017 the network comprised **61** members from **26** European countries (including Rewilding Europe’s eight operational areas). Together these represented over **8.5** million hectares (85,000 square kilometres) of land.

big queue for them!”

Rewilding Europe was also delighted to welcome the **Marker Wadden** project to the ERN in 2017. Overseen by Dutch nonprofit organisation Natuurmonumenten (the Dutch Society for Nature Conservation), this aims to restore part of Lake Marken (Markermeer), a 700 square-kilometre lake in the central Netherlands, enhancing biodiversity through the creation of islands, marshes and mud flats from lake sediments.

“We were really happy for this project to become part of the ERN,” says Philip Makkink, Natuurmonumenten’s Director of Finance and Fundraising. “We are looking forward to magnifying the beneficial impact of Marker Wadden by exchanging expertise and knowledge with other managers and stakeholders of European water bodies.”

As a critical part of rewilding’s scaling up process, Rewilding Europe will ensure the ERN continues its upward trajectory. As results from 2017 show, this is a network which really works. We invite all existing ERN members to make use of the tools and facilities that we can provide, to assist in further growth. Other rewilding initiatives in Europe are also encouraged to make use of these tools, but to be able to do that they have to become a member of ERN first.



# Financial overview 2017

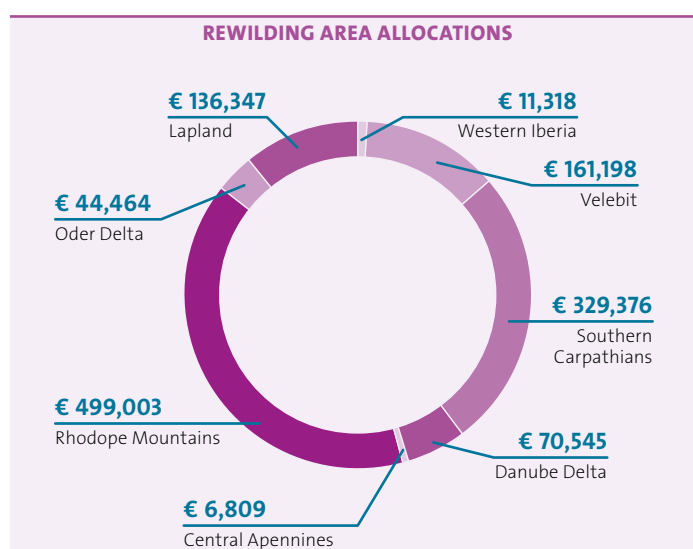
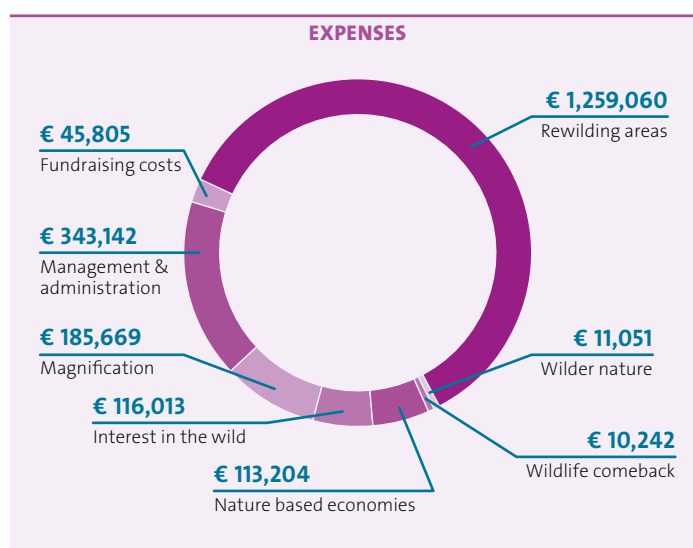
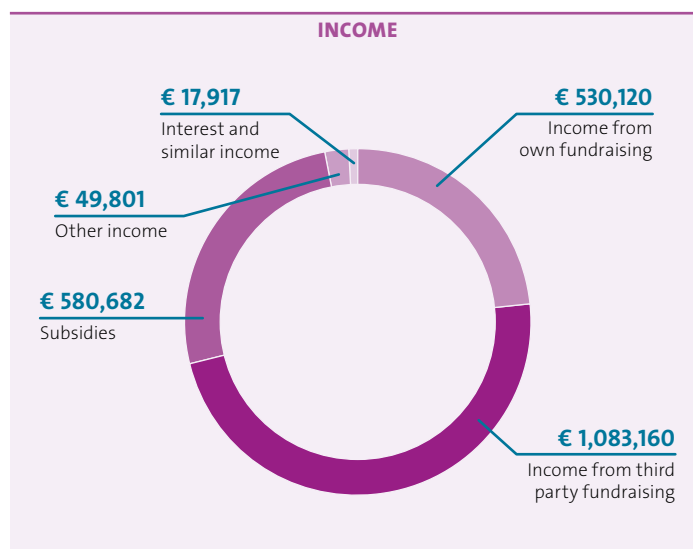
Stichting Rewilding Europe's consolidated annual financial statements over 2017 have been audited by De Jong & Laan accountants (the Netherlands), who expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the consolidated financial statements, dated 18 April 2018. The Rewilding Europe Supervisory Board officially accepted this report and approved the financial statements on the same date.

