

World Rewilding Day

March 20 is World Rewilding Day. But what is rewilding? And how is wilder nature better for animals, people and the planet? Read the article to find out more.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–j) with the vocabulary (1–10).

Vocabulary

1. to restore
2. an ecosystem
3. extinct
4. a habitat
5. to heal
6. a riverbank
7. to erode
8. a predator
9. excrement
10. to spread the word

Definition

- a. no longer existing (of an animal or plant)
- b. an animal that kills and eats other animals
- c. to become well and healthy again after an injury or illness
- d. to return something to how it was before
- e. to communicate a message to a lot of people
- f. the natural home of an animal or plant
- g. the land along the sides of a river
- h. the system of all the living things in an environment, and the way they connect with each other
- i. to slowly be reduced or disappear
- j. solid waste from a person or animal

World Rewilding Day

What is rewilding?

‘To rewild’, or ‘re-wild’, means ‘to make something wild again’. The idea is to restore natural environments to their original state, back to how they were before human activity damaged them. Rewilding aims to put nature, not humans, in control. By bringing back the wild animals and plant life that naturally existed there before, we can help ecosystems like rivers, oceans, forests, mountains and grasslands to recover. Rewilding does not generally involve direct actions such as humans planting trees. Instead, we must step back and allow nature to take care of the process.

Why do we need rewilding?

Our planet, and our life support system, is in serious trouble. Rivers are polluted, oceans are full of plastic and forests are dying. Many plants and animals have become extinct, and many more are in danger. We have taken much of their wild habitat and changed it into land for farming and building. Climate chaos is another terrible example of the result of human actions

over centuries. The aim of rewilding is to allow some of this damage to heal by helping environments become more natural again.

What are the results of a successful rewilding project?

In 1995, an inspiring rewilding project took place in Yellowstone National Park, USA. For almost 70 years, there hadn't been any wolves in the park. As a result, there were too many deer and they were eating all the trees and plants. This reduced the numbers of many animals, such as birds, beavers and cold-water fish, and even changed the rivers, when their banks started to erode.

So, to control the number of deer, wolves were reintroduced to the park. The result was amazing. The behaviour of the deer changed. They now stayed away from the rivers, where the wolves often would go. This meant small trees now had a chance to grow tall. Some grew five times their height in just six years. With healthier forests, birds and other wildlife came back. Even bears reappeared because now there were plants to eat. The riverbanks became stronger again – thanks to all the new trees – and river animals returned. Reintroducing the top predator allowed nature to find its balance.

Can rewilding happen in oceans?

Rewilding can also happen in oceans. Healthier oceans create a healthier planet. The Earth's temperature is rising because greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide (CO₂) trap heat in the atmosphere. You probably know that trees absorb carbon from the atmosphere. But did you know that whales also do the same thing? During its lifetime, one large whale can absorb around 33,000 kilograms of carbon, while a tree absorbs 22 kilograms a year.

Where there are whales, there are also tiny living creatures that live on the surface of the sea, called phytoplankton. They also absorb carbon dioxide. In fact, phytoplankton absorb an estimated 40 per cent of the CO₂ in our atmosphere. That makes phytoplankton really important in the fight against climate change. And it makes whales especially important, because whale excrement feeds phytoplankton.

Sadly, the whale population is just a quarter of what it was centuries ago. Rewilding would mean not only stopping whale hunting but also creating protected areas where fishing and shipping are banned. Rewilding the ocean by banning human activity in certain areas would increase the whale population and fuel phytoplankton, restoring the marine ecosystems that absorb CO₂.

What is World Rewilding Day?

On 20 March 2021, people across the planet celebrated the first ever World Rewilding Day. The day continues to be held every year, and is organised by the Global Rewilding Alliance.

The aim of the day is to raise awareness of rewilding and inspire people to get involved in projects that help nature to recover. The message is that together we can change and rewild the world! You can find out more, join an event or organise your own using the links below. You can also help spread the word about rewilding and share the hope it offers for wildlife, nature and the people on our planet.

Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. Rewilding is about making sure humans are in charge of nature.	True	False
2. The most important task for rewilders is to plant trees.	True	False
3. Rewilding is necessary to repair the damage that human activity has caused.	True	False
4. For nature to recover in Yellowstone National Park, it was necessary to get rid of the biggest predator there.	True	False
5. Whales can help control global warming.	True	False
6. Restoring ecosystems in the sea is helpful for life on land too.	True	False
7. World Rewilding Day has been celebrated for over a century.	True	False
8. According to the article, one way to support rewilding is to tell other people about it.	True	False

Task 2

Complete the sentences with words from the box.

spread	restore	become	ban
raise	take	absorb	trap

- The aim of rewilding is to natural places to how they were before they were damaged.
- Rewilding often means stepping back and allowing nature to care of the process.
- Many plants and animals have extinct, and many more are in danger.
- Global warming is happening because greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide heat in the atmosphere.
- One large whale can around 33,000 kilograms of carbon in its lifetime.
- To support whales and restore marine ecosystems, we need to shipping and fishing in some areas.
- The aim of World Rewilding Day is to awareness of rewilding and inspire people to get involved in rewilding projects.
- The Global Rewilding Alliance invites us to the word about the benefits of rewilding.

Discussion

What do you think about rewilding?

Answers

Preparation task

1. d
2. h
3. a
4. f
5. c
6. g
7. i
8. b
9. j
10. e

Task 1

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True
6. True
7. False
8. True

Task 2

1. restore
2. take
3. become
4. trap
5. absorb
6. ban
7. raise
8. spread