

# Moor Trees News

Creating native woodland

spring 2016



Focus on  
Rewilding

## Director **Graham Burton** with some thoughts on rewilding



The rewilding concept and planting trees for flood alleviation remain 'hot topics' in the media.

Talks by George Monbiot and Alan Watson Featherstone in January took place in Exeter and Plymouth. Both venues were not only sold out, the overflow lecture theatres which saw CCTV feeds of them also sold out! After the talks our **Moor Trees** display table

More about the 'Monbiot'/  
Watson' effect on page 4

saw lots of activity with our new Vision being handed out and many discussions with excited and interested people. A number of links with new volunteers and possible woodland creation projects were made and at the time of writing I am still receiving e-mails inspired by George and Alan.

There is also now a Rewilding Dartmoor Facebook page where a number of inspiring and informative articles and views are posted – why not see it for yourself? It is a public page.

At about the same time as the talks there was also renewed flooding after heavy rains, especially in the Lake District. A number of articles have appeared calling for more trees to be planted in the uplands. Although many farmers have come forward to say that they would be open to the idea if the money was sufficient, I have my doubts. It is easy to underestimate the social and cultural pull of upland sheep farming, whatever the economics. There is a powerful combination of the public perception of bare hills as somehow natural, and the strong bond between families who have grown up in the uplands and their 'traditional' way of life, although this is a relatively recent construct - see Matthew Kelly's article in the 'Magazine' section of the Rewilding Britain website (*"Grazing regimes established only a century or so ago, rather than thousands of years ago, as is sometimes claimed, are significantly responsible for the Dartmoor landscape of today"*).

[www.rewildingbritain.org](http://www.rewildingbritain.org)

It will be a slow process but we must keep our own messages coming, planting trees and showing how the upland landscape can actually look rather nice with more trees in it – and don't mention the wolves.....



Best wishes  
Graham Burton

Registered office  
Old School Centre  
Totnes Road  
South Brent  
TQ10 9BP

Registered charity  
No. 1081142

See pages 4, 5 and 7 for more on rewilding

## Tree planting

### Howton Down - the home stretch!

**At the turn of the new year the Moor Trees band of volunteers descended upon Howton Down ready to begin the final tree planting season of a three-year project. Everything was ready, the tent, trees, guards, canes and equipment .**

It is worth noting the work done behind the scenes in preparation for the planting season. To begin with, I am given a plan of the site from our director Graham Burton detailing where and what type of trees to plant.

As Christmas approaches Brian Daniel and a few volunteers put up the tent and begin to fill it with all the necessary planting equipment. Then there is the weekly task of lifting trees from our nurseries, putting them in plastic

sacks (to prevent the roots from drying out) and then packing them on to the mini-bus trailer or in cars ready to be driven to the site. At the site these are then heeled in into prepared trenches ready for planting. This year that involved transferring about 4000 trees!

In this year's section of the woodland we have planted, 1400 oak , 370 small-leaved lime, 300 birch, 300 birch, 300 field maple and 200 rowan, 300 blackthorn, 160 hawthorn, 200 willow and 200 alder buckthorn.

All through the season volunteer numbers have been good with an average Sunday attracting at least 12 volunteers. This number went up considerably after the passionate rewilding talks in Plymouth and Exeter by George Monbiot and Alan Watson Featherstone (see pages 4 and 5).

The planting on Howton Down finally and sadly came to an end on 27 March when the comparatively few remaining

trees were planted and volunteers were then rewarded with an excellent cream tea and a thank you from Rodger Jackman, Development Manager at Hannahs at Seale Hayne

To sum up: over the three years we have planted over 13,000 trees on a varied, predominately rocky, hilly and exposed 30 acre site. Given the exposed position and the underlying rock, a little patience will be needed while this woodland establishes itself. However I am looking forward to seeing how it de

velops into a magnificent large new native woodland bursting with life.

As always, a final huge thank you to all our volunteers (another superb effort!) and an even bigger than usual thank you to Brian Daniel and Jon Covey for covering for me when I was away as well as all the hard work they put in behind the scenes. It has been a real pleasure working at Seale Hayne!

