

Welcome to listen to the podcast on rewilding.

Whether rewilding isn't for me or just a conservation strategy, it's a mindset shift towards a more sustainable, connected and compassionate relationship with the natural world.

Does rewilding mean that mammoths are brought back to life and set free in nature? You'll find out in this podcast about rewilding. Is the aim of rewilding to create a new Jurassic Park?

In this podcast, we explore the topic of rewilding, a growing movement that seeks to restore the natural world and reestablish the balance between humans and nature. Over the years, human activity has led to a significant loss of biodiversity, habitat destruction and climate change affecting the health of the planet and all the species that call it home.

Really believe that rewilding is an innovative approach that aims to counter these effects by reintroducing native species, restoring natural habitats, and allowing ecosystems to thrive on their own burns. Join us on this exciting journey as they explore the transformative potential of rewilding or the future of our planet and all its inhabitants. We are very pleased to have Aino Tuominen as our podcast guest today. Aino is one of the key representatives of the rewilding movement in Friesland and well connected to the international rewilding movement.

This podcast has been created as part of Hanken for sustainable organising in times of Crisis. We will dive into the topic of rewilding, which is a topic covered in the course lecture on regenerative design and interspecies relations. Guest lecturer Judith Schwartz opened up the topic to us. Our team selected the topic since it is a very fascinating team.

Podcast Group six It's Kaisa, Paula, Rushabh, and Oscar digging in the compelling world of rewinding. Well, welcome to our broadcast Aino Tuominen from villiinnyts.fi. We are very happy that you were able to join us today. Please, can you introduce yourself and tell us about your background and how did you become interested in rewilding?

Thank you for having me. I'm really happy to be here. It's kind of a long story how I got interested in rewilding. I got into it slowly, I slowly understood, by reading different materials that the European nature used to be very different and it used to be more like African nature, when humans first arrived to Europe, and that we have actually impacted Europe a lot. The nature of Europe are already during the ice age, we made a big impact here, and that led me to the next things I learning about this. I understood that I found out that there is a Rewilding Europe association that is kind of the umbrella bringing together all these rewilders, and I learned about rewilding through their website and I got really excited and I was disappointed that we didn't have anything here in Finland yet.

We have had some projects have got financing from Rewilding Europe, but rewilding Europe didn't have and still actually officially doesn't have a project in Finland, and this is something that got me into this and I thought, I want to see a rewilding Europe project, a rewilding project in Finland, especially I got interested in the Wild Grazers and their return in Europe, and that's why I found other people online who were also interested. We decided to start the association, a local association here in Finland around this, and tried to promote rewilding in Finland and get the first real rewilding project with large grazers possibly here in Finland.

Thank you. I'm going to have like how many people you are now in really into this caring in Finland?

Actually, no, I don't remember. I think around hundred, the might be less probably less it has been in a number of active people is much less. So we have like a handful of active people, not more than that and none, and we don't have anyone working like as a paid job for this. So it's only a voluntary work, all that we have in our association at the moment.

Yeah. All right. Well, we got some questions for you. But before them, there was actually this one thing you mentioned that Europe used to be like Africa in the form of the animal climate. Did I understand that correctly?

When it comes to Fauna, it was more like Africa. You could, when you see how even Siberian Fauna that that looked more like Africa. Then what it looks today. You would have elephants, you would have rhinos, you would have lions, hyenas, all of those creatures and yeah, the bison and the horses. There's lots of animals in all the way to the very north part of Siberia.

And we are still finding all those animal bones in the permafrost, especially now that the permafrost is melting. All these animals, even not just bones, but entire animals with skin and fur and everything. They're museum pieces of, I've seen a head of a woolly rhino, woolly rhinoceros in the Saint-Petersburg Natural History Museum. They have a head of the woolly rhinoceros. They have the eye, they have like it looks like a head.

You can see that's a rhinoceros head, and it was frozen like that in the permafrost. So permafrost has really preserved all of these animals as a whole, even with fur and everything. So we have very good information on especially on the Arctic region. The animals have been preserved really well. But yes, and this was a surprise to me when I first learned about it, and it's kind of why don't we know our history better than that?

Yeah, That's really interesting. So let's dive into the topic more deeply about rewilding. What would you consider your definition of rewilding to be?

There are multiple different definitions for rewilding. Some of them are and I think I find in Australia they use it in a meaning, that is something that I don't recognise. They use it for rewilding. We mean somehow I don't know in the nature, but for what? But how I understand it and what is common to most of the definitions is that most of the definitions share a long term objective to maintain or enhance biodiversity while reducing the current or past negative human impact on nature.

