



This note outlines work carried out by the IUCN CEM Rewilding Thematic Group to develop an internationally recognised definition and establish a set of universal guidelines for rewilding, and is based in part on journal papers currently under review with *Conservation Biology* and *British Wildlife*, alongside a forthcoming IUCN Briefing Note. Using a combination of research and consultation activities, we established, together with a growing global community of rewilding experts, a unified set of guiding principles for rewilding. These have so far been adopted by the Natural Capital Laboratory in the UK and were used to help develop principles in the *Global Charter for Rewilding Earth* (Wilderness Foundation, 2020). We provide more information regarding the process used to develop the principles in our forthcoming papers. We have also developed a new definition of rewilding based on a synthesis of definitions from a systematic literature review with those recorded from a survey of rewilding pioneers, together with the deliberations of participants who attended RTG workshops over 2018 - 2019. Here rewilding is defined as:

the process of rebuilding, following major human disturbance, a natural ecosystem by restoring natural processes and the complete or near complete food-web at all trophic levels as a self-sustaining and resilient ecosystem using biota that would have been present had the disturbance not occurred. This will involve a paradigm shift in the relationship between humans and nature. The ultimate goal of rewilding is the restoration of functioning native ecosystems complete with fully occupied trophic levels that are nature-led across a range of landscape scales. Rewilded ecosystems should - where possible - be self-sustaining requiring no or minimum-intervention



At the landscape scale, it is crucial that core areas provide a secure space that accommodates the full array of species that comprise a self-sustaining natural ecosystem. These areas may be either legally designated or under private management. Restoring connectivity between core areas promotes movement/migration across the wider landscape and improves resilience to the impacts of climate change. Rewilding can build on existing core areas such as designated wilderness areas, national parks or privately managed natural areas. Plans for rewilding at the landscape scale soeayat the lan



disaggregation and assembly of genes, species and biotic communities. Rewilding should facilitate the space and connectivity needed for these processes to have free reign, allowing the wider processes of succession, disturbance and biotic interactions to determine ecological trajectories without impediment or constraint. Rewilding programmes must take effective population size into account



the implications of these for rewilding projects. Projects themselves can form the basis for knowledge generation, data and information of use to further projects.

Monitoring is essential to provide evidence on short and medium-term results with long-term rewilding goals in mind. This is required to determine whether rewilding trajectories, such as a particular treatment, are working as planned. Participatory monitoring using simple crowd-sourced methods with local volunteers coupled with more detailed scientific monitoring can be used to provide the necessary data and information. Rewilding projects should use these data to identify problems and possible solutions as part of an appropriate adaptive management framework. These need to be adequately resourced such that further interventions can be implemented without loss to project budgets and resources.

Whilst there is increasing recognition that natural ecosystems, and the species within them, provide valued goods and services to humans, wild nature has its own intrinsic value that humanity has an ethical responsibility to both respect and protect, emphasising values of compassion and co-existence. Rewilding should primarily be an ecocentric, rather than an anthropocentric, activity. Where management interventions are required, these should be the absolute minimum required and use non-lethal means wherever possible.

In alliance with the global conservation and restoration communities, rewilding means transformative change, providing optimism, purpose and motivation for engagement alongside a greater awareness of global ecosystems that are essential for life on the planet. This should lead to a paradigm shift in advocacy and activism for change in political will and help shift ecological baselines towards recovering fully functioning trophic ecosystems, such that society no longer accepts degraded ecosystems and over-exploitation of nature as the baseline for each successive future generation. This change in paradigm will also help to create new sustainable economic opportunities, delivering the best outcomes for nature and people.