



CONSERVATION TRANSLOCATIONS IN SCOTLAND: REFLECTING ON THE PAST AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

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WHO WE ARE!

Felix: PhD student in the School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh - Research on the History and Politics of Avian Conservation Translocations in Britain

Toryn: PhD student in the Department of Geography, King's College London. Research on human-wildlife coexistence in Scotland (wild boar/feral pigs) and Estonia & the Netherlands (wolves).

Our Speakers: Martin Gaywood (UHI & NatureScot); Cat Barlow (Restoring Upland Nature); Louise Hughes (Saving Wildcats); & George Holmes (University of Leeds; England Species Reintroduction Taskforce)

PLAN FOR THIS EVENT


1. Brief introduction: the past and present of translocations in Scotland
2. Speaker presentations
3. Closed Discussion: What is the future for translocations in Scotland?
4. Q&A
5. Drinks




Credit: Toryn Whitehead – view of Loch Ness

DEFINITIONS

Conservation Translocation refers to the deliberate movement and release of living organisms for conservation purposes (The Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations, 2014).



The Scottish Code for
Conservation Translocations
Best Practice Guidelines for
Conservation Translocations
in Scotland

NSRF 
National Species Reintroduction Forum

TRANSLOCATION HISTORIES

For at least 50,000 years humans have been moving animals for food and cultural reasons (Stanton et al. 2016)

The earliest use of the term reintroduction was for a project to return the Capercaillie to Scotland in the 1830s (Jørgensen 2013; Stevenson 2007)

The 19th and 20th centuries saw further release projects, mostly for hunting (e.g. grey-lag geese) or aesthetic reasons (e.g. red squirrels) (Holmes 2015; Owen & Salmon 1988)

The modern translocation movement in Scotland probably begins with the reintroduction of white-tailed eagles to the Isle of Rùm which began in 1975 (Green et al. 1996)

PRESENT

Paradigm shift from species and protecting fragmented pockets of biodiversity to thinking about connectivity, rewilding, and landscape-scale nature recovery

Frustration with slow progress and perceived overly bureaucratic processes for conservation translocations has led to deliberate illegal reintroductions (e.g. beavers and lynx) (Holmes et al., 2024; Whitehead, 2025)

Legal translocations are becoming an increasing popular conservation tool (e.g. wood ants and wildcats)

More robust community engagement and greater attention given to cultural aspects (e.g. The National Lynx Discussion, Eagle Schools and Moffat festival)

BUT...

whose not in the room and why that matters

conflicts persist over translocated species

upcoming elections in Holyrood

Martin Gaywood



Species Projects Manager

UHI INVERNESS Senior Researcher



2000-present



2015-present



2022-2024

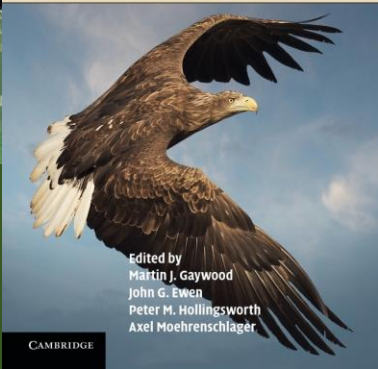
Conservation Translocations in a Changing Climate
Martin J. Gaywood



www.churchillfellowship.org



Conservation Translocations



Edited by
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John G. Ewen
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Gaywood, Ewen, Hollingsworth and Moehrensclager (eds.). (2022) Conservation Translocations. Cambridge University Press.

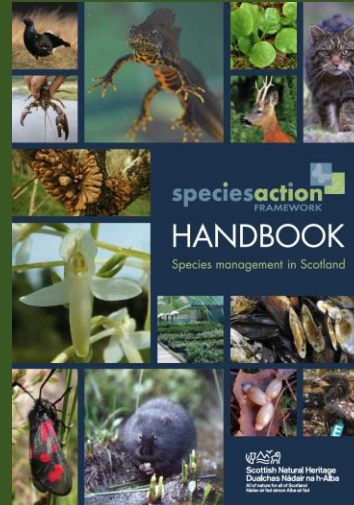
BRITISH WILDLIFE



THE SANDHILL BEEING MOTIF - BORN JONAS'S GREEN LEGACY
SHARP-SHOULDERED PHOENIX - CONSERVATION TRANSLOCATIONS IN BRITAIN
ARE THEY BORN FOR SWIRLS & GOULD JERSEY?
Screenshot

Gaywood, Bavin, Dalrymple, Finger, Foster and Pouget (2023). Conservation Translocations in Britain. British Wildlife 34, 572-583

2007-2012



2009-present



The Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations
Best Practice Guidelines for Conservation Translocations in Scotland



The future for conservation translocations – five themes (there are lots more!)

