

## Back to the future?

What do some conservationists wish for in Scotland in 10 years time? Here are some of their wilder dreams...

*"Cranes displaying near beaver ponds beside forests with Lynx roaming free."*

*"Beavers, wild boar, and Moose established. Realistic proposals for Lynx and serious discussion about Wolf."*

*"Land managers are informed about all possible reintroductions and are willing and happy to work in partnership to achieve this."*

These and similar aspirations were offered at a gathering at Findhorn in September 2008, in an event with a good proportion of ECOS' friends. This edition follows up that discussion, looking at prospects for the return of keystone species to Scotland and some of the land-use implications. And it's not a topic restricted to Scotland - many conservationists are hungry for more reintroductions in England and Wales, including beaver trials, which seem ever closer. But lest we get carried away, Dave Blake has news for us. When he searched for views amongst the shooting fraternity the feedback he got was very redneck - see later in the issue. There is inherent resistance, even to beavers in some quarters, let alone to what people perceive as snarly predators. We must recognise this strength of feeling and work with other camps of people, especially farming, fisheries and game, who could be allies if persuaded that reintroduced species make economic as well as ecological sense.

Meanwhile, traditional fire-fighting activity still dominates our wildlife management work across the UK. The English scene was examined by the Commons Environmental Audit Committee in its November report *Halting Biodiversity Loss* (see [www.parliament.uk/eacom](http://www.parliament.uk/eacom)). The Committee reports that the protected sites system is largely working, but beyond this there is *"dramatic biodiversity loss occurring in England"*. Local authorities, Regional Development Agencies, and even the Department for Communities and Local Government come under fire in the report, as they pursue economic development unconstrained by environmental factors. The Committee wants quick progress on the Government's promised ecosystem assessment for England, designed to set tougher conditions for potential wildlife impacts, and it wants *"a new target and vision for halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2020"*. These are promising words, but don't get your hopes up - the very week the report emerged, back across the border, Scottish Ministers approved Donald Trump's mega golf course on a serene stretch of wildlife-rich dunes, ignoring the SSSI status. The Rednecks are in government too...

Geoffrey Wain