



Rewilding  
Europe

# Rewilding Europe

## Making Europe a Wilder Place

- Turning problems into opportunities
- Rewilding a million hectares
- Building Rewilding enterprises
- Massive public outreach





MANUEL PRESTI / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



STAFFAN WIDSTRAND / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



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Bringing back the variety of life for us all to enjoy. Exploring new ways for people to earn a fair living from the wild.



#### Colofon

Rewilding Europe originates from an initiative by the World Wide Fund for Nature-Netherlands, ARK Nature, Wild Wonders of Europe and Conservation Capital

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# What are we waiting for?

Rewilding Europe is an ambitious, new initiative which aims to turn a problematic situation into an opportunity. The urbanisation and the depopulation of rural areas is presently resulting in large-scale land abandonment of the countryside in many parts of Europe. Instead of only being perceived as a problem, this could also be turned into an opportunity. New possibilities for employment and business, as well as new space for the return of wilder nature in one of the most crowded continents of the world. This could provide the basis for innovative ways of using the land in Europe, for the people who want to remain, live and work in these areas and also for those who like to enjoy natural landscapes, with abundant wildlife, exciting activities and attractive sceneries – some of which probably have never been experienced before by any modern person.

To grasp these opportunities, a change in mind-set and perspective is required. We need to realise that some of the ways we have made use of nature across the continent are simply not economically viable any more, especially not on the low-productive soils. We also need to realise that wild nature is something genuinely European and intimately linked to our cultural history and our heritage. It is about core identity and not at all something alien or strange.

The Rewilding Europe initiative was launched in 2010 to try to explore some of these new opportunities. We selected a group of five areas out of more than 20 different nominations from all across Europe, to create a first set of model areas for this new rewilding approach: the

Danube Delta (Romania), the Eastern Carpathians (Poland, Slovakia), the Southern Carpathians (Romania), Velebit (Croatia) and Western Iberia (Portugal, Spain). In 2011, the Rewilding Europe Foundation, a not-for-profit foundation, was formally registered. In 2013, an additional set of five rewilding areas will be presented at WILD 10, the World Wilderness Congress.

Outlined within this document, we have set ourselves an ambitious vision, clear goals and concrete milestones to be reached by the year 2020. Our focus is to create at least 1 million hectares of new wild lands across Europe by 2020. However, the ambition is to also stimulate similar initiatives in many other parts of the continent, thereby influencing a shift in the land use of some 10 million hectares towards a wilder state, with much more wildlife and more of the natural processes back at work. By doing so, we hope to inspire a new sense of 'pride in the wild' amongst the wider European audience.

You are invited to join us. To explore new avenues for the future that will benefit both nature and the citizens of Europe. Welcome to a wilder, 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe!



*Frans Schepers*

Frans Schepers,  
Managing Director









# Europe is changing

## **A short history of European nature**

Many believe that Europe's open landscapes first appeared with the introduction of agriculture, but in fact most of these habitats have far more ancient origins. In the past we have often thought of the vast forests as being the only "real" European wilderness, which is not surprising considering that many of our most important and common wild herbivores became extinct a long time ago. With them, we lost our extensive natural steppes and other (semi-) open landscapes. In the absence of the heavy grazing and browsing, the landscape quickly changed. Later, domestic cattle and horses gradually replaced these wild animals and in part maintained some of their ecological functions, but now these livestock too are disappearing from the countryside and many of the remaining primeval forests are being cut down.

## **Urbanisation and land abandonment**

Every period in time brings with it opportunities and challenges. The 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe is no different. We are exposed to economic downturn, health deterioration,

social conflict, the loss of biodiversity and natural disasters increasingly associated with climate change.

One change that is less noticed is the urbanization of the world. In Europe this is particularly prominent. Over the last 50 years, Europe's cities have expanded on average by 78%, whereas the population has grown by only 33%. By 2020, it is estimated that 4 out of 5 European citizens will live in urban areas. With the depopulation of the countryside, an ageing rural society and competition through globalisation, more and more land is being taken out of agricultural production. Between 1960 and 2000, the European countryside experienced a dramatic change in land use. Marginal areas of less importance for agricultural production have been particularly affected by this land abandonment: the Alps, Pyrenees, Portugal, central Spain, Sardinia, former East Germany, the Baltic States, the Carpathians, Poland, north Sweden, north Finland and the Balkans. Further land abandonment is forecasted to continue until 2030, according to the Institute

for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), particularly in Spain, Portugal, parts of Finland, Sweden and Greece, highland areas of France, Italy, central Europe, Romania, Bulgaria and the UK. Estimates indicate a total decline of agriculture, grasslands and semi-natural habitats of more than 30 million hectares and a subsequent increase of forest or bush areas across the EU.

## **The threat**

Low-intensity grazing and small, semi-subsistence farms often occur on marginal land, unsuited to alternative production and are particularly vulnerable to changes in the socio-economic climate. In some EU states (France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania and the UK), the biofuel market is expected to grow, putting pressure on grasslands in the more fertile areas. But the biggest 'threat' to natural values may come from afforestation of farmland and spontaneous forest expansion of abandoned marginal farmland or even worse: deliberately through huge plantations funded with public money.



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*The young are leaving the countryside for the cities. By 2030 it is expected that 30 million hectares of farming and grazing land in Europe will have been abandoned. Much of that land can be re-wilded.*



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Since 1958 the EU Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) has played an important role in shaping the agricultural landscape in Europe. The winners have been farmers on the most fertile soils – but not their colleagues trying to survive in the more marginal areas. A new reform of CAP is scheduled for 2013 and is likely to continue the current trend of shifting production away from the less productive areas to the more fertile.

Many of these marginal farmlands have served as strongholds for the large part of Europe's biological wealth that have often been associated with the traditionally farmed landscapes. However, with the custodians of some of these treasures - the small-scale, traditional farmers and herdsman – now leaving, Europe's natural heritage is facing a tremendous challenge. Once abandoned, the semi-open landscape quickly changes, with shrubs and young trees invading the open patches, while the multitude of species that were adapted specifically to the open landscapes become isolated and trapped.

If nothing is done, we risk creating a “digital” Europe – with intensive farming on the fertile soils and industrial forest plantations

and bush dominating the less productive regions. The result will be an almost irreversible decline of a significant number of our plants and animals. That would lead to a new, poor and vulnerable face of Europe, never experienced before in human history.

#### **The opportunity**

But could the present depopulation of the European countryside also provide some solutions for the people who decide to stay on there? And at the same time provide a solution for biodiversity? Could some of those areas that are now taken out of farming be returned to naturally functioning areas? With ideally all the important species and processes once again shaping the vegetation and the landscapes? Could the ‘rewilding’ of nature help lay the foundation for a socially and economically more sustainable rural society in certain regions? Could it mean more jobs and income for these regions? And could this maybe even help combat some of the impacts of climate change?

#### **The demand for wildlife experiences**

Currently, the international demand for all kinds of nature experiences is booming. It is becoming a very serious industry across the world. In the USA, already back in 2006

