



Rewilding
Europe

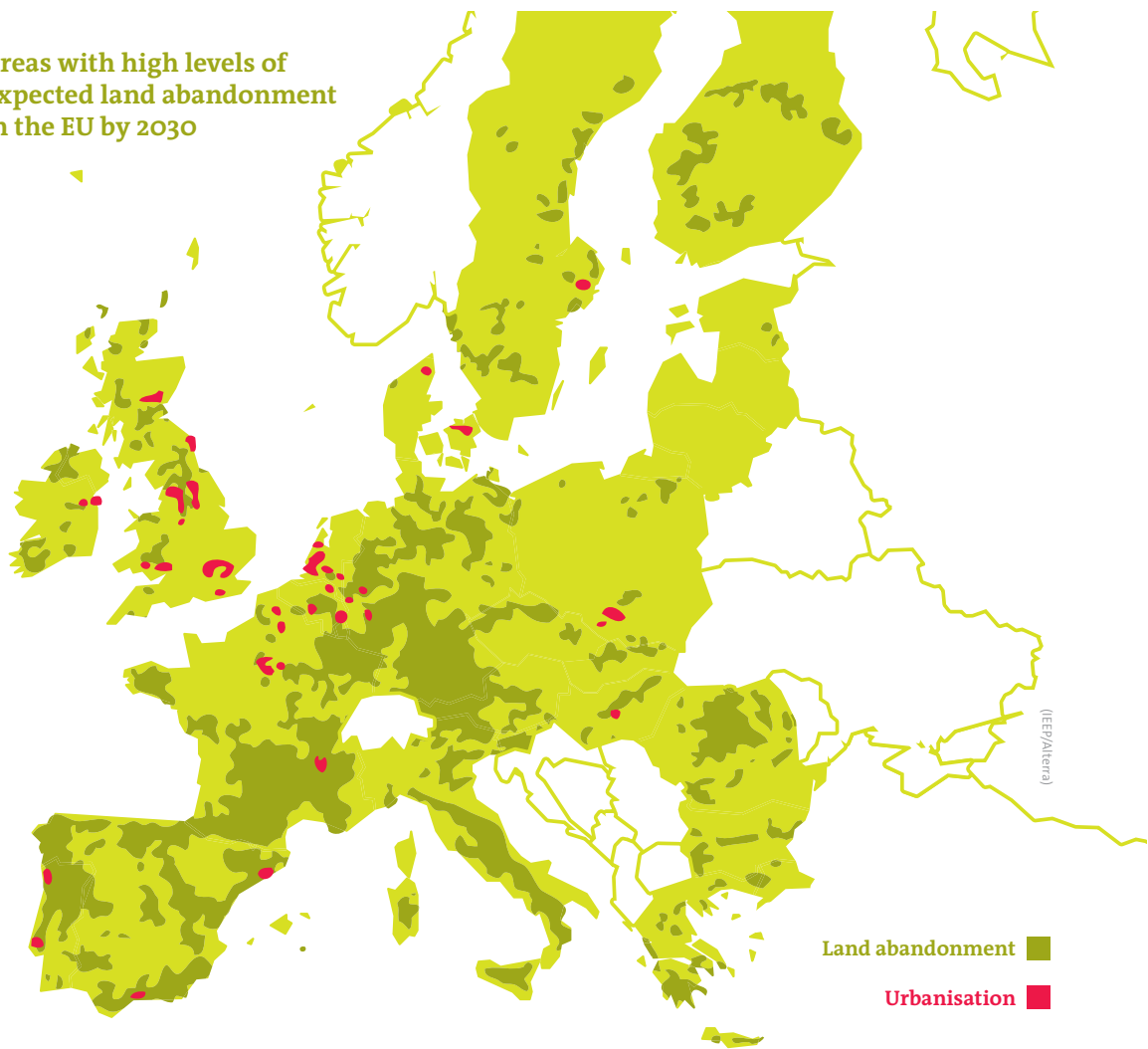


Making Europe a Wilder Place

- Turning problems into opportunities
- Rewilding a million hectares
- Providing the WILD business case
- Massive public outreach



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



Europe's more remote countryside is presently being abandoned at an unprecedented scale. Not only because small scale farming and cattle grazing on poorer soils and in smaller units is increasingly less profitable due to global economic realities, but also because of socioeconomic changes.

Turning problems into opportunities

Many young Europeans today don't want the hard work for small money in sheep herding or olive picking that their grandparents had to cope with. They prefer laptops and ipads and cool cafés and clubs, they want diversity of choice, partners, new ideas and education. Something that can't quite be obtained just by more farm subsidies.

