

Rewilding
Europe®
Making Europe a Wilder Place

2015 ANNUAL REVIEW



Rewilding Europe®

Making Europe a Wilder Place



Rewilding Europe is a proud beneficiary of the Dutch Postcode Lottery

Initiating Partners



The Supervisory Board of Rewilding Europe formally approved this Annual Review 2015, in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, on 12 April 2016

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Telling our stories

At Rewilding Europe, we love to share our accomplishments with you. In this latest Annual Review for the year 2015, you will read about the encouraging progress we made to make Europe a wilder place.

As the scale and scope of our work grows, so does the nature of the material that needs to be reported. It is for this reason that we have decided to adopt a fresh approach to this year's review. In addition to presenting essential facts, figures and milestones, we want to give you a greater understanding of the way that our initiatives work, and how they can bring positive change to people's lives and environments across Europe.

During the course of this review, you will therefore come across a number of feature stories. Profiling our work at both general and project level, these illustrate our progress in rewilding, enterprise and communication. As vignettes of the way we operate and the benefits that rewilding can bring, we hope they capture your imagination and provide new insights into the opportunities and challenges that we face.

We sincerely hope that you will enjoy reading this Annual Review 2015. As we take our pioneering initiative forward, your support – be it new or long-standing – is both essential and highly appreciated.



Frans Schepers

Frans Schepers
Managing Director



Wiet de Bruijn

Wiet de Bruijn
Chairman

2015 at a glance

1 January

Geneva, Switzerland

- › Fondation Segré starts supporting Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria



FONDATION SEGRÉ

7 January

Central Apennines, Italy

- › First REC loan provided to a local business (Wildlife Adventures)



28 January

Amsterdam, the Netherlands

- › Rewilding Europe receives 500 000 euros from the Dutch Postcode Lottery

31 January

Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria

- › 30 fallow deer released in one of the rewilding pilot sites (Chernoochene)

10 April

Nijmegen, the Netherlands

- › First six volunteers from across Europe join Rewilding Europe and start supporting our work

22 April

Brussels, Belgium

- › Rewilding Europe becomes a member of the European Habitat Forum, an assembly of 25 European nature organisations

11 May

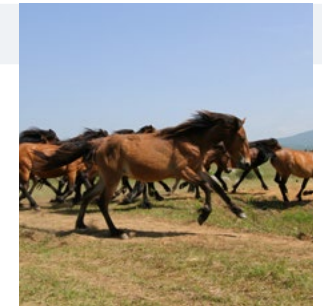
Nijmegen, the Netherlands

- › Annual Review 2014 published and rewilding definition launched

28 May

Velebit Mountains, Croatia

- › Lika Plains officially opened as a natural grazing pilot with the release of 24 Bosnian mountain horses



22 June

Nijmegen, the Netherlands

- › Toyota Fund for Europe supports Rewilding Europe



3 July

Southern Carpathians, Romania

- › First bison calf born in the rewilding area, part of 18 newborn bison in rewilding network sites across Europe



13 July

Nijmegen, Netherlands

- › New publication launched: sharing practices on natural grazing in Europe, to guide natural grazing pilots

4 September

Brussels, Belgium

- › European Commission approves LIFE project bison reintroduction in Southern Carpathians, Romania, for a period of five years

14 October

Apeldoorn, the Netherlands

- › European Rewilding Network welcomes three new Dutch members from Natuurmonumenten



22 October

Danube Delta, Romania

- › New Tauros breeding site opened with 12 animals transported from Netherlands to the delta

19 November

Brussels, Belgium

- › Rewilding Europe co-signs joint paper with EHF members on EU Nature Directives being fit for purpose

24 November

Stockholm, Sweden

- › Swedish Postcode Foundation starts supporting Rewilding Lapland with a financial grant



3 February

Velebit Mountains, Croatia

- More than 300 people participate in opinion survey about rewilding, with positive outcomes guiding our future work in this area

11 February

Stockholm, Sweden

- Partnership with Wild Wonders of Europe renewed for another three years



**WILD WONDERS
OF EUROPE**



25 February

Paris, France

- Partnership with Conservation Capital renewed for another three years



3 March

Nijmegen, the Netherlands

- Rewilding Europe's Facebook page reaches 15 000 likes

13 June

Southern Carpathians, Romania

- HSH Princess Theodora of Lichtenstein visits bison release area and local schools in Armenis municipality, representing the Green Teen Team Foundation



15 June

Southern Carpathians, Romania

- Second bison release of 14 animals; now herd of 28 European bison roaming the area

19 June

Oder Delta, Germany/Poland

- Oder Delta becomes the eight rewilding area in the portfolio during a launch event attended by many local stakeholders and partners

19 June

Western Iberia, Portugal

- Rewilding Côa Valley celebrated with pre-launch of Faia Brava Star Camp at the 15th Anniversary of our local partner Associação Transumância e Natureza

23 September

Brussels, Belgium

- European Commission approves LIFE project Vultures in Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria/Greece, for a period of five years

1 October

Drenthe, Netherlands

- Partnership agreement signed with Artists for Nature Foundation to start cooperation on nature artists' projects in our rewilding areas

2 October

Monaco

- Partnership agreement signed with Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, to explore and prepare joint conservation and rewilding initiatives



9 October

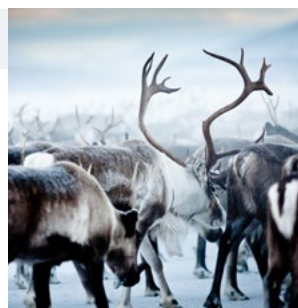
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

- Dutch Postcode Lottery Project 'Green Treasures of Europe' successfully closed

1 December

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

- Lapland officially becomes the ninth rewilding area in the Rewilding Europe portfolio.



2 December

The Hague, the Netherlands

- Rewilding Europe Circle launched with nine members becoming rewilding ambassadors from across Europe

9 December

Nijmegen, The Netherlands

- New online fundraising platform launched



18 December

Velebit Mountains, Croatia

- Cooperation started with Zagreb University on old-growth forests and brown bears



Rewilding Europe: our story

Rewilding is a powerful new term in conservation. In Europe, rewilding is gathering momentum as a young and vibrant movement of conservationists and citizens seeking a counterweight to our increasingly regulated lives, society, landscapes and nature. It signifies a desire to rediscover the values of freedom, spontaneity, resilience and wonder embodied in Europe's natural heritage, and to revitalise conservation as a positive, future-oriented force.

Already in 2008 we began to explore new conservation opportunities presented by a number of distinct trends in Europe. We were particularly interested in engaging with the dynamics of large-scale land abandonment of rural areas in Europe, the wildlife resurgence that is happening across large parts of our continent, and an increased interest in experiencing wild nature and wildlife by Europeans.

We were also driven by the opportunity to 'steer' landscapes towards a rewilded future where restored ecological systems could support new nature-based economies, and bring new skills, experience and energy to rural areas. Finally, we felt that an important ecological process like natural grazing – in combination with the wider wildlife comeback – could help restore food chains and safeguard the rich biodiversity associated with mosaic landscapes, as an alternative to spontaneous reforestation and declines in domestic grazing associated with land abandonment.

This was the founding inspiration for Rewilding Europe. We set an agenda by developing and launching a new but complementary vision and approach to conservation in Europe that addresses such opportunities and challenges, and pioneers and develops these new ideas in practice, providing new perspectives for both nature and people.

Rewilding Europe has developed an ambitious strategy to put this vision into reality through five 10-year objectives, starting work on these in 2011. These objectives are being pursued by creating 10 rewilding areas in different geographical regions and in different socio-economic settings across Europe. Areas have been chosen where rewilding is possible at a scale of at least 100 000 hectares within a wider landscape setting. By the end of 2015, nine of these are operational and run and owned by local partner organisations that receive technical, financial and promotional support from Rewilding Europe.



REWILDING EUROPE'S VISION: MAKING EUROPE A WILDER PLACE

'Wild nature is recognised as an important and inherent aspect of Europe's natural and cultural heritage. It is an essential element of a modern, prosperous, and healthy European society in the 21st century.'

Beyond developing these 10 rewilding areas as showcases for its vision, Rewilding Europe is working with the wider conservation community to create a supporting environment which will help the rewilding process gain momentum. An important step was taken by the WILD Foundation at the WILD10 Congress in October 2013 in Salamanca (Spain), where 'A Vision for a Wilder Europe' was presented and signed by 10 European conservation organisations. This vision was a landmark publication, establishing for the first time 10 key actions to promote a wilder Europe, many of which have now been acted on by the various signatory organisations.

Since 2011, dozens of rewilding initiatives have been launched independent of Rewilding Europe. An important recent development is the launch of Rewilding Britain in June 2015, opening up the

conservation debate in the UK and providing inspiration for pioneering rewilding projects across the British Isles. Rewilding Europe liaises closely with Rewilding Britain and other rewilding groups across Europe to promote alignment of rewilding approaches, taking into account the national context in which each is working.

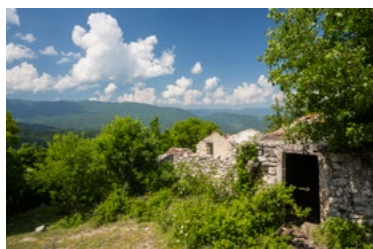
Rewilding projects are now widely reported on in European media. Not only are they exciting, engaging and challenging, but they also promote healthy debate over what is natural and the types of nature that we collectively wish to conserve and shape. In the context of Europe's dynamic multicultural societies and landscapes, a distinct approach to rewilding is now unfolding: one that is shaped by our conservation heritage, but that also resets expectations of what is possible in European biodiversity conservation.

REWILDING EUROPE'S MISSION

Rewilding Europe wants to make Europe a wilder place, with far more space for wild nature, wildlife and wilderness, to bring back the variety of life for all of us to enjoy, and to explore new ways for people to earn a fair living from the wild.



Rewilding Europe brings a **new conservation vision for Europe**, with wild nature and natural processes as key elements, and where rewilding is applicable to any type of landscape or level of protection. We view nature as something that is fully capable of taking care of itself. This concept should become the main management principle for many of Europe's natural areas in the future.



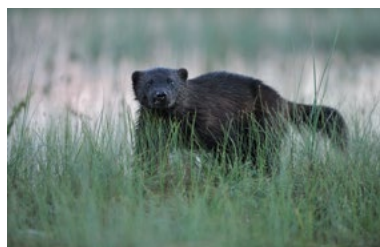
Rewilding Europe focuses on **transforming the problems caused by ongoing and extensive land abandonment into mutually beneficial opportunities** for man and nature, providing a viable business case for wild nature across Europe. Selected areas have the potential to become world-class destinations for nature tourism, as well as offering a range of other nature-based economic benefits.



Rewilding Europe **aims to rewild at least one million hectares of land by 2022**, creating ten magnificent wildlife and wild areas of international quality, that will work also as examples of a new competitive, sustainable rural economy. They will serve as inspirational examples for what can be achieved elsewhere.



In these areas, Rewilding Europe wants **natural processes to play a vital role** in shaping landscapes and ecosystems. Such natural processes include flooding (including the effects of erosion and sedimentation), weather (for example storms and avalanches), natural calamities (for example natural fires and disease), natural grazing (the role of herbivores of all kinds in creating vegetation dynamics), predation (the impact of carnivores on their prey species and thereby the vegetation), and scavenging.



Rewilding Europe recognizes the **crucially important ecological role of large carnivores**, as well as smaller predators, raptors and scavengers. The brown bear, wolf, lynx, Iberian lynx, wolverine, golden jackal, eagle, vulture and many more species are essential for the natural functioning of the ecosystems they live in.



Rewilding Europe recognizes **natural grazing as one of the key ecological factors** for naturally open and half-open landscapes, upon which a large part of Europe's biodiversity is dependent. We want to allow our native herbivores to return again in significant, naturally balanced numbers to the lands where they once belonged. It is here that they can play their vital ecological role.



Rewilding Europe **emphasizes the joy and the value of wildness**, and takes an active part in mass communication to stimulate a greater sense of pride in the wild and to spread a vision of a wilder continent. We aim to do this by using a broad range of media and partnerships to promote our natural heritage, showcasing the opportunities for rewilding to the people of Europe.



What is rewilding?

Recognizing that there might be differences in how 'rewilding' is defined and practiced in different places across the world, in 2015 we published a working definition for 'rewilding' that we believe is particularly suited to Europe's history and culture, and the condition of European landscapes. A number of important clarifications further define rewilding with regard to the European situation. We will use this definition for the vision and work of Rewilding Europe and encourage other organisations and initiatives to adopt it as much as possible.

'Rewilding ensures natural processes and wild species to play a much more prominent role in the land- and seascapes, meaning that after initial support, nature is allowed to take more care of itself. Rewilding helps landscapes become wilder, whilst also providing opportunities for modern society to reconnect with such wilder places for the benefit of all life.'



Rewilding represents a new appreciation of wilder landscapes, in which people understand the interdependent relationship between the health of wild nature and the health of human society, and act to strengthen this indispensable relationship.



Rewilding often requires initial supportive measures, to re-establish natural processes, or to help restore wildlife populations to more natural levels. From the point of initial intervention, however, the goal is always to reduce the level of intervention going forward.



Rewilding creates a new understanding that life-supporting European biodiversity is fundamentally important, and is best derived from natural processes and the habitats that are the result of those processes.



Rewilding is a relative and progressive process, where the goal is to move up a scale of wildness within the constraints of what is possible.



Rewilding can occur in all types of terrestrial and marine environment, on both a small and large scale. While formal protected status for such environments is not essential, some form of protection is often desirable to ensure the full and continued success of the rewilding process.



Rewilding is not geared toward reaching any specific, human-defined 'optimal situation' or end state, or to only create 'wilderness', but is instead meant to support more natural dynamics that will result in landscapes, habitats and species interacting with each other in each particular place, and interacting with local cultural identities.



In Europe, even our wildest landscapes are missing certain key natural processes and/or species, making even these areas important and "qualified" for rewilding.



Reintroductions and population reinforcements of flora and fauna are meant to restore ecosystem functions and processes, but in a historically indigenous range of species.



Rewilding is future-oriented, and works towards the return of natural processes and wildlife within our modern social context, creating new opportunities to link human activities to such wilder, natural landscapes.



To restore ecosystem functions and natural processes, working with 'ecological replacements' (of extinct species) is also an option (cf. IUCN). However, the main focus will remain on native species, including those that may be extinct in the local area.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

A rewilding scale

In the context of Europe, rewilding is not synonymous with wilderness. It is about moving up a scale of wildness within the constraints of what is possible. Rewilding is seen as a process rather than a state, and is about giving ecosystems a functional 'upgrade' whatever their nature, scale and location. On a hypothetical rewilding scale of 1–10, wilderness areas would already be at 9–10. Restricting rewilding to this upper end would limit both its geographical scope and transformative potential.

To quantify the process of rewilding, Rewilding Europe is developing a new tool – the 'Rewilding Scale'. This is meant to be an evaluative tool for measuring progress on the most important ecological conditions in Rewilding Europe's 10 rewilding areas. Each condition is measured on a 10-point scale arranged along a continuum. The process of rewilding is in fact expressed as moving up the Rewilding Scale – in which each step can be seen as progress towards a wilder state.

As each rewilding landscape has its own unique characteristics, the relative importance of the rate of change of ecological conditions within each landscape will vary from site to site. This means that each rewilding landscape will have its own own reference 'values' on the Rewilding Scale.

The scalar evaluation of landscapes should be made on a regular (ideally annual) basis, and is based on 'best professional judgement' by a select group of people boasting relevant skills, scientific knowledge and areas of expertise. The Rewilding Scale will be further developed with the support of scientific institutions; our goal is for it to become operational and applicable to a number of rewilding landscapes after testing in 2016.



Five specific, 10-year objectives

Rewilding Europe has given itself five specific, 10-year objectives that are worked on both at the central level and at the rewilding area level. The work in the rewilding areas is designed in a way that all activities and results contribute to these five European-wide objectives. For each objective, the main tools are mentioned that we have developed to help achieve these objectives.

1

WILDER NATURE: Create enabling conditions and kick-start the more natural functioning of nature across Europe, in particular in larger, connected landscapes, based on the Vision for a Wilder Europe.

Main tools: 10-year shared visions for each rewilding area, landscape planning and zonation, pilot sites in priority rewilding zones where user- or property rights (grazing, hunting, management) are secured, partnership agreements with main landowners and area managers.

5

MAGNIFICATION: Inspire the scaling-up and replication of the rewilding approach across Europe.

Main tools: European Rewilding Network, support to rewilding initiatives wherever possible, exchanges of knowledge and expertise with initiatives in Europe and across the world.

2

WILDLIFE COMEBACK: Ensure the continued comeback of wildlife – including large herbivores, large carnivores and scavengers across Europe, to service both nature as well as people.

Main tools: European Wildlife Bank, species reintroductions or rewilding (based on strategic and feasibility plans), wildlife population enhancements, change of hunting practices, mitigation of human-wildlife conflicts, local rangers, herd keepers or ambassadors of certain species.

3

NATURE-BASED ECONOMIES:

Demonstrate that rewilding generates new business opportunities, jobs and income for society, thereby creating an alternative and competitive form of land (and sea) use for local people, landowners and communities.

