



Forests Without Frontiers *Restore, Inspire, Nurture*



Through music and art we bring nature back to life - and people back to nature

Year-End Summary 2023

As we look back on 2023, **Forests Without Frontiers** is extremely grateful to all the supporters who have helped us towards our mission to restore and regenerate damaged ecosystems, to inspire people to celebrate nature through music and art, and to nurture culture and community. We are proud of the holistic approach we take to our restoration work, in recognition of the interconnection between natural and cultural ecosystems.



RESTORE

In 2023, we continued our tree-planting programme to restore degraded land in Romania. We planted 30,000 fir, beech and spruce across two planting seasons, Spring and Autumn, in the **Carpathian Mountains**. The saplings were planted on areas that do not naturally regenerate and we are extremely grateful to all the planters from the local community who worked so hard to plant the trees at high elevations in the mountains. All the saplings we plant are monitored, maintained and protected on an ongoing basis by our partners at Foundation Conservation Carpathia, ensuring high rates of survival despite the challenges of climate change. Our planting area borders natural forest and, as they grow, the trees will reestablish essential wildlife corridors for the species that live in the region, including wolves, bears and lynx.



Additional to our work in Romania, we are expanding our programme in the UK with 1,500 trees planted in Sussex, UK, at **Wilderlands Farm** in 2023 (500 have already been planted and a further 1,000 will be planted this winter). These include silver birch, oak, hazel, field maple, buckthorn, alder and hawthorn, and will contribute towards the restoration of hedgerows. Moving forward, we will continue to partner with them to support their vision of Sussex becoming one of the wilder areas of England, particularly on community engagement activities and events.



We are pleased to report that the trees planted in the UK in 2022, at **Springham Farm** in Sussex, are doing well. The trees are being monitored on an ongoing basis and although a few had to be replaced due to the hot weather in 2022, our partners told us that *“there are far fewer replacements needed than other woodlands planted that year because we were able to mulch them, thanks to the maintenance money that Forests without Frontiers provided.”*

Looking forward, we are in discussions regarding support for a new tree-planting initiative in **Scotland** as part of the restoration of the Kyle catchment ecosystem in Scotland. The programme will create a network of interconnected habitats as part of the Kyle Riverwoods project and we will be planting trees along the riverbeds creating a riparian forest, and help build a tree nursery for thousands of locally grown native saplings. The overall aim of the project is to prevent the regional extinction of wild Atlantic salmon.

We employ local people for our tree planting and our aim is to create more job opportunities in the green sector.



INSPIRE

We celebrate indigenous culture alongside the nature restoration work that we do. This also contributes towards the sustainability of projects with local community participation and support being an essential part of that. As part of this, we worked with local artists and musicians near to our planting area in Romania to develop the **Interbeing** project, funded by Cambridge Conservation Initiative's Endangered Landscapes Programme. The album, which weaves together recordings of Romanian elders and traditional instruments with nature soundscapes in an electronic composition, was released in November 2022 and won their Endangered Landscapes Artists Residency prize.

In 2023, the project secured further funding from CCI to include a live show in which the participating musicians, including 80-year-old Silvia Dan, performed to at a local festival in Fagaras Mountains. Silvia said that she wanted to “bring the story of the land and its songs and keep them alive” and as noted in the Guardian article, “the resounding themes are of our interconnectedness with nature, the wisdom of the elders, and the importance of preserving these landscapes and traditions for future generations.” <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2023/oct/22/a-yellowstone-for-europe-romania-ambition-for-a-vast-new-wilderness-reserve> Live show: <https://vimeo.com/871763914>



Based on this great success, the Interbeing model will be replicated in **Bulgaria** through our partnership with the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds and Bird Life Bulgaria, and in collaboration with the community in the Rhodopes Mountains and Bulgarian artists. Accompanying film and photography brings the moving stories of the people and environmental challenges faced to life. This project is being supported by the Cambridge Conservation Initiative's Endangered Landscapes and Seascapes Programme.

In the UK, **Enchanting Forest** will tell the stories of the rich Sussex landscape, from the Downs to the sea, using music and visuals, and blending traditional English folklore with contemporary music and natural soundscapes. We are inviting local musicians and artists into nature to record songs, poetry and stories inspired by Sussex and collaborate with a diverse array of people, young and old, including individuals navigating mental health challenges. We are thrilled to welcome Andrew Stuart Buttell, as a co-producer, and Brighton-based musician Alice Russell, as a featured artist.

We are also delighted to have reached our fundraising goal for the production of the Enchanting Forest multimedia project, which includes the planting of 3,000 trees at **Wilderlands Farm**, 500 of which are already in the ground. Much of this was achieved thanks to the generosity of artist Stanley Donwood and photographer Jasper Goddall, who donated stunning prints to the fundraising campaign.

In May, we welcomed supporters to celebrate and contribute towards the growth of FWF. Hosted by comedian Jen Brister at Soho Beach House Brighton, we raised several thousand pounds through a raffle and auction and introduced artists that will be featured on upcoming projects.



NURTURE

Across all our ecosystem restoration work, the **community engagement** element is integral, and we are developing our educational element particularly in the UK. This consist of community events where people can learn about rewilding and tree planting from conservation specialists.

We will continue to invite community participation at all our tree planting events, focusing on organisations that align with our mission. To this end, we will continue to partner with the **Children's Forest**, whose mission is to support children's wellbeing by providing them with the opportunity to envision and create a positive future by planting trees. We also aim to develop partnerships with mental health initiatives, in recognition of the crucial role that nature plays in our wellbeing.

We are very proud of our achievements in 2023 and give heartfelt thanks to all our partners and supporters. We look forward to achieving even more in 2024 towards our goal of bringing **nature back to life, and people back to nature.**