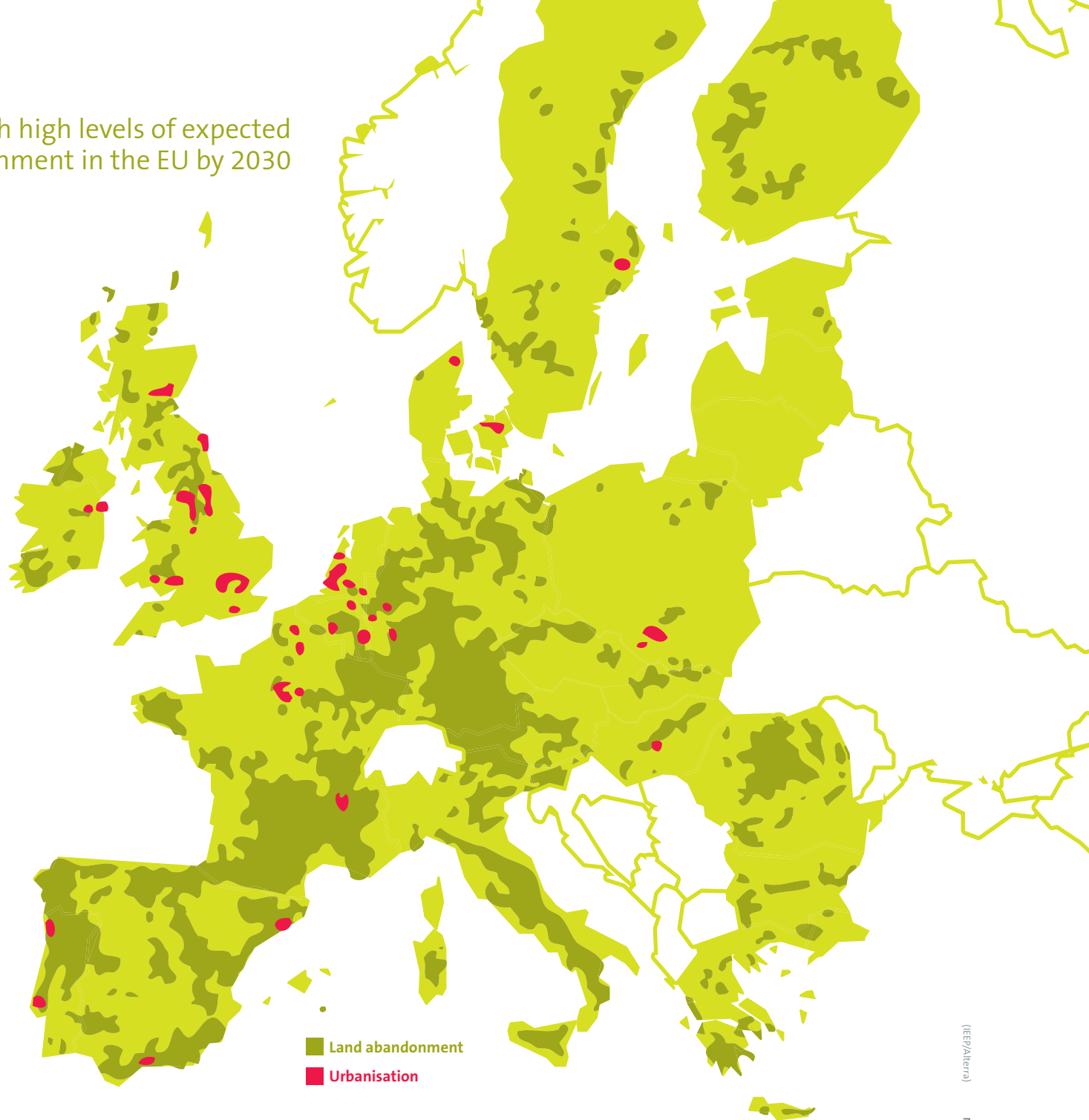


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## Areas with high levels of expected farmland abandonment in the EU by 2030

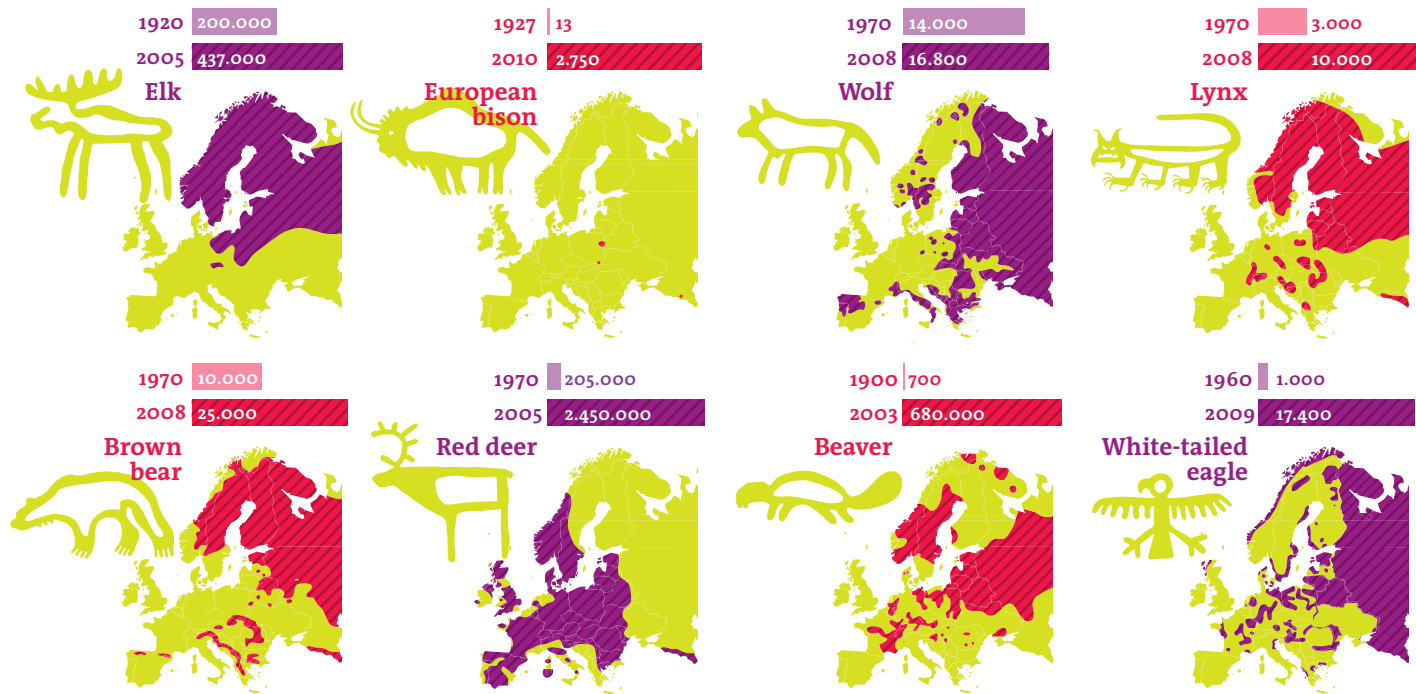
“wildlife watching” had become the biggest of all outdoor recreational activities, with a turnover that year of 35 billion Euro. Safari lodge operators are now beginning to look at Europe, not only as a market source but more and more as a wildlife travel destination in itself. The main problem to date has simply been that there was too little wildlife to watch, however with the wildlife comeback happening in front of our eyes, the doors are slowly beginning to open to a whole new set of tourism products and sources of rural income.

We intend to assist in bringing wildlife numbers up to more readily viewable levels, as well as bringing this wildlife and wilderness tourism to Europe. An industry for which Europeans themselves will probably be the biggest market. We believe the economic growth associated with wildlife tourism will serve to stimulate many other nature-friendly businesses.





## Numbers of some wildlife species that show a come-back in Europe



### The wildlife comeback in Europe

Surprisingly, the last 30-40 years has been an era of significant wildlife comeback in Europe. According to the 2010 “Living Planet Report”, the period 1970 to 2007 saw an average increase of animal populations in Europe of 43%. A major contributing factor has been better “environmental protection”, but recent changes in land use with abandonment of farmland, reduced hunting pressure, and higher productivity of many ecosystems due to more nutritional input from human activities probably also played an important

role. Land seems to have benefitted more than the sea - many marine species and areas still struggle, often associated with the escalating overharvesting of diminishing fish resources.

The wildlife comeback encompasses a long list of species, particularly larger mammals and birds. In today's Europe there are probably larger populations of certain species than we have had for many centuries, such as roe deer, moose, wild boar, chamois, ibex, cormorant, greylag goose, barnacle goose, mute swan,

whooper swan, common crane, black stork, and white-tailed eagle. With active protection and re-introductions, many other species have also benefitted including beaver, otter, eagle owl, peregrine, lammergeier and black vulture. The large carnivores are also doing better. From previous bastions in Eastern Europe, in particular, wolves and brown bears are slowly re-colonising all corners of the continent: Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France, Spain and Portugal. This success has been both natural and as a consequence of dedicated work from nature conservationists and hunters, which assisted in enabling a number of species to reoccupy lost territories, including the Eurasian lynx, the brown bear, the Alpine ibex, the Iberian ibex and the chamois. Even the Iberian lynx has started to recover slowly from an all-time low just a few years ago.

### Three key species to revitalize ecosystem functioning

This significant wildlife comeback provides an important foundation for a successful “rewilding” of parts of the European continent. However, the lack of natural numbers of wild living, large herbivores - bison, aurochs, red deer and wild horses – is a critical gap in the natural functioning of most European ecosystems. A strong resurgence in the numbers of these key species will be vital for successful “rewilding”.

Since returning to former agricultural practices is no longer a realistic option, we need to find a new appreciation for the original role that these large grazers once served. Their return to many of Europe's most important nature areas will be the best guarantee for the long term survival of a significant part of Europe's



natural heritage. In many of these areas we can also no longer continue relying on the unsustainable and heavily subsidized nature reserve management system that has prevailed for decades. We need to think in new ways, outside the old box.

The starting point for bringing back historically lost wild species is to focus on the aurochs, wild horse and European bison. The bison already lives in wild populations, although still in very low numbers. For the other two, rewilded primitive forms of cattle (the descendants of the aurochs) and horses could in the interim play the same ecological role as their ancestors did. Practical experiences have shown that such substitutes function very well under completely natural conditions, including with predators around such as wolves and bears. The ancient social structures shown in flocks of wild animals quickly re-establish, and a process of de-domestication starts.

In parallel, re-introductions or re-stocking of species that have been lost or have been drastically reduced in numbers locally such as red deer, fallow deer, ibex, and chamois need to be considered. The Iberian lynx still needs reintroductions into most of its old territories and in a few locations the brown bear and Eurasian lynx do too. But generally speaking the predators will come by themselves, once there is a stable, natural food base for them and a less aggressive attitude from some locals towards them.

### **Wilderness on the European Agenda**

At the European level things are also slowly shifting for the better and leading to an improved policy for wilderness and wildlife.