Main tools: Rewilding Europe Capital, Rewilding Europe Travel Club, European Safari Company, promotional support and sales of destinations.

4

INTEREST IN THE WILD: Create pride, public support, new engagements, and a more positive attitude amongst stakeholders for a wilder Europe with much more wild nature, wilderness and wildlife.

Main tools: mass-media campaigns, photo missions and image purchase, high quality design products, media-trips and press releases, website and social media, exhibitions, TV productions, local seminars and branding.





A photograph of a forest with tall, thin trees and a carpet of blue flowers in the foreground. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The ground is covered in a dense layer of small, bright blue flowers. The lighting is soft and diffused, creating a serene atmosphere.

Management and development

With numerous partners, Rewilding Europe is now working in nine larger landscapes across the continent to put our vision into practice. This is done by supporting locally based and locally led rewilding initiatives which provide ownership and leadership. Also, new and innovative tools are developed at central level that support our work in general and in the rewilding areas. Two new areas were added to the portfolio in 2015: Oder Delta (Germany/Poland) and Lapland (Sweden).

As this Annual review shows, 2015 was another strong year for Rewilding Europe in terms of achieving or working towards our key goals and objectives. Over 70 people across 17 different European countries were directly involved in our initiative, either as staff members, board members, or as ambassadors in our newly established Rewilding Europe Circle.

While we try to maximize efficiency by remaining a lean and mean organization, our work is to a large extent based on partnerships and networks that can effect a wider impact. In 2015, a number of new partnerships were established, while existing ones were also extended.

The following section, entitled 'management and development', will outline our major accomplishments in 2015, with facts and figures that show how we are successfully building our portfolio and widening our rewilding network across Europe.



Management and development: facts and figures



REWILDING AREAS

spanning 8 countries were part of the Rewilding Europe portfolio by the end of 2015



of these 9 areas are

TRANSBOUNDARY:

- Western Iberia (Portugal/Spain)
- Danube Delta (Romania/Ukraine)
- Eastern Carpathians (Poland/Slovakia/Ukraine)
- Rhodope Mountains (Bulgaria/Greece)
- Oder Delta (Germany/Poland)
- Lapland (Sweden/Norway)

2 NEW REWILDING AREAS (ODER DELTA & LAPLAND)

were added to the portfolio, further increasing the geographical spread of our work

72 PERSONS

were directly involved in the Rewilding Europe team in 2015

The central team had a capacity of

8 FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTE)

of which 4.5 fte is direct support to rewilding areas.

Our expenditure in 2015 was nearly

1.44 MILLION EUROS

– a decrease from 2014, while a strong fundraising result will allow us to significantly increase our activities over the coming years

Truly European – our team is working from

16 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Belgium • Bulgaria • Croatia
Estonia • France • Germany
Greece • Italy • Netherlands
Poland • Portugal • Romania
Spain • Sweden • Switzerland
United Kingdom

The local partners had a total

30 PEOPLE

actively working in the 9 rewilding areas, with a total capacity of around 16 full-time equivalents (fte). This makes the total of

24 FTE

of staff working for Rewilding Europe, of which just over 20 fte is dedicated to the rewilding areas.

THE REWILDING EUROPE CIRCLE

was launched in December, starting with

3 PARTNERSHIPS

were renewed with our initiating partners: Wild Wonders of Europe, Conservation Capital and ARK Nature

Rewilding Europe became member of the

EUROPEAN HABITAT FORUM

– a coalition of

25

conservation organisations in Europe

A NEW LEGAL ENTITY



was set up and became our local partner: Rewilding Lapland (Sweden)

9

members who will act as ambassadors for our work

Two main existing **FUNDING PARTNERS**

continued their financial support, and a new funding partner came on board, while another funding partner increased its support

3

CORPORATE SPONSORS

started supporting us: Life-Line, Clifford Chance and Toyota Fund for Europe

The European Commission approved

2 LIFE NATURE PROJECTS

contributing a total of 2.2 million euros

In total, just over **70%** of our budget in 2015 was dedicated to rewilding areas

while the remaining part was spent on management and development of the initiative, including reservations



A holistic approach

Our operational model for making rewilding a reality

Rewilding Europe's work is guided by a three-year Strategic Plan. As our initiative is still dynamic in its development, this Plan is updated and approved by the Supervisory Board on a yearly basis. This yearly revision of the strategy allows us to adapt to new developments as needed and as appropriate. The Strategic Plan is further broken down into separate strategies for the three main pillars of our work: rewilding, enterprise development and communication.

Our support base and engagement with new partners and individuals is growing. By the end of 2015, a total of over 70 people were directly involved in our initiative, be it as a team member, board member, advisor, volunteer or ambassador. A real highlight was the launch of the Rewilding

Europe Circle, a new alliance of rewilding ambassadors, starting with nine members from across the continent. You can read more about this new alliance on page 59 of this Annual Review.

Partnerships are key

In terms of partnership building, we renewed our cooperation with founding partners Wild Wonders of Europe, Conservation Capital and ARK Nature, while further strengthening our relationship with WWF Netherlands. We also started new exciting partnerships, such as those with the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and the Artist for Nature Foundation. In April, Rewilding Europe became a member of the European Habitat Forum, an assembly of 25 European conservation organisations who

coordinate their efforts to influence nature policy in Europe. We believe that cooperation, building coalitions and genuine partnerships at a European level is not only crucial for the success of our initiative, but for effective conservation in Europe as a whole. This also means that we have started to more actively engage with policy work, to help creating space for rewilding in European nature and biodiversity policy.

One of our initiative's key strengths is the trans-European cooperation that we have been able to develop. People from 16 countries are now working together to make our vision for a wilder Europe a reality. It is important to realize that while Rewilding Europe's core team is small, it plays a vital and hardworking role as both an "umbrella"

and an "engine", ensuring cohesion and alignment throughout the network. This includes, among others, providing leadership, strategic planning, coordination, internal communication, fundraising, financial management, monitoring and reporting. We believe that we have organised our internal operations according to professional standards, and are in the process of acquiring a Dutch charity certification standard for this (CBF label).

Further support

The second key function of the central team is to provide technical support to the individual rewilding area teams. This support relates to the three pillars of our initiative – rewilding, enterprise development and external communication and development – on many different levels. This means that all of our core staff are fully engaged with the rewilding area teams, with two regional managers playing a key role in supporting, developing and guiding the rewilding areas to become inspirational showcases for our overall vision.

The third key role of the central team is to develop corporate initiatives that facilitate and support the rewilding areas in meeting their ambitions and objectives; of particular importance here is Rewilding Europe Capital and the European Wildlife Bank. The Rewilding Europe Travel Club is under revision, and will be connected with the European Safari Company that can be ready for launch in 2016. You will read more about these developments in this Annual Review.

Showcase system

At the heart of our initiative are now nine rewilding areas; showcase sites where we work with local partners according to our 10-year vision and area-specific five-year strategic plans. In 2015, after nearly three year of preparation, we welcomed two new rewilding areas to become part of our European portfolio: Oder Delta (Germany/Poland) and Swedish Lapland. These two new areas in the north-western part of Europe make our geographical spread more balanced and rich, with new landscapes, types of ecosystems, local cultures and socio-economic settings. Groundwork for establishing our tenth area, to complete our portfolio, has begun.

According to our de-centralized operational model, we engage with these nine rewilding areas through working with both existing NGOs (such as WWF Romania for the Southern Carpathians, and Associação Transumância e Natureza for Western Iberia) and new legal entities that are set up



► Meeting of the Supervisory Board of Rewilding Europe in the Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria, June 2015

specifically for this purpose. In 2015, such dedicated rewilding entities were active or newly established for the Rhodope Mountains (Rewilding Rhodopes), Velebit (Rewilding Velebit), Central Apennines (Rewilding Apennines) and Lapland (Rewilding Lapland). All these partner organisations have their own local board representations and thus independent governance structures, with whom Rewilding Europe has signed partnership agreements or specific project contracts.

The overall total capacity in the rewilding areas numbers around 30 staff, equivalent to approximately 16 full time positions. With the eight full time equivalents in the central team, the total staff capacity of Rewilding Europe has reached 24 full time equivalents.

Money matters

Our financial capacity is growing overall, albeit with a temporary decrease in 2015, due to the conclusion of two larger funding commitments. Fundraising efforts in 2015 were intense, leading to new commitments from both existing and new funding partners. We are excited about two LIFE Nature proposals that were approved by the European Commission, while new engagements were made with a group of major donors (through WWF

Netherlands) and continuation and extension of funding with existing financial partners. This has already resulted in a substantial increase of income for 2016, continuing the positive trend we have seen since the start of the initiative in 2011. Further growth and consolidation of secured income over a mid-term period according to the targets set by the organisation is one of the continued key priorities of our work.

A burgeoning concept

In 2015, rewilding has attracted much interest within the public, scientific and policy spheres of Europe. Coverage of rewilding in both the general media and scientific publications has also sharply increased, as the concept of rewilding becomes an idea that resonates with many people. At Rewilding Europe we believe we play an important role in putting 'rewilding' on the map as a new, exciting and additional conservation approach. We will continue to take a pro-active, entrepreneurial and leading role over the years to come, encouraged by the wealth of partnerships and new engagements that we continue to foster. The growing European Rewilding Network plays a key role in building, expanding and "magnifying" these efforts, as well as allowing us to learn from each other.



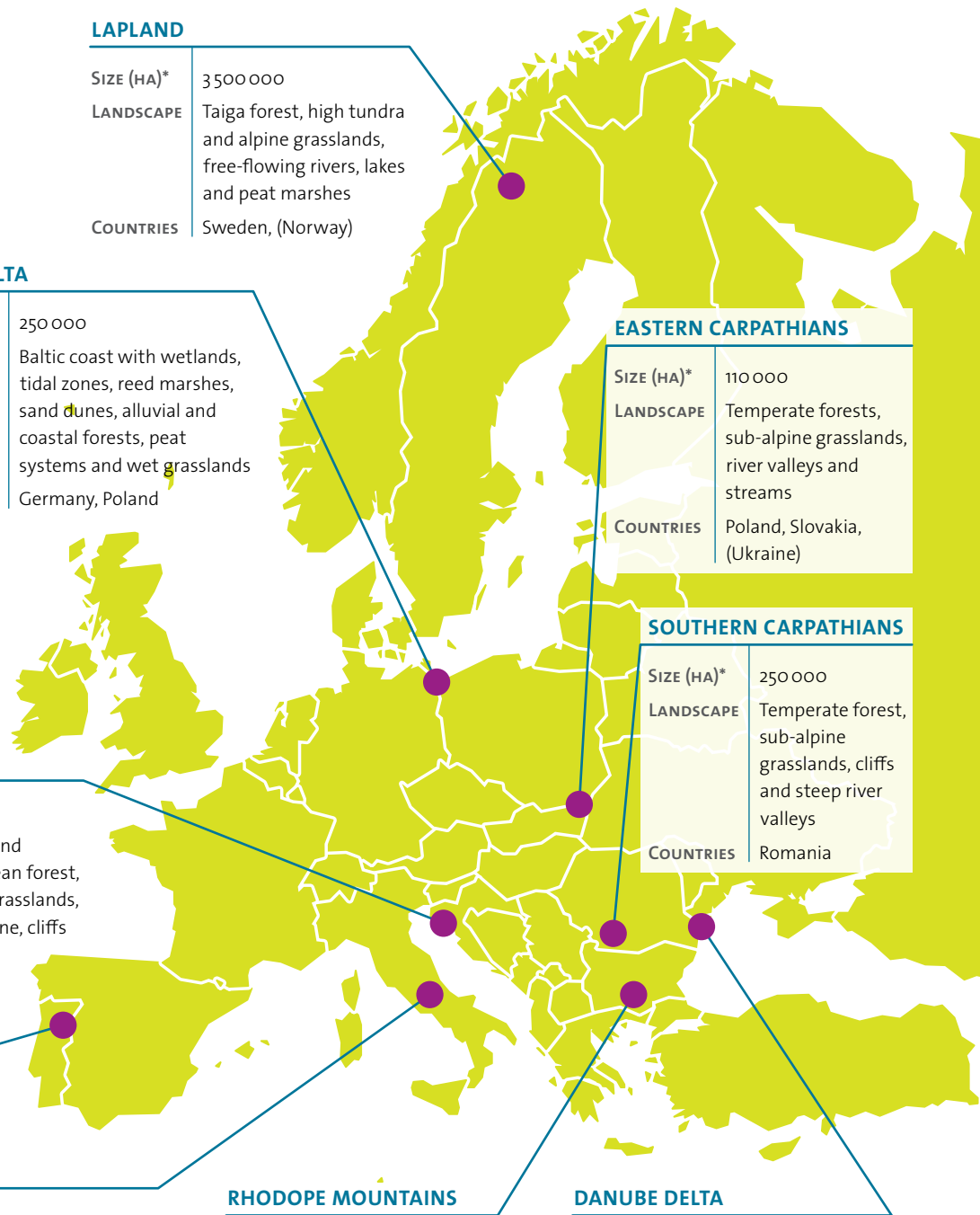
Rewilding areas at the forefront

Rewilding Europe puts its vision into practice through working in 10 areas across Europe. These 10 areas serve as leading examples and inspirational benchmarks for our vision. Expansion of our portfolio is done with a careful, case-by-case approach, taking into account what we have learned in the past and applying critical success and risk factors.

Based on a screening of over 30 nominations from all over Europe, submitted by a variety of organizations, the first rewilding areas became operational at the end of 2011.

Currently nine rewilding areas are active, while a tenth area, which will complete the portfolio, has not yet been selected.

The rewilding areas have vast geographical spread and together reflect a wide selection of European regions and ecosystems, each having their own specific context.



LAPLAND

SIZE (HA)*	3 500 000
LANDSCAPE	Taiga forest, high tundra and alpine grasslands, free-flowing rivers, lakes and peat marshes
COUNTRIES	Sweden, (Norway)

ODER DELTA

SIZE (HA)*	250 000
LANDSCAPE	Baltic coast with wetlands, tidal zones, reed marshes, sand dunes, alluvial and coastal forests, peat systems and wet grasslands
COUNTRIES	Germany, Poland

EASTERN CARPATHIANS

SIZE (HA)*	110 000
LANDSCAPE	Temperate forests, sub-alpine grasslands, river valleys and streams
COUNTRIES	Poland, Slovakia, (Ukraine)

SOUTHERN CARPATHIANS

SIZE (HA)*	250 000
LANDSCAPE	Temperate forest, sub-alpine grasslands, cliffs and steep river valleys
COUNTRIES	Romania

VELEBIT MOUNTAINS

SIZE (HA)*	220 000
LANDSCAPE	Temperate and Mediterranean forest, sub-alpine grasslands, coastal marine, cliffs and canyons
COUNTRIES	Croatia

WESTERN IBERIA

SIZE (HA)*	100 000
LANDSCAPE	Montado, dehesa, sierra, rivers and canyons
COUNTRIES	Portugal, (Spain)

CENTRAL APENNINES

SIZE (HA)*	100 000
LANDSCAPE	High alpine mountains, alpine grasslands and valleys, small rivers and temperate forests
COUNTRIES	Italy

RHODOPE MOUNTAINS

SIZE (HA)*	250 000
LANDSCAPE	Mediterranean temperate forests, river valleys, grasslands and steppe
COUNTRIES	Bulgaria, (Greece)

DANUBE DELTA

SIZE (HA)*	180 000
LANDSCAPE	River delta, reed beds, marshes, riverine forests, coastal grasslands, dune systems, coastal lagoons and forests
COUNTRIES	Romania, (Ukraine)

* The estimated size of the area that can be rewilded which is targeted in each rewilding area. In each area, there is a zonation where different levels of rewilding can be achieved, according to the rewilding scale and depending on a zonation plan. The total size of the Lapland rewilding area is 3,5 million ha. However in the graphs on page 22 we have calculated with 1,4 million hectares as the main focal area to avoid bringing huge unbalance in the overall figures.



STEFAN WIDSTRAND / REWILDING EUROPE

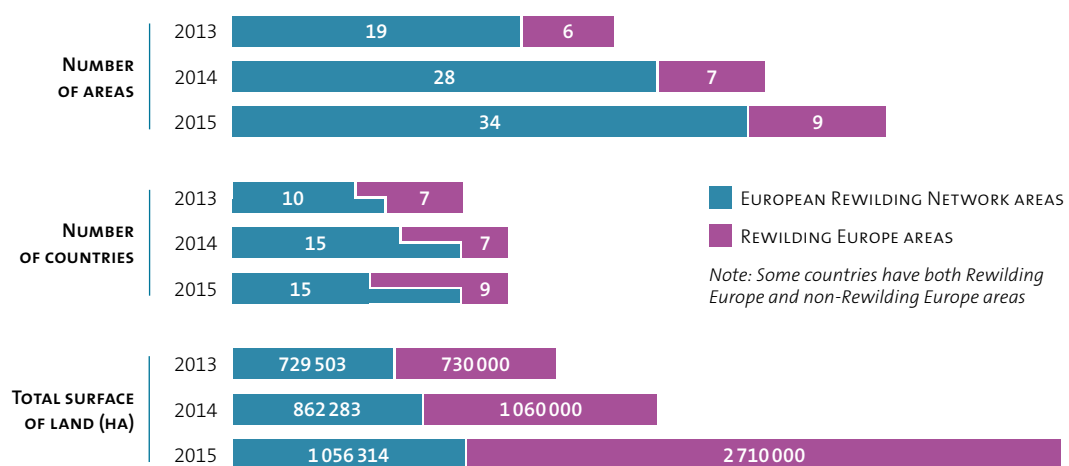
The power of pilots

There is nothing more powerful than demonstrating the rewilding vision through practical, real and tangible efforts and results on the ground. This serves to open people's minds, shows how wilder nature could look in specific locations, creates a strong learning base, breaks down barriers between seemingly opposing actors, forges partnerships, and inspires others to join the cause.