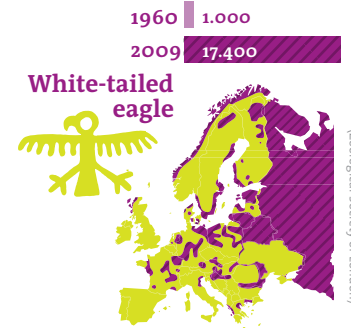
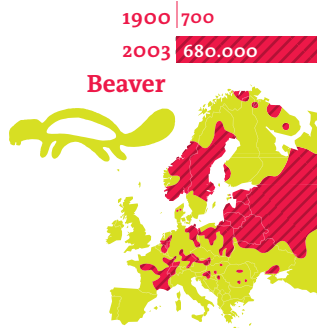
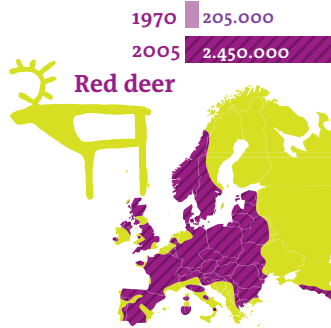
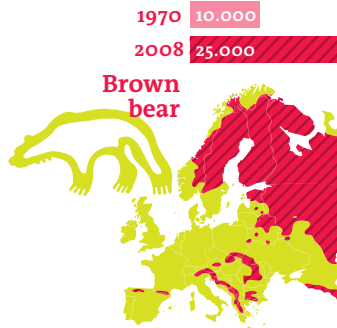
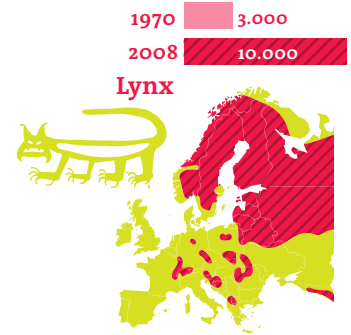
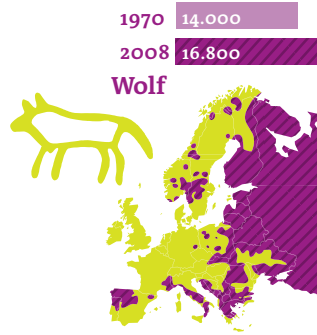
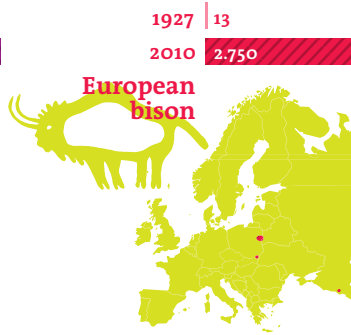
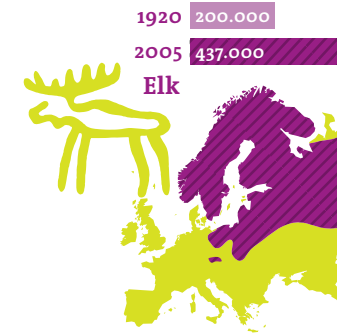
Millions of hectares have already been abandoned. Every year a further million hectares of land are left fallow within the EU. In Portugal alone, the government stated in 2011 that 2 million hectares of land are now abandoned. The trend is similar almost all across Europe from North to South, East to West. Inside the EU as well as outside of it. In richer countries as well as in the less affluent. 18 million more hectares are expected to be abandoned in the EU between now and 2030.

A huge problem of course, but one that in many areas can be turned into new opportunities for man and nature. From a nature conservation standpoint, the land abandonment represents both a serious threat to biodiversity and at the same time a real opportunity to reclaim at least some of all the wild lands and wilderness areas that have been lost over the past centuries.

This could be the biggest opportunity yet for wildlife and wilderness in Europe, if we just choose to look at it that way. This might even very well turn out to be more profitable



economically than the previous ways of using those same lands that are now trying to survive on subsidies. This is something Rewilding Europe intends to explore in great detail.



Wildlife in Europe is coming back

Europe is right now experiencing an amazing wildlife comeback. Almost all large species of mammals and birds are returning, across a wide range of countries. Species like ibex, chamois, red deer, bison, otter, beaver, wild boar, wolf, bear, lynx, wolverine, seals, whales, eagles, falcons, herons, cranes, storks, pelicans, owls, geese and cormorants have all increased significantly over the last decades. That is all because of successful nature conservation efforts. Europeans have

allowed it to happen. We have become a little bit more wildlife friendly. However, wildlife numbers are still extremely low compared to what would be expected in any kind of natural state, and especially so in our open lands.

Today, there is hardly a single area of any significant size in Europe where the natural processes are fully in charge, the wildlife roams completely free, in natural numbers and in the natural variety of species.



Furthermore, we are still losing biodiversity: flowers, butterflies, bees and hundreds of other species connected either to the old forests or the traditional farming and grazing lands. We are also still losing wilderness. Several of the last remaining ancient forests are being logged and many other wild landscapes are being threatened by ski resorts, hydropower dams, road constructions, phone masts, holiday home developments and plantation forests.

About half of Europe's biodiversity is connected to the open landscapes. Before man brought in domestic grazers like sheep, cattle and goats, many of these landscapes were naturally kept open by large wild grazers and browsers that are now almost gone. Now the domestic grazers are also disappearing and the open landscapes are increasingly being lost to scrub and bush. Rewilding Europe wants to bring back the wild large herbivores, and in good numbers. Bison, ibex, chamois and red deer of course, but also wild horse and aurochs – two large, vegetation-shaping herbivores which were the ancestors of every present-day horse and cow in the whole world. They were once some of Europe's most important and dominant wildlife species.