**Jon Brock**  
Tree and volunteer officer



*The volunteers on the last day enjoyed a cream tea and a 'thank you' from Rodger Jackman, Development Manager*

## Nurseries

**This winter much of our time at Broadley nursery has been taken up with lifting, bundling and bagging up 3000 or more trees and transporting them to our planting sites, which this year have been Howton Down at Seale Hayne and a small one at Slapton. You get fit pushing tree-loaded wheelbarrows up a steep hillside many times!**

After lifting all our bigger oaks, small leaved lime, birch , rowan and hazel for this year's planting, as the beds emptied, we set about reconstructing as many of them as we could with the last of our stock of old scaffolding planks. All the trees that have not been big enough to plant out this year have been replanted in the nursery.

The nursery beds have needed very little weeding because the excellent woody compost we mulch with, from *Sustainable South Brent*, suppresses weeds. It also promotes strong tree growth by retaining moisture around the roots in dry spells. Bed preparation is completed by raking sand in to the clay top soil and then covering with black plastic to help retain the warmth in the soil. All ready for the hundreds of tiny crab apple and blackthorn seedlings that are now filling the seed trays!



*Lifting trees at Broadley nursery*

It has been great working with **Moor Trees** volunteers throughout the year. Some have undertaken volunteer work before and for others it is their first regular volunteering experience in the conservation field. Motivation to get involved varies from being inspired by a talk on rewilding to wanting to do something practical and meaningful to provide a better environment.

A sociable mix of different people in a lovely countryside location often leads to friendships being formed and a genuine appreciation and respect for fellow volunteers. **Moor Trees** is a good fit for practical nature conservation work on a small local sustainable scale.

A heartfelt thanks to all our regular volunteers who get stuck in to the variety of nursery tasks with considerable skills and positive attitudes.

**Jon Covey**  
Broadley Nursery Officer

## Native trees

Graham Burton continues his series on native trees with a look at the Willow (*salix sp.*)

There are a number of willow species in the UK and Devon but the three most common and familiar on Dartmoor are the Eared (*Salix aurica*), Grey (*S. cinerea*) and Goat willows (*S. caprea*). Unfortunately they regularly hybridise and it can be tricky to distinguish clear examples, especially between Grey and Goat willow that are often collectively and popularly referred to as 'pussy willow'. Another common name for all these species is Sallow.

Most willow species grow and thrive close to water or in damp places. They have the ability to quickly regrow from coppiced or pollarded trees, growing several feet in one season.



Most willow species grow and thrive close to water or in damp places

All the willows can reach 3 metres in height with stems up to 20 cm in diameter, typically rounded and bushy in shape, with multiple stems spreading out at, or near, ground level. Bark can be grey to dark brown and smooth, although in older individuals there can be large cracks or splits running longitudinally on the stems.

The leaves of Eared willow are grey-green in colour, wrinkled in texture, lance-like, and up to 4 cm in length and 3 cm in width. Goat willow leaves are oval rather than long and thin and Grey willow leaves are rounded and at least twice as long as broad. All of them have a fine felt of hairs on the underside of the leaves.



Pussy Willow flowers

Male and female flowers appear on separate trees, their flowers or catkins out before the leaves in March and April. The cylindrical male catkins are grey and hairy with yellow anthers – the classic 'pussy willow'. Once pollinated by wind, female catkins develop into white woolly seeds which blow freely across the countryside in late summer.

## Value to wildlife

Catkins provide an important early source of pollen and nectar for bees and other insects. Insect life is especially abundant and varied in wet woodlands. This richness attracts many foraging



Willow tit

birds, including relatively rare species for Dartmoor such as willow tit and lesser spotted woodpecker, best seen in moorland fringe woodlands such as at Yarner near Bovey Tracey.



Marsh Marigold

The most characteristic plants of willow carr are marsh marigold, opposite-leaved golden saxifrage, great tussock sedge, ferns such as lady fern and broad buckler fern, and bog

mosses. Many willow woods, especially where the trees are old, have rich lichen communities.

## Mythology and symbolism

Willow has come to symbolise grief probably originating with Psalm 137. During the 16th and 17th centuries

*By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the willow-trees we hung up our harps.*

the association became particular to grief suffered by forsaken lovers, who also adopted the custom of wearing a cap or crown made of willow twigs and leaves. By the nineteenth century illustrations of weeping willows were commonly used as ornaments on gravestones and mourning cards.