Rewilding Europe sees itself as part of a broader European rewilding movement in which many great and inspiring initiatives have been developed over the last few decades, and where many new ones are being started all over our continent.

In order to inspire others and to make a fair contribution to these novel efforts, Rewilding Europe has started a new initiative within its wider programme: the European Rewilding Network (ERN). The ERN aims to establish a living network of ultimately 100 rewilding initiatives across Europe.

GROWTH OF THE EUROPEAN REWILDING NETWORK (ERN)



Although every initiative is unique and has its own opportunities linked directly to the specific area and people involved, it is worthwhile exchanging knowledge and experiences – and inspiring each other. It also allows for authorities, politicians, stakeholders and many others to come together to communicate, appreciate rewilding achievements, and conceive of a wilder European future.

43 Members, 18 countries

At WILD10 in Salamanca, October 2013, Rewilding Europe officially launched the European Rewilding Network. We announced our first 20 members from 13 countries, accounting nearly 1.4 million hectares of land (including Rewilding Europe areas). Since then the network has been continually growing, with new members coming on board on a regular basis. By December 2015, two years after the launch, the ERN membership has more than doubled, and now comprises 43 members from 18 different countries, covering over 3.7 million hectares of land and water where rewilding is taking place in one form or another. Member sites are spread right across Europe, with significant potential for further growth.

Amongst network members there is a great diversity in the nature of rewilding initiatives being undertaken. They range from restoring river dynamics, restoring food chains, promoting the return of wildlife, reintroducing species, natural grazing, building networks of wildlife hides, changing forestry practices, developing enterprises and conducting applied research. Areas range from small private reserves to complete national parks. Some rewilding sites are located close to human habitation, while others are situated in very remote areas.

Sharing lessons and experiences

While the ERN continues to grow steadily, so the interaction between its members increases step by step. Lessons learned and innovative approaches are exchanged, which broadens everyone's knowledge and stimulates ongoing rewilding efforts in member areas. Every year, up to six web-based seminars (webinars) are organised addressing specific rewilding topics. Each webinar attracts between 10 and 20 participants from across Europe, of which two present their case to others, which then sparks questions and lively debate. Peer-to-peer contacts after the webinars are often a result of this interaction.

The next step in knowledge sharing is the facilitation of exchange visits between practitioners and specific seminars about rewilding. This is already happening on an increasingly frequent basis.



European Rewilding Network members: ● Rewilding Europe areas ● European Rewilding Network areas





Rewilding

Although Rewilding Europe approaches rewilding with a unified, well-defined approach and key principles, there are no blueprints as to how these can be applied on a continent with such huge diversity in nature, culture and social context. Our local partners are key to understanding these local dynamics. Working together in 2015, sustained efforts have again been made to address two key rewilding objectives: re-establishing natural processes and supporting wildlife comeback.

Restoring natural processes included a continued focus on re-establishing natural grazing. This was carried out in a wide range of pilot sites across five rewilding areas, with the principal herbivores involved comprising European bison, wild horse, Tauros, red deer and fallow deer. Most of these animals are part of the European Wildlife Bank.

Restoring naturally flooded areas – another key natural process – was the subject of much of our work in the Danube and Oder Deltas, while in the Rhodope Mountains we have actively begun restoring food chains with vultures as the flagship species.

The European bison received a lot of attention again in 2015, in particular in the Southern Carpathians, where we are building one of the largest free-roaming bison populations in Europe. We are delighted that the European Commission has decided to start supporting our work both on bison on Romania and vultures in Bulgaria as of 2016.

In this section on ‘rewilding’ you will read about our accomplishments in 2015, with associated facts and figures. Five feature stories will provide further insight into how our on-the-ground rewilding efforts take place.



Rewilding: facts and figures

With all relevant stakeholders in Danube Delta an area of

120  hectares is designated for **REFLOODING**



1 BISON TRANSLOCATION

to the Southern Carpathians (Romania) including 14 animals originating from four countries (Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and France).

1

MAJOR PUBLICATION

'Natural grazing: Practices in the rewilding of cattle and horses'

Growing populations of **LARGE CARNIVORES** in at least **4**

areas: Western Iberia (wolf), Velebit Mountains (wolf), Rhodope Mountains (brown bear) and Oder Delta (wolf)

22 000

HECTARES

secured for rewilding through user rights in six rewilding areas

Vulture populations in Rhodope Mountains have increased to

75 pairs of **GRIFFON VULTURES**



19 pairs of **EGYPTIAN VULTURES**

125 Tauros



48 European bison



402

ANIMALS

in the European Wildlife Bank



229 horses

STUDY about protection of old growth forest in the Velebit Mountains

43

MEMBERS

in the European Rewilding Network covering 18 countries and a total surface of over 3.7 million hectares



EUROPEAN REWILDING NETWORK

Cooperation with

9

HUNTING CONCESSION HOLDERS



on wildlife comeback in four rewilding areas (Velebit Mountains, Rhodope Mountains, Lapland and Western Iberia)



TAUROS BREEDING SITES OPERATIONAL

(two in Western Iberia, one in Velebit Mountains, one in Danube Delta and one in the Netherlands), now involving six different ancient breeds

9

EUROPEAN WILDLIFE BANK HERD CONTRACTS

signed with landowners in 4 rewilding areas



Cooperation with

14

ZOOS

from seven European countries on bison translocations for the Carpathians so far

8

NATURAL GRAZING PROJECTS in 5 different rewilding areas started, covering a total of ca 4-500 hectares





FRANS SCHIPPERS / REWILDING EUROPE



Chain of thought

Restoring food chains is a key part of the rewilding process. In the Rhodope Mountains, the reintroduction of fallow deer is leading to a more biodiverse, interconnected natural landscape

Achieving natural balance

In many cases, the rewilding process is all about leaving ecosystems to revert to their natural state. But bringing back key species – species that have disappeared or been diminished due to man's activities – is also crucially important. Many of Rewilding Europe's projects involve the reintroduction of ungulates (hoofed mammals), as this is the best way for us to recreate a wild local ecology boasting complex food chains.

Wild horse, tauros, bison, chamois, deer – these are all naturally occurring European herbivores which, left to their own devices, will sustainably maintain a patchwork of open and forested

landscapes through their grazing. In the Rhodope Mountains, on the Greek-Bulgarian border, the fallow deer is proving the pivotal species in our ongoing efforts to rewild the land.

The problem of abandonment

Home to such signature species as the brown bear, wolf and Egyptian vulture, the Rhodope region is one of the most biodiverse in Europe. Its unrivalled mix of landscapes support myriad flowering plants, reptiles, birds and insects. Yet with local animal husbandry on the decline – as it is in many areas of Europe – such magnificent biodiversity is now under threat.

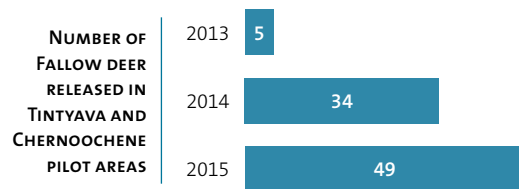
For millions of years, European land has been grazed by natural populations of ungulates. With the recent development of agriculture across the continent, many of these populations were then replaced by domestic livestock.

But now, for the first time in history, a decline in animal husbandry means increasingly large swathes of European land are being left alone without any herbivorous grazing at all. The resultant encroachment of forest areas is bad news for all those European species that depend on open space, including the flowers, butterflies and reptiles that make the Rhodope region so precious.

“Boosting fallow deer populations is not only important for aiding the return of large carnivores and vultures, but also shapes a landscape which is very attractive for a huge variety of species.”

STOYCHO STOYCHEV,
Team Leader of Rewilding Rhodopes

FALLOW DEER RELEASES



Chain reaction

Southern Bulgaria's Studen Kladenets Reserve extends over 7000 hectares beside the River Arda, and is home to one of Europe's largest fallow deer herds. It is from this herd that Rewilding Europe is currently reintroducing deer to the Rhodope Mountains, with the first 30 animals released in January 2015 (in conjunction with a ban on hunting). We are delighted to report that our efforts are already having a profound impact on Rhodope ecology.

By creating a mosaic landscape with numerous open habitats, fallow deer grazing is boosting reptile populations, thereby providing food for raptors. The maintenance of grazed areas also boosts populations of suslik (a ground squirrel), which helps two highly endangered Rhodope species – the imperial eagle and marbled polecat. In addition, the deer themselves – now the most abundant herbivore in the area – are supporting burgeoning local wolf and vulture populations.

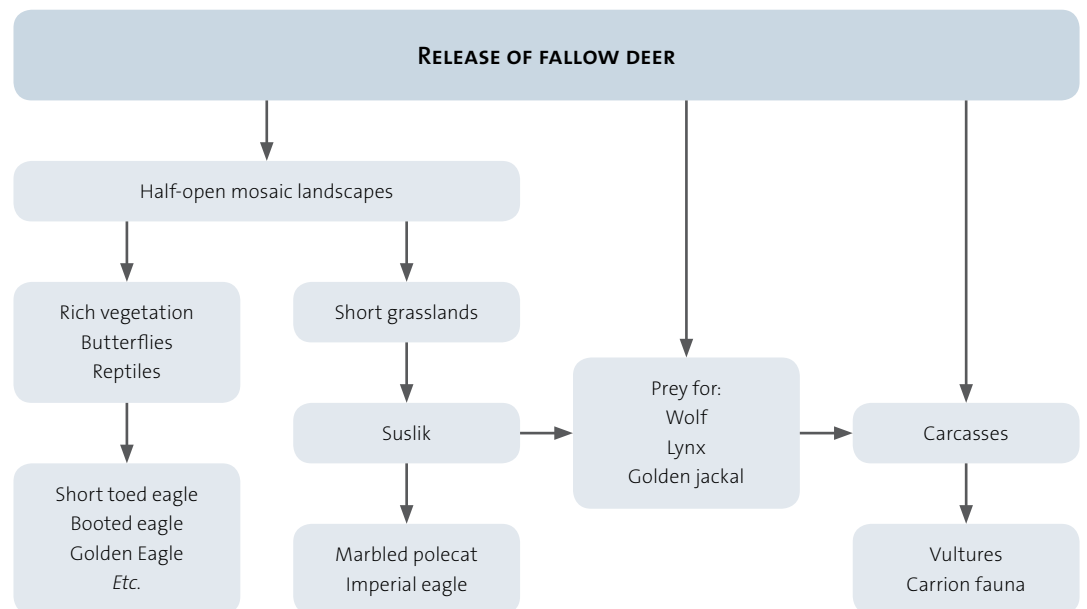
Based on such positive results, Rewilding Europe is now working to develop the fallow deer herd at Studen Kladenets into a breeding centre. This will serve as the source for further reintroductions across the Rhodope region planned for the years to come.



➤ Black vulture, one of the target species in the Rhodope Mountains, taking advantage of natural prey densities

MARKUS VARESVUD / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE

THE IMPORTANCE OF FALLOW DEER IN THE RHODOPES





A tale of two projects

A collaboration between Rewilding Velebit and the University of Zagreb augurs well for bears, beech forests and biodiversity in Croatia's largest wilderness

Some people feel at home in the city, others prefer a life on the road. For Croatian Joso Vukelić, a professor at the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Forestry, the call of the woods has always been paramount.

"Born in the village of Krasno, in the north Velebit Mountains, much of my early childhood was spent surrounded by trees," explains Vukelić. "Since then forests have always held a fascination for me. The stillness, the dappled light, the beauty of the plants and animals. I've devoted my whole career to forests."

This fascination goes along way to explaining Vukelić's enthusiasm for a new collaboration between Rewilding Velebit, Rewilding Europe's recently established partner in Croatia, and Vukelić's Faculty of Forestry, with its long history and expertise in Velebit ecology.

"The memorandum of understanding that was signed in October 2015 will hopefully lead to great things," says Vukelić. "It will also allow me to indulge my life's passion."



FRANIS SCAPELERS / REWILDING EUROPE

► Joso Vukelić explains natural processes in his favorite habitat: old growth forest. Stirovaca forest reserve, Velebit Mountains, Croatia

Rewilding potential

According to the words of an old Croatian folk song, the Velebit Mountains are inhabited by fairies. They are certainly enchantingly picturesque, characterized by towering outcrops of weathered rock, flower-filled upland meadows, and thick stands of pine, fir and beech.

Running parallel to the Adriatic coast for 150 kilometres, the Velebit massif is one of Europe's last great wildernesses. With a diverse range of habitats, it is home to such iconic species as the brown bear, grey wolf, Eurasian lynx, griffon vulture and golden eagle. Two of Croatia's eight national parks are found here, while the entire region is a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

It is within this spectacularly biodiverse environment that Rewilding Velebit and the Faculty of Forestry will combine strengths on two groundbreaking projects.

Unique habitat

Located at the southern end of the Velebit Nature Park, which itself incorporates most of the Velebit Mountains, the Ramino Korito forest is an environ-

ment more than worthy of protection.

"Old growth forests such as Ramino Korito are unique," explains Joso Vukelić. "It is extremely rare to find them completely intact. Every part of the ecosystem here is born, develops and disappears according to natural processes. Such pristine areas are irreplaceable laboratories that can teach us an incredible amount about natural forest processes."

Sitting at an elevation of between 800 and 1300 metres, the 300-hectare Ramino Korito site is dominated by beech trees. But the habitat is especially rich in other plant species, with many endemic to the local environment.

"In Ramino Korito we find all stages of tree development – regeneration, growth, ageing and decay," explains Vukelić. "There is a lot of dead wood on the ground, supporting various saprophytic organisms, mosses and ferns. The biodiversity is magnificent."

Vukelić has already visited Ramino Korito twice in his lifetime, but will soon know the area like the back of his hand. In 2016 the professor will lead a faculty team to measure and record local ecology, laying the scientific groundwork for the area to be declared a special forest reserve.

"This declaration will mean Ramino Korito receives the appropriate legal protection," says Vukelić. "The value of the forest will be officially recognized, and it will become an environment for research. Research which will help in the beneficial management of other forests, both in the Velebit and farther afield."

Bear necessities

The Velebit Mountains are an important brown bear stronghold, with the region currently home to an estimated 80 to 100 individuals. Understanding local bear ecology is crucial in order to provide the animals proper protection, and to boost the population where possible. As a signature Velebit species, bears already generate a significant economic return through wildlife watching and general nature tourism.

In a second Rewilding Velebit-Faculty of Forestry project, Joso Vukelić's colleague Damir Ugarković will lead a separate team to identify and map active and potential brown bear dens across the Velebit Nature Park. They will also assess habitat types and forestry management around the dens, and examine the influence of human activity on bear hibernation periods.

The information gathered from this research will help to protect dens from the impact of forest infrastructure, and hopefully lead to an increase in brown bear numbers.

"This is a pioneering project," says Ugarković. "It could lead to the protection of more Velebit areas from anthropogenic activity, and ultimately raise bear numbers toward their full potential."

Future focus

Learning more about the special habitats and species of the Velebit massif is an essential precondition for rewilding this beautiful area.

"The Velebit has so much hidden potential," says Davor Krmpotić, Director of Rewilding Velebit. "Projects such as Ramino Korito and investigating local bear ecology will allow us to develop such potential in a sustainable way."

Joso Vukelić is also enthusiastic about the prospects for Velebit rewilding.

"The massif presents us with a 2000 square-kilometre mix of forest, pasture, farmland, mountain and other habitat," says the professor. "Species such as bears and wolves have enough space here for a stable existence."

"The project in Ramino Korito is just one step toward understanding, developing and reconnecting other natural sites in the region," he continues. "In this way a rewilded Velebit can benefit every species, including man."

