



Ecological  
Restoration  
Fund

The Ecological Restoration Fund  
Activity Report  
2022–24



# A note from our Founder & Chair

Amidst the accelerating decline of species, widespread habitat loss, and record-breaking global warming, coupled with other critical challenges, the resilience of our planet faces unprecedented strain. Addressing the biodiversity and climate crisis is key to safeguarding the planet upon which we all depend, and we must all play our part. At the Ecological Restoration Fund, we are committed to supporting civil society organisations to conserve, protect, and regenerate nature. As a funder, our role is to listen to our partners and support their needs. In our first two years of activity, we have developed more than 26 partnerships with locally rooted, impact-driven nature conservation organisations around the world. We are only at the beginning of our journey, but we can clearly see that positive change is happening. We are therefore delighted to introduce you to our partners and invite you to explore our work during 2022–2024.

**Dan Hotz**  
Founder & Chair





# Why we are here

**Our vision is of a vibrant, healthy planet with thriving ecosystems, where communities develop in harmony with nature. We are dedicated to supporting remarkable organisations that protect areas of high biodiversity value, rejuvenate degraded land and seascapes, and ensure good environmental governance. We aim to establish nature's essential interconnections while fostering associated cultural, social and economic opportunities for the communities inhabiting those land and seascapes.**

## **Our work so far**

We have had tremendous growth at the Ecological Restoration Fund (ERF) since our inception in 2022, having, to date, granted £46.35 million to 47 organisations in 29 countries around the world. Their transformative projects address pressing conservation needs worldwide and ensure long-term benefits for nature, indigenous peoples and local communities. We extend our appreciation to all our partners for their steadfast commitment to environmental advocacy and litigation, ecosystem protection and species reintroductions, as well as for their efforts in rewilding landscapes and seascapes. Their achievements inspire us and provide us with much-needed hope for a greener, fairer, more sustainable future.

ERF is governed by its Board of Trustees which provides oversight to the ERF team, which currently consists of Lenke Bálint (Executive Director), James Byrne (Programme Director), Mariela Dellagiovanna (Grants Officer) and Olivia Eckersley (Communications Officer). We are grateful for the expertise of our advisor Emma McIntosh, who has been supporting us since 2023.





# Our partners around the world





# Current partners

2023 & 2024

Organisation	Location	Focus	Grant size	Years
<b>Rewilding Chile</b>	Chile	Rewilding, species reintroductions, and marine protection and restoration	£11.25 m	3
<b>Rewilding Europe</b>	Europe	Rewilding and species reintroductions	£9 m	3
<b>Wildlife Trust</b>	UK	Rewilding, species reintroductions, and marine restoration	£6 m	3
<b>Birdlife International / RSPB</b>	Africa and Europe	Restoration along the East Atlantic Flyway bird migration route	£3 m	3
<b>World Land Trust</b>	Africa and South America	Protecting and conserving threatened forests	£1.5 m	3
<b>Hutan</b>	Malaysian Borneo	Rainforest restoration with a focus on orangutans	£1.5 m	3
<b>Pole Pole</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	Rainforest restoration with a focus on gorillas	£300,000	3
<b>Lifescape</b>	UK	Protection and reintroduction of Eurasian lynx and White-tailed eagle	£250,000	2



# Current partners

2023 & 2024

Organisation	Location	Focus	Grant size	Years
<b>Eagle Reintroduction Wales / Durrell Conservation Trust</b>	UK	Protection and reintroduction of White-tailed eagles	£100,000	3
<b>Environmental Law Foundation</b>	UK	Policy and legislation, with a focus on the Rights of Rivers	£150,000	3
<b>Beaver Trust</b>	UK	Protection and reintroduction of beavers	£150,000	3
<b>ClientEarth</b>	Europe	Policy and legislation in Europe	£1.5 m	3
<b>Oceans 5</b>	Global	Marine protection and restoration	£4.8 m	3
<b>European Environmental Bureau</b>	Europe	Policy and legislation, with a focus on wolves	£600,000	2
<b>River Action</b>	UK	Freshwater policy and legislation	£200,000	2
<b>Coast Funds</b>	Canada	Marine protection and restoration	£5.8 m	3