## How we use willows

Wicker-work is probably what willow is most famous for, using the coppiced or pollarded willow. The relatively pliable willow is less likely to split while being woven than many other woods, and can be bent around sharp corners in basketry. Wattle fences and wattle and daub house walls were often woven from osiers or withies.

Country folk have been familiar with the healing properties of willow for a long time. They made an infusion from the bitter bark as a remedy for colds and fevers, and to treat inflammatory conditions such as rheumatism. In the early nineteenth century modern science isolated the active ingredient responsible, salicylic acid. From this the world's first synthetic drug, acetylsalicylic acid, was developed and marketed as Aspirin.

In addition, tannin, fibre, paper, rope and string can be produced from the wood.

Rewilding

## Dr. Janet Cotter reflects on the recent lectures on rewilding given by by George Monbiot and Alan Watson Featherstone at Exeter and Plymouth

**Five hundred leaflets given away; 20 cheese twists munched; 2 cakes demolished; most of Moor trees staff and trustees in many, many conversations with visitors to the Moor Trees stall; some new members and enthusiastic new volunteers.** That was the effect of having George Monbiot and Alan Watson Featherstone give two double bill lectures on rewilding in January. The lectures took place in both Exeter and Plymouth and were quite the hottest ticket in town, with the lecture televised to overspill rooms at each location.

Many of you will be familiar with George Monbiot's manifesto on rewilding, elegantly expressed in his book, *Feral*, and also with Alan Watson Featherstone, executive director of Trees for Life, our sister organisation restoring the Caledonian forest in Scotland. Both Alan and George wonderfully illustrated the benefits of a wilder landscape to both humans and wildlife (see 'The benefits of More Trees on Dartmoor' on page 5). George Monbiot was wonderfully provocative, outlining the rights and wrongs of the current EU farm subsidy

schemes and current conservation practices (mostly wrongs!), whilst Alan described the long road towards making people realise that trees and woodland will regenerate if grazing is reduced, even in seemingly inhospitable environments such as the Scottish Highlands. More details on the content of the lectures, the discussions and articles on rewilding are available from the links given on page 5.

### REWILDING AND MOOR TREES

Re-wilding is close to the soul of Moor Trees. We want to increase the amount of native woodland in and around Dartmoor. Our long term vision is for a Wild Heart of Dartmoor, a wooded core zone within the National Park. But this does not mean the exclusion of farming or people. We think there is room for both: we want a more wooded landscape, with woodland regenerating in valleys, keeping the hilltops, archaeology and tors free from trees, maintaining the vistas that Dartmoor is famous for. Low density grazing of farm animals could mimic the natural grazing of large herbivores that once existed. Do we want to bring back the wolf? No. Would we like to if the red squirrel could form stable populations in our Wild Heart of Dartmoor? Possibly.

concept of "shifting baselines". Many conservation bodies (the National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts and the National Parks) tend to conserve what is currently there. In Dartmoor's case, this means that the upland habitat is managed, not only for grazing animals, but for birds such as the skylark that thrive in the open moorland. But what about the bird and other animals and plants that could be there if woodland was allowed to regenerate? George explained that, in general, because they are not currently present on the open moorland, they do not feature in conservation efforts. The baseline has shifted to conserve the birds that we see in this 'sheepwrecked' landscape, for example, the skylark, and this includes measures such as swaling (controlled burning of heathland) to prevent woodland returning. He suggested we start thinking about what could be present, rather than maintaining what is present in our impoverished landscape.



George Monbiot (left) and Alan Watson Featherstone (extreme right) at Exeter

See page 7 for some different working examples of rewilding projects

Although many people immediately think 'wolves' when re-wilding is mentioned, it is not about wolves in the UK, and certainly not on Dartmoor. Rewilding is about allowing a more naturally vegetated landscape, and hence ecosystem, to develop. The essence of the talks was that our UK uplands, and especially our National Parks, such as Dartmoor are too grazed by sheep and other animals to let the natural vegetation, such as trees, grow. George calls this 'sheepwrecked'. Alan outlined the work of Trees for Life, showing that trees can, and do grow back when the grazing pressure is reduced or eliminated. For me, one of the interesting messages was the

One of our **Moor Trees** trustees, Adam Griffin, got a special mention in the lectures. He co-founded **Moor Trees** in Devon after being inspired as a leader of volunteers for Trees for Life in Scotland. Adam realised that Dartmoor, like the Scotland Highlands was a largely de-forested landscape and set up **Moor Trees** in 2001 to restore, expand and create native woodlands on and around Dartmoor and the South Hams – and this remains the vision of **Moor Trees** today.

