Scotland’s only entry in major international competition aims to address biodiversity loss and deforestation

Tuesday 15 March, 2016

Scotland's only entry in a leading international conservation competition could this week secure funding to address biodiversity loss and deforestation in the Highlands.

Trees for Life's Rewilding the Highlands initiative will receive more than £20,000 from the European Outdoor Conservation Association (EOCA) if it wins an online public vote, which is open to anyone until Tuesday 22 March.

The project – competing against three other shortlisted finalists in the bi-annual competition's 'Alpine' category – will involve ambitious habitat creation to support endangered and rare wildlife, the planting of 50,000 native trees, and the growing of 10,000 rare montane tree species annually, at Trees for Life's Dundreggan Conservation Estate in Glenmoriston to the west of Loch Ness.

“We're proud to have been shortlisted in these prestigious awards, which feature outstanding conservation initiatives from all over the world. Voting is easy, and we're asking everyone to support us and Scotland in this competition – so that we can do more to create a renewed Caledonian Forest for people and wildlife," said Alan Watson Featherstone, Trees for Life's Founder.

“Every vote will help offer a lifeline to some of our remarkable wildlife that is at risk, including pine marten, red squirrel, golden eagle and Scottish wildcat. Without concerted action to restore their forest homes, these species face a bleak future."

Benefits to people also form a key part of the Rewilding the Highlands project. Trees for Life wants to boost the local and Highlands economy by promoting Glenmoriston as a tourist destination, where people can enjoy the great outdoors and discover wonderful wildlife. Central to this will be Dundreggan, a 'lost world' biodiversity hotspot where more than 3,000 species have been discovered, including 10 found nowhere else in the UK.

There will also be opportunities for local people and visitors to get involved in conservation initiatives, and for volunteers from different walks of life to gain training in conservation. Support will be given to a local community project at Invergarry, to enhance biodiversity at its Glengarry Community Woodland.

The EOCA Online Conservation Vote attracts huge interest internationally with national media, politicians, presidents and celebrities getting involved. Trees for Life is Scotland's only finalist in the competition's three categories, which also feature projects from as far afield as central Asia, Brazil, The Caribbean, Ecuador, Madagascar and Nicaragua.

For more details and to vote, see www.treesforlife.org.uk/voteTFL.

Notes to editors

* Trees for Life is an award-winning conservation charity whose volunteers have planted more than one million trees at dozens of sites in the Highlands, and which has pledged to establish one million more trees by planting and natural regeneration by 2018. See www.treesforlife.org.uk.

* EOCA works to support valuable conservation work by raising funds from within the European outdoors sector and by promoting care and respect for wild places. See http://www.outdoorconservation.eu.

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