

IN CONVERSATION WITH...



PAUL LISTER

Custodian of
Alladale Wilderness Reserve

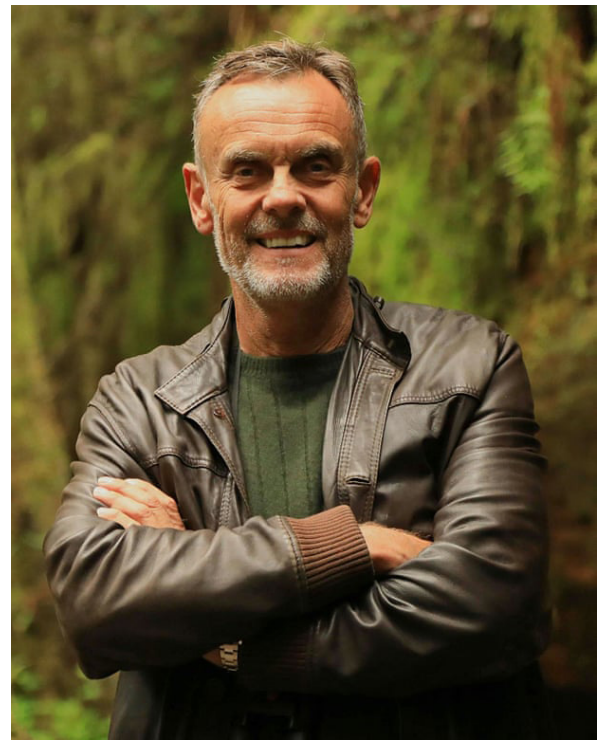


Image © Brenda Phillips





Can you lay out the different ways in which Alladale is carrying out rewilding across the reserve?

With the support of ICAP, we pioneered the restoration of Alladale's peatlands by blocking drains, producing a healthier landscape and sequestering carbon at the same time. In

partnership with the Scotland Rural Development Programme we have planted almost a million native trees, mainly in riparian areas. With the help of the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation we reintroduced red squirrels to Alladale and have established a wildcat captive breeding programme with the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland.

How did your relationship begin with Alladale?

After several years of searching, the 23,000 acres of Alladale came on the market in 2003. It was always my ambition to get involved with nature conservation in the Scottish Highlands and create a unique, eco-conscious tourism destination.

For 6 weeks each year we operate a 5 day Highland Outdoor Wilderness Learning (HOWL) programme, which offers a specially designed and expert-led, environmental journey for local school children.

Have there been challenges by doing things differently and how have you got people on board?

With a dedicated hard-working ranger team who fully understand the 'direction of travel' we have been able to just get on with our projects. We are all very proud of what has been achieved so far and really take pride in sharing with guests what we have been up to for the past 17 years.

When did ecotourism come to the forefront of business activities at Alladale and how have you been developing things recently?

For a number of reasons it took us a good while to 'crack' the eco-tourism business and gain a following, but for the last 5 years news of our hospitality operation has spread far and wide. We now have a healthy mix of yoga retreats, rewilding holidays, product & marketing launches, family celebrations and corporate workshops who come to Alladale for a remote wilderness experience.

How do you see the overall ecotourism market evolving as people become more environmentally conscious with their travel decisions?

Generally, I feel that under current circumstances people will find air travel more

challenging. This will lead to fewer trips, but for longer durations. As the concern for climate change, global warming and the extinction crisis grow, I hope people will opt for nature holidays with purpose by visiting those remaining wild and beautiful corners of the world and fall in love with them.

Any exciting future plans for rewilding/hospitality at the reserve?

We are currently completing the building of an extensive aquaponics garden centre which will supply most of our fruit and veg, making us increasingly self-sufficient. Our talented chef prepares humble & honest food from incredibly fresh ingredients for all our lodges.

Why should people have a visit to Alladale on their bucket list?

Alladale is located on the eastern side of the watershed and has less rainfall than some might believe, making for a very sunny destination. We are located at the end of a 12-mile single track road with no passing traffic or overhead aircraft. If you are looking for a place in the UK to unwind and reconnect then Alladale is for you. It is the fantastic Alladale team that is the icing on the cake!

**Join us for a
Wilderness Weekend
at Alladale Reserve**

