

EXTRA EXTRA!

READ ALL ABOUT IT

The farming couple who struck gold by rewilding

This is an edited version of a story from
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Take a stroll through the classic English countryside of West Sussex, and you'll notice things becoming strange just beyond the village of Dial Post.

Here, a patchwork of tidy fields bordered by neat hedgerows becomes a bamboozling maze of flowery glades and thickets of hawthorn, blackthorn and sallow. Rabbits dart between billowing brambles, watched by a fallow deer sporting furry new antlers. Stranger than the unexpectedly abundant plants and mammals is the cacophony of birdsong — the common melodies of thrushes, robins and blackcaps but also songs virtually extinguished across Britain: cuckoos, nightingales and turtle doves. Oddest of all is a clacking noise that sounds like two hollow sticks being banged together.

“Isn’t it a great sound?” says Isabella Tree, landowner, author and now star of a new film, *Wilding*.

Tree was 18 when she fell in love with Charlie Burrell, also 18. In his 20s, Burrell inherited the Knepp estate. He was determined to make the old family farm thrive. After 17 years

of new crops, technologies and chemicals, he still couldn’t profit from Knepp’s heavy clay soils, which were waterlogged in winter and baked concrete-hard in summer. They were £1.5m in debt.

Then, in 2000, Burrell and Tree took a big, unconventional step: they stopped farming. Inspired by the theories of the pioneering Dutch rewilder Frans Vera, Burrell and Tree decided to “let go” of their acres, and introduce small numbers of cattle, ponies and pigs (and ultimately beavers) that would live wild and, through their grazing, engineer a new nature-rich landscape.

The film shows in full cinematic glory the burgeoning wildlife coming back. Over the last decade, Knepp has become a dramatic success story. Knepp is profitable even without counting government environmental payments. The film will only increase another measure of Knepp’s success: the visitors enjoying its 16 miles of footpaths, wildlife tours, glamping facilities, farm shop, cafe and restaurant.



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TRUE OR FALSE?

Not all news is based on truth. Do you think this story is based on true or false news?

Before animals are released as part of rewilding programmes they have to take a personality test.



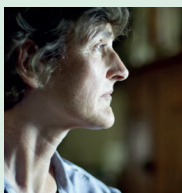
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Wilding by
Isabelle Tree
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Watch [the trailer](#) for the Wilding film, and see some of the wonders of rewilding for yourself.