An important milestone was the adoption of the “European Parliament Resolution on Wilderness in Europe” in February 2009, calling on the European Commission to develop a clear definition of wilderness, mandate the European Environment Agency to map existing wilderness areas in Europe, undertake a study on the values and benefits of wilderness, develop an EU wilderness strategy, promote the development of new wilderness areas (“rewilding”), and promote the values of wilderness together with NGOs & local communities.

The European Parliament also welcomed the establishment of the Wild Europe Initiative (WEI) - a collaborative effort to promote the wilderness concept amongst several European nature conservation organizations, including PAN Parks, EUROPARC, WWF, BirdLife, IUCN, Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), and European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC).

In May 2009, more than 230 delegates met at the Prague “Conference on Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas” hosted by the Czech European Union Presidency and the European Commission. A key outcome was the development of the “Message from Prague”, which contained 24 recommendations from the participants on policy, research, awareness raising, mass communication and partnerships. The Prague conference also saw the call for nominations for suitable rewilding areas, which led to the subsequent forming of Rewilding Europe.



FLORIAN MOLLERS / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



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MAGNUS ELMER / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE

A mountain goat with dark brown fur and long, curved horns stands on a rocky, snow-dusted peak. The goat is facing right, looking towards the horizon. The background is a clear blue sky with some light, wispy clouds. The overall scene is a high-altitude, natural landscape.

# Rewilding Europe

## The initiative

### A 21<sup>st</sup> century vision for Europe

Rewilding Europe presents a vision in which wild nature is recognized as an indispensable part of Europe's natural and cultural heritage and a necessary building block for a modern, prosperous and healthy society. We aim towards a new approach to nature conservation in Europe, where the concept of wild nature and natural processes is accepted as one of the main management principles. Rewilding Europe therefore seeks to inspire a broad movement to shape a new, wilder version of our continent.



# So, what could a wilder Europe look like?

Open, broadleaved forests where bison, deer, wild horses and aurochs exist alongside wolves, lynx and bears and where most of the original plants and animals of lowland Europe thrive.



Mystical, old-growth forests with woodpeckers, mosses, lichens, mushrooms and where the voices of the capercaillie and owls resound at the dawn of spring.



Extensive grass steppes and shallow lakes where the ground trembles under the hooves of thousands of horses and aurochs, with a myriad of cranes, waders and other wetland species breeding or resting during migration.



Mountain cliffs alive with ibex and chamois, with vultures, eagles and other raptors soaring in the thermal uplifts.



Winding, free-flowing rivers cascading down from the mountains to the lowlands where the water is allowed to spread out beyond former dykes, where salmon and sturgeon can once again migrate freely from the ocean to their spawning grounds.



River deltas with large numbers of pelicans breeding side by side with herons, cormorants and eagles, where several species of sturgeons - some of the oldest and largest fish species still in existence - once again migrate between the rivers and the oceans.



Seas and coastal areas rich in life and inhabited by herds of seals and more than twenty-five species of whales and dolphins providing first class entertainment, jobs and inspiration for people



Spectacular landscapes with abundant wildlife, which attracts visitors from all sectors of society and from all corners of the world.

*Images as described above can become a reality. Even within our lifetime. In a Europe experiencing fewer and fewer borders, both for nature and people. The choice is ours.*









# Rewilding Europe

## A new beginning. For wildlife. For us.

Rewilding Europe is about making Europe a wilder place, with much more space for wildlife, wilderness and natural processes. Bringing back the variety of life for us all to enjoy and exploring new ways for people to earn a fair living from the wild.

**Rewilding Europe** aims to rewild one million hectares of land by 2020, creating ten magnificent wildlife and wilderness areas of international quality, which will serve as inspirational examples of what can also be achieved elsewhere.

**Rewilding Europe** focuses on turning the problems caused by the on-going land abandonment into opportunities for man and nature alike, providing a viable business case for wild nature in Europe. Several areas have the potential to become world-class wildlife tourism attractions, alongside the many other ways of reaping economic benefits from the wild. We will work hard to make this a reality.

**Rewilding Europe** is a new conservation vision for Europe, with wild nature and natural processes as key elements, where rewilding is applicable to any type of landscape or level of

protection. Treating nature as something that is fully capable of taking care of itself, if given the opportunity to do so. This concept could become the main management principle for many natural areas in the future. Just let it be.

**Rewilding Europe** recognizes natural grazing as one of the key factors in maintaining open and half-open landscapes, upon which a large part of Europe's biodiversity is dependant. Allowing our large native herbivores to return in significant, more natural numbers to the lands where they once belonged – bison, red deer, ibex, chamois, wild horse, moose, wild boar, wild reindeer and hopefully soon also the aurochs.

**Rewilding Europe** emphasises the joy and the value of wildness, and takes active part in a mass communication effort to stimulate a greater sense of pride in the wild and to spread a vision of a wilder continent. A Europe with

much more wildlife than today, where this is also much more watchable and accessible to its citizens. A Europe with much larger areas of protected wilderness, vast areas of rewilded lands and reserves forming ecological corridors across the continent.

### Goals and timelines

Rewilding Europe seeks to inspire a broad movement to shape a new, wilder version of Europe.

- With space for both nature and mankind.
- With much larger tracts of protected wilderness than today.
- With vast areas of rewilded, natural lands.
- With much more wildlife.

All this serving as the basis for thriving new local economies.

The ten rewilding areas will together reflect a wide selection of European regions and ecosystems, flora and fauna. With each then showing a substantial wildlife comeback, supported by reintroductions where necessary. These ten areas are to serve as leading examples and inspirational bench marks for a large-scale shift in land use across Europe towards wilder nature and new ways to use that resource for jobs and subsistence.

# Making Europe a wilder place

## Putting the vision into practice

Rewilding Europe's programme builds on three guiding principles:

- Every area should host complete and naturally functioning ecosystems specific to the region, with the full spectrum of native wildlife typical for the region present.
- The areas should be embedded within the social and cultural fabric of their respective region.
- The new land use should be based on what nature can offer, be economically viable and competitive with other alternatives.

Rewilding Europe's first five selected areas for the time period up to 2013 are:

1. Danube Delta (Romania).
2. Eastern Carpathians (Slovakia and Poland).
3. Southern Carpathians (Romania).
4. Velebit Mountains (Croatia).
5. Western Iberia (Portugal and Spain).

Our concrete objectives are:

- A total of at least 1 million ha (10,000 km<sup>2</sup>) 'rewilded' across 10 places by the initiative and its partners, covering different regions of Europe.
- Substantial wildlife comeback in the 10 places, supported by re-introductions where appropriate/necessary, serving as the starting point for complete, functional ecosystems.

- Magnification of success: Up to 100 other 'rewilding' initiatives launched across Europe affecting 10 million ha (100,000 km<sup>2</sup>).
- Sufficient "in-situ" breeding facilities for wildlife established in each of the 10 project areas.
- European wildlife has a 'market value', providing new business opportunities - for partners, land owners, hunters and farmers.
- Competitive land and sea use forms & economic success stories established in each of the 10 project locations.
- "Wild nature & natural processes" accepted as one of the main management principles for nature conservation in Europe.
- Pride in the wild is created amongst a very broad European audience.
- A science-based monitoring system is established to oversee nature developments in pilot areas.
- Together with Wild Wonders of Europe, the concept of the "joy of the wild" and Rewilding Europe has reached out to 350 million European citizens.





By 2013, the following targets have been set:

- The first five rewilding areas have received start-up funding and begun carrying out the needed work.
- These five areas are visible and demonstrate how our vision is being put into practice.
- Another five project areas have been identified and will be started as of 2013 (coinciding with the WILD 10 Conference in Spain).
- A new conservation vision for Europe is being discussed by major stakeholders (also chosen from outside the traditional conservation sector).
- The importance of wild nature for society and development has been recognized by at least five major funding/investment institutions.
- Together with Wild Wonders of Europe, the concept of the “joy of the wild” and Rewilding Europe has reached out to 100 million European citizens.

### Institutional set up

#### Central programme coordination

Rewilding Europe is registered as a non-profit foundation under Dutch Law (established on 28 June 2011). Additionally, a for-profit limited company (which is 100% owned by the foundation) has been established for the purpose of carrying out or participating in any future commercial activities which may be relevant to our projects and overall rewilding objectives. A Supervisory Board, consisting of members from different European countries, has been established to provide strategic guidance and legal oversight of the foundation's activities.

Rewilding Europe has also engaged a small and dedicated group of Special Advisors, who will support the initiative with their skills, expertise, reputation and networks. Currently, there are three Special Advisors for Rewilding Europe: Princess Laurentien van Oranje (The Netherlands), Dr. Claude Martin (Switzerland) and Mrs. Odile Rodríguez de la Fuente (Spain).

The management responsibility of the foundation and the limited company lies with an Executive Board of four directors. These are passionate and experienced professionals with diverse backgrounds and expertise, origi-

nating from various European countries and include a Managing Director, a Conservation Director, a Business & Finance Director and a Marketing & Communications Director. Supporting the Executive Board is a small and dedicated staff team, primarily based in Nijmegen, The Netherlands. Together with the Executive Board they form the Rewilding Europe team at the central level of the initiative, totaling six full time equivalents. The focus of the central team is equally divided between programme coordination activities and direct support for projects.