In case of rewilding, this objective has been pursued by reintroducing ecological processes and when is appropriate, also by returning lost species into the wild, and rewilding has also been defined as to restore a non wild area to wildness, or at least to the degree of wildness beyond the initial stage.

So if you take whatever area and you increase the wildness in that area, that is can be considered rewilding. For example, you can take farmland and make it more biodiverse, more wild, and that is rewilding also.

It's very interesting. What do you say the main principles of rewilding?

As it happens, rewilding Europe has published a list of rewilding principles. They were formulated 2019 in a meeting in Spain that I participated, and they have also translated these principles to several languages. They can be found in the Rewilding Europe website.

I have done the translation into Finnish, so please don't be too hard on my English skills if you read that and in Finnish they are also Swedish, but I hope that's better, an English one of course is very good and I can go briefly through this 11 principles:

The number one is providing hope and purpose. Rewilding generates visions of a better future for people and nature that inspire and empower, and that is to me also a very attractive part of rewilding, actually.

The number two is offering a natural solutions like how to make and use nature based solutions which rewilding and to mitigate environmental, social, economical or climate changes challenges.

The number tree is thinking creatively. Rewilding means acting in ways that are innovative, opportunistic and into an area with the confidence to learn from failure. I think this is pretty radical, actually, but this has been a key part, especially in the rewilding Europe operations.

Number four is complimentary conservation. Rewilding is not replacing the traditional conservation and it complements the more traditional methods. So it's not replacing the traditional ones. Yeah, that's like expanding.

The number five is the idea of letting nature lead. So rewilding, lets restore natural processes to shape our landscapes and seascapes in a dynamic way. There is no human defined optimal point or end stage in rewilding. So the nature goes, where the nature is taking is.

Number six is working at the nature scale. Rewilding means working at scale to rebuilt wildlife diversity with enough space to allow nature to drive the changes and shape the living systems. The idea is, is to scale up not the stay in a small scale, but to scale up that essential part of self rewilding.

Number seven is acting in context, and so this means rewilding embraces the role of people and their cultural and economic connections to the land. It's about finding ways to work and live with healthy, natural, vibrant ecosystems and reconnect with the wild nature. So rewilding should contain long term knowledge and the environmental and cultural history of a place. It should not be out of context. It should not be out of contact from the local people. So working together with the local people is very important. Otherwise, projects just fail. They don't succeed.

The number eight is building nature based economies, which I also think is quite radical idea and I think it's a very good idea. So need to find new economic opportunities in the nature and income link to the nature and this kind of creates the continuity. Then when people see the benefit for themselves in rewilding, then that creates the continuity.

Number nine is long term focus. Rewilding efforts aim to and work on a long term perspective. So not just a one or two year project, but really long term, and always considering kind of considering the long term backwards and towards the future also.

Number ten is working together. So building coalitions and connecting people from different backgrounds to co-create innovative ways of rewilding and deliver the best outcomes for communities and to widen nature, and that's also why I have felt it's very it's been very easy for me to contact with the Rewilding Europe and work with them because they are really open for people. You don't have to be a biologist to join in. They are happy to take people from different backgrounds and they do understand that you need people from, let's say, photographers, marketing people, all different kind of people to make projects to succeed.

The number 11 is not a knowledge exchange. So exchanging knowledge and expertise continually to refine rewilding best practices and achieve the best possible rewilding results and to use the best up to date evidence and get gathering and sharing data and learning in the whole process.

So yeah, these, these were the, the 11 principles that we came up in the meeting in Cuenca.

Only 11?

Only 11 yes

Yes, those sound like very clever and sustainable principles. You mentioned traditional conservation. So how does rewilding differ from traditional conservation efforts?

Rewilding emphasises the benefits of a more better functioning ecosystems can provide, such as improved water quality, increase the number of pollinators, increase biodiversity, all the good things we get out of more wild and more diverse nature. Traditional conifer conservation is maybe more focussed

on achieving some defined past state of an area or maintaining a current state. As rewilding focuses on the things that can be improved through rewilding and also is not targeting for a specific state, especially in some areas, we don't even know what the state is, and anyway, how do you define that? If it was 50 years ago, 100 years ago or 20,000 years ago? What is the right state? It's rather more like trusting the nature's processes and trying to support the natural processes. I think that's the biggest difference.

