

## Our Christmas 2022 Letter

We started 2022 with the climate emergency alarm bells ringing louder than ever. Whilst it is imperative that the urgency in combating our climate breakdown stays at the top of the global agenda this was severely challenged with the very sad Russian invasion of Ukraine. Within days of the crisis our friends at [Foundation Conservation Carpathia](#) (FCC) stepped up.

As background FCC was founded in 2009 by 12 philanthropists and conservationists with the goal to stop illegal logging of the woodlands around the Carpathian Mountains in Romania. FCC wish to protect a significant surface of Carpathian forests in form of a completely protected area for future generations. This is achieved by purchasing land and leasing hunting rights for full protection of all natural elements with private and public money. FCC have purchased close to 27,000 hectares at the time of writing.

The Ukrainian Carpathians in the west of the country became a shelter for people fleeing the conflict in the east. The Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) led a co-ordinated aid response with partners from Slovakia, Germany and Romania providing goods and shelter for those seeking refuge in the region. FCC represented Romania. The collective help provided in those first few weeks and months were crucial and Consano Earth was delighted to contribute to these efforts. Now that the larger aid organisations have reached the Ukrainian Carpathians FCC is moving back to its core mission. The opening line from a short [video](#) about the work summed it up – “Dark times always reveal good people.” Barbara and Christoph Promberger, the driving force of FCC, continue to be an inspiration.

### Looking back on 2022

This was the first full year for Consano Earth having been formalised in 2021. Our objective for this year, and every year going forward, is to add momentum to the fantastic work being done by our charity partners through rising financial and other support. Our efforts focus on smaller organisations where we believe our unrestricted funding can make a real difference and where we hope to be able to add value either ourselves or through our personal and professional contacts. Our two core charities remain [Heal Rewilding](#) and [Project Seagrass](#) but in 2022 we added [Knepp Wildland Foundation](#), [Beaver Trust](#) and [Keep It Wild](#) to the people we support. This [page](#) provides details of all our charities as well as links to their websites for those wanting to learn more. All have done fantastic work in 2022, which we will not elaborate on here, and we look forward to even more progress next year.

On 7<sup>th</sup> June Consano Earth hosted an inaugural collaboration event with Heal Rewilding and Project Seagrass in Bristol. This was a wonderful evening with a c.150 strong audience hearing from some of charities we support as well as watching the formal premiere of “*Kelp!*” a film that we funded after a shout out on the *So Hot Right Now!* podcast from some Falmouth University students. Recordings of the event presentations are available [here](#) or on our YouTube channel [here](#). A special thank you goes to Hannah from Heal Rewilding for all her help she gave us organising the event.

While we were in the West Country for our event we took the opportunity to visit the [Cornwall Beaver Project](#). Chris Jones hosted us for a wonderful evening at Woodland Valley Farm where we visited the beavers in their enclosure. Some great footage [here](#).



Later in June we finally made what has been a long overdue trip to the Scottish Highlands. Huge thanks to Jeremy Leggett and Paul Lister who hosted us at [Bunloit](#) and [Alladale](#) respectively. Both are wonderful locations at different stages of their rewilding journeys. We look forward to visiting both estates regularly and seeing the magic of letting nature run wild! At Alladale we encountered Scottish Wildcats for the first time. A wildcat enclosure has been built on the Alladale reserve as part of a captive breeding project in partnership with the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and Saving Wildcats. The wildcats are being bred with the ultimate aim of release at some point in the future, once appropriate preparations have been made.



In July a small group of us were very kindly hosted by Charlie Burrell at Knepp. We are sure neither Charlie nor Knepp need any introduction. It was a great day not only learning more about Knepp's inspiring journey but also about the Knepp Wildland Foundation, a charity recently started by Charlie and his wife Issy. Consano Earth became one of their first supporters and we have funded some important work for them. More on this exciting development below!

In October Nick spent some time at Derek Gow's Rewilding Coombeshead in Devon. Derek is rewilding his 300-acre former farm into "an ark for lost species" and is doing some critical work on numerous reintroductions including wildcats, white storks, water voles and the harvest mouse. Derek's passion for nature and the environment is infectious. Derek along with Nick Viney recently founded Keep It Wild which has the objective of purchasing small pockets of land that are wildlife rich oases to hold and maintain in an environmentally friendly way for the benefit of all. Consano Earth will be supporting Derek and his team on a fantastic reintroduction project.