*“I believe in Rewilding Europe because it is about turning a problem into opportunities, by putting abandoned land to good use. By revealing Europe's shared natural heritage, the initiative serves the interest of all of us across Europe, both economically and aesthetically. So everyone can be a winner.”*

**Princess Laurentien van Oranje,  
Special Advisor Rewilding Europe**





DIETMAR NILL / WILD MONDERS OF EUROPE



MILAN RADISICS / WILD MONDERS OF EUROPE



*“Just the name of the organization: Rewilding Europe already evokes strong emotions of lost senses of freedom, beauty, harmony and peace. It is encouraging to witness how a number of very experienced, professional and passionate people from all across Europe have come together to work on returning to our marvellous countries what these lands deserve: nothing less than the full biodiversity that they are capable of naturally accommodating.”*

**Odile Rodríguez de la Fuente,**  
**Special Advisor Rewilding Europe**

#### *Rewilding area projects*

The main capacity of Rewilding Europe is in its rewilding area projects. All rewilding areas have a dedicated project leader and technical and communications staff, with estimated total project capacity in 2012 close to 17 full time equivalents. The detailed activities of the projects are outlined in their respective section of this brochure.

#### **A European Rewilding network**

The strong alliance of an umbrella organization working at a European level together with rewilding projects in the different geographical regions – together forming a Rewilding Europe Network - has a number of important added values compared to

individual projects working “on their own”:

- The five – and soon to be ten – rewilding projects form the very core of Rewilding Europe, and together with the central team represents a “large scale” initiative in a position to make a greater difference.
- Improved ability to collectively generate support at local, national, regional and international levels, in particular for building partnerships, fundraising and stimulating conservation-based business.
- Being part of a network with similar strategies, approaches and challenges in different geographical regions in Europe enables projects to easily share experiences and expertise, thereby enhancing project effectiveness and efficiency.



- The Rewilding Europe central team will provide technical and strategic support to individual projects on issues where individual projects might neither have the resources, nor the capacities themselves.
- The potential to communicate and reach large audiences is far more efficient and effective when working from a programme level instead of individual project levels. Being part of a European-wide initiative will help to raise the profile of each individual project considerably.

### Formal relationship between programme level and project level

Rewilding Europe establishes formal relationships with the individual projects in two different ways:

- A general partnership agreement (Memorandum of Understanding, MoU) which describes the relationship between the central and project levels. This relates to the joint overall vision, goals and objectives, way of working, as well as roles and responsibilities at the two levels. The MoU has a 6 year horizon, demonstrating commitment from both sides.
- Legal project contracts, which secure the flow of funds raised at central level to the project level, and describe the formal obligations for the projects relating to financial management and reporting. The project contracts are normally for a rolling three-year period and are based upon detailed project proposals developed by each of the projects.

### Management

Management within Rewilding Europe takes place at three levels, where assigned directors and staff each have their own roles and responsibilities.

#### *Programme level*

At this level lies the overall responsibility and accountability of the initiative. Principal activities include overall programme and financial management, partnership development, selection and screening of potential projects, fundraising and overall reporting to financial partners, technical support to the three key areas (conservation, communication and business), support to local communication and outreach, ensuring exchanges and lessons learned between projects, harmonisation with other European programmes and initiatives, communication at European level, up-scaling (magnification) to other areas in Europe and (outsourcing of) technical studies.

#### *Project level*

Our contracted project partners are responsible and accountable at the local level. This includes building good working relationships with local stakeholders, establishing and formalizing local partnerships, close cooperation with local authorities and governments, planning, financial management, local communication and outreach, reporting and providing inputs to Rewilding Europe at the central level.



TOM SCHANDY / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



VINCENT MOUNIER / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



STEFAN WIDSTRAND / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



SANDRA BARTOCHA / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



STAFFAN WIDSTRAND / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



SANDRA BARTOCHA / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE

*50% of Europe's biodiversity is connected to the open landscapes. Wildlife like bison, deer, ibex, wild horses and wild cattle are designed to keep these landscapes open. Why don't we bring them back in greater numbers?*

#### *Activity level*

The project teams oversee all technical and operational work 'on the ground' including land acquisition (if applicable), management of wilderness areas and restoration measures, re-introduction of key species, in-situ breeding projects, facilitation of conservation enterprises, joint projects with local stakeholders, production of communication materials, and monitoring of impact. All activities at project level are described in project proposals that have been developed and formally approved by Rewilding Europe.

#### **Monitoring, evaluation and auditing**

Rewilding Europe has developed an overall monitoring plan, which will show progress of the initiative by measuring key performance indicators on a regular basis.

The initiative will be evaluated by independent, external evaluators every 3 years. The first evaluation will take place in the second half of 2013. The evaluation results and recommendations will guide Rewilding Europe in its continuation in the subsequent phases. External, financial audits will be carried out each year, both at programme and project level, by an external, independent auditing agency.

Through these monitoring, evaluation and auditing efforts, Rewilding Europe will strive to build a track record of its progress and achievements, and demonstrate transparency and accountability in all its efforts.

#### **Funding and fundraising strategy**

To realize our ambitions, Rewilding Europe will need considerable funding support which can be provided in many different ways. Rewilding Europe has developed a fundraising strategy based on projected expenditure both at programme and project level for a period of five years. The fundraising strategy focuses on two key elements: a) diversification of income and b) building financial sustainability at both programme and project level.

With the current five projects, Rewilding Europe will need a minimum funding base of € 2,5 million per year. When the next five projects come on board in 2013, this level will have to increase to a minimum of € 3,5 million per year. Fundraising at local level by the projects themselves is not included in these figures.

To be successful, Rewilding Europe is actively seeking funding support, ranging from





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personal donations to government funding (bilateral or multilateral donors), private foundations and NGOs. It is planned that the activities of conservation enterprises and related financing mechanisms will produce returns in later years for the purpose of core programme and project activities. The projects themselves also have a key role in fundraising, and funding at the central programme level can serve as match funding for funding proposals prepared at local level.

Fundraising is primarily focused upon appealing projects in the rewilding project areas. Management costs of Rewilding Europe at both central and local level form a standard part of the overall project costs.

Rewilding Europe invites every interested person, organization, financial institution or other entity to become a supporter or partner in our initiative.

*"In my home country of Switzerland, we have witnessed the return of a number of wildlife species over the past decades: the beaver, red deer, ibex, lynx, wolf, brown bear and bearded vulture were either successfully reintroduced or returned of their own accord. Less than a hundred years ago all these species were extinct here. It looks like wild species and spaces today stand a chance to expand rather than shrink. Rewilding Europe is grasping this tremendous opportunity for the benefit of man and nature on our continent."*

**Claude Martin, Special Advisor Rewilding Europe**





ERLEND HARBORG / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



## Building Rewilding Enterprises

Traditionally, nature conservation has often been seen as an influence which seeks to slow or indeed halt economic activity. Rewilding Europe instead recognises the vital role of business, investment and job opportunities for the success of conservation and an important dimension of our work will focus upon supporting and building businesses based around wildlife, wild values and wilderness.

The backdrop for Rewilding Europe is an ailing agricultural economy in rural Europe, propped up by inefficient EU subsidies and heading towards a period of rapid change as these subsidies are replaced and restructured. We will therefore seek to exploit rapidly evolving new markets – for example, nature-based tourism is growing at three times the rate of conventional tourism globally. It is no longer necessary to travel to Alaska to see brown bears or Yellowstone to see bison. Instead, with the right investments in tourism facilities and promotion, several areas in Europe have the potential to become world-class wildlife tourism attractions.

Various other nature-based business opportunities are emerging, such as commercial breeding centres for endangered wildlife species, and food products associated with wild nature. Rewilding Europe will strive

to work with other interest groups – for example, the value of properly managed hunting concessions will surely rise in those regions where rewilding is taking place.

New finance mechanisms are evolving such as payment schemes for carbon sequestration and ecosystem services. These place monetary value on the fact that wild and natural areas protect our drinking water, provide buffers against floods and help to slow down or prevent some of the effects of climate change. Working across large scale habitats will enable Rewilding Europe to make a meaningful contribution to the development of such mechanisms in Europe.

The last decade has seen the rapid growth of a new 'Impact' (or 'Social' or 'Responsible') investing marketplace. A 2010 report by JP Morgan and the Rockefeller Foundation estimates that the Impact Investment 'industry' globally represents between €300 and €800 billion per year, encouraged in many countries by new tax regulation. This is creating and filling an emerging niche between pure philanthropic finance and pure commercial finance for conservation, which Rewilding Europe is perfectly positioned to target. Rewilding Europe proposes to create a dedicated investment fund, designed to





provide commercial investment for businesses which will support (directly or indirectly) our rewilding ambitions and contribute to the economies of our rewilding areas and beyond.

Establishing a network of strong and innovative nature-based businesses across our rewilding areas will require a deep understanding of the policy, legal and fiscal environments in which we will work. In particular, we will develop techniques around effective land tenure and provision of investment security. We will work to build lasting relationships with entrepreneurs and to attract forward-thinking and conservation-minded commercial investors.