Ok, thank you. About the geography, is it possible to say is the area of impact more global or local? Or how would you define it in rewilding?

I think it should be global. I think the rewilding movement as such has started in the US. But many people are saying that actually there might be more possibilities in Europe, maybe because the European nature has been destroyed so badly that global possibilities and I think there's a global need in all continents.

Humans have changed in natural environments a lot. There is hardly any places on the planet where you don't see the human impact, especially if you consider all the animals that have gone extinct or have had the number of the animals, how much they have reduced by human activities.

How do you select suitable candidate species for rewilding, and what are the criteria that you consider in this?

There are some guidelines set by everyone in Europe for this, and these are, I think specific for Europe. For example, they have made the recommendations of, for example, what kind of horse species to use in different areas in Europe. The main point in general when you're choosing species is to start from the area and what is missing? What kind of functions are missing in that area? And then to understand if a reintroduction is needed to restore some missing process. There are some successful examples of introducing even completely different species than the original that has gone extinct.

For example, in some cases on islands, there has been a local turtle species that has gone extinct and they have introduced a different turtle species successfully to replace it. But this, of course, needs to be done with extra caution. For me personally, I find the extinction of large grazers in Europe to be very important. We used to have animals called tarpan, vicent, and aurochs and these animals are like they are horse, bison and cow for like in a normal age.

The bison is a European bison, and we have a lot of smaller species that depend on these ecosystems that these big craters used to maintain. In Finnish, we call it, 'perinnebiotooppi', but I think that's a very Finnish term. So it's really the open grasslands that used to exist metres and that started to change already one very long time ago because the hunted those animals into extinction already a long time ago, some of them or the majority of those animals. So the wild horse in Europe was still alive in 1890, something that's been in the last one died.

So a little bit more than 100 years ago, we lost the last wild horse. But of course, before that, already majority of the individual wild horses had gone extinct a long time ago. The wild cow 'auroch' we lost in the 17th century. The last one died, but also those were hunted to small numbers, long time before that, and then there's the European bison, the descent, and that went almost completely extinct. It went extinct in the wild during the First World War.

The last ones were in Poland, and the story goes that the Germans, maybe also Polish people ate them. But we had at that point of time, we already had zoos, and some of the individuals were saved, preserved in the zoos and protected people have been rebuilding the Russian population, and today, or at least before the war in Ukraine, we had around 9000 European bisons, European vicent, half of them in the wild, but many of them in Russia, Belorussia and Ukraine in those areas that they're now fighting with this war.

That's a very unfortunate impact as well. Yeah, But there's kind of basically still some population of these animals existing. So there is in that sense, some hope.

We do not have the horse and we the original horse is lost. We have a wild horse in Mongolia. It's a different species from the original European one. On the other hand, I mean that the horse is the domestic horse, it used to be wild one day. It was not born in captivity, the ancestors were wilds, and some of the more old species are more hardy, and I mean, we have accidentally wild horses in the U.S. The runaway horses have become completely wild and feral and survive in the wild very well.

The license we have now in the wild because we have returned them, and when it comes to aurochs, we lost that species. But now because we still have DNA samples of these animals, so they have been comparing those DNA samples of the extinct species to some of the European cow species, and they have found that we still have the genetic material to some degree, and there is a project that they are doing what they call back breeding.

So they are crossing these different European old cow species to get an animal that is more close genetically and the way it behaves and looks to the extinct species. So we are rebuilding, rebuilding this animal to some degree, at least with the very traditional breeding methods.

That's super interesting. I think that you actually partly answered already. How does rewilding contribute to biodiversity conservation?

Yeah, I should clarify that these animals are important for they are what they call an ecosystem architect. So they are maintaining an ecosystem that many other species are dependent many birds, many plants, many insects are dependent on an ecosystem that is maintained by these big animals, and the domestic animals in the past were doing this work.

We had also in Finland, we had the cows running almost wild in the forest and on the meadows. There was maybe a small children were taking care of them that they don't get lost. But this was still close to what used to be the wild state, also, when it comes from the point of view of the plants, for example, and, there was one species I still wanted to also mention is beaver, because beaver is also an ecosystem architect, that is maintaining ecosystem, entire ecosystem of its own.

It builds a dam and it creates these wetland areas that have a many different kind of functions in the nature, and so very important keystone species, and we have beavers in Finland, we could have had more of them and they have been reintroducing beavers to UK, for example, where it's gone extinct.

