

Press release: embargo OOOI on Wednesday 20th March 2024

## World Rewilding Day: putting hope into action

World Rewilding Day 2024 is tomorrow, Wednesday 20th March, a global celebration of the rewilding movement. Rewilding is a 'system catalyst' - a new idea that can solve many problems at once. Rewilders are putting hope into action as they address the climate emergency, reversing biodiversity loss, managing water, generating new income opportunities, *and* converting widespread eco-anxiety into hope, whether it is through:

- Bringing more wildlife into cities
- Creating beautiful nature corridors that encourage people to walk and cycle
- Re-creating natural flood defences to catch water from cloudbursts
- Returning lost species to huge landscapes, offering new livelihoods for local people
- Reducing the threat of climate change by enabling landscapes to draw down carbon.

**In South America**, Rewilding Chile, Rewilding Argentina and Tompkins Conservation are releasing species such as Condors, Jaguars, Parrots, Giant Anteaters and Giant Otters into landscapes that have not seen them for decades. Rewilding Chile is creating a National Huemul Corridor to help the survival of this species of deer, which is key to the entire ecosystem. Rewilding organisation Felinos do Aguaí have been releasing wild cats back to restored habitat, as have Instituto Fauna Brasil, who also work with Parrots and Howler Monkeys, for example releasing a group of the latter to an island called Santa Catarina, where they have not been seen for 260 years..

**In Australia**, WWF-Australia have been rewilding Platypus in areas where they have been absent for 50 years. Through their *Cores, Corridors and Koalas* programme, Great Eastern Ranges and WWF-Australia have been working to restore and connect critical habitat for the koala and other forest-dependent native animals. A virtual fence (using technology rather than physical fences) along the New South Wales South Coast road has drastically reduced wildlife roadkill, from 5 kangaroos and wallabies a week to 5 in 8 months.

**In Africa**, the Peace Parks Foundation have rewilded 29 species of large wildlife species to Mozambique including two species of Rhino, Elephants, whole herds of Antelope, Giraffes and Hyenas, re-creating entire ecosystems. At the smaller end, Ferncliffe Forest Wilding has teamed up with the Songamanzi Youth Movement to clear invasive species from a vulnerable rare forest habitat, seeing rapid results with the return of native rodents and birds of prey. In

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Mali, researchers and rewilders have worked with local communities to protect a vulnerable, isolated population of elephants, creating benefits for local people too, such as better access to water in the dry season.

**In India, the Wildlife Conservation Trust** has sought to reduce conflict with wildlife in forest areas - and danger for humans: 11,458 households have adopted biomass-fuelled water heaters, leading to 30% fewer visits to the forest per year, reduced exposure to smoke compared to a traditional chulha, 1.5 tonnes of CO2 emissions reduced per year per household, and 70% lower consumption of firewood.

**In North America**, an employee of the rewilding organisation American Prairie stumbled across grizzly bear tracks along the Judith River in October 2023. This was later substantiated via images captured on a camera trap several weeks later. This event marks the first verified instance of a grizzly bear in the Missouri River Breaks in nearly a century. Elsewhere, dam removal has seen migratory fish species recover from the low hundreds to millions on one river alone.

**In Europe, Rewilding Europe** and many partners have played their role to bring back the European Bison from the brink of extinction in 1924, when only 54 were left alive, all in captivity. In the last 10 years, the number of free-roaming European bison has increased to around 7,000 individuals. As a 'keystone species', Bison benefit nearly 600 species of animals and 200 species of plants. Elsewhere, the release of 14 cinereous vultures in 2022 and another 13 in 2023, contributes to reinforcing the natural cycle of life and biodiversity. Rewilders are bringing back dozens of species from Hamsters to wild horses, removing dams to allow fish to run the rivers and spawn again, which sometimes return within weeks.

**Globally, Re:Wild** have been on the hunt for lost species, and have found 12 so far. These are species that have not been recorded in recent years - sometimes for decades. And in their work to protect and restore populations of amphibians, Re:wild has assessed 8000+ amphibian species, providing valuable insight for future conservation. In Anguilla, the population of the Sombrero Ground Lizard, a Critically Endangered species, increased from fewer than 100 in 2018 to over 1,100 in 2022.

All of these rewilding successes have been brought together in a 50-page "[Collective Impact Report](#)" for the growing global rewilding movement, the first attempt to assess the progress of rewilding around the world.

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The last year has seen a huge surge in confidence in the global rewilding movement, as a result of five things, including the:

- many experiences on the ground that are showing success, often rapidly
- scientific evidence about the central role that rewilding could play in mitigating the climate emergency and regulate water flows
- rigorous evidence that rewilders are collecting to measure their successes
- connections between rewilders across continents, learning from each other
- burgeoning interest from policymakers, private investors and the general public.

Karl Wagner, Managing Director of the Global Rewilding Alliance said: *"In all these ways and more, rewilders are challenging the easy assumption that human progress necessarily means the decline of nature. What is more, we are showing how flourishing nature is the bedrock of human wellbeing and prosperity, in a myriad of ways in different places to suit the local circumstances. Helping nature to come roaring back is turning the tide and supporting a positive development of society."*

### **About the Global Rewilding Alliance**

The [Global Rewilding Alliance](#) is a worldwide organisation working with rewilders on every continent to help nature heal itself and secure a thriving future for people, nature and planet.

The Alliance is a partnership of rewilding organisations, with 175 Alliance Partners worldwide - and we are gaining on average one new Alliance Partner each week. Together, we are building the global rewilding movement. The Alliance also coordinates World Rewilding Day on 20th March each year. This year is the 4th.

By initiating the comeback of numerous wildlife species and working hand-in-hand with indigenous and local communities, rewilding is restoring healthy ecosystems. These functional ecosystems capture vast amounts of carbon, provide fresh air and clean water, reduce flood, fire and drought, and stabilise extreme weather - that are vital to our prosperity, survival, and security.

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