**Moor Trees** had a stall at both events, manned by staff, trustees and volunteers, with several turning up on both nights. On both occasions the stall was a buzz of activity from the moment it was set up until the very last people were leaving. All of us were engaged from the talking to visitors to the stall, offering them cake or cheese twists whilst explaining **Moor Trees** work and vision. I'm pleased to say that this resulted in a several extra volunteers for tree planting on Sundays, and a few extra members. Since the event, the **Moor Trees** office has fielded many enquiries from people wanting to know more about us, to link businesses to their pages and about volunteering opportunities.

Importantly, the many blogs and local press reports from the meeting show that the lectures really got people thinking about the concept of re-wilding and the potential for increased woodlands on Dartmoor. Although opinions are highly varied, and often passionate, most people agree that there is room for more trees on Dartmoor. Thanks to Alan and George for such thoughtful, inspiring and provocative lectures. Thanks to everyone who attended the lectures, especially those who manned the **Moor Trees** stall. The evenings have given **Moor Trees** a great boost that we'll be working to maintain into the future.

#### THE BENEFITS OF MORE TREES ON DARTMOOR

The way people look at England's upland areas, such as Dartmoor, is changing. There is:

- increasing realisation that many areas of the UK, including Dartmoor, would naturally be more wooded.
- less of an economic incentive for high levels of grazing on uplands, allowing some woodland to regenerate.
- need for a multi-purpose uplands including flood prevention and alleviation.

Increasing the amount of woodland on Dartmoor could:

- create new woodland habitats for woodland and woodland edge birds and other wildlife. Dartmoor would naturally host much more woodland
- help alleviate flooding. Trees increase the penetration of water into the ground, resulting in less surface run off. Trees in valleys can help form "leaky dams" that hold back floodwaters, releasing the water over time.
- increase carbon uptake and storage. Trees are approximately 50 % carbon, and woodlands have greater amounts of carbon-rich organic matter in their soils than cropland or grassland.
- create places where people can explore a wilder natural environment than Dartmoor currently offers – re-wilding ourselves, if you like.

#### FIND OUT MORE

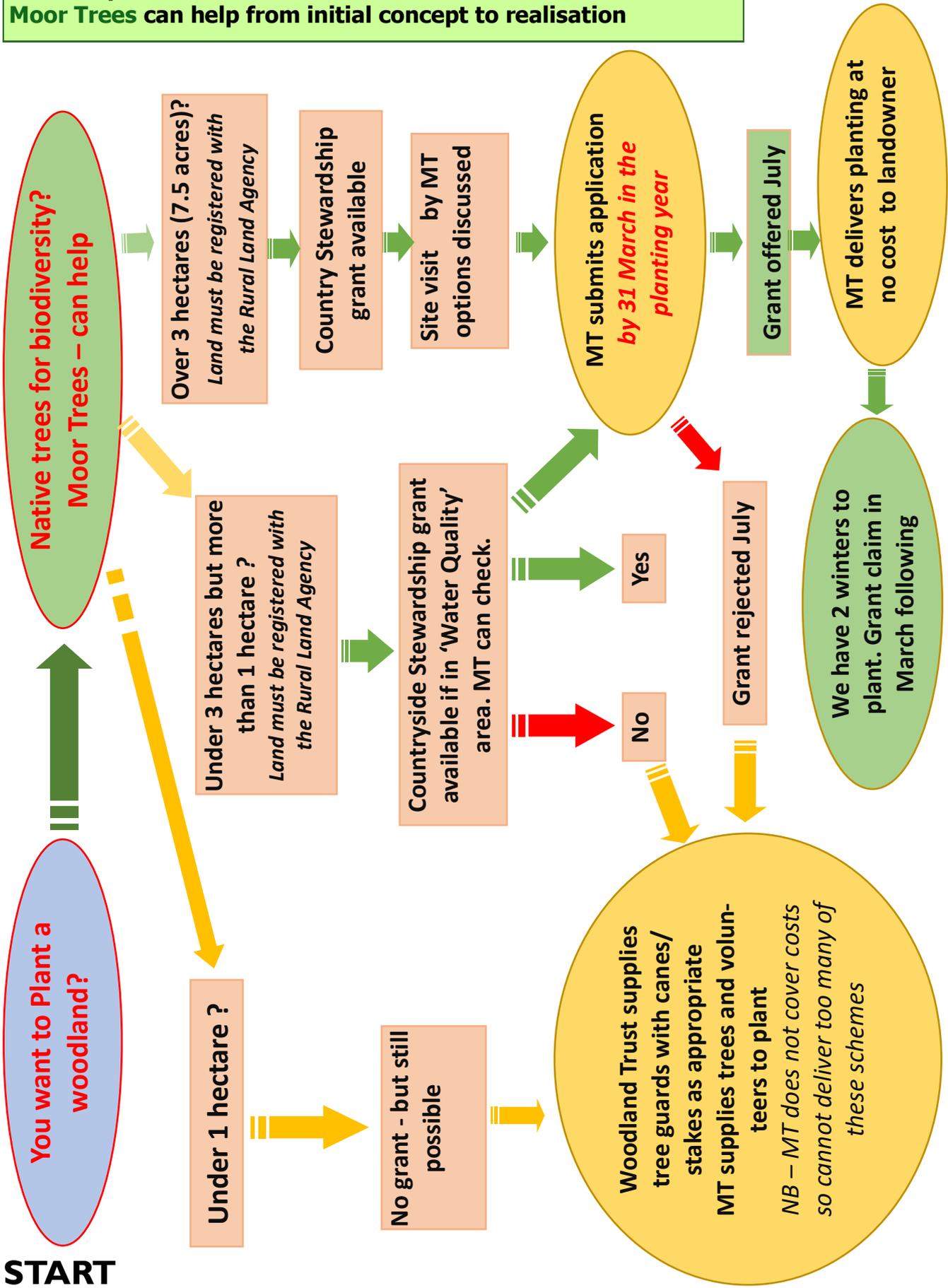
Follow the links to a video of the talks:

