

Lonesome pines and An Camas Mor

Description

Trees for Life announced this week a new project to use old isolated Scots Pine to restore areas which were formerly covered in Caledonian Pine Forest.

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ANALYSIS, INSIGHT, OPINION

Project aims to stop lone pines being last of ice age

TIM BUGLER
NEWS REPORTER

CONSERVATIONISTS have launched an appeal to save Scotland's "lonesome pines".

The initiative, from Findhorn-based conservation charity Trees for Life, aims to prevent ancient Scots pines across the Highlands from becoming the last generation in a lineage of trees dating back to the last ice age.

The organisation hopes, through its Caledonian Pinewood Recovery Project, to help restore 50 areas of remnant and neglected pinewoods. They are mainly made up of lone, ancient "Granny" pines, which are over 200 years old but dying, with no young trees to succeed them.

The fragments of Scotland's ancient pine forest, scattered over a large area, face growing threats from tree diseases, climate change, and overgrazing by deer, and could disappear forever over the next few years.

Trees for Life says if they are allowed to die, the "extraordinary wildlife" dependent on them, including rare capercaillie and the crossbill, will be lost too.

The charity has already raised £150,000 for the project. It now needs to raise at least £20,000 from the public to be able to start the work.

Trees for Life chief executive Steve Micklewright said: "The Scots pine is Scotland's national tree and symbolises the Caledonian Forest, but the last fragments of these ancient pinewoods are dying.

"Without action, the chance to bring back the wild forest could slip away forever, with only the skeletons of these special trees revealing where a rich woodland once grew.

"We are determined to ensure these trees are not the last generation of Scots pine in these places. This project is one of our biggest and most crucial initiatives ever, and every donation will help save these precious fragments of our natural heritage."

In total, only some 42,000 acres of the

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original Caledonian pinewoods remain in 84 fragments, spread across a wide area from Loch Lomond, northwards to Ullapool, and eastwards to Glen Clova near Aberdeen.

Some of these have been largely restored but, according to a review of pinewood studies by Forestry Commission Scotland and the UK Government, at least 50% are declining and could disappear within a generation.

Currently, where seeds manage to germinate, the resulting saplings are often eaten and killed by deer.

The forest fragments are also isolated from each other, which is bad news for wildlife; red squirrels cannot reach and crossbills cannot reach restored woodlands from where they have been lost, while the rare capercaillie is rapidly declining in Scotland as there is little connected forest to enable them to reach a stable population.

Trees for Life says it is difficult to estimate the population of crossbills, but

It brought to mind An Camas Mor



â?!â?!â?!..where the isolated old pines now sit among regenerating forest.



A great example of rewilding ([see here](#)) and of what Trees for Life want to achieve.

Instead of using public money to build town here, the Cairngorms National Park Authority should be using An Camas Mor as the perfect example of what National Parks could achieve if they had more power over land-use and if they were left alone by the Scottish Government to do the job they were set up to do.

The designs for the new town, which appear excellent, could get used for somewhere outside the National Park – how about Cambuslang rather than An Camas Mor? – and small elements could be used to meet the need for more social housing in Badenoch and Strathspey.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. An Camas Mor
2. CNPA
3. rewilding
4. Scottish Government

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