Bison at the border

Tracking European bison in the Eastern Carpathians rewilding area proves the importance of transboundary wildlife management in the Bieszczady Mountains



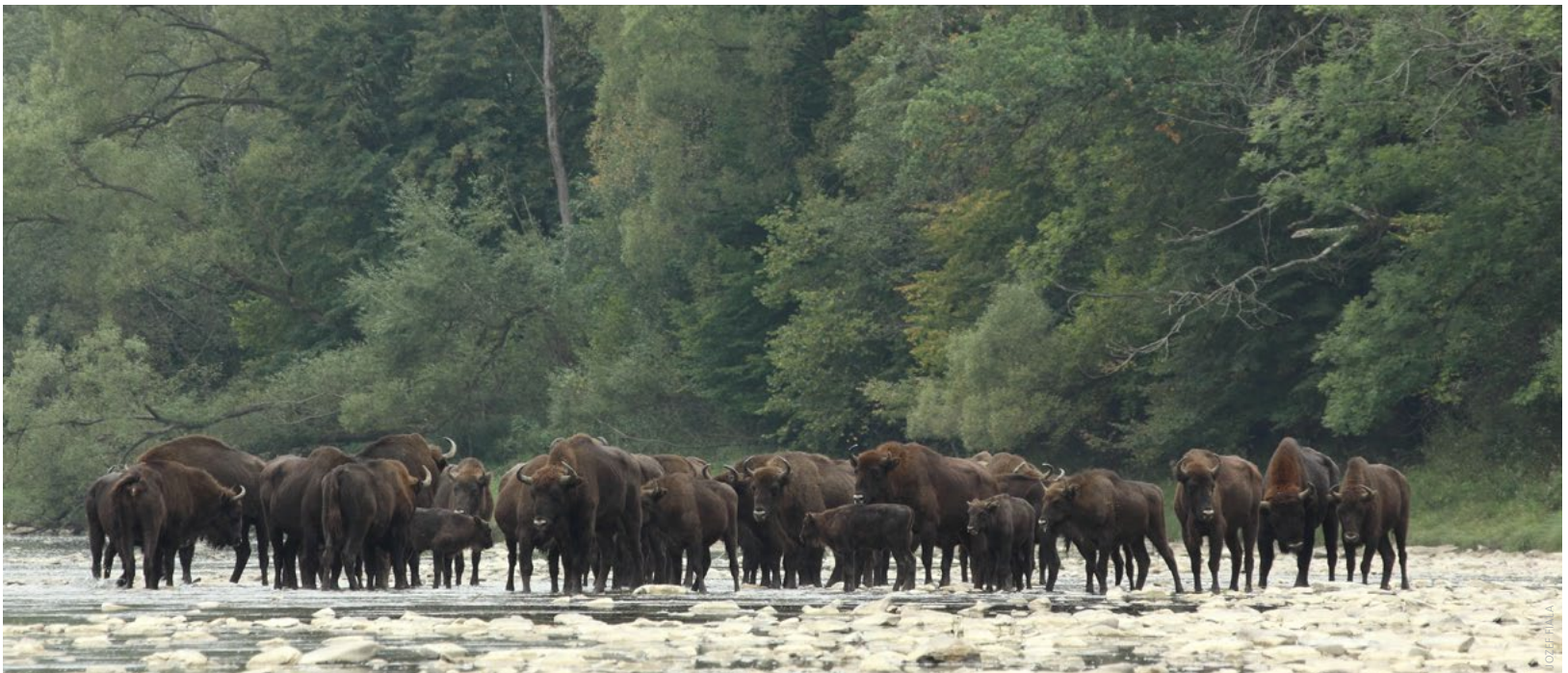
In December 2016, Rewilding Europe supported the release of two female bison into the Bieszczady Mountains in Poland. Together with two bulls, they were collared with a GPS transmitter. The GPS data three months after the release show that at the end of March, the two female bison crossed the Polish-Slovak border; the tracking information shows that they are still roaming in Slovakia accompanied by these two bulls. All four bison have radio collars with GPS/GSM announcing system and a thorough monitoring on their dispersal and behaviour is done on a daily basis.

Spring came to Slovakia earlier than to Poland and most probably the first sunny days and the greener grass on south facing slopes attracted the bison to cross the border. The safe transboundary passage for bison and other wildlife is an absolute

must for restoring their seasonal migration patterns. This allows them to find suitable habitats in different parts of the year, which gives them a much better chance for survival.

Aleksandra Woloszyn-Galeza, who is in charge of monitoring the bison, explains that the animals start moving around and exploring new sites soon after their release into the wild. "In the beginning the bison moved very little from the enclosure, where they were returning for supplementary food," she says. "Now, four months later, it is normal for them to travel long distances. It is clear that the acclimatization process has begun."

The bison population in the Eastern Carpathians is one of the largest free-roaming populations in Europe. More than 300 animals now live in Bieszczady Mountain transboundary area.



► Herd of European bison in the San River, Eastern Carpathians, Poland



Delta force

In the Oder and Danube Deltas – both key Rewilding Europe areas – reflooding is leading to greater biodiversity and boosting local livelihoods



Cases for change

Deltas are some of the most fertile ecosystems on the planet, making them attractive to both man and nature. This has implications for rewilding, which is often restricted by high population densities. There are exceptions, however.

Two of Rewilding Europe's showcase areas are deltas: the Danube Delta in Romania, and the Oder Delta on the Polish-German border. In both of these areas the reflooding of former polders (low-lying tracts of land enclosed by dykes) lies at the heart of our rewilding strategy.

There are different economic reasons for the reflooding of polders in each delta. In the Oder Delta the soil of the polders consists of peat. This means

that drainage leads to soil compaction and necessitates expensive water management solutions.

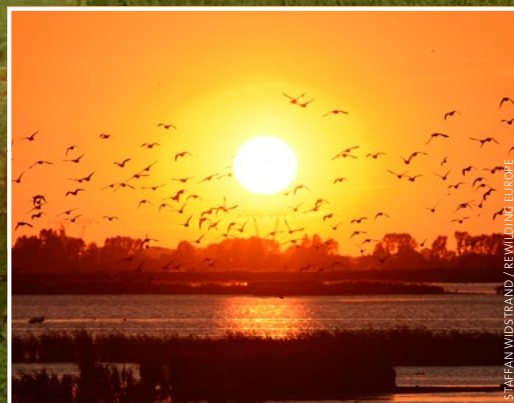
In the Danube Delta the situation for farming is even worse, as a lack of precipitation leads to salinization of the polders. This renders them useless for long-term agriculture.

Interestingly enough, the situation in both deltas is such that biological productivity is higher when the polders are underwater, making reflooding both an economically and ecologically beneficial option. It not only leads to an explosion of aquatic life, upon which sustainable fisheries can be based, but also creates natural spawning areas which support local populations of fish, fish-eating birds and mammals.

Advanced area

The Oder Delta is one of the most advanced European deltas in terms of its reflooding. Thanks to the active restoration of floodplains, 10,000 ha of re-flooded delta are already undergoing natural redevelopment. Immense numbers of cormorants, great white egrets and white-tailed eagles highlight the abundance of burgeoning local fish populations.

We were delighted when this spectacular area joined the Rewilding Europe family in June 2015. Together with local authorities and NGOs, we are now exploring ways to communicate the success of the rewilding strategy here, and investigating ways that the area can be further rewilded.



Partnership potential

In the Danube Delta we are building partnerships around the reflooding of polders – with the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority, the Danube Delta Institute, WWF Romania and the National Fishery Agency. An initial pilot area has been designated, close to the city of Sfantu Gheorghe. Two small polders, with a combined area of 120 ha, will soon be opened to the Danube, allowing the development of aquatic life. Working together with local fishermen, we are developing a plan for the sustainable use of these new resources, and are also working with partners to identify further areas with reflooding potential.



STAFFAN WILDS TRAND / REWILDING EUROPE

“Fishery is the main source of income for the people of my village, while ecotourism is a burgeoning economy. Increasing the area of natural floodplains, where fish can spawn and tourists can enjoy wildlife, will benefit all of us.”

VALENTIN SIDORENCU, Mayor of Sfantu Georghe, Danube Delta, Romania

Born to be wild

Grazing the landscapes of Europe, the auroch – Europe’s original wild bovine species – once played a vital role in maintaining biodiversity. Today, nearly four centuries after the animal’s extinction, pioneering efforts by Rewilding Europe and the Taurus Foundation are seeing this beneficial herbivore brought back to life.



Back to the future

As the ancestor of all domesticated cattle, it is hard to think of a more important animal in the history of mankind than the auroch. Once widespread across Europe, it was a keystone species within many of the continent’s ecosystems. But by 1627 this impressive animal had been hunted to extinction across its entire range.

The auroch may be long gone, yet all is not lost. Today strands of its DNA remain alive, distributed among a number of ancient cattle breeds that still exist across Europe. Rewilding Europe, together with the Dutch Taurus Foundation, in 2013 embarked on a programme to bring the auroch back to life.

“The results of the breeding programme are promising. By selecting the right breeds – and then the right individuals within such breeds – we have taken a big step forward, even with the first generation of animals.”

Bovine-led biodiversity

For millions of years, European land has been grazed – by wild herbivores, and, far more recently, by domestic cattle. This grazing has kept parts of the land free from forest, providing open habitats that support a wide range of plants and animals. But today a decline in animal husbandry across Europe means these habitats, and their biodiversity, are in danger of disappearing.

This is where the auroch, or its latter-day descendant – the so-called “Tauros” – comes in. Through selective breeding, Rewilding Europe and its partners want tauros to occupy the niche the auroch once filled, keeping Europe’s rich mosaic of open landscapes flourishing through natural grazing.

Selective science

The Tauros Programme started in 2008 with the aim of creating the modern-day equivalent of a long-dead animal. The programme’s principal technique is “back-breeding”: by combining cattle breeds with desired characteristics, a herbivore can be created with physical attributes, behaviour and genetics that closely match those of Europe’s original wild auroch.

Today, many old European cattle breeds still retain a genetic similarity to the auroch. Following the selection of six or seven such breeds from an original list of over 30, the first animals were purchased and transported to the Netherlands for breeding.

The Tauros Programme comprises four phases (see Table 1 overleaf). Apart from natural breeding in social (family) groups, artificial insemination techniques are also used in the initial phase to accelerate the breeding process and enable highly specific genetic combinations.

RONALD GODERIE, Director of the Taurus Foundation

PHASES OF THE TAUROS PROGRAMME

PHASE	I	II	III	IV
PERIOD	2008–2013	2013–2018	2018–2025	After 2025
NATURE RESERVE	Small	Small	Medium	Large
ANIMAL STATUS	Domestic	Domestic/Feral	Feral	Wild
BREEDING STRATEGY	Active natural breeding Artificial Insemination Embryo transplantation Numbers, no selection	Active natural breeding Less artificial Insemination Less embryo transplantation Selection	Natural breeding Strong selection	Selection
HUMAN ACTION	Strongly hands-on	Hands-on/Guidelines	Guidelines	Hands-off

Rewarding results

Rewilding Europe took the decision to team up with the Taurus Foundation in 2013. Our aim is to populate rewilding areas (where possible) with Taurus, harnessing the animals' ability to maintain and boost biodiversity. The Taurus Foundation manages the technical aspects of breeding, while Rewilding Europe is responsible for the programme's rewilding component.

The Taurus Programme has already made significant progress. By the end of 2015 around 450 animals were involved, grazing in expanding areas of more than 6000 ha in the Netherlands, Western Iberia, Velebit and the Danube Delta. The pie chart gives an overview of the total number of animals by generation (FO represents the starting generation, F1 the second generation, etc.).

The main breeds currently present in rewilding areas are the Spanish Sayaguesa, Portuguese Maronesa, Italian Maremmana primitiva and Croatian Boskarin, although the Spanish Pajuna, Scottish Highland cattle and Spanish Limia have also been used. Since we aim to incorporate local breeds if they have desirable features, the number of breeds involved in the programme may increase slightly going forwards.

In general, all FO animals have coped well with new conditions in the rewilding areas. To mitigate the effects of their translocation, the animals are watched closely for the first few years, especially at wintertime. For instance, the winter of 2015–16 was harsh in the Lika Plains (Velebit Mountain region) with heavy falls of snow, so animals here received hay. We are also pleased to see Maronesa cattle in Faia Brava doing surprisingly well on the steep slopes of the Cõa Valley (Western Iberia), despite the quite poor nutritional value of local vegetation.

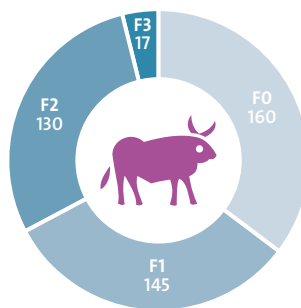
The road ahead

In 2010, the Taurus Programme began cooperating with Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR) in the Netherlands. Financed by WUR, around 30 ancient cattle breeds were genetically analysed, giving new insight into their genetic make-up. In 2015, the outcome of this research was compared with the complete genome of the first ever sequenced aurochs (using a 6700-year-old fossil). We were delighted when this research confirmed the choice of breeds for the Taurus Programme.

One of the next steps is to compare the genetic composition of Taurus Programme offspring with the genome of the original aurochs. To this end, 200 offspring animals were analysed in 2014, while another 200 will be analysed in early 2016. We eagerly await the results!

Rewilding Europe would ultimately like Taurus to be present in five of its main rewilding areas, and they may soon be introduced to the Oder Delta. We will continue to monitor their effect on local biodiversity.

TAUROS: NUMBERS OF ANIMALS INVOLVED BY GENERATION



MAIN CATTLE BREEDS USED IN THE TAUROS PROGRAMME



LIMIA



PODOLICA



MAREMMANA PRIMITIVA



SAYAGUESA



MARONESA



PAJUNA

DESIRED END RESULT



AUROCHS 2.0





Enterprise development

At Rewilding Europe we want to show that rewilding can generate new business opportunities, jobs and income. By building this 'business case for the wild', we can replace historic agrarian land use – which is now associated with declining economic productivity and land abandonment – with dynamic and contemporary wildlife and nature-based businesses, thereby benefitting local societies that are more closely tied to natural environments. We believe our enterprise component sets us apart from all other European conservation organisations.

Our enterprise team brings together people with significant international experience. It is dedicated to supporting businesses and communities that have the potential to revitalise rural economies, with the wider goal of engendering a pan-European rewilding enterprise movement.

In 2015 we continued to focus our efforts on certain enterprise-enabling initiatives. By engaging with local stakeholders, we worked to secure property and user rights for our priority rewilding sites. Such property and user rights are essential to the rewilding process, comprising management, grazing, hunting, recreational fishing, logging and management rights for public, communal and state land.

Rewilding Europe Capital (REC) – Europe's first rewilding enterprise loan facility – has been instrumental in making further progress by extending loans to a range of enterprises, as well as through the provision of technical and promotional support. In 2015 we also looked at how REC can broaden and intensify its activities going forwards.

In this section you will read about our accomplishments in enterprise development during 2015, with associated facts and figures. Four feature stories – two based on interviews with entrepreneurs based in rewilding areas in Portugal and Croatia – provide further insight into the way that we work and the benefits that it can bring.



Enterprise development: facts and figures

21 REWILDING ENTERPRISES supported across **8** different REWILDING AREAS, covering **5** different BUSINESS SECTORS

30+

NEW JOBS

were created through REC, while investees are set to generate

25 000

euros worth of

REWILDING LEVIES

and to protect an estimated

20 000

HECTARES

of wild natural landscapes

3

TRAVEL ITINERARIES

were created and designed for Danube Delta, Eastern Carpathians and Velebit, adding to the existing 15 itineraries from 2014

2

NEW MOUNTAIN REFUGES

were identified for business plans development and partnership in 2016



An investment in the

LAGOSTA HUNTING CONCESSION

in Velebit was made, together with a new business plan to transform this into a wildlife tourism-based business



provided by the Rewilding Europe Capital, in the total amount of

411 500
EUROS

Allocated funds by sector:

€30 000

NATURAL PRODUCTS

€50 000

EUROPEAN WILDLIFE BANK

€80 000

WILDLIFE COMEBACK

TOURISM

€251 500

15 000 euros of **INTEREST INCOME**

earned from the loan portfolio of our existing enterprises



THE STAR CAMP

in Faia Brava (Portugal) was built and opened in August 2015, hosting international media, partners and guests

2 **WILDLIFE HIDES**

were constructed and sited in Lagosta rewilding area, for opening in 2016. This was subject to international wildlife hide training for five rewilding team members in Finland

THE EUROPEAN SAFARI COMPANY

business model was finalised and entered a concept launch phase for early 2016

Tourism & business development training programmes took place in the Southern Carpathians, Danube Delta, Velebit and Eastern Carpathians, involving

28

LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS

An application for

5

MILLION EUROS

of REC funding was submitted to the Natural Capital Financing Facility of the European Commission



Rewilding enterprises – the missing link

In Europe conservation and entrepreneurship often appear to inhabit mutually exclusive worlds. Rewilding enterprise can bring these worlds together.

Subsidies are important in European conservation, although they are seldom enough, on their own, to allow targets to be met. On the other hand, most enterprises – even if they are completely dependent on the natural environment – almost never contribute in a positive way to that environment. At Rewilding Europe, we believe it's time for a change!

Rewilding Europe has started a quest to find enterprises which want to integrate rewilding objectives into their business plans. To support these nascent businesses, we have established a new financing facility: Rewilding Europe Capital (REC). To date 16 enterprises in six countries have been supported by REC, ranging from wildlife viewing hides in Italy and wildlife breeding centres in the Netherlands to transforming hunting ventures into wildlife watching operations in Croatia, and the Miles Away Fly camp in Portugal's Côa Valley.

What makes an enterprise a rewilding enterprise? In short: a rewilding enterprise generates direct or indirect finance, incentives or engagement for rewilding, and has a positive impact on wilder nature or the comeback of wildlife. And of course, this all based on a viable business that operates in a sustainable way.

Rewilding entrepreneurship is still in its early stages in Europe. As pioneering ventures, we can learn much from the enterprises mentioned above as we develop more extensive operations. So far, results have been very encouraging - almost all of the 16 enterprises are performing according to our original plans and expectations, paying their interest fees and rewilding levies on time. Providing guidance and support to these new enterprises is as vital in the sustainability of these businesses as financial support. As a result, we now feel justified in scaling up the rewilding enterprise concept, attracting new investors and exploring new market sectors to work with.