In this Annual Review we have included a consolidated view of the foundation's distribution of income and expenses. The total income raised in 2017 amounted to 2.26 million euros, while the total expenditure was 2.08 million euros. The surplus of 175,000 euros consisted of donor income that was reserved for future expenditure, and as such added to the reserves of the foundation. The distribution of the income and expenditure is graphically represented.

Total income is broken down into income raised directly by Rewilding Europe, income raised by other fundraising organisations (such as the Dutch Postcode Lottery), subsidies from the EU LIFE Programme, and interest and other own generated income.

The majority of our expenditure was directed towards the foundation's main objectives and was divided between our rewilding areas and the five main objectives (in total 81% of our expenditure). The remaining 19% of total expenditure was spent on the management and administration of the foundation, and fundraising.

For further financial information, we refer to the Financial Report 2017, which is available for download on our website.



# ARE YOU INTERESTED IN **SETTING UP OR GROWING A BUSINESS** THAT SUPPORTS THE COMEBACK OF WILD NATURE IN EUROPE?

From restoring free-flowing rivers and establishing wildlife watching enterprises through to rewilding forests and private properties, Rewilding Europe Capital can support you in setting up or changing your business by providing an attractive financial loan.

Read more and apply at:  
[REWILDINGEUROPE.COM/  
REWILDING-EUROPE-CAPITAL](https://rewildingeurope.com/rewilding-europe-capital)

Rewilding  
Europe  
Capital



*Rewilding Europe Capital is Europe's first rewilding enterprise funding facility that provides financial loans to businesses that support the environmental and socio-economic aspects of rewilding. It demonstrates that rewilding can create thriving wildlife and nature-focused rural economies, generating new business opportunities, jobs and income for society.*





# Rewilding Europe Circle – ambassadors united for rewilding

Founded in 2015, the **Rewilding Europe Circle** is best described as a group of high profile, highly motivated and respected individuals who not only share our passion for making Europe a wilder place, but who are willing to help us realise our vision.

Making use of their networks, insights and expertise, Circle members offer advice and help raise public awareness about the opportunities that rewilding offers as a new conservation approach in Europe.

At the beginning of 2017 the Circle comprised members from nine different countries. During the year it welcomed three new members: Paula Sarmiento (Portugal), Ignace Schops (Belgium) and Keith Tuffley (Switzerland). These new members all bring highly valuable and additional skills and networks to Rewilding Europe.

With these new appointments, these 12 members of the Rewilding Europe Circle now boast backgrounds and expertise in conservation, science, communication, TV and social media, business, national and EU policies and governance across a wide range of European countries and outside.

Each member supports Rewilding Europe with specific activities that are meaningful and of personal interest to them, based on a yearly plan. In 2017 good progress was made with a variety of contributions, with most Circle members meeting for the first time at the **Wild Ways** event in Amsterdam in April.

During the coming years, we look forward to work closely with each Circle member working towards our mission.

# Our team

In 2017 the Rewilding Europe Team comprised no less than 100 people working from 17 different European countries. An overview of all Rewilding Europe team members in 2017 is presented below, including their position and resident country. The list is updated to the situation of publication of this Annual Review in 2018.

