

## ZSL SCIENCE AND CONSERVATION EVENT

# What's next for rewilding?



**Tuesday 13 October 2020**  
**6:00pm – 7:30pm UK Time (BST)**

Online event livestreamed to [zsl.org/IOZYouTube](https://zsl.org/IOZYouTube)  
There is no charge for this event, and no need to register in advance

## AGENDA

Chaired by Dr Nathalie Pettorelli, Institute of Zoology, ZSL

---

Receive the following communications

**Henrike Schulte to Bühne, Institute of Zoology, ZSL and Imperial College London**  
*The policy consequences of defining rewilding*

**Paul Jepson, Ecosulis Ltd.**  
*Aligning rewilding and natural capital to create ambitious nature recovery policy*

**William Farren, Institute of Zoology, ZSL and University of Reading**  
*Megafauna and Rewilding: Importance, Practicalities and Potential*

# ABSTRACTS

## **The policy consequences of defining rewilding**

*Henrike Schulte to Bühne, Institute of Zoology, ZSL and Imperial College London*

Since it was first proposed about 30 years ago, the perceived merits and risks of rewilding have been intensely debated among conservation scientists and practitioners, as well as the wider public. In most versions of rewilding, the aim is to revive the functioning of an entire ecosystem, and to ensure it is self-sustaining, but the ways by which this is achieved differ widely. A key point of contention is the role that introduced species, especially predators, play in rewilding, and the effects rewilding will have on the livelihoods of local communities. Since there is no consensus about what rewilding is, it is unclear how best to take advantage of its potential benefits for nature and people and address any potential risks. In this talk, I will show that rewilding means different things to different people because there is no agreement about what “wild” means. There are three main issues in this debate: 1) The role of people in wild nature – are they mutually exclusive, or can people and wild nature co-exist and interact? 2) Size – can wild nature exist in small spaces? 3) What aspects of “wild” nature do we value – its pristineness, or its ability to adapt to new circumstances? Depending on how we define “wild”, rewilding will pose different challenges to policy and lawmakers. Working towards a scientific and political consensus on rewilding in the UK is an urgent challenge, as Brexit has created the opportunity to try new strategies to achieve national conservation goals, and rewilding could become a key part of the UK’s conservation toolbox. I hope to contribute to this process by clarifying some of the clashes of values and norms that need to be resolved to find the necessary consensus.

**Henrike Schulte to Bühne** is a final year PhD student at the Institute of Zoology at ZSL and Imperial College London. She studies how interactions between climate change and land use change shape biodiversity, using satellite data to look at long-term changes in ecosystems. She is interested in the potential of rewilding as a conservation tool, and recently led a review on the diversity of values among rewilding scientists and practitioners.

---

## **Aligning rewilding and natural capital to create ambitious nature recovery policy**

*Paul Jepson, Ecosulis Ltd.*

We are at the beginning of the UN decade of ecosystem restoration. Brexit and new environmental and agricultural bills guided by the political ambition ‘to leave nature in a better place than we found it’ represent a window of opportunity to address the climate and nature emergency in new and innovative ways. In this talk, I will argue that rewilding represents a new body of theory, insight and practice that signifies an opportunity for our generation to achieve something amazing. However, I will describe how the space for policy innovation is already occupied by the natural capital approach and, whilst this has merit, its application in policy is locking in outmoded concepts of habitat rooted in Victorian natural history traditions and 1970s community ecology. I will suggest that a crucial next step for rewilding is to forge an alignment with natural capital and I will propose the natural asset approach as an effective means to do so. Creating new policy institutions to enable investments in new

'rewilded' natural assets would generate new value for nature, society and economy and help ensure that, ten years on, we don't look back at opportunities missed.

**Paul Jepson** is Nature Recovery Lead with Ecosulis Ltd where he is developing new services at the intersection of rewilding, technology and finance. He is a former director of Oxford University's MSc/MPhil in Biodiversity, Conservation & Management and the Birdlife International Indonesia programme. He is an expert in conservation governance and co-founded the field of conservation Culturomics. He has published collections of academic articles on wildlife trade, protected area and rewilding policy and on extinction and flagship species theory. He is a former member of Rewilding Europe's supervisory and his latest book "Rewilding: the radical new science of ecological recovery" has received positive reviews in the Financial Times and elsewhere.