And yet these were the kind of most important species that I'd been thinking of for Finland. Then, of course, the predators are also important, but we have those in Finland, so we have no need to reintroduction for those they have been discussing, reintroducing some predators in the UK. But I think so far nothing has been done on that in practice.

Yeah, very interesting. Can Rewilding be used as a tool for climate change mitigation and adaptation?

It can, depends on a different area, of course. It has been used for adaptation already in the Netherlands by wetland restoration. They have some really nice, interesting projects that I have visited, especially like the one in the Millingerwaard area that they have restored out of normal industrial farmland. They have converted it back to wetland by the River Rhine to help to prevent flooding. So they use those areas for then the river is rising. They use them these areas to help a little bit to lower the level of the river, to letting the water flow into these restored wetlands. This is one adaptation strategy.

I think also one adaptation, and what you should do is connecting natural areas to each other. So because then the climate is heating, the different species, they need to move north. Now at the moment, if you have the problem in Europe that all of our natural areas are very disconnected, small fragments here

and there, and we need to reconnect those areas so that the animals can move then the climate, how do you say, the climate areas are moving towards north, the animals also need to move and this is important.

The corridors?

Yeah, the corridor, and we need to build this kind of green corridor so that they can adapt to the changes. Also by improving biodiversity we can increase resistant to many pests. For example, if you have an industrial forest only with one species of tree, same age, that is much more in the risk of being impacted by a pest, due to the climate is changing.

If you have different kind of trees in the forest, the forest is much more resistant to do this to the warming of the climate. Although in Finland we have peatland restoration. This is rewilding. Also, if you take a completely, destroyed peatland and we can restore it, it stops emitting carbon, and this is one way to help reduce the carbon and carbon emissions of methane emissions, and then there is also.

One mechanism that I find important is not maybe so relevant for Finland, but in Siberia they have the permafrost. And there has been a research done by a respected Russian scientist that when you have, these big animals grazing during the wintertime, the animals are digging the snow, removing the snow, stomping the salt snow, and this exposes the land to the more cold air, which again, means that the ground is freezing, it's getting more cold, because if you leave the snow on top of the ground, it's a very good insulator.

So this the land doesn't freeze so deeply during the wintertime. So if you have grazers, be courageous like bison grazing there, then the ground is freezing more deeply and that helps to keep the permafrost frozen, and this, again, is very important because under the permafrost we have lots of reserves of methane, which is a very powerful climate change gas.

And if the permafrost melts, it means all this gas is released into the atmosphere, and this could be really a big catastrophe. So this could be one way to protect the permafrost is to have these large craters to return back.

Yeah, there's lots of this kind of interconnections and impacts that one doesn't actually think.

But yeah, and unfortunately, we don't know all of them. It maybe seems that we only learn about them and when something goes wrong and we already destroy something. Yeah, there's also some more complicated connections like the, we know that forests are storing carbon, but also grasslands are storing because they actually store the natural grasses store quite a lot of carbon underground in their roots.

The roots can be several metres long and this is actually very well stored carbon because if you have a forest there's always a risk that the forest catches fire and burns and then the carbon is released. But even if a grassland is burning the roots on the ground, they don't burn, and they are kind of protected from burning. So in that way, it is maybe a better way of storing carbon.

Also there is something that is not so often discussed is called albedo effect, and this is especially strong in the Arctic regions, and with albedo effect, I mean, the reflection from the ground. So in the wintertime, it's actually quite a big difference, if you have a spruce forest. It's a very dark forest because it doesn't drop the needles, so the sun is shining on that forest and it's all there. It's converted into heat and when it meets the dark forest.

But if you actually have grassland covered by snow, that is then reflecting all the light back to the space, and this has a considerable effect on the heating of the planet also, and this somehow has to be balanced with carbon storage. So basically any forest on the equatorial area is a better carbon storage because it doesn't affect the albedo in the same way as the Arctic forest do. But yeah, there's this some sort of balance and it's different on different reasons. So this is connected to the graziers also. It's a bit more complicated topic.

Yeah, quite complex actually. Yes, you start thinking about all the relation.

Yes, it's so complex.

I have actually read about that like the big animals, like how they gummed the ground up with the snow like that the ground gets more like cold air because there was like in Norway there was this legal debate about that there should be like less reindeers than there is like for the moment, and like the government of Norway wanted to like kill those reindeers and the ones that owned them didn't want to do it because they wanted to have like all of them, because they knew that how good it is for the nature and the government. They think something like it's bad for the environment and is bad for the climate change and something like that, even though it was just the contrary. So they were like saying that's the opposite, but it was actually for the nature. It was better for the nature to have all of them there. Like they were more like, slowing down the climate change there.

