



Launch of the Rewilding Expertise Centre

EVIDENCE-BASED REWILDLING

March 20, 2026
9:00 - 17:00 CET

Online and on-site: Omnia, Hogesteeg 2, Wageningen, the Netherlands

What evidence shows that rewilding actually works?

During this event, national and international speakers from science and practice explore how to build robust evidence for rewilding and demonstrate its impact.

Using real-world examples from iconic rewilding areas across Europe, the event highlights wetlands as nature-based solutions and trophic rewilding with large herbivores. From remote sensing and GPS-collared animals to insights from 35 years of rewilding, participants discover how conservation evidence is built in practice.

With a mix of presentations, videos and posters the event offers an accessible overview of evidence-based rewilding in action for scientists, practitioners, policymakers and people interested in the field of rewilding. The symposium also marks the launch of the Rewilding Expertise Centre on World Rewilding Day!

PROGRAMME

9:15 VENUE OPENS, REGISTRATION AND COFFEE

10:00 OPENING AND WELCOME

Liesbeth Bakker

10:05 REWILDLING KEMPENBROEK

Sneak preview of a movie by Ruben Smit

10:15 CLIMATE-SMART REWILDLING

Liesbeth Bakker

Rewilding can offer nature-based solutions to climate change impacts. Liesbeth addresses the newest developments in climate-smart rewilding and gives examples of the results in Dutch rewilding sites, in particular wetlands.

10:30 REWILDLING LANDSCAPES

Nathalie Pettorelli

Rewilding often alters landscape structure, affecting openness of the landscape and the amount of shrubs and trees. Nathalie demonstrates how these changes can be documented with remote sensing using iconic rewilding sites, including Knepp Estate (UK) and Côa Valley (Portugal) as examples.

11:00 CONSERVATION EVIDENCE

William Sutherland

William addresses how to collect evidence of nature conservation actions, document it and make it accessible for anybody involved in conservation. He will showcase the initiative Conservation Evidence and explore how rewilding fits in here.

11:30 EVIDENCE OF 35 YEARS OF REWILDLING THE NETHERLANDS

Leo Linnartz

The Netherlands has been pioneering rewilding long before the word rewilding was coined, with year-round grazing, introduction of keystone species and making room for the river. Leo will reflect on 35 years of rewilding in the Netherlands and its outcomes.

12:00 LUNCH AND POSTERS

13:30 LAUNCH REWILDLING EXPERTISE CENTRE

Liesbeth Bakker

Hereby, we launch the new Rewilding Expertise Centre which aims to make rewilding knowledge better available and to connect rewilding research, practice, initiatives and people, contributing to knowledge development and sharing to forward the field of rewilding.

PITCHES OF THE PHD CANDIDATES WORKING IN THE CENTRE
TROPHIC REWILDLING: SYNTHESIS OF 40 YEARS OF DUTCH
REWILDLING WITH LARGE GRAZERS

Natanja Schuttenhelm

REWILDLING AS A NATURE-BASED SOLUTION: WETLANDS FOR
CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Anne Wolma



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PROGRAMME

LAUNCH OF THE BOOK ON NATURAL PROCESSES

Leo Linnartz

Leo documented all his expertise and that of ARK Rewilding NL with natural processes for rewilding in this book, which is now also available in English.

14:00 SHORT MOVIE: REWILDLING IN ACTION

14:15 HOW REWILDLING EUROPE MONITORS REWILDLING PROGRESS

Theresa Stratmann

For NGOs it is a challenge to collect the resources, capacity and knowledge needed for large-scale monitoring – it should be simpler and cheaper. Theresa shows how Rewilding Europe measures rewilding progress in their areas using the rewilding scale and documents outcomes for nature and people.

14:40 SCIENCE-BASED REWILDLING MOLS

Kent Olsen

The Molsbjerge area in Denmark has been a long-term scientific open laboratory for nature management and ecology. Since 2016 it has implemented rewilding with free-ranging Galloway bovines and Exmoor ponies and continues as Rewilding Mols. Kent presents how rewilding management is combined with scientific research and the results thereof.

15:10 COFFEE AND TEA BREAK

15:40 REWILDLING FORESTS: EXAMPLES ACROSS EUROPE

Lydwin Wagenaar

Lydwin presents the effects of forest rewilding in Swedish Ecoparks on dead trees and insects.

Martin Mykoláš

Martin presents rewilding in the High Tatra Mountains in Slovakia, one of the most pristine places in Europe, and the impacts on biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

16:00 GLOBAL WETLANDS AS NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Magnus Sylvén and Chloe Eckert

Wetlands are hotspots of biodiversity and offer many ecosystem services. Rewilding by conserving and restoring wetlands can be a nature-based solution to climate change with benefits for biodiversity and people. Magnus and Chloe will highlight this role of wetlands from a global perspective.

16:30 CLOSURE AND DRINKS



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LIESBETH BAKKER

Netherlands Institute of Ecology, Wageningen University

Liesbeth Bakker is a professor in Rewilding Ecology at Wageningen University and senior researcher at the Netherlands Institute of Ecology. She investigates the concepts of rewilding and the outcomes, including effects on biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation. She works in human-dominated landscapes and some wilder places across terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems.