# Previous partners

2022

Organisation	Location	Focus	Grant size	Years
Blue Marine Foundation	Cyprus	Marine protection and restoration	£25,000	1
Association Biom	Croatia	Freshwater restoration	£25,000	1
Bulgaria Biodiversity Network	Bulgaria	Freshwater restoration, with a focus on peatlands	£25,000	1
Polish Society for the Protection of Birds	Poland	Freshwater restoration, with a focus on peatlands	£25,000	1
BirdLife Sverige	Sweden	Freshwater restoration	£25,000	1
Cheshire Wildlife Trust	UK	Protection and reintroduction of beavers	£25,000	1
Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds	Portugal	Protection and conservation of Bonelli eagles	£25,000	1
Wildfowl and Wetland Trust	UK	Rewilding	£25,000	1
Zoological Society of London	UK / Europe	Monitoring	£25,000	1
Rewilding Portugal	Portugal	Rewilding	£25,000	1



# Litigation

## Partner highlights

Litigation work uses legal actions to protect biodiversity and enforce environmental laws. This includes challenging environmentally harmful activities in court and working to hold governments and corporations accountable to their environmental responsibilities.





## The Environmental Law Foundation

In a landmark judgement in 2024, the UK Supreme Court ruled against a major UK water company after the Manchester Ship Canal was routinely and illegally polluted with untreated sewage. The Environmental Law Foundation, with the support of the Good Law Project, successfully intervened in the case, and demonstrated the widespread impact of sewage pollution on communities across the UK. This significant victory sets a crucial legal precedent and has opened the door for stronger legal action against polluting water companies in the UK, including private lawsuits as well as tougher action and fines from regulators.



## ClientEarth

In 2023 and 2024, ClientEarth secured landmark victories in European environmental and biodiversity protection. In partnership with the Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli, ClientEarth successfully challenged local authorities for failing to protect Lake Vico, a biodiversity rich protected area in Central Italy, from intensive farming. The continuous build-up of dangerous amounts of fertilisers had created toxic conditions in the lake, harming wildlife and making the main source of drinking water for local communities undrinkable. The Italian Council of State ruling, which cannot be appealed, compels the Lazio region to take action to address the damage caused by fertilisers and pesticides and to effectively protect the lake's sensitive wildlife habitats. The case highlights how the strategic use of law can drive systemic environmental change to protect fragile ecosystems and human health.



# Advocacy

## Partner highlights

Policy advocacy is used to protect biodiversity and promote sustainable practices, by influencing legislation and regulatory policies, and working to hold governments and corporations accountable to their environmental responsibilities.





## ClientEarth and European Environmental Bureau

After an historic campaign, the European Parliament has formally adopted the EU Nature Restoration Law, which requires European Union member states to develop plans to restore 20% of Europe's land and sea by 2030. Responding to the demands of over a million citizens, alongside businesses, scientists, and 200 NGOs, the ground breaking legislation is set to reverse the widespread degradation of nature across the continent. Instrumental in the campaign to pass the law were our partners ClientEarth and the European Environmental Bureau as part of the Restore Nature coalition, whose ongoing advocacy played a key role in shaping this landmark outcome.

As Europe faces increasing climate change-related threats from floods, droughts, and wildfires, the law is a powerful tool that can significantly improve and restore the state of Europe's degraded ecosystems, ensuring a safer, more resilient future for people and nature.





# Species Reintroductions

## Partner highlights

Reintroductions involves bringing back species, particularly keystone species or apex predators, that can reshape and restore ecological balance in various ecosystems.





## Beaver Trust

The Beaver Trust has made significant progress towards ecosystem restoration in the UK by spearheading the release of beavers at 21 sites over the past year. Two releases stand out for their scale and impact. In October 2023, marking a historic moment for urban conservation, the first-ever community-led beaver reintroduction in London took place. The beaver enclosure, which is open to the public, offers a unique opportunity for Londoners to experience these remarkable animals and witness their contribution to nature.

Meanwhile, in the Cairngorms, Scotland, the Beaver Trust played a pivotal role in reintroducing beaver families to five sites within the upper Spey river catchment where they had been absent for 400 years. The Beaver Trust also helped secure a 5 year licence from NatureScot for further releases over the coming years, ensuring the long-term establishment of a thriving beaver population.