[www.networkofwellbeing.org/index.php/blog/post/rewilding-and-wellbeing-george-monbiot-and-alan-watson-featherstone-talks](http://www.networkofwellbeing.org/index.php/blog/post/rewilding-and-wellbeing-george-monbiot-and-alan-watson-featherstone-talks) <http://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/>

Visit the Rewilding Britain website [www.rewildingbritain.org.uk](http://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk) and see Matthew Kelly's excellent article on Rewilding and Dartmoor in the Magazine section

Read George Monbiot's manifesto for Rewilding the World  
Monbiot, G. 2013. Feral: Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding.

Want to plant a woodland? Here **Graham Burton** shows how **Moor Trees** can help from initial concept to realisation



## Rewilding

*Rewilding comes in many different forms. Here are six interesting examples.*

### Carrifran Wildwood, Dumfries and Galloway

Carrifran is a magnificent 1,600-acre ice-carved valley in the Moffat Hills. The Wildwood project was started by a group of friends and their supporters who bought the glen in 2000 and have since planted over 600,000 native trees. Their aim is to restore an extensive tract of wild woodland that evokes the landscape of 6,000 years ago, eventually removing all human intervention to allow a truly wild ecosystem to develop. Find out more about Carrifran Wildwood at [www.carrifran.org.uk/](http://www.carrifran.org.uk/).

### Pumlumon Project, Welsh Uplands

Established in 2007, the Pumlumon Project aims to re-establish a sustainable upland habitat across 40,000 hectares of the Cambrian Mountains. By engaging with farmers and landowners across the area, they have been able to complete projects that benefit not only the biodiversity of the area, but also the socioeconomic aspects of the local communities. They have worked to change the grazing patterns of sheep and cattle herds to minimise ecological damage and maximise yield for the farmers, planted native trees to create important habitat and prevent flooding and developed green tourism. Find out what else the Pumlumon Project has been doing at [www.montwt.co.uk/what-we-do/living-landscapes/pumlumon-project](http://www.montwt.co.uk/what-we-do/living-landscapes/pumlumon-project)

### Vincent Wildlife Pine Marten Recovery Project, Mid Wales



Founded in 1975, The Vincent Wildlife Trust focuses their conservation and research efforts on mammals, primarily bats and mustelids. Over the next two years they will be releasing pine martens brought down from Scotland into 20 woodland sites across mid Wales. The first of these reintroductions has already happened this autumn, with 20 animals being released. This is an exciting example of restoring a species to its native habitat after an unnatural decline due to woodland clearances and predator control by the game industry. Find out more about the project at [www.pine-marten-recovery-project.org.uk/](http://www.pine-marten-recovery-project.org.uk/).