The business dimension of Rewilding Europe is unquestionably new territory for conservation in Europe. While our partnership with Conservation Capital will enable us to learn from similar approaches in other parts of the world, there will be many lessons and challenges along the way.

We believe that establishing new and creative linkages between wilderness, wildlife and commercial business will result in a more sustainable economy for those who live and work in Europe's natural regions.

This is a new and exciting future for Europe.



STAFFAN WIDSTRAND / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



SØREN RUD / LIFE EXHIBITIONS

## Massive public outreach

Wild values will only survive if the majority of us, the citizens, vote for them - in elections and through our actions in our daily lives. We will do that only if we feel that wildlife, biodiversity and wilderness has strong emotional value and relevance to us. But how are we supposed to feel strongly about something that we have never even seen, never heard of nor experienced ourselves? And never realised how wonderful it is?

Rewilding Europe therefore teams up with Wild Wonders of Europe in its ten-year mass communication effort to stimulate the joy and the sense of pride in the wild, spreading together a vision of a wilder continent, while using a number of good practical examples of what could be done to make it happen. Rewilding Europe will be reaching out to hundreds of millions of Europeans - locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, through a massive communication output via every possible media - TV films, outdoor and indoor exhibition tours, mass media coverage, books, a website, Facebook, Twitter, apps, AV-shows, meetings, seminars, person-to-person talks and more. Wild Wonders of Europe has already reached about 300 million people with its messages.

The aim for Rewilding Europe is to reach at least half of all Europeans before 2020.



- 1 **Danube Delta** (Romania)
- 2 **Eastern Carpathians** (Poland, Slovakia)
- 3 **Southern Carpathians** (Romania)
- 4 **Velebit** (Croatia)
- 5 **Western Iberia** (Portugal, Spain)







# The first five rewilding areas

In 2009 we invited Europeans to submit nominations for areas to become part of Rewilding Europe. Twenty applications from across Europe were received, after which detailed feasibility studies were conducted in six areas. From these, five areas were finally selected to serve as the first model rewilding areas.

These five areas span 6 countries, and have an emphasis on the eastern and southern parts of the continent. More than 30 different organisations have become local partners – including national parks, nature parks, geoparks, archaeological parks, UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, universities, foundations, local communities, and NGOs.

In 2013, during the next World Wilderness Congress, WILD10, we will present the next five rewilding areas.

Here follows a brief introduction to each of the first five areas.



## Danube Delta Europe's Unrivalled Wetland

### Conservation setting

The Danube Delta on the border between Romania and Ukraine is outstanding in Europe due to its size (over 600,000 ha), intact river dynamics, unexploited coastline (shaped by the Danube River and the Black Sea), wide horizons and large-scale landscapes without significant infrastructure. It also has the largest reed beds in the world, in addition to millions of nesting and migrating birds, some of them rare or even globally endangered. The unique Letea Forest, situated in the Romanian section, is the only “primeval” forest of the country with trees up to 700 years old. Through the designation as UNESCO Biosphere Reserves by both the Romanian and Ukrainian governments, with strictly protected core areas, the delta enjoys a relatively high level of protection. Buffer and economic zones around these also provide opportunities for local developments without jeopardizing the natural values.

### Local situation

As in so many other areas of Europe, traditional farming based on livestock has become unprofitable and the local communities are looking for new, alternative sources of



*“The communities in the Danube Delta are facing hard times. With the declining income from livestock breeding and fishing, tourism is becoming increasingly important. We are looking forward to participating in creating rewilding conservancies together with local communities.”*  
**Cristian Tetelea, Project Leader, WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme**



income. Tourism is already quite well developed in parts of the delta, with several tour operators, a growing capacity and infrastructure located in the regional hub Tulcea, and relatively good standards of accommodation increasingly provided within and on the periphery of the delta. With a very rich history from ancient times to the present day, the delta and its surroundings offer a multitude of historical remains from Roman, Greek, Byzantine and Ottoman periods. The “wilderness” concept has an interesting potential of further profiling the Danube Delta both within Romania and abroad. But there is a need to better involve the local communities and authorities in the process and associated economic opportunities.

### Organisations

Working together on the project are: WWF (coordination & facilitation), Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve (public body for the management of the area), Danube Delta National Institute (research on conservation & natural resource management), Tulcea Forestry District, the communities of the villages C.A Rosetti and Sfântu Gheorghe, and several local NGOs (e.g. “People for the Delta” and “Ecopontica”).

### Planned work & vision

Initially, the focus will be on the outer, maritime part of the delta with its sand dunes, untamed river arms, meadows, lakes, reed beds, salt marshes, and woodlands. Two ‘core’ areas have been identified around the two villages of C.A. Rosetti and Sfântu Gheorghe respectively, which will serve as the starting points for the rewilding actions. With the incentive of creating “communal wildlife conservancies” - the first of their kind in



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MICHEL FOGGO / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



STEFAN WIDSTRAND / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE

Europe - missing wildlife species such as red deer and beaver will return and natural grazing systems will be promoted using wild-living horses and cattle, and maybe even the European bison. The issues around some old habits - like poisoning of predators - needs clarification and, if still existing, need to be remedied. With the wolf living not far from the delta, a natural come-back would be possible, provided that there is an acceptance for the species from the major local parties.

Outside investors will be encouraged to get involved in investing in the conservation enterprises, run by professional operators in collaboration with the local communities. To improve the wilderness experience for the visitors, some existing infrastructures – old electric power lines and ruins without historical value – will be removed. Potential wilderness/rewilding areas in the rest of the delta will be identified, and the principle of wild nature and wilderness will be promoted as part of local development plans and the management plan for the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. Collaboration will also be sought with surrounding areas, like the Dobrogea Hills with the Macinului Mountain National Park.



## Eastern Carpathians

### One of Europe's Top Wildlife Areas

#### Conservation setting

Eastern Carpathians - the triangle area between Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine - is one of the wildest corners of Europe: vast, extensive forests with untamed rivers, low undulating mountains with scattered alpine meadows, and pockets of old-growth forests. Here one of Europe's largest wild-living population of bison lives side by side with red deer, roe deer, wild boar, lynx, wolves, bears, beavers and otters. Few other regions of the continent have more protected areas than the Eastern Carpathians (in total around half a million ha of national parks, biosphere reserves, forest reserves, landscape parks, nature parks and Natura 2000 sites).

#### Local situation

Some of the areas that are richest in wildlife, such as the Bieszczady in Poland, have only recently been converted from farmland to wilderness; abandonment of previous farmland within a 60 year time frame combined with concerted conservation measures have created one of the best places to experience wildlife and wilderness hiking in central Europe. This, in turn, has served as basis for a thriving tourism industry, especially on the Polish side.



*"Europe needs new wilderness areas since there is so little wilderness left. For me personally, the inspiration that a bear or a thousand year old tree provides are essential in life. This is something I wish other people to also experience. The Ticha Valley in the Tatra Mountains in Slovakia shows that rewilding is possible also in a short period of time. Rewilding Europe has the potential of creating a new conservation movement, with Ticha Valley and Eastern Carpathians as inspirational building blocks."*  
**Erik Baláž, Lesoochránárske zoskupenie VLK ("Wolf")**





FLORIAN MOELLERS / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



GRZEGORZ LESNIEWSKI / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



GRZEGORZ LESNIEWSKI / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE



GRZEGORZ LESNIEWSKI / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE

The national parks and landscape parks, with their relatively well developed infrastructure (information centres, hiking trails, information panels, etc.), act as magnets for between 1 and 1.5 million visitors annually, mostly of domestic origin. The bison and bear in particular have been used as 'flagship' species for attracting visitors. However, in contrast to the Polish part, the tourism development on the Slovak side is still in its infancy. The area is undergoing major changes: continued depopulation, plummeting livestock numbers, farmland abandonment, logging of mountainous old-growth forests, widespread hunting and new roads being built. With dwindling livestock numbers, young forests are rapidly expanding, creating a more monotonous landscape with less space for sun-loving animals and plants to thrive and a general decline of biological diversity. Some open areas are today artificially maintained through mowing, which – however – is entirely dependent on external, financial subsidies and has an uncertain future. So, the landscape in the Eastern Carpathians – like in so many other similar

areas of Europe – is at a critical cross-roads. To stem the negative tide, large-scale natural grazing systems with wild living horses and bovines need to be installed and the remaining old-growth forests protected.

### Organisations

Two organizations decided to turn the negative trend into a positive: Lesoochranárske zoskupenie VLK ("Wolf") - the most famous environmental NGO in Slovakia - and the Carpathian Wildlife Foundation in Poland.. Partnerships are also required with communities, regional authorities, hunting and forestry entities, the Bieszczady National Park, etc. In the future, collaboration with Ukraine is also essential.