## Rewilding Europe

European bison (or wisent) disappeared from Romania over 200 years ago. However, since 2013, ERF partners Rewilding Europe, Rewilding Romania and their local partners have been working together to reintroduce this iconic species back to the Southern Carpathians rewilding landscape. Since 2014, over 110 bison have been translocated to the Țarcu Mountains, with the current population estimated at 180, including new calves born in the wild. This thriving population marks a major success in Romanian conservation, which is also part of a larger rewilding initiative in Europe, with the partnership working together to create one of the largest contiguous areas of wild nature in Europe. Extending across 3 million hectares, this would encompass various protected areas and give the bison space to take their place in a landscape governed by natural processes. The partnership will also work to ensure that the growing European bison population and the people who live in the landscape can live alongside each other in a balanced and positive way. A strong emphasis is placed on ensuring local communities benefit economically from the return of this species, through the area's burgeoning nature-based economy.



# Protection, Restoration and Rewilding

## Partner highlights

**Protection** involves the establishment and maintenance of protected areas to prevent further degradation. This can include creating national parks, nature reserves, and enforcing legal protections to safeguard existing ecosystems from human impact.

**Restoration** is primarily concerned with the active repair of degraded ecosystems, focusing on restoring habitats, landscapes, and natural systems to a state of health and functionality. This often involves human-led interventions such as planting trees, rebuilding wetlands, or cleaning up polluted areas.

**Rewilding** focuses on restoring natural processes and ecological dynamics by allowing nature to take its course with minimal human intervention.





## Rewilding Chile

Rewilding Chile has successfully acquired a 34,000-hectare property in the Cape Froward, building and advancing the vision of creating over 8 million hectares of contiguous protected land. The area, which includes important peatland and old-growth subantarctic forest, forms a critical addition to conservation efforts in the region and is part of Rewilding Chile's unique model of conservation. The approach involves purchasing large tracts of land, securing matching commitments from the state, and then donating the land to the government. The state, in turn, designates the land as a national park and commits to managing it in perpetuity. This model not only ensures long-term protection of critical ecosystems but also helps expand the country's network of protected areas, reinforcing Chile's national commitment to biodiversity conservation.



## Hutan

Hutan, which is the Malay word for “forest” is a grassroots organisation and Earthshot Prize finalist. Their name reflects their mission to protect the forest ecosystems and wildlife of Borneo while working closely with local communities. The Malaysian Borneo rainforests are one of the world's most important biodiversity hotspots, home to an array of unique and endangered species such as the Asian pygmy elephant, sun bear, proboscis monkey and sunda pangolin. However, human activities have broken up large swathes of the natural forest into fragments which has led to human-wildlife conflicts with some of the region's iconic wildlife at risk of extinction.