### Wild Ennerdale, Cumbria

A partnership between the Forestry Commission, National Trust and United Utilities, Wild Ennerdale was established in 2002. A remote valley on the western edge of the Lake District National Park, Ennerdale displays dramatic ridges and high summits as well as a host of diverse flora and fauna. The vision of the partnership is to create a wild valley where natural processes determine how the landscape and ecology of the area is shaped and developed. Forestry tracks have been allowed to grow over, and the river has been left to find its own way. As the valley develops, it is hoped that there will be a series of naturally evolving and interacting ecosystems that are far more robust in the face of stresses such as climate change. Find out more about the project here: [www.wildennerdale.co.uk/](http://www.wildennerdale.co.uk/)

### Wild Nephin, North County Mayo



Considered what will be Ireland's first wilderness, 8,000 hectares has been set aside in the Nephin Beg Range for a dramatic rewilding project, with the vision that the landscape will be entirely shaped by natural processes and not human hands. Equally, at the heart of the project is the expectation that recreation will be welcomed, with the careful development of trails so that backpackers can explore this new and exciting wilderness. The project site will be divided into three core areas: Primitive; Semi Primitive; and Developed Natural. Find out more about Wild Nephin at [www.self-willed-land.org.uk/articles/wild\\_nephin\\_project.pdf](http://www.self-willed-land.org.uk/articles/wild_nephin_project.pdf).

### Nigg Bay Managed Realignment Scheme, Cromarty Firth

This ambitious coastal realignment scheme involved breaching sea walls to flood a 25-hectare area of farmland in 2003. Nigg Bay, owned and managed by the RSPB, has since become a haven for water birds incorporating areas of mudflat, saltmarsh and wet grassland. Some species began returning just months after the breach, and it is now thought there are 25 additional species of bird that have taken up residence along the firth, including the rare scaup duck and bar-tailed godwit. Salt marsh is a nationally endangered habitat, so the rewilding of this area is a huge helping hand to the 2,000 or so expected avian visitors to the area. Find out more at: [www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/seenature/reserves/guide/n/niggbay/about.aspx](http://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/seenature/reserves/guide/n/niggbay/about.aspx)

These examples are taken from an article on the Trees for Life website:

[www.treesforlife.org.uk/blogs/article/10-exciting-rewilding-projects-happening-in-the-uk/](http://www.treesforlife.org.uk/blogs/article/10-exciting-rewilding-projects-happening-in-the-uk/)

With grateful thanks to **Jess Greaves**, the author and **Trees for Life** for their permission to use them.

They paved paradise  
And put up a parking lot  
They took all the trees  
Put 'em in a tree museum  
And they charged the people  
A dollar and a half just to see 'em  
Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got  
'Til it's gone...

~Joni Mitchell, from "Big Yellow Taxi"

## Moor Trees

Old School Centre  
Totnes Road  
South Brent  
Devon  
TQ10 9BP

PHONE:  
0845 456 9803

E-MAIL:  
[info@moortrees.org](mailto:info@moortrees.org)

Visit our website  
at  
[www.moortrees.org](http://www.moortrees.org)

Registered charity number  
1081142

We are also on  
[Facebook](#)

## About Moor Trees

### Our staff:

Graham Burton	Director
Brian Daniel	Project Officer
Jon Brock	Tree & Volunteer Officer
Jon Covey	Broadley Nursery Officer
Chris Curry	Membership Officer
Paul Harrison	Newsletter Editor

### Our trustees:

Janet Cotter (chair)	Paul Harrison
Guy Gilmore (secretary & Treasurer)	Matt Underwood
Jon Brock	Adam Griffin
Jill Broom	Jon Covey

### Our patrons:

Sir Jonathon Porritt  
Stephan Harding (Schumacher college)  
Satish Kumar (*Resurgence* magazine and Schumacher College)  
Pen Hadow (Polar explorer)  
Alan Watson Featherstone (Trees for Life)

Edited by Paul Harrison

Printed on paper from FSC mixed sources by the print workshop at HMP Dartmoor