### Planned work & vision

In the first year, the goal is to obtain an overview of the opportunities for rewilding in the Bieszczady region in Poland and the area of and around the Poloniny National Park in Slovakia. As part of that, opportunities for starting concrete field pilot projects on natural grazing and alternative hunting management

will be identified. Contacts will also be made with the authorities in Ukraine to explore the opportunity of coordinating the wilderness management with one regional park and one national park bordering Poland and Slovakia. Transboundary management of migratory species of large herbivores and large carnivores between the three countries is essential in order to boost numbers and reduce illegal hunting. One very important area for the entire region is the unspoiled San River Valley on the Polish-Ukrainian border. It serves as an important wintering ground for great numbers of large mammals and efforts will be made to prevent further negative developments there, such as buildings and fencing, by participating in on-going spatial planning processes.

An on-going process of reforming key legislation in Slovakia – especially the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection, Forest Act and Game Act – will be addressed to ensure a radical shift away from current logging and hunting practices in national parks in Slovakia, to a management based on naturally function-

ing ecosystems. As part of that process, the few remaining old-growth forests on the Slovak side should be given permanent protection. In Poland the development of a management plan for the 112,000 ha Bieszczady Natura 2000 area is a great opportunity to introduce a new perspective based on wild nature.

A joint development vision will be created with partners from all the three countries, based on rewilding and wilderness. Wildlife watching operations will be developed and promoted in collaboration with local entrepreneurs. The wilderness concept will be promoted through local and regional websites, brochures and photo missions. A documentary film – "Return of the Wilderness" – will be produced.



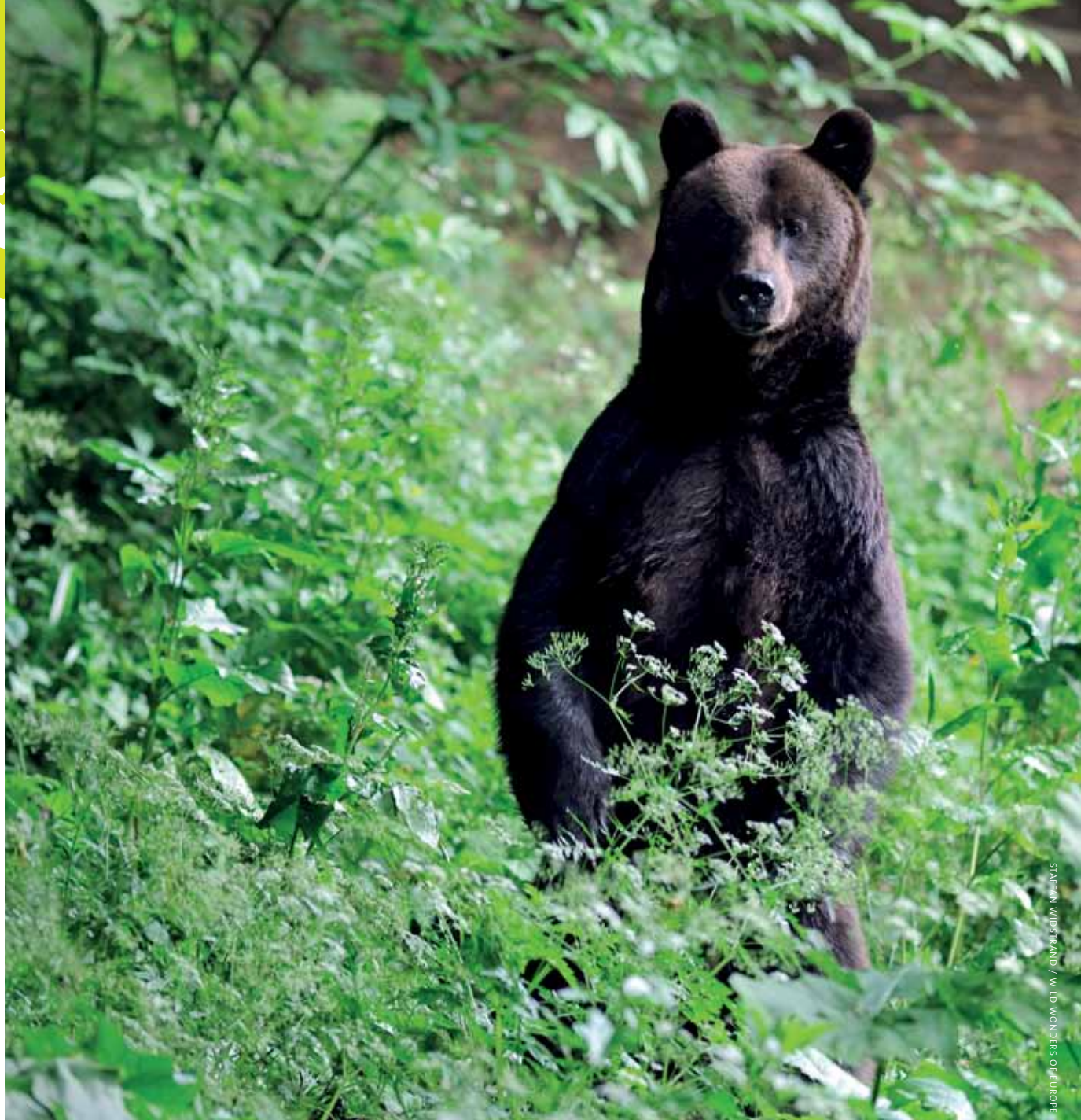


## Southern Carpathians A Wilderness Arc at the Heart of Europe

### Conservation setting

Like a huge green crescent, the Carpathians arch over an area of more than 20 million hectares, from the Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary and Poland in the north and northwest, via Ukraine in the northeast, to Romania in the southeast and Serbia in southwest. At the southern end of the mountains in Romania, an initiative is underway to create one of Europe's largest wilderness landscapes south of the Arctic Circle. With a backbone of more than 1 million hectares of protected areas already in place, rich wildlife, large intact forests, a high concentration of biodiversity, un-fragmented landscapes, wild rivers, and large mosaic landscapes shaped by sustainable farming practices, there is a unique opportunity to realise this vision.

The starting point is in three areas – the Tarcu Mountains Natura 2000 Site, the Domogled-Valea Cernei National Park, and the Mehedinți Plateau Geopark – which together cover around 225,000 ha. Ranging from the 2,196 m peak of Mount Tarcu in the north, to the Danube River at 150 m in the south, the area covers a wide variety of ecosystems – alpine meadows and grasslands, old beech and fir forests,





steep cliff formations, and undulating mosaic landscapes with open grasslands intersected by woodlands (with a mixture of deciduous tree species, including oak) closer to the Danube. With dramatic, steep cliffs, deep canyons, waterfalls and untamed smaller rivers, it is a very attractive part of Romania and the Carpathians.

### Local situation

Although the region already hosts a rich variety of wildlife species (wolf, Eurasian lynx, brown bear, red deer, roe deer, chamois, etc.) the ongoing, large-scale abandonment of traditional farmland has created an urgent need to re-introduce the lost wild-living species that can maintain the diversity of these landscapes rich in animal and plant species. Therefore, the vision for the area would also include having herds of wild bovines, horses, European bison and red deer once again shaping the vegetation. This, in turn, will provide the basis for bringing back lost species such as the griffon vulture. The European beaver also had an old home in the mountain rivers – although it has been locally extinct for centuries.

With the conservation measures and the ‘rewilding’ of the region, new economic opportunities will arise. In combination with some of the world’s most famous caves, spectacular sceneries (like the Danube Iron Gate), and a famous Roman health resort (Baile Herculane), the region has the potential of become a first class destination for both domestic and foreign visitors. Right now, it is an almost ‘forgotten’ corner of Romania.

### Organisations

The project includes an interesting set of local institutions: WWF (coordination/facilitation), Altitudine (NGO, responsible for the management of the Tarcu Mountain Natura 2000 Site), managers of the Mehedinti Plateau Geopark and the Domogled-Valea Cernei National Park, and several local communities. Other important actors to be included are the private sector, the Romanian Government, regional councils, hunting associations, and academic institutions.

### Planned work & vision

Within the borders of these three existing parks, one of the main goals is to establish a wilderness area of at least 100,000 ha by 2020, managed according to wilderness principles, with core and transition zones governed mainly by natural processes. Missing species will be reintroduced. Local names of villages, rivers and mountains show that the European bison and beaver once lived here, and specific efforts will be made to bring them back. By creating large hunting-free zones, numbers of deer and chamois in particular will be allowed to grow, which within a short timeframe will also benefit hunting interests in the surrounding areas. With much more wildlife in the area, the attraction value of the region will increase.

In the surrounding communities, the development of a new economy based on wild values and sustainable use of natural resources will be supported. Entrepreneurial individuals and groups will be assisted to set up conservation enterprises. The possible



development of a Wilderness Revolving Investment Fund will be discussed together with relevant companies and Romanian banks. Together with representatives from communities, the three regions, the tourism sector, local entrepreneurs and NGOs, a new vision for the region’s future will be developed with emphasis on the values of wild nature and what they can bring for local development, branding and marketing. This will put the Southern Carpathians on the European map as a region where local hardships have been transformed into better prosperity and hope, to serve as inspiration also for other parts of Romania and beyond.

