

Lynx and beaver reintroductions should be part of any Green agreement with SNP, says coalition

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The Scottish Rewilding Alliance is calling on the Scottish Greens to make the trial reintroduction of lynx and the widespread relocation of beavers a core part of any agreement they reach with the Scottish National Party.

The Scottish Greens manifesto stated they 'support the gradual reintroduction of species native to Scotland where appropriate and in cooperation with local communities, including a lynx reintroduction trial'.

"The Scottish Greens have committed to restoring nature through rewilding, including a trial lynx reintroduction. If they reach an agreement with the SNP that includes this commitment, many will see this as a sign they can achieve real change through cooperation," said Steve Micklewright, Scottish Rewilding Alliance Convenor and Chief Executive of Trees for Life.

The native Labrador-sized Eurasian lynx was driven to extinction in Scotland some 500-1,000 years ago through hunting and habitat loss. It has now been reintroduced to many areas of Europe, including in areas used for farming, hunting, forestry and tourism.

Lynx are shy and solitary woodland hunters that avoid humans. Research suggests the Highlands has enough habitat to support around 400 lynx, which could help to restore nature's balance by controlling numbers of roe deer, the cat's preferred prey.

An opinion poll survey by respected market research organisation Survation for the Scottish Rewilding Alliance showed that 52% of Scots supported a pilot reintroduction of lynx, with just 19% disagreeing.

Steve Micklewright said: "A trial reintroduction of lynx will have very strong public support, and there would be no clearer signal that Scotland intends to become the world's first Rewilding Nation."

The Scottish Rewilding Alliance also wants to see a better approach to beaver relocations to suitable areas of Scotland where beavers are still missing, to help stop the needless killing of wild beavers when they cause problems for farmers on Tayside.

Beavers create wetlands that can reduce flooding, improve water quality, and benefit fish and other wildlife. But since the Government legally protected beavers in 2019, its nature agency NatureScot has issued dozens of killing licences – resulting in 20% of the Scottish population being killed in 2019 alone.

Steve Micklewright said: "Nearly all of these beavers could have been relocated to parts of Scotland where local landowners and communities want the benefits they bring, including reducing the risk of flooding. A deal between the Greens and SNP deal must tackle this needless waste of life."

The Survation poll showed that 66% of Scots support beaver relocation ahead of their authorised killing. NatureScot has identified 100,000 hectares of potential beaver habitat in Scotland, but Ministers have decided to block beaver relocation to these areas.

"Public opinion is in favour of beaver relocation and we have huge areas where they could be moved to. The Greens must ensure that this can happen," added Steve Micklewright.

The Scottish Rewilding Alliance, a coalition of over 20 environmental organisations, is calling on the Scottish Government to declare Scotland the world's first Rewilding Nation, with the rewilding of 30% of Scotland's land and sea within a decade.

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