Due to limited funding in the first years of the REC initiative, we had to restrict ourselves to small businesses (loans of up to 80 000 euros) that were mainly operating in the wildlife tourism market. But with the prospect of large investors coming on board, we will start using REC as a vehicle to redirect



► Three examples of rewilding enterprises: a nearly finished bear watching hide in Lagosta (Velebit Mountains), catch & release fly-fishing (Eastern Carpathians) and local food products linked to bison reintroduction, produced by a local association (Southern Carpathians)

larger cash flows in developed economies in ways that are beneficial for European nature. Looking towards companies that are involved in water management, forestry, fishing or even energy production, we aim to create greater awareness of the need for rewilding, and continue to facilitate the rewilding process through sustainable rewilding enterprise.

**Rewilding
Europe
Capital**

Creating nature tourism destinations

By supporting and connecting local businesses, Rewilding Europe is helping to develop attractive itineraries that provide unique experiences for nature travellers.

This establishes our rewilding areas as high profile nature tourism destinations.



To develop well-balanced nature tourism destinations, people and nature need to work together. For such destinations to succeed, Rewilding Europe identifies unique nature-based offerings, provide technical support to local businesses, extend financial assistance where necessary, and engage in effective marketing and sales activities. Working closely with local tourism partners who are embracing rewilding allows us to ensure long-term sustainability.

Travellers connect businesses and rewilding areas through their nature-focused activities. Examples of such activities include guided tours, rental of specialised photography hides, enjoyment of local gastronomy, rental of accommodation and even visits to local markets. The impact of nature-based tourism is not confined to natural areas, but extends, vitally, to local communities. All these factors must be taken into account as we look to create sustainable nature tourism destinations.

Creating unique, highly attractive tourism destinations together with local partners is one of our core activities, and the process can be very effective in bringing particular areas to the attention of the global travel community. The process of building itineraries and opening up such areas to tourism typically begins with 'early adopters' taking the first steps, followed by other entrepreneurs, and leading to a diversity of possibilities interested travellers can choose from.

Local entrepreneurs take the lead

A good example of nature-based entrepreneurship can be found in Western Iberia. Here, within the Faia Brava Reserve, "Star Camp" is owned and run by local entrepreneur Sara Noro (see her personal story on page 46 of this Annual Review). This enterprise directly supports local rewilding efforts and the ongoing management of the reserve.

In 2015, two years after conception, Star Camp held its soft opening. Over the course of an initial three-month period, various tourism and media



► Fernando Romao, owner of Wildlife Portugal, looking out of a wildlife hide in Cõa Valley, Western Iberia, Portugal

partners experienced this unique offering, kick-starting the property's promotional campaign. This soft launch helped to develop other avenues of the business, and allowed Sara Noro to streamline the camp set-up and daily operations.

In April 2016 Star Camp will officially open and welcome its first guests. As well as enjoying the camp's unique accommodation, guests will be able to undertake a range of activities which highlight the rewilding process, supporting further expansion of the reserve through rewilding fees.

As part of Faia Brava's development, a new photographic business is also being established by a local wildlife guide and photographer. Wildlife Portugal's owner, Fernando Romano, is investing in

specialised wildlife hides, and these will generate further financial support for the reserve.

Community involvement

Imagine watching dolphins swimming in the Adriatic Sea in the morning. Imagine searching for brown bears in the mountains in the afternoon. Imagine savouring the day's highlights over an open fire in a remote tented camp after dinner. In Veletbit, thanks to two newly designed wildlife hides and one small safari-style tented camp, this kind of utopian day is now a real possibility.

Creating itineraries which incorporate new and specialised nature-based offerings can significantly raise the profile of wild areas. The two new hides



► Low impact nature tourism activities create great opportunities for local entrepreneurs. Sundowner at the Côa Valley, Portugal, Western Iberia rewilding area



► Grand Route of the Côa Valley, a great way to explore the rewilding area



► B&B "La Torre" in Ortona dei Marsi, Abruzzo, Italy

which were installed in late 2015 – designed for photographing wildlife species such as brown bear, red deer and wild boar – will be an important part of establishing a new style of wildlife tourism in this region.

All hide construction, development and implementation was carried out by local business owners. These businesses may not have been directly involved in the rewilding process, but these new developments helped to change local opinion, to engage local communities, and to contribute to local grassroots economies – this is a direct spillover from nature tourism development.

Tourism training programmes run during 2015 have helped prepare community members for this

new style of business. On their own, newly established rewilding areas are not well known travel destinations, but with the addition of new offerings such as wildlife hides, tented camps and well-designed travel itineraries, they will rapidly rise up the list of must-see destinations for global travellers.

Raising awareness

The effective marketing and selling of nature-based tourism is a key factor in the success of rewilding areas, thereby underpinning the further development of rewilding enterprise. As part of this outreach, such areas and their tourism offerings need to be promoted in recommended travel itineraries and through dedicated publicity. Articles,

REWILDING AREA ITINERARIES

SOUTHERN CARPATHIANS	Bison in the Tarcu Mountains
VELEBIT MOUNTAINS	Mountain Cottage Mons Baebius Velebit Hiking Paradise Wild horse riding adventure
WESTERN IBERIA	The Côa Valley Grand Route Sleeping and dining under the stars in Faia Brava Discover nature and the Palaeolithic art of Western Iberia
CENTRAL APENNINES	Italy's Big Five Among Wolves and Shepherds
DANUBE DELTA	Five days in the Danube Delta: Spring Migration Exploring the Danube Delta from Dimanche Guesthouse
RHODOPE MOUNTAINS	Enjoying brown bears and birds in the Western Rhodopes, Bulgaria From wallcreepers to vultures – a birdwatching tour in the Rhodopes and Sakar Land of rocks, eagles and vultures

Note: These itineraries are constantly developing and more will be added going forwards. For the latest information, please visit the Safaris page at rewildingeurope.com.

reports, photos and blog posts all help to keep these developing businesses in the public eye, generating market interest and boosting tourist footfall.

Rewilding Europe helps selected local entrepreneurs with marketing by exposing them to a pan-European audience through our communication efforts.

In collaboration with our inbound and outbound partners, we currently have itineraries on offer in the Southern Carpathians, Velebit Mountains, Western Iberia, Central Apennines, Danube Delta, and Rhodope Mountains. These are presented above and can be seen in more detail on the Safaris page of the Rewilding Europe website, with all necessary booking links.

A star in the making

Building a business case for wild nature is an essential part of Rewilding Europe's work. With help from Rewilding Europe Capital, we are pleased to report that Star Camp, a pioneering eco-tourism venture in Western Iberia, will host its first guests in 2016.



In recent times, Sara Noro has frequently found herself working late on northeast Portugal's Faia Brava Reserve. Yet the architect, guesthouse owner, entrepreneur and mother of three isn't complaining. In fact, she's rather pleased.

"Cloudless night skies are the most spectacular thing about being on the reserve after dark," says Noro. "Away from all artificial light, surrounded by the blackness of the land, the marvellous canopy of stars overhead is a real treat."

Noro's efforts, and those of her working partner Ana Berliner, will soon see the public opening of the appropriately named Star Camp, a simple yet spec-

tacularly sited property in the heart of northeast Portugal's Faia Brava Reserve.

"It has certainly been hard work," says Noro with a smile. "But we are so excited about sharing the beauty of the reserve with our guests. This camp is a unique opportunity for us to contribute toward an environment that my family and I have treasured for many years."

Natural selection

Sandwiched between the peaks of the Serra da Marofa and vineyards of the Douro, in the steep-sided valley of the Côa River (a Douro tributary), the

Faia Brava Reservation extends across nearly 1000 hectares. A haven for wildlife, one of the reserve's major attractions is its birdlife, with eagles and vultures both nesting on riverside cliffs (in Portuguese *faia* means "cliff", while *brava* means "brave" or "wild").

Faia Brava's varied-habitat boasts a smattering of olive trees and cork oaks, as well as abandoned farmhouses, shepherd shelters and meandering dry stone walls. Free-roaming Garrano horses and cattle naturally control vegetation and promote biodiversity, while there have even been recent sightings of wolves.



It is within this magnificent natural setting that Star Camp – a safari-style lodge that can currently house six guests - is now sited. Thanks to its low-impact design, the camp strikes a perfect balance between comfort and sustainability.

“Both my husband and I are architects, so we have significant building experience,” says Sara Noro. “We have only used local materials in the construction, and in the winter everything will be removed except the wooden skeleton. We have also integrated solar panels.”

Having grown up with the reserve on their doorstep, the Noro family are the perfect people to introduce guests to Faia Brava. Sara’s husband Miguel has worked as a part-time guide on the reserve for years.

“We have plenty of activities and attractions for visitors to enjoy here,” says Noro. “From bird-watching, hiking and guided walks through to wine cellars, olive oil presses and UNESCO World Heritage-listed rock carvings, there’s something for everyone. All the ingredients for camp meals are locally sourced too.”

Prosperous partnerships

The idea for Star Camp was conceived by Rewilding Europe back in 2013, in collaboration with the Associação Transumância e Natureza (ATN), Rewilding Europe’s main partner in Western Iberia and sole owner of the Faia Brava Reserve.

Already running one local guesthouse, Sara Noro was quickly identified as the best person to develop the property. A low-cost loan was offered through Rewilding Europe Capital, with Rewilding Europe also providing ongoing technical and operational support.

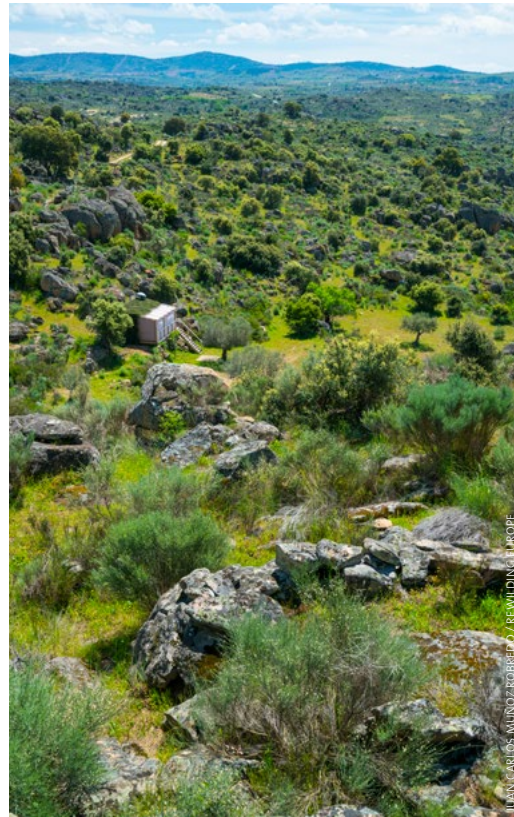
“I jumped at this opportunity,” says Noro. “Without Rewilding Europe’s help the project simply wouldn’t have got off the ground. The loan will only be repaid from the camp’s direct income, which really takes away some of the financial pressure in the early stages.”

Once up and running, Star Camp will directly contribute to local conservation and the upkeep of Faia Brava through a “per guest fee”, paid annually to the ATN. A further “rewilding levy” will be used to improve and expand the reserve.

As Europe’s first real safari-style accommodation, in the great tradition of the African bush camp, Sara Noro’s Faia Brava project represents a milestone in Rewilding Europe’s drive to develop sustainable tourism across the continent. We wish her and Ana well as they welcome their first guests to the increasingly wild wonders of Western Iberia.



➤ The Faia Brava Star Camp, a first safari-style experience in Europe, will be officially opened in May 2016. Coa Valley, Portugal, Western Iberia rewilding area



➤ The Faia Brava Star Camp perfectly blends in the landscape and is beautifully located



➤ Preparing for a bush dinner as part of a European safari experience



➤ Cosy atmosphere inside the Faia Brava Star Camp



STEFAN WIDSTRAND / REWILDING EUROPE

Sweet success

As natural pollinators, bees are an essential part of Europe's wild ecology. In a win-win situation for humans and the local landscape, a loan from Rewilding Europe Capital has seen Croatia's Velebit Mountains become a burgeoning hive of activity.

The Velebit mountains have long been home to some of Croatia's finest and most dedicated beekeepers. That said, this wild and stunningly beautiful region can't have produced many apiarists more passionate about bees than Sanjin Zarkovic.

"I could stand watching these fascinating insects for hours," explains the beekeeping aficionado and father of two. "Their biology intrigues me. The way they all work in harmony is one of nature's miracles."

Beekeeping in the Zarkovic family dates back centuries, with Sanjin's great grandfather and grandfather both keen apiarists.

"As a child I remember thinking my grandfather was crazy to keep bees," he says with a twinkle in the eye. "Now I'm the one with the beekeeping obsession."

Helping hand

Back in 2009 Sanjin Zarkovic and his wife Ines started their own apiary with a modest collection of five hives, sited next to the family house in the town of Senj. Despite several setbacks, the Zarkovic's became enthusiastic and experienced beekeepers, slowly expanding their hive collection and forming a company – Guslice & Melnice – named

after two villages where Sanjin's parents were born. In 2014, thanks to advice and a 30 000 euro loan from Rewilding Europe Capital (REC), the Zarkovic's were able to further expand and professionalize their venture. The couple now have 104 hives, and hope to increase this to 240 in the near future.

"Without assistance from REC it would have been impossible to achieve such an expansion," explains Ines. "The banking situation in Croatia is very difficult. If we can reach 240 hives then beekeeping will become our family's primary business. It will have been a remarkable and life-changing achievement."

Bountiful environment

Many Croatians claim that the country's sweetest honey comes from the Velebit region. The dramatic karst landscape here is typified by sweeping forests of spruce, fir, pine and beech, with lush, flower-filled alpine meadows supporting a diverse range of pollinating insects. It is here that Sanjin Zarkovic now spends much of his time, moving the family's distinctive green-and-orange hive collection between locations according to the season and weather.

Keeping bees in the Velebit environment aids the pollination of flowering plant species, which in turn supports local biodiversity and complements rewilding efforts such as the introduction of large herbivores. In addition, Guslice & Melnice has pledged 2.5% of its future income toward supporting rewilding activities in the area.

As President of the local Senj Beekeeping Association, Sanjin has recently helped to bring together beekeepers from across the Velebit area for the sake of conserving local biodiversity.

"In the face of threats from pesticides and pollutants, bees may not survive without our support," he says. "They help us, so we must return the favour."

Popular products

Ines and Sanjin's efforts have created quite a buzz in the Velebit area and beyond. The excellence of the company's products, in conjunction with appearances at local and national fairs and new packaging bearing the Rewilding Europe logo, has meant news of Guslice & Melnice has spread far and wide. The company has quickly established a loyal network of customers, and has recently begun exporting products overseas.

"At the moment we're selling everything we produce," says Ines Zarkovic. "It bodes well for future expansion of the company."

In addition to bee venom, a product popular for its supposed anti-ageing properties, the Guslice & Melnice range now boasts three kinds of organic honey – meadow honey, sage honey and vrisak (winter savory) honey. Rich, sweet and golden, all three have a distinctive taste.

"You haven't tasted honey till you've tasted sage honey," says Ines with a smile.

Balancing act

Despite problems with the weather – Senj and the nearby area are frequently exposed to an intense katabatic wind called the bora – last year saw a slight increase in the yield from Guslice & Melnice's hives. During 2015 the company began to sell both propolis and pollen, and purchases of both products are already outstripping honey sales.



➤ Sanjin and Ines Zarkovic in front of their products from bee-keeping. Velebit Mountains, Croatia



➤ Honey bees



➤ Bee keeper Sanjin Zarkovic at his bee farm in Melnice, Croatia

Propolis is a resinous mixture that honey bees collect from various plants. Also known as "bee glue", it is increasingly used for its antibacterial properties. In contrast with honey, however, which can be regularly harvested from spring through to the autumn, propolis can only be extracted from hives once a year.

Explaining his decision to diversify and balance out Guslice & Melnice's product line, Sanjin Zarkovic stresses the importance of guaranteeing a reliable income.

"I believe the perfect ratio of products is 35% venom, 30% honey, 20% pollen and 15% honey," he explains. "This improves the resilience of our business in case the yield of one product fails due to the weather, for example."

Guslice & Melnice is an inspirational example of a sustainable business benefiting nature and people. As they prepare for the long Croatian summer, Rewilding Europe wishes Ines and Sanjin continued sweet success for the 2016 season.



**"Artenvielfalt
in Berlin**
In Berlin wird, dass ich als
Regierender
Bürgermeister
mit meinem
Amtszimmer
ausläge die
Wanderfalken
fliegen sehen kann, die
in ihrem Nest zu Gast im
Roten Rathaus
sind!"

Wolke Weidlich
Regierender Bürgermeister
von Berlin

Wanderfalken fliegen über dem
Roten Rathaus in Berlin. Die
Vogelarten sind in der Liste
der gefährdeten Arten
aufgeführt.

Begegnung

**Freien
Spielplatz
Stadt von Berlin**



Communication and promotion

The focus of our communication and promotion work is twofold. Firstly, we want to increase widespread interest in the wild: generating pride, public support, new engagements and a positive attitude for a wilder Europe amongst stakeholders at all levels. We have a lot of different tools on hand to achieve this – mass media campaigns, web-based and social media, media trips, publications, use of top quality imagery, TV productions, local seminars, exhibitions and press releases.

