

## England Species Reintroductions Taskforce

**Date and time:** 6th June 2024, 09:00-13:00

**Location:** Chelsea Parkfields, Pontshill, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 5TH

**Attendees:** Andy Clements (Chair), Sarah Dalrymple, Rachel Gardner, Jenny MacPherson, Geoff Hilton, Ben McCarthy, George Holmes, John Ewen, Delphine Pouget, Julia Touza, Karim Vahed, Mike Fay, Andrew Stringer, Will Stinson, Jeremy Sabel (Secretariat)

**Online:** Martin Lines, Andrew Stringer, Martin Gaywood (NatureScot), Mina Patel (Secretariat)

**Guest:** Jamie Kingscott-Edmunds (Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust)

**Apologies:** Jake Fiennes, Mike Shurmer

### Minutes

#### 1. Welcome from the Chair

Andy Clements welcomed attendees to the meeting.

#### 2. Minutes and actions from last meeting

Andy Clements asked members to confirm their acceptance of the previous minutes, noting that the agreed actions formed substantive items for this meeting's agenda.

#### 3. Sub-group updates

Andy Clements invited members to give updates on the following activity:

##### *3.1 Barriers and enablers*

George Holmes gave an update on the 6 month post-doctoral contract. The project is at the halfway stage with the literature review ongoing and interviews with stakeholders starting. The project will produce a comprehensive overview of barriers and enablers to more and better reintroductions in England and will hopefully lead to an academic publication. The themes covered include biological, ecological, governance and regulatory, organisational, socio-political. Emerging results indicate a need for a coordinated approach, ensuring long-term and holistic monitoring and evaluation and integrating social dimensions from the outset.

##### *3.2 Predator guild assessment*

Julia Touza presented progress on this project which has issued a survey with a deadline of 13<sup>th</sup> June to over 350 stakeholders asking them to consider hypothetical reintroductions of Golden Eagle, Dalmatian Pelican, Wolf, Lynx and Pine Marten and gathering the relative preference of stakeholders of criteria such as social acceptance, livestock impact, impact of natural processes and cultural value.

##### *3.3 Repository & database*

Sarah Dalrymple informed members that the survey to inform the database design will be sent out shortly with a deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> July. The intention is that stakeholders and projects from Wales and Scotland should be included. The subgroup will meet in mid-July to discuss results.

##### *3.4 Conservation grazing vs ecological replacement*

Andrew Stringer informed members that a comprehensive report has been written and will be shared with the group for comments.

### Actions

- Explore other ways of disseminating the findings of the barriers and enablers project, e.g. a blog, a workshop, conferences etc... (GH/DP/JS)
- Share results of predator guild assessment and final report at the next ESRT meeting (JT)
- Bring recommendations for the repository and database to the next ESRT meeting (SD)
- Read conservation vs ecological replacement report and consider whether to share/endorse/publish on ESRT website (all)

#### 4. Priorities for funding

Delphine Pouget presented the predicted budget for 2024/25 - £50K. Priorities for funding include the development of the repository and database and a potential commission to initiate work on assisted colonisation (to be discussed and defined).

Other options and **actions**:

- John Ewen suggested producing a decision support framework for Conservation Translocations, similar to that produced by the USFAWS (**AC/JS/DP to consider**)
- George Holmes suggested more public facing comms/outputs as a result of the barriers and enablers work (**GH to cost**)
- Assisted colonisation was discussed as a topic for the group to develop guidance on, including perhaps starting with a definition of what is considered to be native (**JS/DP to scope and cost an initial piece of work**)

#### 5. Comms and stakeholder engagement

Jeremy Sabel provided a summary of the next round of engagement that ESRT are carrying out to gauge hopes and concerns of stakeholders towards reintroductions in England:

- Botanists – 10th June, 10:00-12:00 - online
- Government bodies – 18th July, 12:30-14:30 - online
- Zoos/BIAZA – 21st October, 11:00-13:00 – In person, Chester Zoo

Jeremy Sabel summarised the Message House workshop held on 7<sup>th</sup> March that resulted in useful key messages that we want to get over and can be used when framing external facing comms.

Members were encouraged to come up with themes for external facing comms.

A logo was agreed for use in comms.

#### Actions

- JS to circulate Message House key messages and logo
- Isabelle Pashley (NE) to develop comms plan
- (All) commitment to develop a piece on a theme of their choice once a year (i.e. approx. 1 per month)

#### 6. Project Pine Marten presentation

Jamie Kingscott gave a presentation on Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's 'Project Pine Marten' which came to a close in May 2024 after a period of 3 years. Monitoring and volunteering will continue.

#### 7. Member updates

Andy Clements led a round table session on topical organisational news and wider issues related to conservation translocations. These included:

- Increasing liaison between NE/NatureScot and ESRT/National Species Reintroductions Forum (Scotland). Andy Clements attended NSRT meeting in May on Lynx
- Lynx - two current projects undergoing community engagement: (1) Missing Lynx - Kielder and (2) Lynx to Scotland – Cairngorms.
- ZSL/Kent WT/Blean Species Recovery workshop (May) – Report to come - John E would like feedback from ESRT members who attended (AC, RG, DP and JE to discuss)
- ZSL species work is increasing with a potential breeding facility at Whipsnade and Red-backed shrike being considered
- Forestry England’s focus in conservation translocations is not on rare species but on functions - so next on the list is fungi (soil translocations) and potential wood ant translocations.
- Buglife - 2nd year of project on Wart-biter cricket - scoping new locations. Looking at guidelines and feasibility.
- Buglife - Narrow-headed ant - translocations of mated queens to adjacent sites in Devon.
- Buglife - Crayfish project - sharing good practice in conservation translocations across Midlands - crayfish online hub on good practice will be revamped - appointed new officer for 3 years
- European Cooperation in Science and Technology Action Network – is drafting and will consult on seed collection protocols to improve genetic diversity of seed collections with a view to improving conservation translocations in future
- Forestry England analysis of White-tailed eagle diet from Isle of Wight shows no evidence of lambs or sheep being taken
- Forestry England carrying out desk based feasibility into wildcat reintroduction to Kielder
- University of Leeds PhD proposal for social science study into illicit reintroductions will be resubmitted in autumn 2024
- National Trust nearing completion of its 10 year strategy and features conservation translocations of threatened species
- WWT have just launched their strategy which is more habitat based and looking at natural processes/keystone species
- WWT will get involved in White-tailed Eagle feasibility study to SE Wales alongside Gwent Wildlife Trust and Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
- Black-tailed Godwit – captive breeding population being set up – with Natural England funding
- UK Treescapes - improving environmental, socio-economic and cultural understanding of the functions and services provided by UK treescapes in order to inform future decisions on woodland expansion and improved safeguarding and management
- Pine Martens reintroductions to England (1) Cumbria and (2) Two Moors (Dartmoor/Exmoor) - taking stock from Scotland
- Saving Wildcats (Cairngorms) - in year 2 now, good survivorship, next tranche will be released this summer Scottish Wildcat strategy being developed with input from IUCN.
- Guidance - native oyster translocation work just published: [New guidance provides advice for native oyster restoration in Scotland | NatureScot](#)
- Scottish Animal Welfare Commission are looking at welfare in conservation translocations
- BOU Avian translocation conference 12-13 November this year (online) – a few ESRT members presenting and on panel.

**8. Round up and date of next meeting – 26 Sep 2024, Isle of Wight**