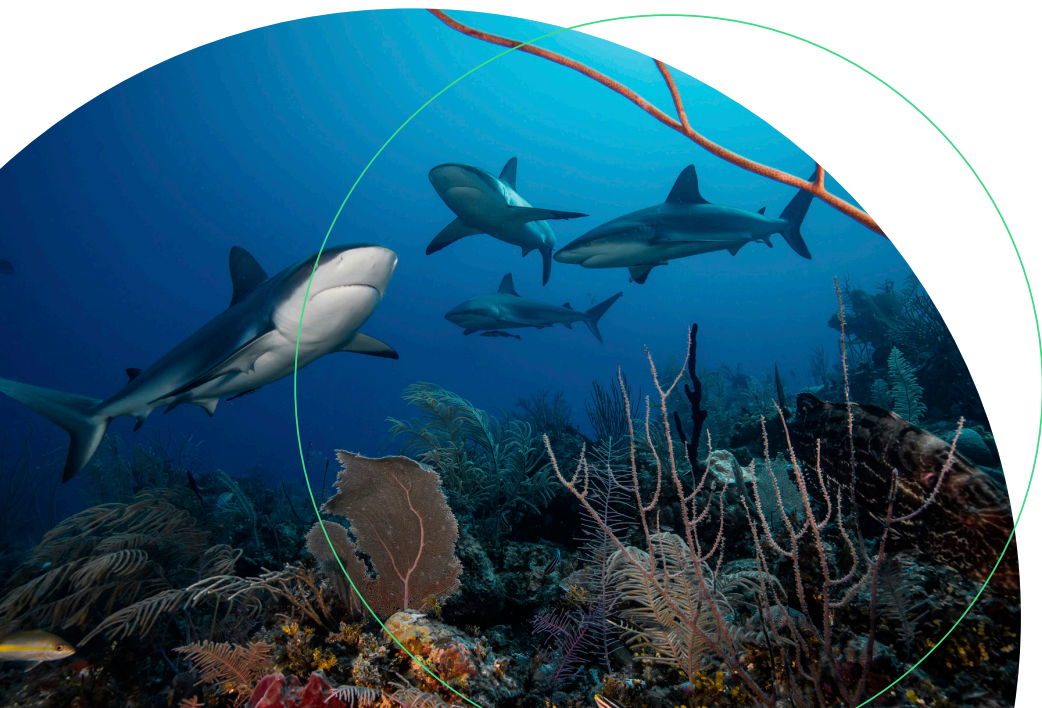
Hutan has achieved significant milestones including acquiring five key forested plots, and restoring swathes of former oil palm plantations by planting native trees. Their restoration initiative, led by an all-indigenous women's team from the local Sungai community, strengthens ecological connections, supports biodiversity, and provides vital employment and training opportunities for local communities. Hutan's restoration efforts aim to improve coexistence between wildlife and local communities and ensure the safe movement of endangered species.



## Oceans 5

Oceans 5 is a consortium of international funders dedicated to establishing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), combatting overfishing, and constraining offshore oil and gas development. Oceans 5 works with an extensive network of partners, from grassroots organisations to international NGOs. It currently manages \$104 million in 138 active grants in almost 100 countries and regions.

Some notable successes funded by Oceans 5 are through its grantee the Shark Conservation Fund (SCF), whose strategic campaigns have significantly curtailed the fishing and trade of sharks and rays in countries including Senegal, Oman, Yemen, Ecuador, Madagascar, and Tanzania. SCF has also expanded MPA coverage in Bangladesh, Guatemala, and the Philippines, with its ongoing work expected to add 19 new protected areas for sharks and rays, covering 42,000 km<sup>2</sup>.



Another landmark achievement comes from Pew-Bertarelli Ocean Legacy, an Oceans 5 grantee which helped secure the designation of new 'No Take Zones' in South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. These zones safeguard 166,000 km<sup>2</sup> of crucial marine habitat—an area eight times the size of Wales—bringing the total protected area to 449,000 km<sup>2</sup>, shielding these biodiverse waters from fishing activities. South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands lie southeast of the Falkland Islands and northeast of the Antarctic Peninsula, and are home to one of the most biologically rich ecosystems in the Southern Ocean. The health of the marine life here is globally significant, playing a key role in regulating climate by acting as a carbon sink, supporting migratory species, and maintaining the balance of marine ecosystems.



## Coast Funds

In a bold move to protect one of the world's most productive cold-water ecosystems, the governments of Canada, British Columbia, and a coalition of philanthropic funders, including ERF, have committed £200 million to safeguard the future of the Great Bear Sea. Spanning over 10 million hectares (or the size of Ireland), this remarkable marine and coastal region, stretching from the northern reaches of Vancouver Island along the British Columbia coast to the Alaskan border, the Great Bear Sea is home to a diverse array of habitats and species critical to the survival of both wildlife and local communities. Its vast marine environments – from deep fjords and coral beds to kelp forests and open ocean – sustain vital connections between fish, seabirds, whales, and coastal First Nations communities who have relied on its abundance for generations. However, the health of these waters is under growing threat from overfishing, increased shipping traffic, and climate change.

In response, 17 participating First Nations with support from Coast Funds, seek to create a resilient future for the region by establishing and co-managing a groundbreaking network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The initiative will add 15,000 km<sup>2</sup> of new MPAs to the existing 18,800 km<sup>2</sup>. This will link the areas to form a connected system that spans 30 percent of the Great Bear Sea, protects sensitive ecosystems, restores populations of marine species, and ensures the sustainability of coastal communities.







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