Secondly, we want to inspire others to adopt our vision and approach through the replication of our ideas and scaling up of our operations. Apart from promoting our work through the media tools listed above, we also promote the exchange of knowledge and expertise, through the European Rewilding Network, for example.

Working together with many of our partners, in 2015 we have played an active role in promoting our work in rewilding areas, while also linking these to the wider, emerging European rewilding movement. For the first time, we published a working definition of rewilding that resonates with Europe's dynamic, multi-cultural societies and landscapes: a definition that is shaped by our conservation heritage but that re-sets expectations of what is possible in European biodiversity conservation.

At the same time, we are shifting gear from mass media outreach, to engagement, to generating support for our work. We have focused more on targeted audiences related to our work in the field, while still conducting our mass media approach. We have also begun engaging with policy makers and scientists, to identify and promote policy 'spaces' for rewilding at a European level. This is also part of our scaling up strategy, in which communication plays a key role.

In this section you can read about our accomplishments in 2015, with associated facts and figures. Four feature stories provide further insight into different aspects of our communication and promotional work.



Main facts and figures in communication and outreach

In 2015 Rewilding Europe reached out to and informed more than

20 000 000

PEOPLE

worldwide through various communication activities.

Information about the second bison release in Romania reached at least



million people, featuring in many different types of media throughout Europe and other parts of the world.

Rewilding Europe promotion in

MAJOR MEDIA OUTLETS

such as National Geographic, Science Magazine, BBC Wildlife Magazine, Deutsche Welle, Le Monde, Geographical, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Quercus, L'Espresso, Wizzair Magazine and others.



3

MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

were released during the year, comprising: Natural Grazing - Practices in the Rewilding of Cattle and Horses, our Annual Review 2014, and an update of the Practical Guide to Wildlife Watching Hides.



E-MAIL NEWSLETTERS

were sent to

8300

SUBSCRIBERS

Internal newsletter called 'Rewilding Updates' distributed to over

100

staff and team members, advisors, partners and relations



56

NEWS ITEMS

+

22

BLOGS

from various authors about the activities of Rewilding Europe, work in local areas, partnerships, rewilding network and other topics published on Rewilding Europe web page.

WEB PAGE VIEWS

The number of remained high, www.rewildingeurope.com website was viewed an average of

1113

times per day

SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

increased by

+100%

on the Rewilding Europe Facebook page and eight local Facebook pages, Twitter and YouTube.



The number of Rewilding Europe Facebook page 'likes' grew by

+17%

reaching

17 500

by the end of 31 December, 2015.

800 people participated in a **MAJOR OPINION AND KNOWLEDGE SURVEY** of rewilding, biodiversity and the Natura 2000 network in 8 rewilding areas.

A new donation platform was launched with a choice of six causes to support:



1.

RETURN OF THE BISON



2.

WILD AND FREE HORSES



3.

BRINGING BACK THE EAGLES



4.

RAISING INTEREST IN THE WILD



5.

PURCHASE OF WILDLIFE CAMERAS



6.

SUPPORTING WORK WITH CHILDREN



STAFFAN WIDSTRAND / REWILDING EUROPE

Campaigning for a wilder Europe

Through positive messaging on a combination of success stories and opportunities arising from rewilding, Rewilding Europe continues to generate greater awareness, pride, public support and positive attitudes toward creating a wilder Europe

To make the vision for a wilder Europe a reality we are reaching out in positive ways to open the minds of people, inspiring them to discover how wilder nature looks or could look in various European landscapes. Today, as a result of urbanisation, at least three out of five Europeans live in urban areas, creating more distance with nature. At the same time, this creates a desire in many people to explore nature, to see wildlife and to experience more wild places. This is where an opportunity lies that can really benefit rewilding.

For more than four years, Rewilding Europe

has been working to reveal the amazing natural heritage and natural potential of our continent to European people on a daily basis. This is done by writing about our work, our accomplishments and how amazing nature really is, and through wildlife images, paintings, tweets, posts, conversations, and lectures. All of these have one goal – to revive the love affair between the man in the street and Europe’s unique and magnificent nature.

Campaigning for a wilder Europe can only be achieved by combining talents and creating partnerships with organisations that share a common

vision. Rewilding Europe and Wild Wonders of Europe – the world’s largest conservation communication initiative – have been working together since 2011 to bring Europe’s natural heritage to the attention of the European public and the rest of the world.

In 2009 Wild Wonders of Europe gathered 69 of the continent’s most talented and committed nature photographers. Together they photographed natural wonders across Europe’s 45 countries, creating a stunning and unparalleled collection of images. This collection has now touched more than 800 million people worldwide, creating a real force

“We will continue to reach out both to very wide and to very specific audiences, using the emotional power of great photography. We want to connect people with the wonderful natural heritage that we all share as Europeans, as part of our identity as humans that dates back thousands of years.”

STAFFAN WIDSTRAND,
Managing Director of Wild Wonders of Europe

for good and a collective desire for change with regard to Europe’s wild nature.

Building on the success of our first four years together, Wild Wonders of Europe will continue to be one of Rewilding Europe’s core partners. This partnership has already witnessed huge progress in reaching out to an extensive European audience. Top professional nature photographers have carried out photo missions at all of our rewilding areas, producing high quality images that have and will continue to be used for all of Rewilding Europe’s communication products and media events. Through our joint efforts, ‘rewilding’ has rapidly and widely gained acceptance as a new, complementary conservation tool across Europe, generating significant publicity, support and goodwill.

In 2015 Rewilding Europe partnered with another like-minded organisation – the Artists for Nature Foundation. This foundation is a unique, non-profit organisation that uses the creative output of artists producing paintings, drawings, original prints, sculptures, poems and music. Artworks are inspired and mostly created on location by renowned and talented artists from all over the world, as a medium to draw attention in a positive way to the need for nature to be appreciated as an essential element of sustainable development. The Artists for Nature Foundation is proud of its 14 successful projects on four continents – these have involved over 130 artists and resulted in more than 600 000 people visiting exhibitions. One of the goals of our partnership is to see similar artwork projects take place at all of Rewilding Europe’s showcase areas.



➤ Publicity at the release event of fallow deer in the Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria, January 2015



➤ Painting of the Great Fen (UK), one of the projects of the Artists for Nature Foundation



➤ The Visitor Center of the Armeniș bison reintroduction project is the perfect prelude to witnessing these splendid animals in the wild

“I strongly believe that effective nature conservation must go hand in hand with environmental education. Rewilding Europe areas give our artists an ideal platform to work with local children, their parents and teachers.”

YSBRAND BROUWERS,
CEO of Artists for Nature Foundation

Connecting children with nature

Through the lens of curiosity and wonder, young children learn how to observe and make sense of their world.

They do this quite naturally when they are given the time and space to play. Animals form a central part of every child's learning process; the connection with animals is one of the most fundamental relationships that human beings experience, especially when they encounter those animals up close in their natural habitat. Close, meaningful experiences with nature are essential to the health and well-being of all young children – physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Rewilding Europe believes that it is essential to restore and strengthen the connection children and youth have with the natural places of their childhood – the green backyards, meadows, hills, rivers, lush forests, lakes and mountains. Through our nature-based activities, we help young children develop a sense of belonging and purpose in the world, and a deepened connection with wild nature. Our activities also encourage parents, teachers, childcare providers and the local community to undertake a more active role in this form of wild education.

In 2015 we organised numerous school field trips, outdoor activities, creative workshops, competitions and rewilding camps in the Southern Carpathians, Western Iberia and Rhodope Mountains. We actively engage with children in our rewilding areas, and it is our eventual goal to establish education programmes and activities for young people at all of them. This is not something we can do alone; we need strong and professional partners, because together we can achieve much more.



► HSH Princess Theodora surrounded by school children of Armenis municipality, June 2015



Going wild over bison in Southern Carpathians

In 2015 Rewilding Europe and The Green Teen Team Foundation (GTTF) pooled resources to give children an unforgettable experience in Southern Carpathians, connecting them with our projects through their own ideas. GTTF is a small charitable organisation that aims to connect like-minded young people around the world through projects, activities and camps that engage with the natural world and provide life-changing educational experiences. HSH Princess Theodora von Liechtenstein is the founder of GTTF and an active participant in managing foundation projects.

In June HSH Princess Theodora von Liechtenstein and HSH Prince Alexander von Liechtenstein visited Romania with the Green Teen Team to launch a school programme with young students from Armenis and Teregova, together with Rewilding Europe and WWF Romania. The challenge for the children was to

initiate a small conservation project and implement it in the next two years.

Project proposals included an initiative to collect medicinal wild flowers and promote their benefits, and to make remedies to send to poorer countries where regular medicine is scarce and nature is less bountiful. Other ideas included a reforestation project, a summertime eco-camp, an initiative to transform art classes into craft for purpose classes, upcycling and making useful objects.

Also of interest were pitches about raising awareness of endangered species amongst hunters, and an innovative mobile bridge for animals facing the difficulties of habitat fragmentation. During the year members of the Southern Carpathians rewilding team visited the schools and assisted the children with further development of their projects.

"It was an amazing experience to find the herd of European bison. With the help of Green Teen Team Foundation, Rewilding Europe and WWF Romania all school competition entries will be implemented in the next two years!"

HSH PRINCESS THEODORA VON LICHTENSTEIN



Education and excitement at Faia Brava

In the dramatic landscape of Portuguese Western Iberia, where the Côa River carves a deep canyon through the mountains, the land is home to an array of wildlife species. It is a paradise for children to explore.

The Faia Brava Reserve, run by our local partner Associação Transumância e Natureza (ATN), is a place where children can play in nature, uninterrupted and free. It is a place where they learn by experience, developing meaningful relationships with the natural world, wildlife and each other. The rewilded landscape, with its new plants and animals, provides unique opportunities for discovery.

Marco Ferraz, an environmental education teacher and partner of ATN, has developed a variety of exciting programmes for local schools, which he also leads. Until 2015 Faia Brava organized one-day programmes, but has now expanded these to three-day educational camps.

Camp programmes consist of various guided walks through rewilding areas, where children learn about local flora and fauna. They time travel from the Upper Palaeolithic to the present day by visiting the Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in the Côa Valley, and discover the hidden mysteries of the night – animals, noises, lights and stars. Marco's challenge is to allow children to rediscover nature in new ways, in a place where nature rules.

Throughout the day, children are invited to walk through the Faia Brava Reserve, to touch and feel rocks and plants, and to grab binoculars and find out just where that griffon vulture nest is. "Look, there's a vulture chick on that rock!" is a phrase he never tires of hearing. They also embark on a treasure hunt – "the Bonelli's Eagle Hunt" – and play the "web game", which explains the interconnected role of animals and plants in the local ecosystem.

Numerous practical workshops are also organized, on subjects such as nature photography, discovering animal tracks, building nest boxes and planting trees. By interacting closely with the the Garrano horses roaming the reserve, children learn about the importance of large herbivores, such as horses and cattle, restoring natural diversity in places such as the Côa Valley. What better way to learn than by doing and playing?



➤ Nocturnal excursions to see the Neolithic rock engravings in the Coa Valley are a great experience for children

“Children sleep in nature for the first time in their lives, away from everything, with no electricity and no artificial sounds. They help cooking their dinner by the fire, hearing natural sounds of the night, staring up at the million stars shining overhead. This is a magical and unforgettable experience.”

MARCO FERRAZ, Environmental Education Teacher at ATN

For conservation work to be successful, we need to engage with the younger generation directly, on their terms and through actions that they appreciate. Within a 10–20 year period, today's younger generation will be the world's decision makers. They will be adults, voters and economic actors in society. If they come to appreciate nature, wildlife and rewilding ideas, this will have an enormously positive impact on the long-term success of European nature.

➤ Local children watching vultures during a summer camp in Faia Brava Reserve. Western Iberia rewilding area, Portugal





SPECIES PROFILE
EUROPEAN BISON
REWILDING EFFORTS
 The European bison, also known as the wisent, became extinct in the wild during the early 20th century, almost due to habitat destruction, hunting and poaching. By 1937 there were just 54 captive individuals left. Despite breeding and translocation success by zoos and reserves, and there are now 21 wild herds in Eastern and Central Europe. The largest herd of nearly 900 animals is in the Bialowieza National Park in the border of Poland and Belarus. Conservationists have about 2,500 wild bison in captivity, but through the European Rewilding Foundation's efforts, the European bison is being reintroduced to its natural habitat. The project is a joint effort between Rewilding Europe and a group of conservationists across Europe.

Conservationists gather at their meeting in the Bialowieza Forest in Poland.



VISITORS
 Die Tourismuszeitung
 5 Quartal 2015



BEARS OF THE SOUTHERN WELLS: #2 BROWN BEAR
 The brown bear has been rehabilitated at the Rewilding Europe documentary library. The bear is shown in a natural setting, and the text discusses its conservation status and the efforts to reintroduce it to the wild. The magazine also features other articles on wildlife and nature.



Bringing back the aurochs
 By conjuring the extinct ancestor of modern cattle, breeders are making Europe just a little wilder
 By Erik Stokstad, in Sibiu, Georgia, Romania

Rewilding Europe's efforts to bring back the aurochs, the extinct ancestor of modern cattle, are making headlines. The project is a joint effort between Rewilding Europe and a group of conservationists across Europe. The aurochs is being reintroduced to its natural habitat, and the project is expected to have a significant impact on the region's biodiversity. The magazine also features other articles on wildlife and nature.

Media outreach

In 2015, through our communications, we reached out to and informed more than 20 million people worldwide

Since the inception of Rewilding Europe in 2011, around 325 million people have heard, read, watched and learned about rewilding as a new conservation approach, and about the work and activities of Rewilding Europe throughout its nine rewilding areas. Major articles and special features published in globally recognized scientific journals and popular media outlets, numerous news items, blogs and posts on our website, Facebook and Twitter posts and our external newsletter – all of these communications channels have resulted in further outreach growth. The number of visits to our web page reached nearly half a million in 2015, double the amount in 2014. By the end of the year, we had nearly 17 500 likes on our Facebook page, and the number of followers on Twitter grew from 2350 to 3700. The Facebook pages of each rewilding area continued to attract more followers, rising from 4700 to over 12 000 by the end of 2015.

The second bison release in Armenia, in the Southern Carpathians, was the major communication highlight of 2015. An estimated 10 million people were made aware of this event across Romania, Europe and beyond. In June 2015 European bison appeared on countless television screens in countries across Europe - from Romania, Italy, France and Belgium through to Sweden, Croatia and Serbia. National Geographic, BBC Wildlife Magazine and the Wizzair Inflight Magazine told stories about the comeback of European bison, as millions of people were made aware of this amazing rewilding achievement. In addition to the bison publicity, Rewilding Europe also featured in Science Magazine, National Geographic, BBC Wildlife Magazine, Le Monde, Deutsche Welle, Geographical, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Quercus, L'Espresso and others. Major features on Rewilding Europe appeared in various media, including TV programmes, media portals and radio. CNN International web portal wrote about rewild-

ing carnivores, while Geographical's (UK) "Rewilding Week" featured four articles about Rewilding Europe, the European Rewilding Network, European bison and Marsican brown bears in the Central Apennines. In 2015 various TV productions featured the work of Rewilding Europe and the bison translocation to Romania. Belgium's RTBF Channel broadcasted a half-hour programme about the bison transport from Belgium to the Southern Carpathians. Germany's Bayerische Rundfunk broadcasted a one-hour documentary on Animal World about the return of wild animals to Portugal. Dutch TV programme 'Koffietijd' also featured an item on European bison, while Canada's CBC showcased rewilding work in Western Iberia on its show 'Nature of Things'. In countries which are home to rewilding areas, numerous publications also appeared in local and national media, all contributing towards greater outreach of our vision and rewilding activities.



Rewilding Europe Circle – a new alliance of rewilding ambassadors

In December 2015 Rewilding Europe launched a new and important initiative. A small assembly of prominent and respected individuals from Europe and abroad has joined us as founding members of the Rewilding Europe Circle – a group that will champion and support our initiative in the widest possible sense. The Circle includes members from nine different countries, representing a wide range of skills, expertise and networks.

The Rewilding Europe Circle is best described as a group of highly profile and respected individuals who not only share our passion for making Europe a wilder place, but who are also willing to help us make it real. Rewilding Europe Circle members will provide support, networks and expertise to help raise public awareness of the opportunities that rewilding brings to Europe as a new conservation approach.

Currently the Rewilding Europe Circle has nine members with background and expertise in a broad range of fields: conservation, science, communication, TV and social media, business, climate and energy, national and EU policies, and governance. Each of the members has agreed on a specific set of activities in support of Rewilding Europe that are meaningful, tangible and interesting to each of them personally. The membership base of the Circle will likely grow in the near future.