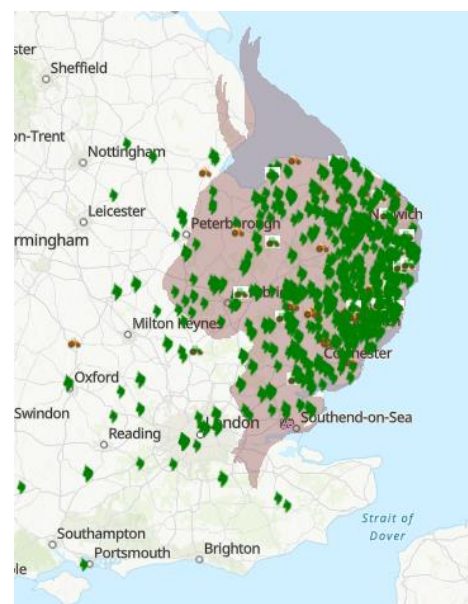


## Consano Earth partners with The Land App and WildEast to promote nature collaboration and build regional clusters

[WildEast](#) was one of the first charities we supported when Consano Earth's rewilding journey started in 2021. WildEast is on a mission to return 250,000 hectares or 20% of the land in East Anglia to nature. What drew us to their cause was they were acting as a magnet and bringing together landowners, from backyards to school yards to agricultural land, into a regional community which shares a common mission to give back some land to nature to help address ecological decline. By acting together under a single umbrella organisation, the community can promote nature connectivity and build ecological value within a specific region.

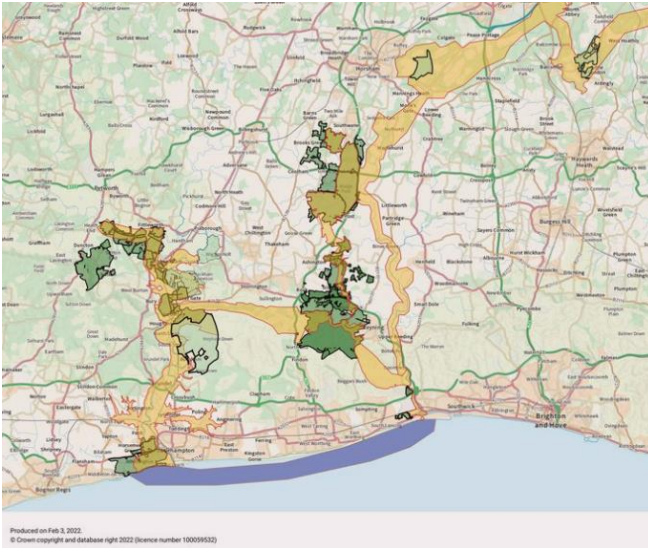
WildEast has developed a *Map of Dreams* which shows at a high level the aggregation of these local landowners that have pledged at least 20% of their land to the wild. What particularly excited us about WildEast was that co-founder Hugh Somerleyton and his team always wanted WildEast to be an example that other regions could follow. WildEast was developing tools and initiatives to further their own mission, but the team recognised these tools would be equally valuable to others who were interested in replicating their East Anglia model in other parts of the UK.

The *Map of Dreams* was a great place to start as it demonstrated the scale of landowners committed to returning some part of their land to nature with landowners simply making a pledge. However, WildEast wanted to have for its pledgees a platform that not only showed the land committed by could also be a tool that helped landowners optimise their rewilding actions thereby helping them to understand more quantitatively what benefits their actions were having and therefore seeing how these were helping the broader WildEast community.



Map of Dreams "Version One"

This more sophisticated platform underpinning the *Map of Dreams* would give WildEast an even louder voice in engaging with government, councils, infrastructure owners and utilities. Consequently, WildEast began work on a second iteration of the *Map of Dreams* in partnership with [The Land App](#) (work that is half funded by Consano Earth). Each landowner in the community has free of charge access The Land App platform, develop a detailed map of their own land and with it get insightful land and habitat metrics. The platform helps the landowner to really understand the current connectivity of their land and how this can be improved. The landowner at a click of a button can join the WildEast community. As more landowners join the platform what starts as an individual landowner map quickly evolves into a “Map of Maps” with the platform becoming an aggregation dashboard to produce a landscape-level view of the regional nature corridor. There is now the potential for a significantly more granular *Map of Dreams*. At this stage WildEast has an internal dashboard that enables them to track the pledges of community members (and the associated environmental benefits) and the ambition is to make this suitable for public facing in the near future.



WildEast is acting as a “Facilitator” on The Land App platform that manages a group of local farmers, growers, landowners, foresters and advisers who can work and learn together to enhance the natural capital of their land. Each individual landowner can see directly how they contribute to the cluster. This “Facilitator” model of The Land App platform can very easily be “copied and pasted” for use by others looking to do something to WildEast in another region. As noted above Consano Earth began supporting Knepp Wildland Foundation (“KWF”) this year. A key initiative that KWF is working on is [Weald to Waves](#) which is creating a 50-mile wild corridor across Sussex running from Ashdown Forest to the marine kelp forests at Climping Gap as shown here.