## SUPERVISORY BOARD

**Wiet de Bruijn**  
Chairman (the Netherlands)

**Paul Jepson**  
Member (United Kingdom)

**Odile Rodríguez de la Fuente**  
Member (Spain)

**Lena M Lindén**  
Member (Sweden)

## SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

**Frans Schepers**  
Managing Director  
(the Netherlands)\*

**Ilko Bosman**  
Business & Finance Director  
(the Netherlands)\*

**Wouter Helmer**  
Head of Rewilding (the Netherlands)

**Timon Rutten**  
Head of Enterprise (the Netherlands)

**Deli Saavedra**  
Regional Manager (Spain)

**Alexandros Karamanlidis**  
Regional Manager (Greece)

*\*Executive Directors*

## CENTRAL TEAM

**Violeta Giurgi**  
Finance & Operations Manager  
(the Netherlands)

**Kristjan Jung**  
Communications Manager (Estonia)

**Mei Abraham Elderadzi**  
Communications Manager and  
Coordinator European Rewilding  
Network (Croatia)

**Matthew McLuckie**  
Enterprise Development Manager  
(United Kingdom)

**Simon Collier**  
Wildlife Tourism Manager  
(the Netherlands)

**Annette Mertens**  
LIFE Projects Manager (Italy)

**Dana Bezdičkova**  
LIFE Projects Officer (the  
Netherlands)

**Daniel Allen**  
Writer & Editor (United Kingdom)

**Yvonne Kemp**  
Exchange Officer European Rewilding  
Network (the Netherlands)

**Susan Wright**  
Multimedia Producer (United  
Kingdom)

**Jelle Harms**  
GIS Data Manager (the Netherlands)

**Paulo Oliveira**  
GIS Expert (Germany)

## REWILDING EUROPE CIRCLE

**Princess Laurentien  
of the Netherlands**

**Hannes Jaenicke**  
(Germany)

**Stanley Johnson**  
(United Kingdom)

**Siniša Krajinović**  
(Croatia)

**Claude Martin**  
(Switzerland)

**Vance G. Martin**  
(United States)

**Ladislav Miko**  
(Slovakia)

**Julian Popov**  
(Bulgaria)

**Jordi Sargatal**  
(Spain)

**Paula Sarmento**  
(Portugal)

**Ignace Schops**  
(Belgium)

**Keith Tuffley**  
(Switzerland)

## VOLUNTEERS

**Arne Loth**  
Communications (United Kingdom)

**James Whiteman**  
Enterprise (United Kingdom)

**Elodie Terrier**  
Operations and Coordinator  
Rewilding Europe Circle (France)

## WESTERN IBERIA

*Portugal:*

**Pedro Prata**  
Team Leader

**Nuria Valverde**  
Rewilding Officer (until July 2017)

**Sara Casado Aliácar**  
Rewilding Officer (from July 2017)

**Rafaela Faria**  
Communications Officer

## CENTRAL APENNINES

*Italy:*

**Mario Cipollone**  
Team Leader (2018)

**Alberto Zocchi**  
Team Leader (until end 2017)

**Angela Tavone**  
Communications Officer

**Piero Visconti**  
**Annette Mertens**  
**Carlo Alberto Pratesi**  
Board Rewilding Apennines

## SOUTHERN CARPATHIANS

*Romania:*

**Marina Drugă**  
Team Leader (from November 2017)

**Adrian Hagatis**  
Team Leader (until November 2017)

**Mara Cazacu**  
LIFE Bison Communications Officer

**Mariana Tintarean**  
LIFE Bison Project Assistant

**Florin Halastauan**  
LIFE Bison Project Officer

**Oana Mondoc**  
LIFE Bison Education Expert

**Alexandru Bulacu**  
Rewilding Officer (until October 2017)

**Georg Messerer**  
Wildlife Tourism Officer

**Daniel Hurduzeu**  
Bison Ranger (Țarcu)

**Matei Miculescu**  
Bison Ranger (Țarcu)

**Roland Hauptman**  
Bison Ranger (Poiana Ruscă)

**Marius Gradean**  
Bison Ranger (Poiana Ruscă)

## VELEBIT

*Croatia:*

**Davor Krmpotić**  
Team Leader

**Milan Nekić**  
Rewilding Officer

**Nera Fabijanić**  
Communications Officer

**Nino Salkić**  
Wildlife Officer

**Joseph Vukelic**  
**Nikica Sprem**  
**Marijana Gasparovic Biondic**  
Board Rewilding Velebit

## ODER DELTA

**Suleika Suntken**  
Team Coordinator

*Germany:*

**Ulrich Stocker**  
Team Leader

**Katrin Schikorr**  
Interim Team Coordinator

**Jonatan Rauhut**  
Rewilding Officer

**Stefan Schwill**  
Rewilding Officer

**Martin Schröter**  
Partner HOP,  
Sustainable Tourism expert

*Poland:*

**Iwona Krępic**  
Team Leader (until November 2017)

**Arthur Furdyna**  
Interim Team Leader

## RHODOPE MOUNTAINS

*Bulgaria:*

**Stoycho Stoychev**  
Team Leader

**Stefan Avramov**  
Rewilding Officer

**Hristo Hristov**  
Rewilding Officer

**Dobromir Dobrev**  
Vulture Expert

**Desy Kostadinova**  
LIFE Vulture Project Officer

**Nelly Naydenova**  
LIFE Vulture Communications Officer

**Zoritsa Stavreva**  
LIFE Vultures Enterprise Officer