*“Land abandonment is such a key issue for the European countryside and for nature conservation in a crowded continent. We must not waste this opportunity by taking short-term, accidental decisions regarding the future of these lands. I welcome therefore the vision and the longer-term, strategic approach of Rewilding Europe.”*  
**Adrian Hagatis, Project Leader, WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme**





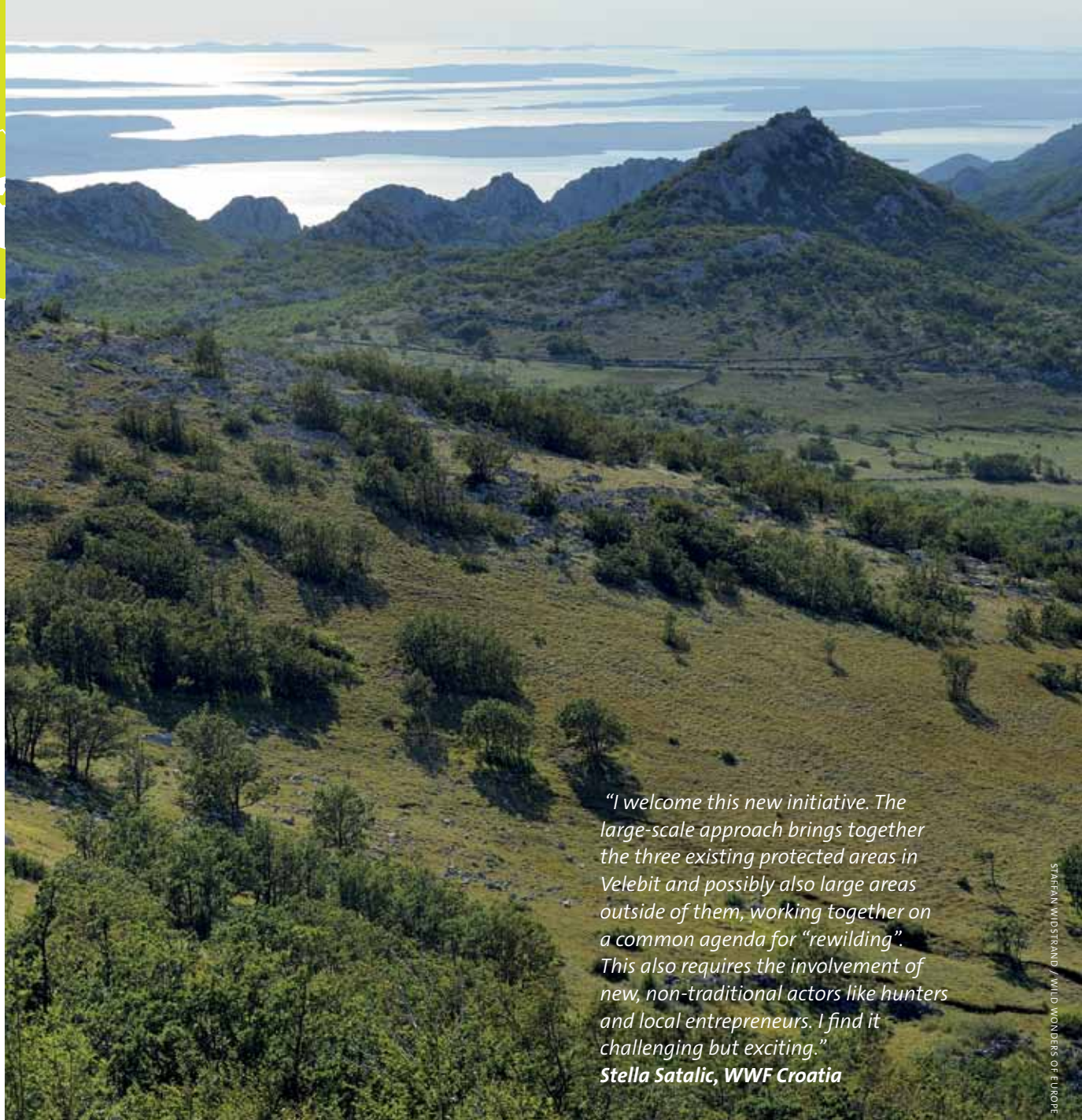
## Velebit

### The “Wild West” of the Adriatic coast

#### Conservation setting

Velebit, one of the most important natural areas of Europe and the Balkans is situated on the Adriatic coast of Croatia. This limestone mountain chain is 145 km long from north to south, and lies parallel to the coast. Following a cross section from the crystal waters of the Adriatic in the west, it rapidly rises to 1757 metres, and then phases out into a higher level plateau towards the east. The area hosts an extraordinary diversity of different habitats, from barren Mediterranean landscapes at sea level to almost boreal systems at higher altitudes. This has led to the establishment of the two Paklenica & Northern Velebit National Parks as well as the Velebit Nature Park – all three very well set up and managed. Together they occupy more than 220,000 ha. The area has also been declared a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve and included in the UNESCO Tentative List of World Heritage Sites. Outside the protected areas in the south and west, there are other very interesting areas for rewilding too, consisting mainly of abandoned farm and grazing lands.

In a ‘nutshell’, Velebit is a climbing paradise, home to spectacular caves and breathtaking sceneries, and



*“I welcome this new initiative. The large-scale approach brings together the three existing protected areas in Velebit and possibly also large areas outside of them, working together on a common agenda for “rewilding”. This also requires the involvement of new, non-traditional actors like hunters and local entrepreneurs. I find it challenging but exciting.”*

**Stella Satalic, WWF Croatia**



receives an increasing number of visitors each year. Most popular is the coastal Paklenica National Park with more than 100,000 visitors annually whilst the more remote inlands receive less attention. The tourism infrastructure is also very well developed with hiking trails, smaller over-night cabins, larger dormitories, professional visitor centres and information panels. The dramatic coastal landscapes with their steep, barren cliffs, deep canyons, waterfalls, and open, uninhabited plains also has an interesting link to contemporary European film history. In the 1960s, the famous “Winnetou” movies were produced in and around Velebit, which provided ideal landscapes for battling Indians and white settlers.

### Local situation

The human settlement has undergone dramatic changes during the last 50 years. The level of land abandonment is significant. After the E65 road was built in the 1960s, people in the coastal villages were no longer isolated and gradually abandoned their traditional lifestyle - like bringing livestock to the mountains in the summer time - and started to focus their attention on the new economic opportunities generated, especially associated with tourism development along the coast. The Balkan conflict 1991-95 also brought a lot of change. The eastern slope of the Velebit Mountains was the frontline between the Croatian and Serbian troops, during and after the war, many houses were vacated and the inhabitants left their land. Still today large areas of minefields are found north-east and east of the Paklenica National

Park as well as further inland towards the eastern border of the Nature Park. Today most villages are home to an ageing population, many houses stand empty and are in ruins, and livestock numbers are dwindling.

The recent changes in land use have brought both challenges and opportunities for nature conservation. The expanding shrub lands and young forests could be seen as a blessing for some of the barren coastal areas which previously suffered from heavy overgrazing by sheep and goats. But in many areas, the landscape diversity – and hence biodiversity – is suffering. To maintain and even enhance the conservation values in the region, the parks want to promote the re-establishment of natural grazing systems. Hunters are seen as an ally in such efforts. In the past the hunters were responsible for re-introducing lost species such as the chamois and the fallow deer.

### Organisations

The three parks – Northern Velebit National Park, Paklenica National Park & Velebit Nature Park - have joined forces with WWF in Croatia to develop a large-scale ‘rewilding’ initiative in Velebit.

### Planned work & vision

At the initial stage, work is planned to increase wildlife numbers by decreasing hunting pressure through policy and field actions in close collaboration with the hunter community. Wildlife watching is already seen as an economic alternative to unprofitable hunting. Chamois is a symbolic species for



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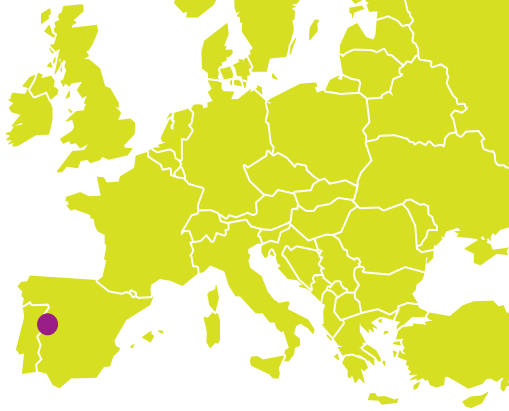


STEFAN WIDSTRAND / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE

the area. It was reintroduced by hunters in the 1970s, and is now well but sparsely distributed across the whole range. Additional planned activities include introduction of animals to the two national parks and establishment of large hunting free zones.

A study of the historical distribution of the other grazing mammal species will reveal opportunities for their reintroduction. Uniquely large and suitable areas for the restoration of vast natural grazing systems exist within Velebit as well as to the east of the area. The importance of the bark beetle for the natural functioning of forests will be promoted, and the concept of rewilding of freshwater systems will be explored. Local partners are formulating a wider development vision based on wilderness

values and the Wild Wonders of Europe/ Rewilding Europe exhibitions will be on display. This will also involve the tourism sector with the aim of creating new economic opportunities by shifting some of the coastal mass tourism stream inland without jeopardising the wilderness values. The legal and policy situation in Croatia for rewilding will be analysed, and the opportunities for creating one of central Europe's largest wilderness area connecting Velebit with western Bosnia-Herzegovina will also be clarified.