---

### **Megafauna and Rewilding: Importance, Practicalities and Potential**

*William Farren, Institute of Zoology, ZSL and University of Reading*

The management and use of the largest animals are always a source of contention in almost every aspect of human-wildlife interaction, both locally and internationally. The ever-growing interest in rewilding, which aims to reorganise ecological processes towards a preferable ecosystem trajectory, has caused some old controversies to be rehashed. At the heart of this discourse there are two opposing, yet established, trends to consider: 1) The larger an animal is, the more likely it is to hold a significant ecological role within its habitat, and 2) The larger an animal is, the more likely it is to attract or generate human-wildlife conflict. Simply put, megafauna which are among the most potentially useful agents of rewilding, are also the most difficult to manage.

Despite this, rewilders in the UK and abroad have found success in rewilding efforts, not by reintegration of these roles, but rather by finding substitutions. For example, at the Knepp Wildland project, indigenous extinct browsers that would contribute to habitat heterogeneity and nutrient transportation are now having their roles emulated by their modern-day cousins. This method may not completely assuage the aforementioned arguments, but it does circumvent a lot of problems in policy and practice, yet because of this success we must also ask another question: 'If we can just use substitutes, do we really need megafauna?'

In this talk I will discuss the dynamics of the functional role that megafauna inhabits, and what that means for rewilding. I will consider the practicalities and challenges involved for rewilding proponents who wish to make use of megafauna. Finally, I will examine potential future rewilding scenarios for developed countries such as the UK, who have no 'true' megafauna.

**William Farren** is a second-year PhD student, who is examining the ecological consequences of megaherbivore loss from dryland rivers in Namibia. He is a self-described 'rewilding fan', who has spent a lot of time pondering megafauna functional roles, both inside and outside the context of rewilding.

---

## Format of Live Events

- This interactive online event will be livestreamed to our YouTube channel here: [zsl.org/IOZYouTube](https://zsl.org/IOZYouTube). A direct link to the livestream will also be shared on the event web page before the event.
- Before attending this event, please read our Code of Conduct found [here](#).
- This event will run from 6:00pm – 7:30pm, and will be recorded and available to watch afterwards on our YouTube channel.
- Each event will comprise of 3 – 4 presentations from experts in the topic, similar to our previous events.
- There will be opportunities for the audience to submit questions during the event (this process will be explained on the night), to be answered live after each presentation. If you wish to submit a question to a speaker prior to the event, please send it to [scientific.events@zsl.org](mailto:scientific.events@zsl.org). Please be aware we may not be able to answer all questions.
- There is no charge for this event, and no need to register in advance.

---

## Join us at our next online event

### **Habitat loss and human health – understanding the links between ecosystem degradation and infectious disease outbreaks**

10 November 2020, 6:00pm – 7:30pm

As people around the world increasingly disturb natural habitats and convert them to agricultural and urban areas, the way that local communities interact with the animal species around them also changes. At this event, experts will examine the latest research in this field, and show the need to carefully manage future landscape change across the world, to protect biodiversity, and by doing so potentially limit human exposure to dangerous pathogens.



---

## ZSL Wild Science Podcast

Listen to our award winning **ZSL Wild Science podcast** episodes produced by Dr Monni Bohm and Eleanor Darbey here... [www.zsl.org/zsl-wild-science-podcast](http://www.zsl.org/zsl-wild-science-podcast).

---

## Further Information

- Please contact the Scientific Events Coordinator, Eleanor Darbey ([eleanor.darbey@zsl.org](mailto:eleanor.darbey@zsl.org)), if you have any queries about our Science and Conservation events or podcasts.
- For press enquiries, please contact the ZSL Press Office: [press.office@zsl.org](mailto:press.office@zsl.org).
- For more information about the ZSL Fellowship, please visit: [www.zsl.org/membership/zsl-fellowship](http://www.zsl.org/membership/zsl-fellowship).
- To receive email updates about forthcoming ZSL Science and Conservation Events, please visit: [www.zsl.org/science/whats-on/science-and-conservation-events-email-updates](http://www.zsl.org/science/whats-on/science-and-conservation-events-email-updates)
- Read the latest blog posts from our scientists and conservationists here: [www.zsl.org/blogs/science](http://www.zsl.org/blogs/science).
- Follow us on Twitter [@ZSLScience](https://twitter.com/ZSLScience) to hear about new publications from our researchers, upcoming events and podcast episode releases.