**Frank Zanderink**  
**Jacqueline van Oorschot** (until June 2018)  
**Petar Iankov**  
**Doriana Milenkova** (from June 2018)  
Board Rewilding Rhodopes

## DANUBE DELTA

*Romania:*

**Serban Ion**  
Team Leader

**Răzvan Crimschi**  
Rewilding Officer

**Stefan Constantinescu**  
**Serban Ion**  
**Deli Saavedra**  
Board Rewilding Danube Delta

*Ukraine:*

**Mykhailo Nesterenko**  
Team Leader

**Oleg Dyakov**  
Field Officer

**Joseph Chernichko**  
**Nataliya Zakorchevnaya**  
**Igor Studennikov**  
Board Rewilding Ukraine

## LAPLAND

*Sweden:*

**Håkan Landström**  
Project Director (until July 2018)

**Linnéa Falk**  
Project Director (from August 2018)

**Nina Siemiatkowski**  
**Lars-Anders Baer**  
**Walter Naeslund**  
**Magnus Sylvén**  
Board Rewilding Sweden



# How can you become involved?

*AS REWILDING EUROPE WORKS TO MAKE EUROPE A WILDER PLACE WE ALWAYS SEEK COLLABORATION WITH CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS, FOUNDATIONS, COMPANIES AND PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS. HERE WE PRESENT SOME OF THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THOSE WISHING TO SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS.*

## *Become active*

Rewilding is a response to growing public demand for a more hopeful, ambitious and exciting form of conservation. The interest and support of European citizens is the bedrock of the continent's conservation movement. There are **many ways** you can help to strengthen the European rewilding movement and be an active part of this growing community.

- Spread the word and promote rewilding via social media by retweeting, sharing articles and images and contributing your own content using #rewilding.
- Choose rewilding as the beneficiary of your charity's fundraising activities. Visit our donation platform to choose one or more actions.
- Include a visit to a rewilding area in your holiday planning. The European Safari Company offers unique experiences to various destinations.
- Learn more from our news and blog about how rewilding complements and extends established approaches to nature conservation.
- Should you be an entrepreneur, conservation or business initiative that shares our rewilding principles, we warmly welcome you to join our European Rewilding Network.



## Partner with us

### BECOME A STRATEGIC FINANCIAL PARTNER

If you are an organisation, public or private institution, foundation or company with the ability and desire to make Europe wilder, we warmly invite you to become our strategic partner. Strategic partners believe in the Rewilding Europe approach, and their support can significantly contribute towards our success at a European level. Examples are our strategic partnerships with the Dutch Postcode Lottery, WWF Netherlands, Adessium Foundation and Fondation Segré.

### BECOME A CORPORATE PARTNER

Companies can engage in our initiative as part of their corporate social responsibility programme, or a desire to reduce their environmental footprint or participate in voluntary biodiversity offsets. We invite companies to discuss such support, which can range from specific services or products at reduced or no-cost through to in-kind advisory work and financial contributions.

### BECOME A MAJOR DONOR

Major donors to Rewilding Europe are private individuals or foundations who like to engage with us at a substantial level. You can make a significant difference to one of our projects, our portfolio in general, or to one of our specific activities. This can also be part of a one-off sponsorship or fundraising action that brings support to us and our work. For individuals or companies residing in the Netherlands, there is also the possibility of a 50% tax reduction. If you or your company are interested, please contact us.

## Invest with us

### INVEST IN REWILDING ENTERPRISES

Rewilding Europe supports the development of nature-based businesses across our rewilding areas and beyond. Our team identifies relevant local entrepreneurs and businesses, welcoming opportunities to connect them with environmentally minded investors or potential business partners. For this purpose we welcome partnerships with private individuals, companies and environmentally minded investors to collaborate in Rewilding Europe Capital's growth.

