



FRANK SCHEPERS / REWILDING EUROPE

Wildlife cameraman Louis Labrom, who shot footage for “Europe’s New Wild”, filming the bison release in Romania.

Wild about film

A TRIO OF MEDIA PRODUCTIONS BOOST REWILDING OUTREACH.

High up on an alpine plateau in Swedish Lapland a tense stand-off plays out. It’s early May and wildlife cameraman Louis Labrom and Rewilding Europe’s multimedia producer Susan Wright are waiting for a herd of reindeer to embark on their spring migration. Soon the animals will journey around 200 kilometres from the Swedish interior to the Norwegian coast. The only question is, when?

As the reindeer herd scrapes through the snow searching for lichen, the lead female looks on, immobile and seemingly unconcerned. The animals’ human escort, which also includes a pair of Sámi herders, are less relaxed, as they check gear, fret about schedules, and attempt to keep warm.

“It was a bit nerve-racking,” explains Wright, as she recalls the experience. “All reindeer herds

have a female leaders, so we had to wait for this one to start the migration. We had a quite a small window of time to shoot the material we needed, so everyone was desperately willing the matriarch to make the first move.”

In the end, the herd finally set off, making their way gradually westward across a still frozen yet slowly thawing landscape. Using a snowmobile to leapfrog the itinerant herbivores, Labrom is able to capture some stunning drone footage, and the mission is declared a success.

“Swedish Lapland is one of the most dramatic places I’ve ever filmed,” says Labrom. “It’s such a vast, starkly beautiful place. It was sad to hear stories about how the reindeer migration is in danger of disappearing forever. But it was good to make a record of it, and to relay the drama and scale of this unique event to a global audience.”



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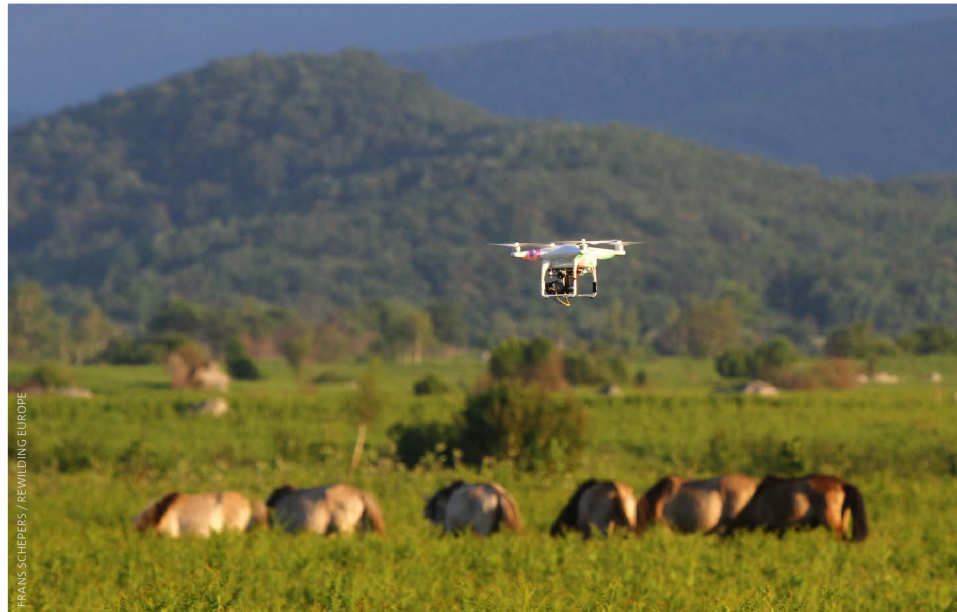
A six-part spectacle

Involving the time-honoured movement of tens of thousands of animals, the twice-yearly migration of reindeer (between summering and wintering grounds) defines Swedish Lapland, shaping landscapes, ecology and indigenous culture. Yet many people, in Europe and beyond, are unaware of its existence, and the existential threats it faces from mining and intensive forestry, which are drastically reducing the availability of the lichen on which reindeer depend.

That lack of awareness will soon change, however, with the release of a new six-part television series entitled "Europe's New Wild", in which Louis Labrom's reindeer migration footage is just one in a multitude of natural cinematographic spectacles. Co-produced by Rewilding Europe and Off the Fence Productions, and sponsored by National Geographic International, WWF Netherlands and Canon Europe, it will broadcast in September 2020.

"Europe's New Wild visualises the spectacular recovery of nature now happening across much of Europe," explains Laurien Holtjer, Rewilding Europe's Head of Communications. "Profiling the rewilding process and wildlife comeback in most of Rewilding Europe's operational areas, it will change the way people think about wild nature in Europe, and its conservation."

"An intimate portrayal of wildlife behaviour and conservation, Europe's New Wild simply looks incredible," adds Andrew Zikking, Creative Director at Off the Fence. "Every episode tells a different story, but the series has a unifying theme – the return of magnificent European wild nature and the positive impact of rewilding."



Filming wild-living horses in Lika Plains, Croatia, to illustrate the importance of natural grazing.



