Trees for Life’s Dundreggan Rewilding Centre near Loch Ness wins top Nature Tourism Award

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Trees for Life’s Dundreggan Rewilding Centre in Glenmoriston near Loch Ness has been awarded the Nature Tourism Award at RSPB Scotland’s Nature of Scotland Awards 2024, in recognition of its pioneering achievements in rewilding landscapes and people.

The centre – the first of its kind in the world – received the prestigious accolade “for bringing people and nature together” at a ceremony held at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre on 28 November.

The Nature of Scotland Awards recognise individuals and organisations across local communities, schools, and businesses who are making a difference for Scotland’s wildlife and natural environment.

“This award is a great honour. It’s a testament to our fantastic team who deliver a unique, high-quality experience for visitors from around the world, and to the hope and inspiration rewilding offers,” said Dundreggan Rewilding Centre Director, Laurelin Cummins-Fraser.

“Dundreggan has long been a beacon for rewilding Scotland’s landscapes – and since the Rewilding Centre opened last year, it has become a beacon for rewilding people too. We offer our visitors the opportunity to connect with nature, explore stunning Highlands landscapes, and see rewilding in action.”

The centre showcases how rewilding can give people inspiring experiences and benefit communities, while tackling the nature and climate emergencies. It offers a gateway for visitors to explore the 10,000-acre Dundreggan estate where Trees for Life is restoring the Caledonian forest and its wildlife.

Developed in close collaboration with the local community, the centre offers year-round events and activities, accessible forest trails, a café and events space, a storytelling bothy, outdoor play area, and purpose-built accommodation with 20 bedrooms.

Visitors, families, schools, and those with specific needs can enjoy year-round events and experiences, discover how rewilding benefits wildlife such as golden eagles, red squirrels and wood ants, and learn about Gaelic culture.

Professor Colin Galbraith, Chair of awards headline sponsor NatureScot, said: “As Scotland takes up the challenge to stop the biodiversity loss our generation has witnessed, this year’s award winners are the true nature heroes we all need in our lives.

“Their energy, expertise and compassion is truly inspirational, and reason for celebration.

Their achievements give us all hope for a nature-rich future across Scotland and

demonstrate that everyone can take action to help.”

The RSPB Scotland’s Nature of Scotland Awards ceremony saw 53 award finalists from all over Scotland gather to celebrate with hosts BBC Landward presenters Dougie Vipond and Arlene Stuart. The awards have been running for over a decade, and this year’s headline sponsor was NatureScot.

Trees for Life has been rewilding Dundreggan since its purchase of the former deer stalking estate in 2008. Volunteers help restore globally important fragments of the Caledonian forest, while a specialised tree nursery grows more than 70,000 native trees each year. Over 4,000 plant and animal species have been recorded at the biodiversity hotspot.

Anne McCall, Director of RSPB Scotland, said: “The Nature of Scotland Awards have brought a growing group of hardworking, motivated and passionate people into the conservation spotlight, and I’d like to wish all our winners a huge congratulations. It’s a joy to see such incredible work happening with nature and climate at its heart, and Scotland is all the better for it.”

Scotland is currently one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. As a member of the Scottish Rewilding Alliance, Trees for Life is urging people to sign the Rewilding Nation Charter at www.rewild.scot/charter – calling on the Scottish Government to declare Scotland a rewilding nation, committing to nature recovery across 30% of land and sea.

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