## Western Iberia

### Ancient Dehesa, Sierra and Montado landscapes

#### Conservation setting

The Iberian Peninsula, with some of the earliest human settlements in Europe, is also home to some of the most ancient natural landscapes of the continent. One typical example is the Spanish “Dehesas” or the Portuguese “Montados”, traditional wood pastures with their origins reaching back to, at least, the middle ages. The savannah-like appearance shaped by large grazers – especially cattle – is today home to some of the rarest animal species of Europe, such as the Spanish Imperial Eagle and the globally endangered Iberian Lynx. These species have, together with their favourite prey, the European rabbit, decreased alarmingly in numbers during the last century and just only recently begun to come back slowly. In addition, these areas are famous for their ham – Jamon Iberico and Jamon Serrano in Spain – produced from pigs feeding on acorns from the Holm Oaks of the Dehesa.

#### Local situation

As in so many other areas of Europe, a lot of the traditional land management, however, will soon be



*“The development of wild nature is an opportunity for a new economy at the same time as it enriches the ecological base and provides new ethical and educational values.”*  
**António Monteiro, Associação Transumância e Natureza (ATN), Portugal**



history. Rural depopulation with ageing inhabitants and declining livestock numbers is leading to rapid change of the vegetation cover in the landscapes. This, in turn creates both an opportunity and a challenge for nature conservation. The less intensive land use offers the development of a more natural tree composition with shrubs, but there is also a risk that huge areas will evolve into very dense scrub with much less diversity and more vulnerable to forest fires. There is also a temptation to plant exotic tree species – like eucalyptus or foreign pine species – on the abandoned land, with disastrous consequences for the natural fauna and flora together with a hugely increased fire hazard. Western Iberia is currently a region without many economic prospects. With a lack of major industries and dwindling agricultural production the regional governments are already investing in a new economy based on culture, nature and attractive landscapes. The re-creation of more natural, wilder landscapes with bountiful wildlife would serve as a vital component in this new identity and a natural part of a better economic basis for the future.

An unprecedented, large-scale opportunity exists for rewilding the border areas of western Spain and north-eastern Portugal. More than 1.3 million hectares of land have been set aside for conservation in the form of Natura 2000 areas with a very interesting mixture of natural/semi-natural habitats. Side by side with Dehesas and Montados are mountain ranges - “Sierras” - with cliff loving animals such as vultures, eagles and Iberian ibex together with river valleys inhabited by otters and pond turtles. On the poorer soils

on granite rocks the landscape is dominated by small holdings with cultivations based on olives, almonds, and cereals - also mostly abandoned.

### Organisations

Two NGOs - Fundación Naturaleza Y Hombre (FNYH) in Spain and Associação Transumância e Natureza (ATN) in Portugal – have decided to join forces across the borders. Both of them already work with a long list of other organisations nationally and internationally. In Portugal, the Centro de Biologia Ambiental (CBA), Douro International Nature Park (ICNB) and Parque Arqueológico do Vale de Côa have already expressed an interest to participate. On the Spanish side, Universidad de Salamanca and several others are also interested.

### Planned work & vision

The two local organizations work hard on creating attractive ‘models’ of how rewilded areas could function here, using four core areas – Campanarios de Azaba (owned by FNYH) and Riscos del Águeda (community owned property, managed by FNYH) in Spain, and the Faia Brava reserve (owned by ATN), and Tajo Internacional in Portugal. The approach includes purchasing important core areas, reintroducing missing species to

create natural grazing systems, promotion of the natural return of iconic and ecologically important species such as Iberian lynx, and enhancing the conditions for the rabbit - a key element in the ecological systems of the Iberian Peninsula. For the natural grazing regimes, red deer, Iberian ibex, primitive horses and cattle adapted to the local situation will be reintroduced. The Sayaguesa cattle breed will serve as founder together with some other Mediterranean races in a project to recreate the Aurochs - the “ultimate toro” - lead by the Dutch Taurus Foundation. The region also boasts the largest open-air Paleolithic art site in Europe, if not in the world, designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The motifs of the earliest engravings (40,000-10,000 BC) are mostly ibex, wild horses, aurochs and red deer, which indicate the crucial importance of these animals in bringing back the natural heritage of the landscapes here.

A Rewilding Europe centre for Western Iberia will be created in Campanarios de Azaba. Opportunities for creating new economic models based on wild nature will be tested in both Portugal and Spain in collaboration with land owners. Eco-tourism promotion, education and communications are other essential elements.

*“Rewilding will promote the come-back of species, many of which have either been lost or are rare, such as the black vulture, black stork and the globally threatened Iberian lynx. An important aspect is to scale-up our impact. “Campanarios de Azaba” will be a model, which can be replicated by private and public landowners across both Spain and Portugal.”*

**Carlos Sánchez, Fundación Naturaleza Y Hombre (FNYH), Spain**



MARKUS VARESUO / WILD MONDERS OF EUROPE



STEFAN WIDSTRAND / WILD MONDERS OF EUROPE

# How can you support Rewilding Europe?

To reach its full potential, Rewilding Europe is looking for partnerships with conservation organizations, public or private institutions, foundations, companies and private individuals to help us make Europe a wilder place. We welcome contributions of all kinds – pro-bono work, joint PR and marketing efforts, financial investment in conservation enterprises, donations, grants, media coverage, presentation possibilities at conferences and seminars, land donations, practical services, sponsorships and business partnerships.

Maybe you yourself or your organization or company would be interested? If you have the desire to make a difference for wildlife and wilderness in Europe we would really like to talk to you about it. Rewilding Europe can offer many different possibilities, including becoming personally involved in a project, if you would like to. Here are some options:

## **Become a strategic partner**

Organizations, public or private institutions, foundations, companies and private individuals which have the ability and desire to make a substantial and long-term impact on a wilder Europe, are invited to become a strategic partner. Strategic partners believe in our approach and their contributions have

a substantial and long-lasting impact on the success of Rewilding Europe. Funding contributions from strategic partners typically exceed € 100,000 per year.

## **Become a major donor**

Major donors to Rewilding Europe are individuals, foundations or NGOs who have the means to engage with us at a substantial level.

Funding contributions start from € 25,000 a year, and make a substantial difference to one of our projects, or our portfolio in general, or a specific activity or component of Rewilding Europe.

## **Become a donor**

These are primarily corporate entities and individuals who are prepared to donate € 2,500 or more on an annual basis to our conservation work, typically focused on (activities in) one of our projects.

## **Invest in conservation-based business**

Rewilding Europe is supporting the development of conservation-based businesses across our project areas and beyond. We are identifying relevant local entrepreneurs and businesses, welcoming any opportunity to introduce them to environmentally minded investors or potential business partners.

We are also in the process of designing an investment fund, which will allow private individuals, companies and environmentally minded investors to invest in a wide range of conservation-based businesses across our project areas and indeed across Europe. If you are interested in these opportunities, we invite you to contact us for more details.

## **Contribute to the European Wildlife Bank**

Rewilding Europe is setting up a European Wildlife Bank, to boost the numbers of wildlife in the rewilding areas, in particular large herbivores such as red deer, European bison, wild horses and wild bovines. This is a very innovative mechanism which has been proven to work already at national levels and will now be scaled up to the European level.

## **Donation details**

You can choose to donate through the tax efficient funding structures which have been set up for Rewilding Europe in the Netherlands, a not-for-profit foundation.

For further information on donations to Rewilding Europe, you are welcome to contact us. We will do everything we can to match your support with your ideas and desires.

## **What can Rewilding Europe offer you?**

- As a supporter of Rewilding Europe, you are invited to visit any of the rewilding projects and we would be delighted to show you the conservation work done on the ground.
- Depending on your level of contribution, you will also be invited to participate in exciting conservation activities, such as the translocation of animals, research work or European wildlife and wilderness safaris (as of 2013).
- As a strategic partner, you will be invited to an annual gathering of like-minded individuals where we will provide you with insights into conservation issues across Europe.
- We will offer individuals or companies who make a significant contribution, the opportunity to join us in a private tented camp in one of our project areas as of 2013.
- Regular updates on progress from the rewilding projects and invitations to Rewilding Europe activities.





#### FUNDING PARTNERS



#### LOCAL REWILDING PARTNERS







# Rewilding Europe

A new beginning. For wildlife. For us.



## We want to make Europe wilder

With much more space for wildlife, wilderness and natural processes. We want to bring back the variety of life for us all to enjoy and to explore new ways for people to earn a fair living from the wild.

Any initiative aiming to rewild a continent will need a lot of support. We need your support in this effort. We would be delighted if you, in one way or another, want to become part of our ground-breaking initiative.

Let's join forces together in Making Europe a Wilder Place!

[www.rewildingeurope.com](http://www.rewildingeurope.com)

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