Yeah, they are very complex processes and we need to pay close attention to the scientists, and we need to understand that this is also not an easy topic for the scientists. So there are many aspects, but the best knowledge we get from the scientists. So we need to listen to them on this.

And yeah, there are many times it's also like with the bison, for example, there is the fact that they are a ruminant species. So they also release methane. So they do have impact on the permafrost and help it to keep frozen. But on the other hand, they do release methane, and you need to understand all this and to see what is the balance.

Then again, horse, for example, is not and horse does not release climate change gases of greenhouse gases. So maybe horse is a better choice in that way. But yeah, there's so many things connected, you need to be careful that you say that this is not preventing climate change or not.

Yeah, I have a different kind of question or different kind of the subject here. I was wondering that is there any harm for animals or ethics in nature based stories such as lions watching when the ecosystem is still recovering and there are animals that are just returning to the wild or like rewilding, people want to get the like do the animals return to nature? So is it bad that there's like people like there's crowds watching those animals?

Yeah. I think in general when you do, even if there's no people around, if you're releasing wild animal to a new location, I find that you are responsible to make sure that that wild animal can survive there, and of course, this is the point also. We don't want to release them so that they will just die there. We want them to do well. Maybe they don't even like usually when they reintroduced bisons to Romania for example, they have the local people where there it was not actually tourists, it was the local people because the local people in Romania still know that bison is part of their nature.

It's like they don't remember it. It was before that time, but they still have kind of the cultural knowledge that bisons used to be there in the forests, and a lot of the local people wanted to come and welcome the animals back and maybe even singing songs to these animals, mentally retarded, which was pretty cool I think, and but these animals, they were released first, then released in this enclosure, then they monitor it for a while.

But along the way I actually to see that they can adopt and they can find enough food and they are okay there, and only after that period of time they release them really into the wild, and even after that, of course, you still keep monitoring. They have radio collars, and they can follow how and see how the animals are doing. So, yes, then we return animals. We should pay attention, even though we know that some animals have been released by accident and they have done very well.

But when we do it intentionally, we should pay attention also how does it go? And you may be right also that if there are larger crowds that are interested in an animal we might need to limit that, we do

limit the x axis of some bird nesting areas already in Finland. So this is already in place in some areas and birds are nesting ee don't want people to go to those areas.

In Netherlands they have some large areas that are completely closed from the public only for the nature, and they say that they want to have some area in the Netherlands to be only for the nature because it's such a crowded country, and otherwise there would be just too many people. So yes, maybe it's not so relevant for Finland, but in some places, yes.

Yeah, there's like people will want to watch like, I don't know if it was bears and then it was on what else, reindeers and something like that, but not that much like different animals that people want to watch like in the wild.

Maybe they have also not marketed so well. So, one of our team is actually organising this moose watching safaris, to Porkkalan niemi and I took one of his trips, and it's really cool. You see a lot of moose and just by walking, and I think most tourists don't know that it's a possibility to see a moose in the nature. I think they would be interested if their news was of course, it's not the whole year, it's certain time of the year. But that's how it is with the whale watching, although you don't see them all year on.

So we haven't advertised it, really, not for the south of Finland. Yeah, and I know that the bear watching and wolf watching the location to have in eastern Finland is hugely popular. I think it was sold out for months at some point and it's not very cheap.

Yeah, so bear watching. That's something that I need to look into. But would you say there's any negative impacts of rewilding, that needs to be addressed, such as confidence with human activity or maybe even the introduction of invasive species.

I have no knowledge of invasive species being introduced by rewilding projects. Usually invasive species are introduced unintentionally by farmers, accidentally or intentionally by hunters. Like we have several invasive species that have been introduced by hunters, and some of them are not even officially called invasive like the I don't know how is this in English? The wild white tailed deer that is an invasive species from from US. But it's been released intentionally, but they are not even trying to remove it because it's a good game species.

But and then of course, you have animals escaping from fur farms as such, but I do know that there might be conflict with human activity or the local people. So this is why it's really important to work together with the local people from already from the start if you want to succeed. So I know that, for example, some like that flooding area, the wetland they restored in the Netherlands, there was resistance from the local farmers originally and the people didn't want to they wanted to keep farming and they were not interested in turning it back into wetland, but they handled this quite well.