Shooting for Europe's New Wild in the magnificent Danube Delta, Romania.

Global outreach

The outreach of Europe's New Wild will span the globe. Airing on the Nat Geo Wild TV channel, it will broadcast in more than 45 languages, reaching at least 140 million homes in more than 160 countries. It will also feature on a number of European terrestrial channels.

"I think the series will open people's eyes across the world," says Susan Wright, who also helped the production team gather footage of black vulture artificial nest building in the Rhodope Mountains rewilding area. "Apart from showcasing the amazing wildlife that Europeans have on their doorstep, which I think many people are simply unaware of, it also shows how resilient nature is, and how it can and will bounce back if we let it."

BY THE NUMBERS



6 episodes of **44** minutes
in Europe's New Wild. It will
broadcast in **45** languages,
reaching at least **140** million
homes in more than **160**
countries. Over **1000** hours
of footage shot for Europe's
New Wild, representing **250**
TB of data.



Water buffalo free-roaming and swimming are interested in the cameraman at Ermakov Island, Ukrainian Danube Delta.



Award-winning French filmmaker and photographer Emmanuel Rondeau, who produced "Zimbrul" in 2019.

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photographer Emmanuel Rondeau from White Fox Pictures. Released in November, it showcases the ongoing reintroduction of European bison in the Southern Carpathians of Romania by Rewilding Europe and WWF Romania, seen through the eyes of the people in the local village of Armeniş.

Featuring numerous one-to-one conversations with residents and people working in the Southern Carpathians rewilding area – including the former mayor of Armeniş (who approved the reintroduction programme) and a bison ranger – Zimbrul has already won glowing reviews for its authenticity and understated beauty.

"I didn't want to promote anything with pre-conceived ideas in Zimbrul," says Emmanuel Rondeau. "I wanted to depict emotions and try to make people say what they had in their mind. This film is about diving into the reality of an incredible event – the comeback of a legendary species – and how people feel about it.

"Zimbrul shows that in life, not everything is black or white," he continues. "Some people will always be passionate about nature. But I think the most interesting thing is that the return of the bison has triggered something in people who'd never cared about nature before. In many communities, the comeback of these animals has placed nature back in the centre of the discussion."

With filming for Zimbrul taking place on a tight, six-day schedule, Rewilding Southern Carpathians Communications Officer Bianca Stefanut played a major role in facilitating production.

"We had many days of sun and rain, so keeping equipment dry was a real challenge," she says. "Yet thanks to a well-planned schedule and to Emmanuel's brilliant eye and storytelling skills, we managed to cram a lot in. I'm overjoyed that the voices of the people of Armeniş can be heard in Romania, and all over the world, through this documentary."



Louis Labrom, who also filmed European bison being released in the Southern Carpathians rewilding area and some beautiful aerial footage of the Danube Delta for Europe's New Wild, agrees.

"I think this is the first television series devoted entirely to rewilding," he says. "The growing coverage demonstrates how rewilding is really gaining traction as an effective and inspirational approach to conservation."

Lives through the lens

Wild nature-based media productions don't always need multimillion-dollar budgets to capture hearts and minds.

Also shot in 2019 was "Zimbrul" (Romanian for "bison"), a candid nine-minute documentary by award-winning French filmmaker and

BY THE NUMBERS



3 media productions featuring Rewilding Europe aired or finalised in 2019.



SUSAN WRIGHT/REWILDING EUROPE

European exposure

Rounding out a great year for media production and coverage, Franco-German television network ARTE broadcast the first ever documentary about European rewilding in France and Germany in May, with a combined viewership of around 1.5 million.

Put together by French production company Bonne Pioche and titled "L'Europe à la reconquête de la biodiversité" ("European rewilding"), the dramatic production provided a comprehensive overview of rewilding, with significant coverage of Rewilding Europe's work. It presented a range of European rewilding areas and initiatives, including the Southern Carpathians in Romania and the Greater Côa Valley in Portugal.

"We were really happy with the documentary," says Bonne Pioche Executive Producer Vincent Perazio. "Rewilding hasn't really taken hold yet in France as it has in other European countries, so it was good to show people what rewilding means and what it can achieve."

Bonne Pioche will also handle the airing of Europe's New Wild on the France 5 television channel in 2020, with a target audience of around 800,000 viewers per episode.

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Compelling communications

Films that feature wildlife and wild nature can be incredibly powerful. The diverse and captivating footage that was collected and aired in 2019 is boosting Rewilding Europe's efforts to spread the message about rewilding and its positive impact enormously.

"Professional media productions such as Europe's New Wild not only tell stories, but create emotional bonds too," says Laurien Holtjer. "There's nothing like seeing a reintroduced bison explore its new home in the Southern Carpathians, or a Marsican female bear and cubs emerge from their den in the Central Apennines, to convey the fact that rewilding offers us all a brighter future. If you need a little more convincing, just stay tuned in September."

BOONNE PIOCHE®

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Around **1.5** million French and German viewers watched "L'Europe à la reconquête de la biodiversité".