Princess Laurentien of The Netherlands
The Netherlands



Hannes Jaenicke
Germany



Stanley Johnson
United Kingdom



Siniša Krajinović
Croatia



Claude Martin
Switzerland



Vance G. Martin
United States



Ladislav Miko
Czech Republic



Julian Popov
Bulgaria



Jordi Sargatal
Spain





Overview of rewilding areas





WESTERN IBERIA

Ancient dehesa, sierra and montado landscapes



LARGER LANDSCAPE

Montado and dehesa landscape between Sierra de Gata in the south and Douro Valley in the north, West-Central Spain and Portugal

PRIORITY AREAS 2015–2017

Côa Valley, including Cidadelhe, Faia Brava, Colmeal, Ribeira das Cabras and Freineda-Jardo-Miuzela

PILOT SITES

Faia Brava, Faia Brava Star Camp, natural grazing sites, Cidadelhe village, flycamp sites

TARGET WILDLIFE SPECIES

Griffon, black and Egyptian vulture, Spanish imperial and Bonelli's eagle, Iberian lynx, rabbit, red deer, roe deer, Spanish ibex, wolf, wild horse and Tauros

TEAM LEADER



Pedro Prata
(Portugal)

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2015

New conservation strategy for 110,000 ha large Côa Valley, embracing rewilding as the central approach • Increase of the Faia Brava reserve as a pilot area for rewilding with 200 hectares • Further growth of the Tauros breeding programme, with seven new Maronesa cattle [STORY ON PAGE 36–37](#) • New release of 15 Garrano horses as part of the natural grazing pilot • Feasibility study – first phase – concluded on reintroduction of Iberian ibex and roe deer • New rewilding pilot area identified in upper Côa Valley • Pre-launch and testing of the safari-style Faia Brava Star Camp and Rewilding Tented Camp [STORY ON PAGE 46–47](#) • First exploration of rewilding opportunities on Spanish side to include in the project





VELEBIT MOUNTAINS

The Wild West of the Adriatic coast



LARGER LANDSCAPE

Velebit Mountain range, connected with Slovenia in the north and Dalmatia in the south; including the marine coast and islands

PRIORITY AREAS 2015–2017

North Velebit National Park, Paklenica National Park, Lagosta Wildlife Reserve (Ramino Korito, Lukovo Sugarje, Dolin Islands), Lika Plains

PILOT SITES

Linden Tree, Lagosta wildlife area (hides, flycamp sites), Zir

TARGET WILDLIFE SPECIES

Griffon vulture, wolf, brown bear, European bison, red deer, Balkan chamois, Eurasian lynx, wild horse and Tauros

TEAM LEADER



Davor Krmptic
(Croatia)

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2015

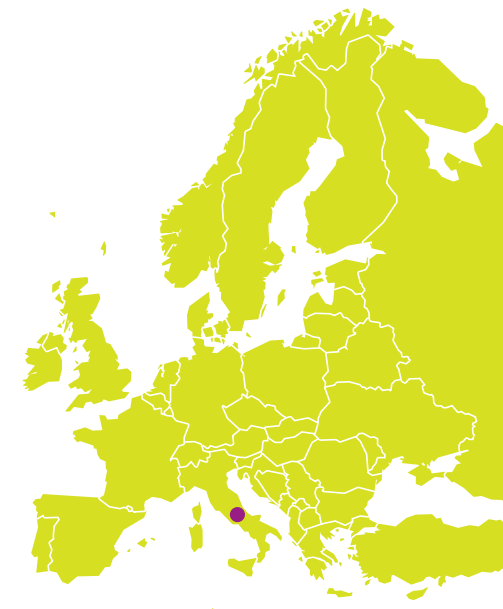
New management board of Rewilding Velebit operational • Development of Lagosta, 17 000 hectares hunting reserve into a wildlife reserve • MoU signed with Zagreb University to support protection of old-growth forests and brown bear [STORY ON PAGE 30–31](#) • Vulture feeding facility prepared for Paklenica National Park • Two bear-watching hides built and placed • Large natural grazing pilot in Lika Plains further expanded with rewilded horses and bovines, now totalling nearly 80 animals • Red deer purchased to release in Lagosta in 2016 to beef up wildlife numbers • Opinion survey among 300 people showed positive attitude towards rewilding • Rewilding Tented Camp tested





CENTRAL APENNINES

The wild heart of Italy



LARGER LANDSCAPE

Apennines mountain range throughout Italy, connected network of protected areas with major national parks

PRIORITY AREAS 2015–2017

Sirente Velino, Ortona dei Marsi, Gioia dei Marsi, Lecci dei Marsi, Monte Genzana

PILOT SITES

Gioia land lease, Gioia Vecchio, Montagne della Duchessa, Teve Valley, Monte Velino, Giovenco Valley

TARGET WILDLIFE SPECIES

Marsican brown bear, wolf, Apennines chamois, griffon vulture, red deer

TEAM LEADER



Alberto Zocchi
(Italy)

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2015

Work with Gioia dei Marsi Municipality on land lease agreements as rewilding pilot and enterprise development • Rewilding Tented Camp and two wildlife watching hides developed with a local nature tourism business • Developing a mountain refuge in Bisegna Municipality as part of rewilding enterprise development • Continued efforts on mitigation of road collision for Marsican brown bear • New fundraising efforts to continue and revise the overall set-up of the project





SOUTHERN CARPATHIANS

A wilderness arc at the heart of Europe



LARGER LANDSCAPE

South-western Carpathian Mountain range including a connected series of national parks and protected areas ranging from Danube River valley in the south to Fagaras in the north

PRIORITY AREAS 2015–2017

Armenis and Poieni Municipality within Tarcu Mountains Natura 2000 site

PILOT SITES

Plopu and Poiana Rusca

TARGET WILDLIFE SPECIES

European bison, red deer, wolf, brown bear, Eurasian lynx

TEAM LEADER



Adrian Hagatis
(Romania)

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2015

Second bison release of 14 animals in Armenis, now totalling 28 animals • Two calves born but did not make it, while four animals died in winter, partly due to a stray dog pack – demonstrating the challenges involved in building the bison population • Children's programme launched in Armenis and Teregova community with support of the Green Teen Team Foundation of Princess Theodora of Lichtenstein [STORY ON PAGE 56](#) • LIFE Nature proposal approved by European Commission for recovery of the bison population, to support the release of 100 animals in 2016–2020 • Demo of the Rewilding Tented Camp and staff trained to operate the camp, during a major donor visit • Mobile fences purchased and operational to mitigate human-bison conflict • Socio-economic study launched on the impact of the bison reintroduction • Renovation of Bison Visitor Centre in Armenis





DANUBE DELTA

Europe's unrivalled wetland



LARGER LANDSCAPE

Overall Danube Delta system consisting of major river branches in Romania and Ukraine, connected with Buszac Plateau and middle reaches of the Danube river

PRIORITY AREAS 2015–2017

CA Rosetti, Sfântu Georghe, Crisan, polders and fish farms (both outer and inner delta)

PILOT SITES

Sfântu Georghe communal land, Caraorman Forest, Letea forest and others

TARGET WILDLIFE SPECIES

White and Dalmatian pelican, sturgeon, red deer, European mink, golden jackal, Tauros, wild horse, beaver

TEAM LEADER



Alexandra Panait
(Romania)

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2015

Strategic partnerships fostered with key authorities, such as Danube Delta Research Institute, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve

- Wetland restoration plans developed for polders surrounding Sfântu Georghe Municipality [STORY ON PAGE 34–35](#)
- Tauros breeding site started in Sfântu Georghe with a first herd of 12 animals arriving from the Netherlands
- With the National Fisheries Agency, plans developed for restoring fish populations in the delta through sustainable fisheries
- Research started on the golden jackal, to understand conflicts with people and propose solutions
- Red deer reintroduction study finished with positive conclusions, however no permit obtained for release in the area
- Beaver monitoring continued of new population expanding into the area
- Network of tourism trails developed (on foot and by boat) for area around Sfântu Georghe





EASTERN CARPATHIANS

One of Europe's top wildlife areas



LARGER LANDSCAPE

Northern range of the Carpathian Mountains, including the International Biosphere Reserve 'Eastern Carpathians' and various national parks and nature parks (e.g. Bieszczady, Uzhansky, Poloniny)

PRIORITY AREAS 2015–2017

Upper San and Lower San Valley

PILOT SITES

Krywe, Krywka, Smolnik, Upper San Valley and Baligrod forest district

TARGET WILDLIFE SPECIES

Wolf, European bison, brown bear, beaver, Eurasian lynx, red deer, wild horse

TEAM LEADER



Katarzyna Wasiak
(Poland)

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2015

Project activities generally at low level due to challenges in working with state authorities

- Four released bison in December 2014 moved to Slovakia and are roaming this transboundary area [STORY ON PAGE 32–33](#)
- Planned pilot for natural grazing with Konik horses in Upper San Valley still waiting for ministerial approval
- Exploration of rewilding enterprise possibilities through ProCarpathia Foundation





RHODOPE MOUNTAINS

Raptor paradise in wild borderland



LARGER LANDSCAPE

Part of large escarpment between Greece and Bulgaria (the Rhodopes and Orvilos Mountains), including a number of national parks

PRIORITY AREAS 2015–2017

Byala Reka, Madzharovo, Studen Kladenetz and Chernoochene

PILOT SITES

Studen Kladenetz hunting reserve, Bojnic, Chal, Sbor, Kostilkovo, Boturche, Tintyava, Chernoochene

TARGET WILDLIFE SPECIES

Griffon vulture, black vulture, Egyptian vulture, Eastern imperial eagle, marbled polecat, red deer, fallow deer, wild horse, European bison

TEAM LEADER



Stoycho Stoychev
(Bulgaria)

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2015

Rewilding Rhodopes foundation established, governing the initiative from Bulgaria • Releases of fallow and red deer, as a means to restore natural grazing as a key ecological process and to restore food chains [STORY ON PAGE 28–29](#) • Start of financial support to the Rhodope Mountains by Fondation Segré • LIFE Nature proposal approved by European Commission for recovery of black and griffon vulture populations, including restoration of natural prey densities • Griffon vulture population steadily increasing, both wintering and breeding birds • Natural grazing with Konik and Karakachan horses in pilot areas, with 43 and 46 animals, roaming free • Small bison group doing well, creating a base for possible expansion in the near future • Exploration of co-management of the Studen Kladenets reserve, as a pilot for rewilding in association with the Bulgarian Hunting Society





ODER DELTA

Wild hub along green crossroads



LARGER LANDSCAPE

A network of rivers, forests, wetlands, and the Baltic Coast at the border between Germany (DE) and Poland (PL)

PRIORITY AREAS 2015–2017

Szczecin Lagoon, Peene River mouth, Anklamer Stadtbruch, Swidwie region, Ueckermünder Heide, wetlands and riparian forests between Lubczyna, Skoszewo in and Szczecin/Police

TARGET WILDLIFE SPECIES

Big Seven of the Oder Delta: white-tailed eagle, European bison, beaver, elk, wolf, Atlantic sturgeon and grey seal

TEAM LEADER



Ulrich Stöcker
(Germany)



Iwona Krępic
(Poland)

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2015

Oder Delta launched as a new rewilding area in Rewilding Europe's portfolio in June

- 'Big 7 Safari' concept launched to support nature-based economy
- Rewilding enterprise training workshop held for local entrepreneurs
- Various pilot projects identified for floodplain restoration [STORY ON PAGE 34–35](#)
- Preparations for setting up a dedicated legal entity for the project advanced, and planned for 2016
- Various funding proposals developed and submitted to start working on various pilot projects in the area
- First actions undertaken to address large construction works in the lower Oder river, threatening the area
- Protests made on a planned powerline through the area on the Polish side



JEROEN HELMERS / WILK NATURE



LAPLAND

Northern Europe's untamed and unique land



LARGER LANDSCAPE

The greater Nordic landscape between Norway and Sweden

PRIORITY AREAS 2015–2017

The rewilding area covers the entire Greater Laponia and the World Heritage Site, because of the scale priority areas and pilot sites are the same

PILOT SITES

Udtja, Pite River, Råne River

TARGET WILDLIFE SPECIES

Elk, wolverine, Eurasian lynx, brown bear, beaver and otter

TEAM LEADER



Håkan Landström
(Sweden)

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2015

Lapland accepted by the Supervisory Board as a new rewilding area in Rewilding Europe's portfolio in December • Rewilding Lapland established as a new legal entity to govern and lead the initiative • Partnership agreement signed with Udtja Sami community to start working together on various rewilding activities • Partnership agreement signed with Råne and Pite River Associations to cooperate in rewilding rivers, restoring fish migration and enterprise models • Funding secured from the Swedish Postcode Foundation, focusing on restoring fish habitats and reindeer migration • Training facilitated for local entrepreneurs to learn about setting up a bear-watching operation • Intensive work done on building partnerships with local and national authorities and NGOs to cooperate in Rewilding Lapland



Financial overview 2015

Introduction

The accompanying summary of consolidated financial statements, which includes the consolidated balance sheet as of 31 December 2015, the consolidated statement of income and expenses for the year 2015, and changes in both restricted and unrestricted reserves and related notes, are derived from the audited consolidated financial statements of Stichting Rewilding Europe for the year ending 31 December 2015.

PWC have audited these accounts and have expressed an unmodified audit opinion on those consolidated financial statements in their report dated 12 April 2016. The Rewilding Europe Supervisory Board officially accepted this report on that same date. The consolidated financial statements and the summary of consolidated financial statements detailed here do not reflect the effects of events that occurred subsequent to the date of the audit report.

The summary statements included here provide a concise and summarised view and do not contain all the disclosures required by the Dutch Civil Law (Book 2, Chapter 9). This summary is therefore not intended as a substitute for reading the audited consolidated financial statements of Rewilding Europe. A copy of the audited statements of Rewilding Europe for 2015 is available upon request.

Consolidation

Our financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Dutch Law Book 2 Chapter 9 and the Guidelines of the Dutch Accounting Standards Board (RJ650). All amounts are in Euros. The consolidation accounts comprise the fully consolidated information for Stichting Rewilding Europe and its wholly owned subsidiaries in which Stichting Rewilding Europe has majority control (Rewilding Europe B.V. and Rewilding Europe-d.o.o (Velebit, Croatia). The financial statements of the parent and its subsidiaries are combined on a line by adding together like items of assets, liabilities, equity, income and expenses. Inter-company transactions and inter-company balances have been removed.

Income

In 2015 Rewilding Europe realised a total income of €1 542 378, representing an increase of €107 630 compared to 2014, when total income was €1 434 784. This allowed us to spend €1 443 135 on our objectives, leading to a net result of €99 243, which has been added to our reserves.

The breakdown of income in comparison with the budget and figures for last year is as follows:

	2015	Budget 2015	2014
Income from own fundraising	609 580	619 763	458 271
Income from third party fundraising	875 512	658 500	945 030
Other income	39 755	0	9 602
Interest and similar income	17 531	8 000	21 881
Total income	1 542 378	1 286 263	1 434 784

Overall expenses

In 2015 Rewilding Europe spent €1 442 135 on the realisation of its objectives. This resulted in a net income of €99 243, which was reflected in an increase in total reserves. In line with our increased income, this allowed us to spend substantially more on our objectives, than we budgeted. The 2015 expenditure is broken down into the following categories, which are explained further below:

	2015 actual	2015 budget	2014 actual
Rewilding area allocations	659 912	565 701	985 153
Rewilding activities	126 103	145 760	188 166
Communication & marketing activities	51 493	52 000	142 620
Enterprise & development	139 190	180 300	201 514
Management, development & administration	424 885	309 593	457 457
Trainings and seminars	7 122	5 000	46 100
Travel costs	34 430	25 500	48 010
Interest and similar expenses	0	2 000	388
Total expenses	1 443 135	1 285 854	2 069 408



Rewilding area allocations

On top of the seven active rewilding areas, the Oder Delta (Germany/Poland) and Lapland (Sweden) were added to the portfolio as the eighth and ninth areas, starting respectively in June and December 2015. For these last two areas, part of their selection was based on the potential for further fundraising. This has already led to a commitment from the Swedish Postcode Foundation for Lapland, which was signed December 2015. The total allocation towards the rewilding areas amounted to €659 912, representing 46 percent of the overall expenses (compared to 48 percent in 2014). The graph below shows the distribution of expenses for the nine rewilding areas.

	2015	2014
Western Iberia	61 850	199 880
Velebit	271 856	231 869
Southern Carpathians	123 203	208 810
Eastern Carpathians	20 715	44 819
Danube Delta	69 408	55 216
Central Appennines	37	166 719
Rhodope Mountains	86 065	37 511
Oder Delta	6 266	17 770
Lapland	20 512	22 559
	659 912	985 153

Rewilding area support

The Rewilding Europe Central Team provides important support services to our rewilding areas. These include a number of overarching initiatives that are instrumental to the success of rewilding areas – these are managed centrally to maximize efficiency. Such activities relate to rewilding, enterprise development, marketing and communication. The total expense for this work in 2015 was €316 786, representing 22 percent of overall expenses (compared to 26 percent in 2014).

These central support operations are explained in the general section of this Annual Review (on page 14–23). In 2015 the main focus of such work related to the European Wildlife Bank, Rewilding Europe Capital, European Rewilding Network and the technical support provided by experts from our central team for our nine rewilding areas.

Travel and training in support of rewilding areas

A total amount of €41 552 was spent by Central Team members on travel to the rewilding areas, for the purpose of providing support to activities on the ground, and on training and seminars in support of such areas.

Management, development and administration

Expenses for management, development and administration only include those activities that are dedicated to both strategic and operational levels of the initiative, such as daily management, strategic planning, finance and operations, fundraising, board meetings and so on. An increased effort was put into fundraising activities, especially for our diversification into EU funding, for which three new proposals were submitted. This led to a total expenditure for management, development and administration of €424 885, including a provision for REC of €56 250. Without this provision, the actual costs amounted to €368 635, which represented 26 percent of overall expenses (compared to €457 457 in 2014).