I think that the the government in the Netherlands gets land from the farmers or die without offspring or anyone to take care of their land. So they get some land like that, and usually they used to sell it all, but in that case, they actually didn't sell the land they get from people who have died. But instead they offered these these farmers who were farming this area that wanted to be restored into wetland.

And they offered that they can change to a do not have a place to farm, that there is actually better for farming because this area that was not very good farming land because it used to be a wetland and it was having problems with wet soil all the time. So in the end, many of the farmers changed to a new location and we are quite happy about it. One of the farmers at least stayed, but instead of farming, he started the cafe. And this a very beautiful cafeteria in the middle of this restored wetland.

Now today's it's like the project is 30 years old and I visited this cafe and it's a lovely place and it's a very good business for the farmer. And the farmer is not missing his farming business anymore because the cafe is going so well. So there are conflicts. Sorry?

The poor wetland took effect.

It was really charming place and it was full of people. So yeah, so you can but you have to support people, and it's a big change. Of course, if you go from farming to having a coffee, it's a big change or if you go to a tourism business, it's a big change.

There's also Connect Farm in the UK that was unprofitable farm and they were struggling financially and they realised they can't keep farming because the the soil is not very good. And so they got this idea of rewilding and they turned the farm in a rewild land and started the tourism business and it's going very well and it's become really popular there.

And actually a lot of other farms have copied, copied what they did. So you can find various, but it's not always easy and you have to be innovative when you do that. And it's really important to consider the people and their needs and to find a benefit for them in the process. I could also imagine that in Finland there's a possibility you have a conflict with the industrial forestry, like what we are having already anyway, and then we are discussing the carbon carbon storage and on the on protecting nature.

It's a conflict of interest with forestry for the landowners. You have to find something else to replace it of some sort of a deal, I think. So if you are rewilding an area, you can't do intensive logging, you can do some forestry like rewilding is not so strict that you can't use land at all anymore.

You can have different kind of solutions and this kind of continuous growth in the forest, for example, we can still keep doing some logging, but not the traditional intensive logging. So yeah, you have to be innovative, and I think that's part of the principles for rewilding Europe that we need to find this kind of new ways to live with the nature in a way that benefits everyone.

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I also remember that we learned a similar concept that you just talking about in our course in sustainable organising, right. So like I was wondering, what are some of the ethical considerations that need to be taken into account when reintroducing species into the work? If you can share your perspective on that.

Yeah, we need to have first of all understand if the area is really suitable for the fish species. And that's like I already explained earlier, we need to do a monitoring of the animals and their well-being. We can't just abandon the animals in the wild. And especially when our landscapes are not really like natural anymore, they are all dominated by human activity. So that's also a reason why we need to pay attention.

And if the animals are kept in a fenced area like they are in the Netherlands, for example, and I think in Finland that would be the most meaningful way of doing it in the at least in the beginning. Then we have some sort of ethical responsibility for their well-being, especially like because if they are not moving freely in the wild, we need to take care of the animals.

There is kind of a context of some disagreement or some discussion because in the nature there are always animals that die out of natural causes. There are always animals every winter. Also in the Finnish forest, animals that die because they are too weak. They don't find enough food and they die because of that and they starve to death.

And this is a natural process, especially also for bigger animals. So in this world, for example, bison, when you have a grown up big bison, we really don't have any predators anymore that would kill such an animal, even in the wild. So these animals, in the end, more likely to starve to death in the winter and then to be killed by their predators, for example.

But I think if you have a fenced in area, you need to manage the animals like more like domestic animals in this respect is otherwise it would be ethically like not acceptable. Although we still should consider, I think, if possible, that it is natural to have dead animal bodies in the nature. This is part of the process. Unless we want to remove some nutrients if the area is like having too much nutrition. Like many areas

in Finland are, then we should remove the dead bodies. But when we leave a dead animal body like a bison, let's say, into a natural area, it's going to feed a number of other animals, birds and small predators, even wolves like this kind of dead animal in the landscape. It's feeding many different species for weeks in the wintertime, and this is also natural. It has not been considered acceptable, but this is something we should have as part of the natural process to have dead animals in the wild.

And still contributing to the system

And that in the nature you should have those institutions going back to the nature also. But yes, in Finland many areas have kind of been almost polluted by too many nutrients. So those areas you should then remove external nutrition. And then if you have like the if the number of animals is growing because they are not predators, then we should dream of the extra animals.