NATHALIE PETTORELLI

Zoological Society of London, United Kingdom

Prof. Nathalie Pettorelli is a conservation biologist at the Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London. Her expertise includes climate change ecology, biodiversity monitoring, remote sensing as well as environmental and wildlife management. Her research, among other things, aims to inform the emergence and framing of rewilding as a novel, science-based, environmental management approach that can add to the existing portfolio of nature-based solutions to tackle climate change. She co-chairs the Rewilding Special Interest Group of the British Ecological Society.



WILLIAM SUTHERLAND

University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Prof. William Sutherland is a professor in Conservation Biology and initiator of Conservation Evidence, a free, authoritative information resource designed to support decisions about how to maintain and restore global biodiversity. As well as a general interest in many aspects of conservation science he is especially interested in improving the processes by which decisions are made. His main work has been the industrial-scale collation of evidence to determine which interventions are effective and which are not and then establishing processes for embedding evidence in decision making.

LEO LINNARTZ

ARK Rewilding NL, the Netherlands

Leo Linnartz leads the Knowledge development program at the Dutch rewilding NGO ARK Rewilding Nederland. He is an expert in landscape restoration, biodiversity conservation, and rewilding. His work bridges science and practical conservation, focusing on large herbivores' role in ecosystem dynamics and creating resilient, biodiverse landscapes. Leo advocates for integrating ecological science into policy.





NATANJA SCHUTTENHELM

Wageningen University, the Netherlands

Natanja Schuttenhelm is a PhD candidate at Wageningen University. She focuses on the effects of trophic rewilding on grassland biodiversity in the Netherlands. By studying the interactions between large herbivores, -which have been introduced in Dutch nature reserves since the 1970s- biodiversity and landscapes, she wants to understand how rewilding practices can contribute to dynamic, resilient and biodiverse ecosystems.

ANNE WOLMA

Wageningen University, the Netherlands

Anne Wolma is a PhD candidate at Wageningen University. She studies the ecosystem services provided by climate buffer wetlands in the Netherlands and how rewilding factors into these climate buffers. Could we combine 'rewilding' and 'climate buffers' through 'climate-smart rewilding'?



THERESA STRATMANN

Rewilding Europe, the Netherlands

Theresa Stratmann is the Monitoring and Research Manager at Rewilding Europe. She is part of the Impact Monitoring and Research Team which is tasked with helping Rewilding Europe's 11 landscapes monitor their effort and impact across all areas of work from the ecological to the social to the economic. Theresa has a PhD in biology and has always worked at the interface between academia and conservation.

KENT OLSEN

Natural History Museum Aarhus, Denmark

Dr. Kent Olsen is Scientific Director and Senior Scientist at the Natural History Museum in Aarhus. His research examines how species respond to environmental change, with a particular emphasis on climate change, conservation, and rewilding. He is head of the Danish wolf monitoring program where his research examines recolonization and population dynamics in Central Europe—especially Denmark—including behavior, predator-prey interactions and activity patterns. He has been closely involved with the implementation of trophic rewilding in the Molsbjerge area and is leading the accompanying research program to study the biodiversity consequences of trophic rewilding, analyzing the drivers of multi-taxa, multi-facet, and multi-scale patterns.





LYDWIN WAGENAAR

Lund University, Sweden

Lydwin is a PhD candidate at Lund University. She studies the effects of different rewilding and restoration methods on the biodiversity in Swedish ecoparks. Ecoparks are multifunctional forest landscapes that are owned by Sveaskog. Her research focuses mostly on deciduous forests with special attention for insects.

MARTIN MIKOLÁŠ

Czech University of Life Sciences, Czech Republic

Dr. Martin Mikoláš is a forest researcher at the Czech University of Life Sciences. He investigates the effects of rewilding on forest biodiversity and carbon storage. He has a strong interest in the functioning of pristine forests and performs research in wild places, including the high Tatra Mountains.



MAGNUS SYLVÉN

Global Rewilding Alliance, Switzerland

Dr. Magnus Sylvén is Director Science-Policy-Practice at the Global Rewilding Alliance, where he works on convening evidence and influences policy globally in relation to rewilding. He is interested in the interface between conservation, climate and what drives change in society. The Global Rewilding Alliance is a worldwide organisation working with rewilders on every continent to help nature heal itself and secure a thriving future for people, nature and planet.

CHLOE ECKERT

Global Rewilding Alliance, Canada

Background in film and communications, with a bachelors in Sustainable Development at the University College Dublin. Since two years she is together with Magnus Sylvén responsible for the global wetlands work of the GRA and will co-lead development and implementation of the Wetlands Initiative 2026-2028, with focus on partnerships and outreach. In parallel she works on the external promotion of an ambitious rewilding initiative of American Bison in Canada.



Photos: Staffan Widstrand, Leo Linnartz, Anne-Marie Pronk (ARK Rewilding NL)