Rewilding a million hectares

Rewilding Europe aims to rewild at least one million hectares (10,000 sq km) of land by 2020, creating 10 large, magnificent wildlife and wilderness areas of international quality, each one at least 100 000 ha in size.

Places where nature is once again allowed free reign to take care of itself. Where the landscape is shaped by natural processes and not by people. Where the animals are not shot, the trees are not cut, the rivers not dammed and where there is no construction works or heavy "management" of the wild. Areas that together reflect a wide variety of European regions and ecosystems, flora and fauna. We want each of them to show a substantial wildlife comeback, supported by reintro-

Who will build and run Europe's first top-class wildlife safari lodges? And in which countries?

ductions where necessary. To serve as inspirational showcases for rewilding in many other locations all across Europe. We want to create 10 European Serengetis, Yosemite or Yellowstone, if you like.

Rewilding Europe suggests a new conservation vision for Europe, based on not only trying to defend the last fragments of wild nature, but also on actively bringing back wilderness and wild lands, with more wildlife, more biodiversity, more wild values and allowing more of the natural processes to come back into control.

Bringing back the variety of life to our lives. After a process when European conservation organisations were asked to nominate what they considered the best and most suitable sites in their countries, we then selected the first 5 rewilding areas, out of the 25 nominations, and in these five, work is already up and running. All work on location is done together with, or by a network of local conservation partners that share our visions and goals. More than 20 different organisations in these seven countries have joined us – including national parks, nature parks, geo-parks, private reserves, archaeological parks, UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, universities, foundations, local communities and NGOs. The next areas will be selected through a similar nomination process with the ambition that also Northern, North-Western and maybe even coastal/marine areas will have representation. These will be launched in 2013, at the WILD 10 World Wilderness Congress in Salamanca, Spain, where they will be thoroughly presented together with the first 5.



**Our first five
Rewilding areas**



Proving the WILD business case

The traditional, low production agriculture economy is rapidly failing in many countryside areas, whilst wildlife and wilderness are becoming more valuable. The "wild" is quickly emerging as an economic alternative to consider.

Rewilding Europe intends to prove the viable business case for wildlife, wild nature and wilderness. We intend to show how rewilding can mean business, commercial investment, jobs and income.

With more wildlife to watch and wilderness to enjoy there will be strong growth and serious investment for the development of wildlife watching and a range of connected nature-based tourism. Several areas in Europe have the potential to become world-class wildlife tourism attractions, alongside the many other ways of reaping economic benefits from the wild. We will work hard to make that a reality.

Who will build and run Europe's first top-class wildlife safari lodges? And in which countries? Who will start commercial breeding centres for endangered wildlife species? Who will be the first to realise that the value of hunting concessions and hunting rights will rise a lot in all regions surrounding a rewilding area, since there will be a strong increase in wildlife numbers coming from the rewilding areas? Which regions will be most successful in letting entrepreneurs develop the mosaic of businesses that can make use of the fact that the area is being rewilded?

New financial incentives and mechanisms being developed around 'carbon storage' and payments for 'ecosystem services' represent huge potential incomes to rural areas and wild lands. Price lists are being established for the fact that wild and natural areas protect our drinking water, store carbon, buffer against floods and slow down or soften the effects of climate change. Services that are increasingly translated into

jobs and income. Rewilding Europe also aims to create a **Rewilding Europe Investment Fund**. Through our partnership with Conservation Capital we will be putting very serious work into the business dimension of rewilding, which we see as one of the three cornerstones of our initiative.

Massive public outreach

Wild values will only survive if the majority of the citizens vote for it - in elections and through our actions in our daily lives. You will do that only if you feel that wildlife, biodiversity and wilderness has emotional value to you. But how are you supposed to feel strongly about something that you have never even seen, heard of or experienced? And never realised how wonderful it is?

Rewilding Europe therefore teams up with Wild Wonders of Europe in a ten-year mass communication effort to stimulate the joy and sense of pride in the wild and spreading a vision of a wilder continent.

Rewilding Europe will reach out to hundreds of millions of Europeans - locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, through massive communication output in every possible media - TV films, outdoor and indoor exhibition tours, mass media coverage, books, web, Facebook, Twitter, apps, AV-shows, folk festivals and more.

Wild Wonders of Europe has already reached c. 110 million people with this message. Our aim is to communicate with at least half of all Europeans before 2020.



Rewilding Europe

A new beginning. For wildlife. For us.

We want to make Europe wilder

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

Any initiative aiming to rewild a continent will need a lot of support. We need your support in this effort. We would love if you, in one way or the other wanted to be part of our ground-breaking initiative.

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

Rewilding Europe is a foundation based in The Netherlands. It is the result of a joint initiative by the WWF Netherlands, ARK Nature, Wild Wonders of Europe and Conservation Capital.

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