And everyone in Europe actually have some kind of a program for that, they called it a wildlife bank, that you can get animals from other areas as kind of a loan and you pay it back as the younglings that you get the young animals and you get baby animals, you keep them back. So to be moved to new rewilding areas again.

Thank you for your answer, and I would like to ask you other question like what role can local communities play in rewarding efforts and how can they support such initiatives?

Yes. These two principles that we have acting in context and building nature based economies, they are both important to to understand the local people, understand their history and communicate with the people, work together with the local people, finding solutions and ways for everyone to work and live with the healthy, natural, vibrant ecosystems.

And, then the nature based economies... The rewilding has taken off really well in those areas in Europe where the farming has been going down. There's a lot of areas in Europe where the people are not doing the traditional farming anymore because it's just not profitable enough for them anymore. The young people they don't walk one to walk with the goats in the mountains anymore. They rather go to the cities to work. And in those areas, there has been a lot of opportunities to start nature-based economies like creating new opportunities to get like tourism business or having bees, how do you call it beehives, and different kind of new kind of economies. And I think here in Finland especially, I mean, we have tourism in nature, tourism in Lapland. But I do think we have a big potential also more in the Southern parts for nature-based tourism, if you want to go into this direction and the fact that this place is great. Yeah, like this bear watching place where they charge you hundred or more euros to see a bear and you still have to queue for months to get the opportunity. I think this is a good example of how much how much demand we actually have for this kind of business. And we could have more of that in Finland. We have not been very actively promoting it and having rewilding areas in south of Finland, with may be wild horses with the wild European bison. I see a lot of potential in that for also nature-based tourist economics opportunities.

When I visited Lapland during my visit, I saw many families that were tending reindeers and huskies. It was good to know that they are doing tourism in that Lapland area, especially for tourists.

Yeah. And there's one thing that I find exciting also about Finland is I find that not every area like this, these what they call big five of Europe, you know, there's a big five of Africa, the big impressive animals there and there something that's called big five of Europe. And we have most of those animals actually the bison is missing, but we could have big five of Europe and I could see potential in promoting big five of Europe. If we would have this kind of rewilding area there, we could have all these animals present.

So I think it's just yeah, it really depends what kind of area we could create. For example, this bear watching place they use, they bring that piques I think there to bring in the animals. It would be even

better if we could have a rewilding area where maybe we could have naturally died grazers and like natural sites where you have like the same way as in Serengeti. You go there, you drive around and they find that, okay, here the lions have last night they have killed a zebra and this is what you want to see a real the real thing. And if we would have a rewilding area like that in Finland, it would be unique. It would really be a big attraction, I think. Yes.

Sounds really something we would all like to do definitely. What do you Aino actually see as the next steps for the rewilding movement?

I think a scaling up is the most important part. And if here in Finland we really need to get started, we have the peatland restoration projects that are going well. That's actually another business model there is the Lumimuutos Change Cooperative, so Snowchange cooperatives who are doing this, restoring peatlands. And they get financed, I think at least by Finnair, because when they do that, when they restore the peatland, they stop the carbon that is getting released from there. And this is something that Finnair is then again, selling as a compensation for the customer. So if you buy compensation, it's a small sum of money. Usually, I always buy it. If I have to fly, then they use that money to do these kind of projects where they stop the carbon from being released. All of the carbon is stored and it has also a good business model there.

But I would like to see these kind of grazing areas to be created here in Finland because at the moment we have a problem. There's a lot of large number of animals that are endangered in Finland are actually species related to grassland areas or grazing areas and we don't have enough this specific set of rules that an area can be considered the natural grazing of this kind of traditional by a type.

And for example, you cannot feed those animals, which means that they are not very productive as an industrial, you can't use industrial production. I don't want for that. And so they have a challenge at the moment to find animals to grazed these areas that we need to maintain to offer over the environment for these endangered species. So I think in Finland it would be really important that we could have these rewilding areas, there would be larger areas of grassland and where would we have we could have natural grazing all around a year without human interference.

So it would be more cheaper. And and to kind of replace the old traditional farming animals we used to have. And then we can help that way we can help to preserve the endangered animals that we have that are connected to these grassland areas.

In Europe, there are some really inspirational initiatives. There are some really large areas that rewilding Europe is studying up. They have 10 now, and I can't remember how many they are targeting. There is one large area in Sweden and I would really want to have one in Finland. Rewilding Europe also really wants to have one in Finland. They have these areas the latest one is going to be in Spain and around that Cuenca area. It's going to be a super cool area. And we are going to have multiple of these initiatives, this really large scale project in Europe. They are already having them and I really want to see it in Finland also.