Weald to Waves will be using The Land App to underpin their work becoming a Facilitator in the same way as WildEast the cost for which has been funded by Consano Earth. We believe WildEast and KWF will become two great case studies in demonstrating the power of the Facilitator model and Consano Earth has committed to fund the implementation costs of this model for other charities that want to follow in their footsteps.

We noted in our 2021 letter that Consano Earth was helping to fund WildEast’s WildEdges initiative which calls on landowners to add a modest amount of regenerating scrub and grass buffers to land edges like hedgerows. There is more detail on WildEdges on our website [here](#). WildEast worked out that if all the hedges in their region were increased to an average of 10 metres that would return around 5% or 62,500 hectares to nature building in their words “great cathedrals of biodiversity” which would draw down millions of tonnes of carbon whilst also restoring the soil. Our funding has helped WildEast to develop a tool also within The Land App that lets landowners automatically visualise what their future land could look like with WildEdges and calculates the total area or percentage of land it would take. Whilst the WildEdges feature of The Land App is standalone it is a wonderful tool that can be promoted by Facilitators like WildEast and KWF to their community members to help them accelerate their rewilding journeys. WildEdges is the first in a series of “habitat suggestions” that The Land App is promoting, with others to include wetland creation, woodland planting, and wildflower meadows.

## Looking ahead to 2023

We expect 2023 will be another year of good progress for the charities and work we support. What follows are just a handful of what we hope to see over the coming year.

Our core rewilding charity for the land is [Heal Rewilding](#). Heal was only established in 2020 but has made great strides forward in its goal to raise money to buy land in England and then to rewild it. They are getting ever closer to securing their first site which is being funded by a combination of donor grants and innovative lending. Watch this space!

Our core rewilding charity for the sea is [Project Seagrass](#). Seagrass meadows promote biodiversity holding 40 times more marine life than seabeds without grass. They are able to store carbon dioxide,

which contributes to global heating, at a rate 35 times faster than tropical rainforests. Seagrass meadows are responsible for 11% of organic carbon buried in the ocean even though they occupy only 1% of the seafloor. This year Project Seagrass significantly grew their UK operations, with seagrass restoration projects now underway across the UK (Isle of Wight, North Wales and the Firth of Forth) and with further baseline data collection being undertaken in the Essex and Suffolk estuaries and in Orkney. In South Wales their Seagrass Nursery Pilot was operational for its first full season of seed germination, and at the Nature of Scotland Awards the team received the Innovation Award for supporting the scaling-up of seagrass restoration. Their work continues across the Indo-Pacific where they continue to support community-led conservation in Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Timor-Leste. In 2023 Project Seagrass plan to expand their work both in Europe, and globally, by establishing collaborations with seagrass conservation and research institutions across the European Union.

In 2022 England moved a step closer to wildcats being released for the first time in hundreds of years. A preliminary ecological reintroduction feasibility study carried out by Vincent Wildlife Trust concluded that there are regions which warrant further exploration for reintroduction, including the Southwest of England (especially Devon), as well North and West Wales. Devon Wildlife Trust is leading the next stage of the reintroduction effort and Derek Gow and his team are helping with this project. Derek currently has a wildcat facility at his Devon based farm which led to four pairs producing kittens. All are doing well in the four large enclosures at the site where they can hunt, climb and play to develop natural behaviours without interference from people.



Wildcat kitten bred at the Rewilding Coombeshead facility  
(Photo Philip Jefferies)

Derek wants to double the size of this facility which will be essential for their breeding programme, and to prevent disease and allow natural behaviour. Preparations need to be made now to have the needed breeding stock required for future reintroductions which will restore the wildcat initially to Devon and then more widely to other English locations. We have agreed to fund the building of four additional enclosures in what will be our largest financial commitment to date. Derek and his team are ready to go on this and we are very much looking forward to visiting Coombeshead again next year to see the new facility.

2023 takes the crown from 2022 as the most important year in the climate emergency just as 2022 took it from 2021. The time for action is now and everyone can make difference. For anyone looking for an inspiring stocking filler here are some great reads:

- Guy Schrubsole – “The Lost Rainforests of Great Britain”
- Derek Gow – “Birds, Beasts and Bedlam”
- Bevis Watts – “River Journey”
- Lee Schofield – “Wild Fell”
- Andrew Painting – “Regeneration”
- Jake Fiennes – “Land Healer”
- Benedict Macdonald – “Cornerstones”
- Charles Clover – “Rewilding the Sea”
- Sophie Pavelle – “Forget Me Not”
- Eoghan Daltun – “An Irish Atlantic Rainforest”



We will be much more active on social media going forward so please follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). We also expect to start a regular newsletter which can be signed up on from our [homepage](#).

We wish you all the very best for 2023

**Nick & Elena Martin**  
**Consano Earth Co-Founders**  
**December 2022**