

# Rewilding: Returning to Nature's Roots

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**B**iodiversity is in trouble. More and more species and plants are becoming extinct at the expense of human capital and convenience. Our ability to expend a resource until it is no more is astounding. But the good news is that from all the damage that has been done, a solution has arisen.

"Rewilding" is a term coined by US environmentalist, Dave Foreman, co-founder of the radical environmentalist organization Earth First! In 1991, he also founded the Wildlands Project, aimed at protecting wilderness areas across the continent. The slogan of this project is where the term Rewilding most likely came from: "Reconnect, Restore, Rewild." In 2003, Foreman opened the doors to the Rewilding Institute.

Dr. Michael Soule and Reed Noss, founders of conservation biology, also claim to have invented the idea of "Rewilding" in 1998. They based it on three concepts: cores, corridors, and carnivores. The term for them is about protecting boundaries and allowing wildlife to return to their old, original ways of living.



It seems possible that more than one person could coin a particular term, but really, the concept of wanting to restore nature to its original form, and letting animal species return to their natural habitat and thrive, is nothing novel. Many citizens truly care about their land, as they should, and don't want to see it disappear for short-term goals like logging, poaching or building. They want the environment's first predators to roam free, species to flourish, and nature to grow and expand. This expansion is essential for the life of our earthly ecosystem. Animals maintain the ecosystem, and the ecosystem maintains us, so we must respect wilderness and work to protect it. We need to restore any damage that has been done because biodiversity cannot be challenged at human expense.

The term "Rewilding" was first mentioned in print in an article in Newsweek in February of 1990, written by Jennifer Foote. She reviewed the organization Earth First! and explained why ecology and the environment were at stake. Today there are eco-terrorists, guerrillas and those who are willing to break the law in order to ensure Rewilding is carried out. But most of us chose to be environmentally friendly and law-abiding.

Rewilding has even spread across the continents with one family in a drought-ridden African land planning to open a conservancy aimed at eco-tourists. Rewilding is the inspiration for a very green industry because it can create jobs and promote green lodging. Even photographers can be paid for a good photo. Not only does it promote a greener world, and a greener economy, overgrazing, logging and poaching are all diminished when Rewilding has accomplished securing a wild territory.

One of the most successful Rewilding projects is the Y2Y: Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative. It promotes education and funding for the much needed protection of the Western coast of Canada and the USA. The developers are not asking that the said area become completely a national park but, "the entire Yellowstone to Yukon region will be managed so that this world-renowned mountain ecosystem and its inhabitants (both wild and human) remain healthy and connected for centuries to come. This does not require the entire region to become a park, only that wild animals are able to travel safely through the lands adjacent to and between parks." They also work on various projects at a given time, focusing on priority areas and threats to the region.

There have been recent attempts at Rewilding severely threatened tiger populations. Environmentalists want to teach the tigers to regain their native predatory skills, like hunting, after being zoed and kept with humans for a long time. The Discovery Channel made a documentary called Living With Tigers (2003) about the Rewilding of tigers. However, claims have been made about this series being fraudulent, that the tigers never successfully learned to fend for themselves and the documentary made it appear that they did. However, other real and dedicated organizations have made real progress. Save China's Tigers set up reserves dedicated to preserving the five critically endangered, and especially the most critically endangered, subspecies of tiger, the Chinese tiger (or South China Tiger). Three species out of eight have already become extinct: Caspian, Javan, and Bali tigers. According to their website, this organization has, "Taken on an ambitious project to reverse the fate of the South China Tiger from the border of extinction by taking them out of zoos, breeding them, let them regain their hunting abilities and reintroduce them back to China's wild."

Rewilding shows that environmentalists will not allow the natural wild to change. We should keep nature and exotic species protected instead of destroying their homes and then spending money to rebuild them. Nature should not be destroyed in the first place, but valued as much as people value their own homes and their lives. Rewilding recognizes the misfortune of the destruction of ecosystems and pledges reparation for those that have been damaged.