Yeah, and that movement is very active and operational and still in Finland there is room for improvement.

We are always the last one and somehow we are on the edge of Europe. Everything new comes here the last I feel and the whole concept is much more well known in other parts of Europe, is not so well known in Finland.

I personally was super excited when I was visiting Millingerwaard. What I found that the fascinating area, how they have done this really boring, monotonous farming area into this really versatile landscape. It was a really beautiful place. I also was really inspired by the area I visited on the border of Romania and Ukraine a few years ago.

They had releasing horses and also wild, wild donkey and are called Kulan. I can go, I'm not sure I could see any fish and this kind of thing. So there are really exciting things already going on in Europe. I would love to see more stuff in the UK. The Knepp farm has been really inspiring thing. Yeah, so I feel this is really growing everywhere and I feel that in Finland we need to get on board with this to join in.

Yeah, I think so, too. Still that last question. Do you think is there anything we as individuals could do on an everyday basis? Do you have to rewilding in Finland?

Yes. In Finland, I find at the moment the most important thing is that we can all spread the word to talk about this, to discuss this and the possibilities. That is connected to rewilding, and we need to get the big institutions here in Finland to participate.

The more traditional conservation associations, the whole rewilding Europe was first started in the Netherlands by the WWF of the Netherlands. So these kind of institutions and also the government. Then this institution again impacted by the public opinion and we all are the public opinion, so we can all have an impact on the public opinion.

So I think this is very important to have anything in large scale. I think here in Finland you need to have the government involved also for the reason that we don't have in southern Finland, especially like these kind of big land owners that could do it on their own, and our land ownership is very fragmented, which makes it all more challenging if you want to do anything.

And then of course, if you are lucky enough to have a yard of land of your own, then you can do your own small scale rewilding project. You can turn your grass areas into into a flowering and natural grassland with native species. They are selling seed mixes for this with the finished natural it makes this for the grassland middle so you can do something like that on your own backyard.

I don't have a backyard. But if you have, you can do it. And I know that there are also I've been talking to people who have who are farmers, who have a farm and some of them are, people who are like, for example, passionate about birdwatching have been doing wetland restoration projects on their own land just because they want to have the wildlife on their own land for themselves to watch and for their friends to enjoy. And I think this is like super cool also. And you can get also financing for this from government bodies like Riistakeskus, the body that is managing them a wild game in Finland, for example they can support this even if you are restoring the wetland, not for hunting but for biodiversity, they are still giving you financial support to do this. So, there are different kind of projects, programs that we can use to do rewilding projects already, like today on your own home land if you have land.

And I'm really inspiring and it's possible for all of us to do something that, For the rebuilding.

Yeah. But I do find that.

Building up the activity around this and communicating is still super important. And this is something that everybody can do because we don't discuss this enough in Finland yet.

They have all the tools, they have the social media and everything, So very effectively.

Yes. And just also to read this multiple really good books, I would one recommend that is a book called Rewilding and about the history of rewilding in Europe and rewilding Europe history also and the current state. There is a book called Wilding, it's been written by the Knepp farm owner Isabella Tree. I can recommend it as a audiobook because she's reading it herself and she's got this really wonderful English and would read Nice the news into her. That was also a very good book. And then there are some documentaries also you can watch, you can see also you'll find some information on the Rewilding Europe webpage.

They have publications that are interesting, like I can recommend, for example, the publication on the horses how to Rewild Horses. They have like it's a leaflet kind of thing you can download it as a PDF from the bottom of the page, it's kind of hidden. There's the made says publications that you can find those guidebooks they have for rewilding and to read some of that stuff can also be interesting.

That sure sounds interesting. I need to check them out. Oh, Thank you very much for an interesting discussion on organising rewilding, and of course, we want to thank take the thank the listeners for your attention. So I know.

Thank you. Thank you very much for having me, and of course, everyone's welcome to our association. That's also one way to do impact. If you want to join in.

Thank you so much. One last question. What is your final message you want to convey to the millions listening?

I think the final message for me is that the future can be better if we want it so, and if you make it so, it's up to us. We can all participate.

So there you have a force. Listeners, please check out the websites <https://villiinnytyts.fi>, and <https://rewildingeuropa.com> to find out more of the topic. Thank you.

Thank you.