### INVEST IN WILDLIFE COMEBACK

Rewilding Europe's rapidly developing European Wildlife Bank works to boost wildlife populations in rewilding areas and support natural grazing as a key ecological process. We put a particular focus on large herbivores such as red deer, European bison, chamois, Spanish ibex, wild horses and wild bovines. You can help the European Wildlife Bank by supporting the purchase, translocation or management of animals as your own "investment".

### BECOME A MEMBER OF THE REWILDING EUROPE ENDOWMENT INITIATIVE

Starting in 2017, Rewilding Europe's Endowment Initiative is an exclusive and dedicated financial support initiative that is unique in its set-up and engagement. Its purpose is to contribute to the financial sustainability of Rewilding Europe and its rewilding areas over the medium and long term. Please feel free to request our special brochure which provides fine details and information on the governance and management of this initiative.



## Support us

You can make a positive **contribution** to the rewilding movement in Europe by supporting our work, with all donations made through the online platform on our website gratefully received. As a token of our appreciation, donations are rewarded with a nature-related gift (dependent on the level of contribution). You can select one (or more) of the six specific causes below to support.

- The comeback of the European bison
- The return of the European wild horse to landscapes across Europe
- The comeback of magnificent eagle species
- The purchase and use of wildlife cameras to monitor wildlife and fight wildlife crime
- Youth education programmes and activities
- Pan-European promotions and communications

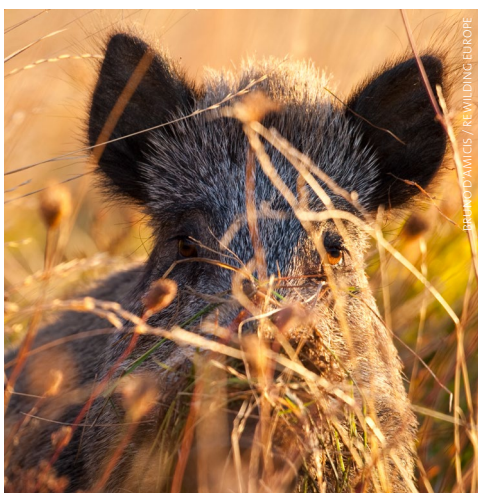
## What can we offer you?

Depending on your personal preferences and level of support, we can offer you a variety of experiences.

- Regular updates on the progress of rewilding projects and invitations to our activities.
- A visit to any of our rewilding areas at any time. We would love to show you the rewilding work being carried out on the ground.
- An invitation to participate in exciting rewilding activities, such as the translocation of animals or research work on European wildlife.
- Participation in one of the "European safaris" offered through the European Safari Company.
- Attendance an annual gathering or event of like-minded individuals where we provide you with insights into Europe's most pressing conservation issues.
- Publications, gifts and branded outdoor gear.

## Further information

For further information, please visit our online donation platform at [www.rewildingeurope.com/support/donations/](http://www.rewildingeurope.com/support/donations/) or contact us at [info@rewildingeurope.com](mailto:info@rewildingeurope.com). We will do everything we can to ensure that the nature of your support corresponds with your ideas and desires.



What if you could  
make Europe a  
**WILDER** place  
by going on  
holiday?



The European Safari Company, established in 2017, offers a growing number of thrilling and totally immersive experiences across the European continent. From bison tracking in the Romanian Carpathians to sleeping under the stars in the Portuguese Côa Valley.

Explore Europe's wild landscapes, wildlife, local culture and gastronomy while supporting local rewilding initiatives and communities at the same time.

Visit [www.europeansafaricompany.com](http://www.europeansafaricompany.com) to plan your European safari.



EUROPEAN SAFARI COMPANY

# A heartfelt thank you

From funding partners, advisors, scientists and photographers through to conservationists, enterprise specialists and members of the media, a hugely diverse range of organisations and individuals provided indispensable support to Rewilding Europe in 2017. To all those who helped us move forward in 2017 – whether you are listed below or not – we truly appreciate your support and look forward to continued cooperation with you in the years to come.

