



# Rewilding Challenge



## WHAT WE'D LIKE YOU TO DO

- Rewilding is all about restoring ecosystems to as natural a state as possible and allowing nature to drive the changes. This should be at the heart of what you do for this challenge.
- Key rewilding steps and ideas are listed in the good ideas section below. The resources section provides links to further information and advice.
- Choose an area(s) you want to rewild. If possible, leave it for a while (e.g. a year) to see what happens when you let nature take a lead.
- Do something **NEW** that will make a significant positive impact for wildlife.
- The scope of the work should reflect the resources you have and the location and size of your park.
- For example, a large park might set aside a large area of land for rewilding; a small park might fence off a smaller area of woodland or streambank. A residential park might encourage residents to get involved in any management activities.

## WHY TAKE THE CHALLENGE?

Rewilding represents a serious challenge for any park and it is unlikely that any park will be able to do rewilding in its purest sense, e.g. reintroducing apex predators such as wolves! However, incorporating the main idea of rewilding – letting nature take a lead – into the management of your park should help to enhance its value for wildlife by increasing the complexity of its habitats and providing more spaces for nature to flourish. This will also make the park richer and more interesting for guests.

When you start and complete a challenge(s), you'll get a logo(s) to display to let everyone know what you are doing and what you have achieved.

## 1. DECIDE WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO

- Decide which areas of your park to work on.
- Research the topic.
- Reach out to local conservation bodies for advice, help and partnership.
- Use the good ideas and resources below as a start.
- Once you've decided to take up this challenge, let us know using the [online form](#). You'll get a logo to show that you've started the challenge.

## 2. MAKE A PLAN

- Once you've decided what you're going to do, put together a long-term plan with actions and goals - time-tabled if possible. You can use the wildlife challenge plan template [here](#).
- Take photos of the area as a visual record of your 'starting point'. If possible, do a biodiversity survey to set yourself a benchmark.
- Be ambitious!
- We would be delighted to receive a copy of your [plan](#), along with some photos so we know what you're working on. Upload your plan and photos [here](#).
- Putting a [plan](#) together will help us know whether the scope of what you've got planned is 'enough' to win the challenge.



### 3. PUT YOUR PLAN INTO ACTION

- Put someone with the necessary skills in charge of the job and give them the time and resources they need to get on with it.
- If you can, get everyone involved by letting them know what you're up to and by encouraging them to help you.
- Use your challenge to educate everyone about the importance and potential of rewilding (e.g. using signage and educational activities). Make the challenge part of what your park is 'all about'.

### 4. REPORT ON YOUR SUCCESS

- When you've reached your project goal or a first major milestone let us know – send us details of what you've achieved and upload your report and photos of the results [here](#).
- If you are due an advisory visit, show your advisor what you've achieved.

### 5. WINNING THE CHALLENGE

- Once we've received details of what you've done, we'll review the information.
- If you have done enough you'll win the challenge and receive a "We've completed the *Rewilding Challenge*" logo to display.
- If not, we'll let you know what you still need to do.



# GOOD IDEAS FOR YOUR PLAN

- If possible, do a **biodiversity survey** so that you have a baseline from which to work. Repeat the survey at regular intervals to monitor progress. Your local Wildlife Trust should be able to help.
- Get advice on how best to proceed – you might reach out to your local Wildlife Trust for this. You'll achieve so much more by working together with neighbouring landowners and conservation agencies. Look to see if there are any local or regional re-wilding organisations that you can join up with.
- Cut back on cutting back. Mow less often and let the grass grow long in some areas. Take part in the **No Mow May** initiative run by Plantlife. Don't tidy up too much. Embrace decay and leave fallen trees and branches to rot. Piles of leaves, logs and rocks all provide vital habitats.
- Leave a wild patch or patches. Species such as brambles, nettles, honeysuckle, ivy and wild rose form dense thickets that offer a home for all sorts of creatures.
- Stop using chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides.
- Choose and nurture plants that provide year-round nectar, pollen, seeds and berries (including native trees and hedge plants).
- Mimic natural processes of disruption, regrowth and decay. This can be done by the judicious use of tools and planting to create as complex and natural a habitat as possible. Make these interventions random and vary their intensity to reflect what happens in the wild.
- Look at how you might use grazing animals (e.g. old breeds of domesticated cattle, pigs and ponies) to enhance the biodiversity and ecological richness of your land (this might involve rotational grazing and restricting grazing to allow natural regeneration).
- Encourage the return of native species. You might be able to reintroduce some species, such as beavers, water voles and red squirrels. Ensure you work with experts on this kind of work, as it is easy to do more harm than good.
- Link up your land with its surroundings and work in partnership with neighbouring landowners and nature conservation bodies to create rewilding corridors along which nature can move.
- Make sure that nature can move into and through your park. Cut small holes at the bottom of fences or create wildlife tunnels.
- If your park is part of a farm, embrace regenerative agriculture, which promotes topsoil regeneration, biodiversity enhancements, improvements to the water cycle and enhancing ecosystems.
- Create natural habitat features, such as scrapes (shallow ponds which hold rain seasonally but stay muddy for most of the year).
- Reverse any land management steps that stop nature taking its course (e.g. re-wet drained areas if appropriate).
- Let any rivers or streams 'run free', re-establish wet and boggy areas and look into the potential of reintroducing keystone species such as beavers.

- Look at any meadow restoration, wetland creation or woodland regeneration you are doing through a rewilding ‘lens’. For example:
  - a. When rewilding grassland, take things up a notch, create new banks, humps and hollows to provide microclimates for different communities of plants on different aspects of the slopes.
  - b. When creating a pond make it wild with open edges and varying depths, and put dead branches in the water to create new habitat (like a beaver) and puddle the margins (like a water buffalo).
  - c. Traditional woodland management, such as coppicing, can mimic natural processes and disturbance. Aim to create a dynamic woodland ecosystem that can support an abundance of wildlife.
- Scrub is an important type of habitat, used by many species. Scrub growth can be achieved through natural regeneration, planting, or simply stopping cultivation or grazing.
- Remember to control invasive species.
- Remember that re-wilding doesn’t just mean that you should be totally passive. As you can see from the points above there are lots of pro-active steps you can take to help nature lead the way.
- Measure and monitor the impact of your work – you might work with your local Wildlife Trust to do this.



## ONLINE RESOURCES

The [Scottish Rewilding Alliance](#) is a collaboration between like-minded organisations who share a mission to enable rewilding at a scale new to Scotland. The group’s website is a great source of inspiration and news and includes a number of inspirational case studies.

[Rewilding Britain](#) is an organisation that wants to see a mosaic of species-rich habitats restored and connected across at least 30% of Britain’s land and sea by 2030. Its website is a mine of information, including a ‘12 steps to rewilding’ plan and details of rewilding projects across the country.

[Knepp](#) is a trailblazing 3,500-acre rewilding project that has changed the way we think about nature and how we can heal our planet.