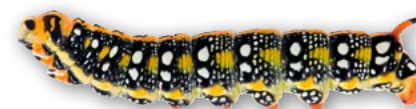
Reserves

During 2014 and 2015 Rewilding Europe received funding for specific purposes or areas. To some extent these funds are spent across multiple years, and are therefore carried forward as part of our appropriated (restricted) reserves. In addition, Rewilding Europe has channelled a €500 000 Dutch Postcode Lottery grant into its Rewilding Europe Capital fund. Since this money is to be used for debt finance, this remains on the foundation's balance sheet as a separate reserve.

The balance of the appropriated reserve at year-end 2015 was €737 189, comprising €443 750 for Rewilding Europe Capital and €293 439 for rewilding areas. These reserves will be used to fund planned deliverables in 2016. For Rewilding Europe Capital, a provision was taken as an accounting measure for the risk of defaults on the loans. This is purely a provision, which is taken out of the REC reserve and added to the balance sheet separately.

Fundraising

Since inception in 2011 Rewilding Europe has been fully dependent on donor income. In 2015 two contracts for EU LIFE funding were signed with the European Commission, securing projects relating to bison in the Southern Carpathians and vultures in the Rhodope Mountains for the next five years. Encouragingly, this represents a major step forward in our efforts to diversify funding sources. In 2015, 96 percent of funds still came from our own or third party fundraising, i.e. donor income. For 2016, taking into account the two LIFE projects and increased income from REC and corporate partnerships, there will be a more balanced funding mix.



Consolidated statement of income and expenses for the year 2015

	2015		Budget 2015		2014	
	€	€	€	€	€	€
Income from own fundraising		609 580		619 763		458 271
Income from third party fundraising		875 512		658 500		945 030
Other income		39 755		0		9 602
Interest and similar income		17 531		8 000		21 881
Total income		1 542 378		1 286 263		1 434 784
Rewilding area allocations		659 912		565 701		985 153
Rewilding activities		126 103		145 760		188 166
Communication & marketing activities		51 493		52 000		142 620
Enterprise & development		139 190		180 300		201 514
Management & administration		424 885		309 593		457 457
Training and seminars		7 122		5 000		46 100
Travel costs		34 430		25 500		48 010
Interest and similar expenses		0		2 000		388
Total expenses		1 443 135		1 285 854		2 069 408
Net income and expenses		99 243		409		-634 624

NET INCOME AND EXPENSES OF 99 243 EUROS:

	€
Added to: Appropriated reserve	130 011
Withdrawn from: REC reserve	-56 250
Added to: Other reserve	25 482
Total	99 243

Consolidated balance sheet as at 31 December 2015

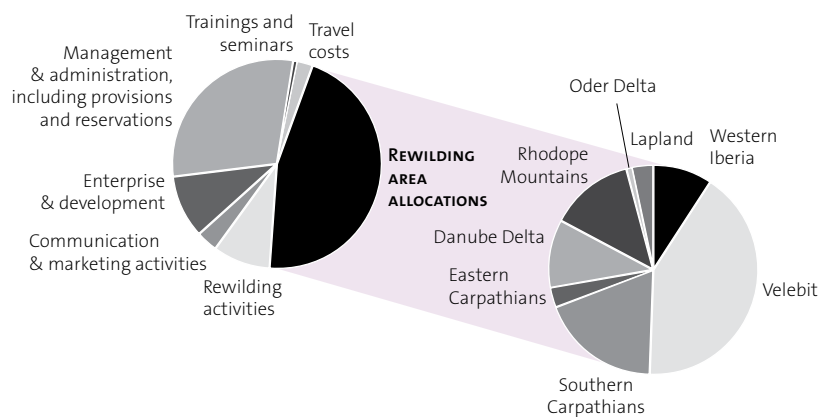
(after appropriation of net income and expenses)

ASSETS	31-12-2015		31-12-2014	
	€	€	€	€
Fixed assets				
Tangible fixed assets		10 512		9 426
Financial fixed assets		227 811		162 061
		238 323		171 487
Current assets				
Receivables				
Debtors		3 572		0
Other receivables and accrued assets		350 313		484 370
		353 885		484 370
Cash and banks		1 363 541		394 933
Total assets		1 955 749		1 050 790
LIABILITIES				
		€		€
Reserves		809 585		710 339
Short-term liabilities				
Amounts owed to credit institutions		0		0
Creditors		127 957		87 314
Other liabilities and accrued expenses		1 018 207		253 137
		1 146 164		340 451
Total liabilities		1 955 749		1 050 790

Reserves

	Appropriated reserve	REC	Other reserve	Total
	€	€	€	€
Balance as at 1 January 2015	163 428	500 000	46 913	710 341
Appropriated result	130 011	-56 250	25 482	99 243
Balance as at 31 December 2015	293 439	443 750	72 395	809 584

DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENSES



THE REWILDING EUROPE TEAM

In 2015 the Rewilding Europe Team comprised no less than 72 people from 16 different European countries. An overview of all the Rewilding Europe team members of 2015 is presented below, including their position and the country they work from.

SUPERVISORY BOARD



Wiet de Bruijn
Chairman
(The Netherlands)



Professor Henrique M. Pereira
Member
(Portugal)



Odile Rodríguez de la Fuente
Member
(Spain)



Lena Linden
Member
(Sweden)

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM



Frans Schepers
Managing Director
(The Netherlands)*



Ilko Bosman
Finance & Operations Director
(The Netherlands)*



Wouter Helmer
Rewilding Director
(The Netherlands)



Deli Saavedra
Regional Manager
(Spain)



Alexandros Karamanlidis
Regional Manager
(Greece)

*Executive Directors

WESTERN IBERIA

Portugal:

Pedro Prata
Team Leader

Nuno Curado
Rewilding Officer

Daniel Cruz
Communications Officer

LAPLAND

Sweden:

Håkan Landström
Team Leader

EASTERN CARPATHIANS

Poland:

Katarzyna Wasiak
Team Leader

Aleksandra Wołoszyn-Gałęza
Bison Expert

Daniel Klich
Grazing Expert

Grzegorz Leśniewski
Photographer

DANUBE DELTA

Romania:

Alexandra Panait
Team Leader

Răzvan Crimschi
Rewilding Officer

VELEBIT

Croatia:

Davor Krmpotić
Team Leader

Milan Nekić
Rewilding Officer

Mei Elderadži
Communications Officer

Nino Salkić
Wildlife Officer

CENTRAL APENNINES

Italy:

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Manuela Osmi
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Rewilding Officer

Adrian Grancea
Rewilding Officer

Oana Mondoc
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Georg Messerer
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Daniel Hurduzeu
Bison Ranger

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Bison Ranger

CENTRAL TEAM

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VOLUNTEERS

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(United Kingdom)

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Rewilding Europe Circle
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Partner of Michael Succow Stiftung

Martin Schröter
Partner HOP

Poland:

Iwona Krępic
Team Leader

Arthur Furdyna
Freshwater Expert



How can you become involved in Rewilding Europe?

To reach its full potential, Rewilding Europe is looking for partnerships with conservation organizations, 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 and purchase options, 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 to the wildlife, wild nature and local people in our rewilding areas, we would love to talk to you about it. Rewilding Europe offers many different ways of doing this, including becoming personally involved in a project. 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 euros per year, for a minimum period of two to three years.

Become a major donor

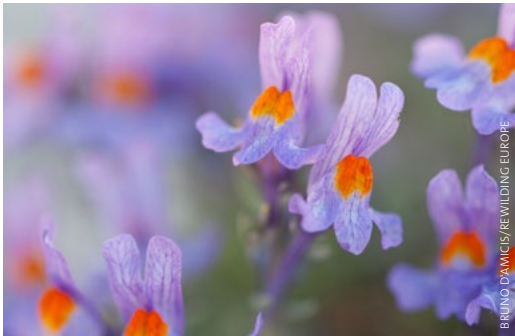
Major donors to Rewilding Europe are individuals, foundations or NGOs who have the means to engage with us at a substantial level. Funding contributions start from 10 000 euros a year, and can make a substantial difference to one of our projects, our portfolio in general, or to a specific activity or component of Rewilding Europe.

Become a donor

These are primarily corporate entities and individuals who are prepared to donate 1000 euros or more on an annual basis to our conservation work, typically focused on activities in one of our projects.



STAFFAN WIDSTRAND / REWILDING EUROPE



BRUNO DAMICIS / REWILDING EUROPE



STAFFAN WIDSTRAND

Visit our online donation platform

In 2015 Rewilding Europe launched a new platform that enables everybody to become an active part of the rewilding movement currently emerging in Europe. We offer the perfect opportunity to support one or more of the different projects that Rewilding Europe is working on. As a token of our appreciation, donations will be rewarded with a nature-related gift (depending on the level of contribution).

We offer six causes to which individuals, families, communities, organisations and other groups can actively contribute:

- the comeback of the European bison, a keystone species in Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia,
- the return of the European wild horse in our landscapes, and support projects currently taking place in Croatia, Bulgaria and Portugal,
- the comeback of magnificent eagle species such as the white-tailed eagle in the Oder Delta, the Bonelli's eagle in Western Iberia, and the Eastern Imperial eagle in the Rhodope Mountains,
- the use of wildlife cameras, enabling us to assess wildlife numbers and behaviour, and spot wildlife crime,
- youth education programmes and activities in Western Iberia and Southern Carpathians, and potentially other areas.

Invest in rewilding enterprises

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

For this purpose, we have launched 'Rewilding Europe Capital' which allows private individuals, companies and environmentally minded investors to help Rewilding Europe Capital to grow. This, we hope, will serve as a precursor to a larger and more conventional conservation investment fund model as the initiative builds momentum and an investment track record. If you are interested in these opportunities, we invite you to contact us for more details.

Contribute to the wildlife comeback

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, chamois, Spanish ibex, wild horses and wild bovines. This innovative mechanism has been proven to work at a national level, and will now be scaled up to the European level. You can join us in the European Wildlife Bank, by supporting the purchase, translocation or management of animals as your own 'investment'.

What can Rewilding Europe offer you?

- As a valued supporter of Rewilding Europe, you are invited to visit any of the rewilding areas and we would be delighted to show you the rewilding work done on the ground.
- Depending on your level of contribution, you will be invited to participate in exciting conservation activities, such as the translocation of animals, research work or European safaris.
- As a strategic partner, you will be invited to an international 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 on an inspiring experience in one of our rewilding areas.
- Regular updates on progress from the areas and invitations to Rewilding Europe activities.
- Rewilding Europe publications and gifts.

Donation details

You can choose to donate through the tax-efficient funding structures that have been set up for Rewilding Europe, as a not-for-profit foundation, in the Netherlands. For further information please contact us. We will do everything we can to match your support with your ideas and desires.

A heartfelt thank you

Many organisations and individuals provided indispensable support in 2015, for which we are very grateful. Our strategic and founding partners were vital in working with Rewilding Europe to develop our initiative further in its fourth year of existence: ARK Nature, Conservation Capital, Wild Wonders of Europe and WWF Netherlands. We are also very grateful to all other organisations and people we worked with over the last year and who helped us to move forward, including our funding partners, advisors, photographers, conservation partners, business partners, scientific partners, corporate sponsors, media and freelance journalists and many more. We deeply appreciate their support and look forward to continued cooperation with them as we work to rewild Europe.

INITIATING PARTNERS

ARK Nature
Conservation Capital
Wild Wonders of Europe
WWF Netherlands

FUNDING PARTNERS

Adessium Foundation
Dioraphte Foundation
Dutch Postcode Lottery
European Commission
Foundation Segré
Swedish Postcode Foundation
The European Nature Trust
Toyota Fund for Europe
WWF Netherlands

ADVISORS

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Remmers Financieel Centrum –
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(The Netherlands)
Giles Davies – Conservation
Capital (France)
Henk Oosterdijk - Hekkelman
Advocaten & Notarissen
(The Netherlands)

CONSERVATION PARTNERS & RELATIONS

African Parks Network – Peter
Fearnhead (South Africa)
American Prairie Reserve –
Sean Gerrity, Kayla Gerrity
(United States)
Bieszczady National Park –
Leopold Bekier, Tomasz
Winnicki (Poland)
European Association of Zoos
and Aquaria – Myfanwy
Griffith (The Netherlands)
European Bison Conservation
Centre – Wanda Olech,
Kajetan Perzanowski
(Poland)
European Bison Pedigree Book –
Małgorzata Bołbot (Poland)
Green Teen Team Foundation –
HSH Princess Theodora,
Eleanora Crisp (Italy)
Large Carnivore Initiative
Europe – Luigi Boitani (Italy)
Municipality of Avesta –
Anders Friberg,
Lars Isacson (Sweden)
Parco Natura Viva – Cesare
Avesani Zaborra (Italy)
Rewilding Apennines – Alberto
Zocchi, Bruno d'Amicis,
Manuela Osmi (Italy)
Rewilding Britain – Helen
Meech, Charlie Burrell
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Rewilding Lapland –
Lars-Anders Bear, Carina
Halvord, Nina Siemiatkowski,
Magnus Sylvén (Sweden)
Rewilding Rhodopes –
Petar Iankov,

Jacqueline van Oorschot,
Frank Zanderink (Bulgaria)
Rewilding Velebit –
Josep Vukelić, Nikica Šprem
(Croatia)
Taurus Foundation –
Ronald Goderie, Paul Jans
(The Netherlands)
Vulture Conservation
Foundation – José Tavares
(Switzerland)
Wild Europe – Toby Aykroyd
WILD Foundation – Vance
Martin (United States)
WWF in Namibia –
Chris Weaver in cooperation
with Rob Moffet, Namibia
Exclusive Safaris (Namibia)

SCIENTIFIC PARTNERS & RELATIONS

Aarhus University –
Jens-Cristian Svenning
(Denmark)
Brussels University –
Mihnea Tanasescu (Belgium)
German Centre for Integrative
Biodiversity Research –
Laetitia Navarro (Germany)
Oxford University – Paul Jepson
(United Kingdom)
Tilburg University – Cees
Bastmeijer (The Netherlands)
University of Aveiro –
Carlos Fonseca (Portugal)
University of Zagreb, Faculty
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(Croatia)
Wageningen University –
Arjaan Pellis, René van der
Duim (The Netherlands)

COMMUNICATION PARTNERS & RELATIONS

Wild About Music – Ellen
Honert (The Netherlands)
Artists for Nature Foundation –
Ysbrand Brouwers
(The Netherlands)
White Fox Pictures –
Emmanuel Rondeau (France)
Wild Wonders of Europe –
Staffan Widstrand,
Magnus Lundgren (Sweden)
Off the Fence – Ellen
Windemuth, Emre Izat, Kate
Bradbury (The Netherlands)

MEDIA & FREELANCE JOURNALISTS

BBC Wildlife Magazine (UK)
Daniel Allen (UK)
Die Tourismus Zeitung
(Germany)
Geographical (UK)
La Repubblica (Italy)
La Stampa (Italy)
Le Monde (France)
National Geographic (US)
Native Woodland Trust (Ireland)
Süddeutsche Zeitung
(Germany)
Science Magazine (USA)
Quercus (Spain)
Wizz Air Magazine (Hungary)
Wilder (Germany)

EUROPEAN ZOOS AND WILDLIFE PARKS

We would especially like to thank the European zoos and wildlife parks that supported our bison translocation to Ardenis in the Southern Carpathians. They kindly provided animals, transport, veterinary support, VHF/GPS collars and animal care. We deeply appreciate their support and look forward to continue work with the following people and their teams:

Thoiry Zoo (France):
Christophe Grossiord
Zoo de Pescheray (France):
Jean-marc Charpentier
Wildlife park Han-sur-Lesse
(Belgium): Brigitte Malou,
Etienne Brunelle
Wisentgehege Springe
(Germany): Thomas Hennig
Tierpark Kiel (Germany):
Anton Gondorf
Bielefeld Zoo (Germany):
Herbert Linneman, Katja
Leszczynski, Markus Hinker
Bern Zoo (Switzerland):
Marc Rosset
Parco Natura Viva (Italy):
Cesare Avesani Zaborra,
Camillo Sandri,
Caterina Spiezo
Bellewaerde (Belgium):
Stefaan Lemey,
Melissa Nollet



Partnerships are key for us

We are both happy and fortunate to work with a number of strong, active and very committed partners. Their firm and highly valued support has allowed us to get to where we are now, and we look forward to achieving more with them in the years ahead.

FUNDING PARTNERS IN 2015



STRATEGIC PARTNERS



CORPORATE SPONSORS



WESTERN IBERIA



VELEBIT MOUNTAINS



DANUBE DELTA



SOUTHERN CARPATHIANS



RHODOPE MOUNTAINS



ODER DELTA



EASTERN CARPATHIANS



LAPLAND





Rewilding Europe®

Making Europe a Wilder Place

Rewilding Europe is working to make Europe a Wilder Place

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

Any initiative aiming to rewild a continent needs a lot of support. We would love for you to become part of our groundbreaking initiative.

You are warmly invited to be part of Making Europe a Wilder Place!

www.rewildingeurope.com

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