## FUNDING PARTNERS

Adessium Foundation  
(the Netherlands)  
Dutch Postcode Lottery  
(the Netherlands)  
European Commission (Belgium)  
European Investment Bank  
(Luxembourg)  
Fondation Segré (Switzerland)  
Svenska Postkod Stiftelsen  
(Sweden)  
Worldwide Fund for Nature  
(the Netherlands)

## ADVISORS

Clifford Chance – Adam Eagle  
(UK), Sylvia van der Heiden  
(the Netherlands)  
codelight.eu – Indrek  
Kõnnusaar (Estonia)  
De Jong & Laan Accountants –  
Harry Wanningen  
(the Netherlands)  
Kraak Holdinga Matthijssen  
Notarissen – Bart Kraak  
(the Netherlands)  
LDNG – Derk Bothe  
(the Netherlands)  
Remmers Financieel Centrum –  
Frank Remmers  
(the Netherlands)  
Versteeg Wigman Sprey  
advocaten – Roland Wigman  
(the Netherlands)

## REWILDING

ARK Nature – Jos Rademakers,  
Esther Blom, Yvonne Kemp  
(the Netherlands)  
Bellewaerde – Stefaan Lemey  
(Belgium)  
BirdLife Europe and Central  
Asia – Ariel Brunner, Wouter  
Langhout (Belgium)  
Bulgarian Society for the  
Protection of Birds (BSPB) –  
Stoycho Stoychev, Dobromir  
Dobrev, Volen Akumarev  
Hellenic Ornithological Society  
(HOS, Greece) – Konstantina  
Ntemiri

Cambridge Conservation  
Initiative – David Thomas  
(United Kingdom)  
Dam Removal Europe – Jeroen  
van Herk (the Netherlands)  
European Bison Pedigree Book –  
Malgorzata Bolbot (Poland)  
European Bison Conservation  
Center – Wanda Oleg (Poland)  
European Environmental Bureau  
– Pieter Depous (Belgium)  
EEB – Leonardo Mazza  
IUCN Europe – Luc Bas, Chantal  
van Ham (Belgium)  
Large Carnivore Initiative Europe  
– Luigi Boitani (Italy)  
Municipality of Avesta – Anders  
Friberg, Lars Isacson, Mikael  
Jansson (Sweden)  
Neumunster Tierpark – Verena  
Kaspari (Germany)  
Parco Natura Viva – Cesare  
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Prince Albert II of Monaco  
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(Monaco)  
Rewilding Britain – Charlie  
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(United Kingdom)  
Rewilding Scotland – David  
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Taurus Foundation – Ronald  
Goderie, Paul Jans  
(Netherlands)  
Tierpark Berlin – Christian Kern  
(Germany)  
Vulture Conservation  
Foundation – José Tavares  
(Switzerland)  
Wildlife park Han-sur-Lesse –  
Etienne Brunel (Belgium)  
WILD Foundation – Vance  
Martin (United States)  
Wild Wonders of Europe –  
Magnus Lundgren, Staffan  
Widstrand (Sweden)  
Wisentgehege Springe – Thomas  
Hennig (Germany)  
WWF European Policy Office –  
Andreas Baumüller, Sabien  
Leemans (Belgium)  
WWF Romania – Orieta Hulea  
(Romania)

## BUSINESS

Bencis Capital Partners – Zoran  
van Gessel (Belgium)  
Biotope – Fabien Quetier (France)  
Conservation Capital - Giles  
Davies and Neil Birnie (United  
Kingdom)  
LifeLine Outdoor – Sebastiaan  
van Beek (the Netherlands)  
Municipality of Nijmegen  
– Michiel Huntinx (the  
Netherlands)  
Patagonia Europe – Mihela  
Mladin Wolfe (the  
Netherlands)  
Skua Nature Group –  
Massimiliano Biasoli, Paola  
Maria Traspardini (Italy)  
Toyota Motor Europe – Steve  
Hope, Guillermo Denaux  
(Belgium)  
Wildlife Monitoring Solutions  
– Lennart Suselbeek (the  
Netherlands)

## SCIENTIFIC

Aarhus University – Jens-Cristian  
Svenning (Denmark)  
Free University Amsterdam  
– Sjoerd Kluiving (the  
Netherlands)  
German Centre for Integrative  
Biodiversity Research (iDiv)  
– Henrique Pereira, Néstor  
Fernández and Aurora Torres  
(Germany)  
NIOO-KNAW – Louise Vet,  
Liesbeth Bakker (the  
Netherlands)  
Oxford University – Paul Jepson  
and Ricardo Correia (United  
Kingdom)  
Wageningen University –  
Herbert Prins, Patrick Jansen  
(the Netherlands)  
University of Brussels – Mihnea  
Tanăscu (Belgium)  
University of Nijmegen – Luca  
Santini (the Netherlands)  
University of Utrecht –  
Liesbeth van der Grift  
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We are both happy and fortunate to work with a number of strong, active and very committed partners. Their firm and highly valued support has allowed us to get to where we are now, and we look forward to achieving more with them in the years ahead.

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