1. Our use of conservation translocation is changing

Increasing numbers, increasing range of use, increasing motivations, increasing range of practitioners etc. – no longer a tool of last resort

2. Conservation translocation is no longer just about individual species - Ecosystem restoration and thinking big!

3. Environmental change has big implications for CT practice, policy and strategy

(e.g. climate, disease transmission etc.)

We need to future-proof CTs + we can use CT as a tool (e.g. conservation introductions)

4. Developments in synthetic biology – Coming our way soon

e.g. Cloning, GMOs, de-extinction techniques etc. – opportunities and risks – biological, environmental, ethical, social

5. Conservation translocations and people – We need to get better

Addressing socio-economic/cultural concerns and aspirations



Photos:

- Brian G Clarke/Michelle Stamp: osprey
- Chris Strachan/NatureScot: water vole
- Fiona Eardley/NatureScot: golden eagle
- Lorne Gill/NatureScot: crinkled snow lichen, great crested newt, pine hoverfly, pine marten, red kite, small cow-wheat, wodly willow

- Iain Erskine/NatureScot: white-tailed eagle
- Martin Gaywood: beaver
- RBGE: alpine sow-thistle, oblong woodsia, yellow marsh saxifrage
- Saving wildcats: wildcat
- Sue Scott/NatClaire Hewitt/NatureScot: vendace
- David Donna/NatureScot: native oyster
- NatureScot: freshwater pearl mussel





CAT BARLOW

CEO Restoring Upland
Nature (RUN)

Red Kite Reintroduction Yorkshire
(RSPB)

Osprey Reintroduction Rutland (LRWT)

Upland Predation Experiment
Otterburn (GWCT)

Langholm Moor Demonstration
Project (LMDP) Community

South of Scotland Golden Eagle
Project (SSGEP)



South of Scotland Golden Eagle project (SSGEP)

Reinforcement project

Geographically isolated

6 to 50 golden eagles

Excellent survival

Award winning stakeholder
engagement approach

Partnership working – land
management & conservation

Dedicated officer (ex-
gamekeeper)



South of Scotland Golden Eagle project (SSGEP)

SSGEP – job done!?

Longer term management /
support

RUN – established to ensure legacy
of SSGEP

Birds of Prey / Apex predators –
threat/competition?

Landscape largely managed by
humans - are there any truly wild
areas?

Nature – preventing development?

Stakeholder engagement – never
ending job?



Saving
Wildcats
#SWAforLIFE





**Saving
Wildcats**
#SWAforLIFE



Three Pillars

- Robust Science
- Landscape Awareness
- Community Engagement



**Shift from preventing
extinction to building
recovery**





**Saving
Wildcats**
#SWAforLIFE



Cairngorms
National Park Authority
Ùghdarras Pàire Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh



**Forestry and
Land Scotland**
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba



George Holmes

Professor of Conservation and Society, University of Leeds

England Species Reintroduction Taskforce

Geographer, started off researching rule breaking and politics in conservation

Then on private actors in conservation

And on conservationists' values

Leading neatly into research on rewilding, rewilders, reactions to rewilding etc

Research projects on

- ▶ Conflict/coexistence with beavers in Tayside
- ▶ Understandings of 'wildness' in Lochaber
- ▶ Meanings of restoration in landscapes in Cairngorms
- ▶ Illicit and unregulated translocations



England Species Reintroduction Taskforce members admiring a recently translocated colony of Northern Hairy Wood Ants, Ennerdale, Cumbria

How might we think about the future of translocations in Scotland?

(what *should* Jeroen Helmer draw?)

Things that have changed rapidly:

- beaver populations, and many other species
- some bits of public debate (the 'r' word!)

What hasn't changed

- Land ownership structures
- Balmoralised visions

What are landscapes for?

What belongs in them, and why?

Who decides?



Illustration for Affric Rewilding, by Jeroen Helmer

CLOSED DISCUSSION

1. What lessons have been learnt from the previous experiences of translocations in Scotland (instances of successes and failures; co-existence and conflict; harmony and polarisation)?
2. What can Scotland learn from other translocation experiences and what can others learn from the Scottish experience?



ANY QUESTIONS? |

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THANK YOU!

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