

FUNDACIÓN  
**REWILDING  
CHILE**

*The Legacy of Tompkins Conservation*

**TOMPKINS  
CONSERVATION**

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# REWILDING CHILE & TOMPKINS CONSERVATION

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*Location: Chile*

## **Wilder Rangelands Case Study**

*Rangelands Working Group,  
Global Rewilding Alliance*



**Rewilding**  
THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE

*Photo credits: Rewilding Chile*

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*Huemul, Chile - Photo credits: Cristian Saucedo*



# Overview

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*The Global Rewilding Alliance has convened Alliance Partners — including Rewilding Chile & Tompkins Conservation — and cross-sector experts through its Rangelands Working Group to launch the Rewilding Rangelands Initiative: a coordinated effort to restore ecological function and foster coexistence across the world's rangelands.*

Large swathes of southern Chile, including Patagonia, were historically managed as extensive livestock rangelands, supporting cattle and sheep ranching for over a century. While economically productive in the short-term, this land-use has led to overgrazing, soil degradation, the loss of native vegetation, habitat fragmentation and declines in wildlife populations.

In the early 1990s, Douglas and Kristine Tompkins, through Tompkins Conservation, **acquired big tracks of lands, restored them, and donated them to Chile** to transform them into national parks.



*Patagonia Park - Photo credits: Linde Waidhofer*

Tompkins Conservation donated 500,000 hectares to help create seven national parks in Chile.

Today, their offspring organization, Rewilding Chile, continues to reverse the ecological degradation in a number of these vast landscapes by **enabling the return of native species and ecological processes.**



APPROACH:

# From Rangeland to Wildland

## Removing Degrading Pressures

Tompkins Conservation, with the Chilean team today known as Rewilding Chile, gradually removed tens of thousands of livestock from former ranchlands, dismantled fencing and infrastructure that once fragmented habitats and restricted wildlife movement, and ended extractive land uses, **allowing soils and native vegetation to recover naturally and enabling wildlife corridors to reconnect.**



*Condor Release in Patagonia National Parks in collaboration with Manku project (January 2026).  
Photo credit: Franco Davico.*

## Active Grassland and Steppe Restoration

The team has worked to restore native grasslands and Patagonian steppe ecosystems that have been heavily impacted by grazing. In Patagonia National Park, this restoration work has included **removing invasive species and reseeding native grasses**, such as Coirón, in severely degraded areas to accelerate recovery. Over time, these efforts can bring tangible results in regenerating soils and controlling erosion.



## APPROACH:

# From Rangeland to Wildland

### Species Conservation

Restoring natural grazing, seed dispersion, and predator-prey relationships is helping recreate healthy and resilient ecosystems. In Patagonia National Park, many native species were low in number or functionally extinct. **Herds of Guanacos**, the largest herbivore in Chile, returned to the grasslands when fences and threats were removed, followed by **Pumas**, the apex predator. **Darwin's Rheas**, of which very few remained, came back thanks to a multi-pronged strategy that included the construction of the first breeding center in a Chilean national park, translocations from other parts of Chile, and also the first-ever international translocation from Argentina to Chile.



*Darwin's Rhea (Nandu) released in Patagonia National Parks (May 2023).  
Photo credit: James Alfaro.*

One of the most endangered mammals on the planet, the **Huemul deer** is starting to return, thanks to efforts to reconnect isolated populations through the National Huemul Corridor, which spans the length of the Route of Parks, with a new Huemul rescue center inaugurated in late 2025 adjacent to Cerro Castillo National Park. Rewilding Chile also manages programs with other species such as the **Andean Condors**, **small cat species**, **amphibians**, **Ruddyheaded Geese**, and other threatened species along the Route of Parks.



APPROACH:

# From Rangeland to Wildland

## Long-Term Landscape Protection

To secure the long-term protection of these landscapes, Tompkins Conservation and Rewilding Chile donated them to the Chilean state, **becoming national parks**, the most durable category of conservation.

Today, Rewilding Chile is working on a new large-scale conservation project in the southern tip of the American continent: **the future Cape Froward National Park**.

Local communities are integral to the long-term success of conservation.

Working with local communities, they have become the guardians of these protected areas, and have found growing economic opportunities related to nature-based tourism.



*Huemul in Cabo Froward (May 2024). Photo credit: Diego Nahuel Diaz*



# Outcomes & Impact

- Large-scale recovery of degraded rangelands, transitioning from overgrazed pastures to **functioning native grassland ecosystems**.
- Improved soil stability and vegetation cover, reducing erosion and increasing **resilience to climate extremes**.
- **Return of native wildlife**, with expanding populations and restored ecological interactions.
- Creation of one of the world's most ambitious examples of **rangeland-to-wildland conversion**.
- The creation of national parks safeguards **water, land and air quality**; enables public access; and spurs the creation of **regenerative economies** that benefit local communities.

A powerful model for restoring rangeland ecosystems globally while delivering social, biodiversity, climate, and landscape resilience benefits.

Rewilding Chile and Tompkins Conservation demonstrate that degraded rangelands can recover at scale when livestock pressure is reduced, native species are restored, and ecological processes are allowed to take place and evolve.

**Read more [here](#).**



*Guanaco in Patagonia National Park. Photo credit: Patagonia National Park, Rewilding Chile.*



# Part of a larger effort

These case studies are part of the the **Rewilding Rangelands Initiative** — a collaborative effort to restore ecological functionality and uplift coexistence across rangelands through coordinated action across disciplines, sectors, and geographies.

A growing coalition of the Global Rewilding Alliance, Alliance Partners and experts have joined the Rangelands Working Group.

Explore other [case studies](#) and learn more about the [Initiative](#).

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## ABOUT THE GLOBAL REWILDING ALLIANCE

The Global Rewilding Alliance is a worldwide organisation catalysing the rewilding movement by bringing together an active network of over 290 partners, working on every continent to help nature heal herself and secure a thriving future for people, nature and planet.

Our mission is to mainstream rewilding in science, policy and practice.

The core support of our Global Rewilding [Champions](#) is enabling us to build the hopeful, growing, global rewilding movement.

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*Published May 2026*

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