

Hoo knew ... showman owl surprises keepers by laying egg

Kaya Burgess

Kaln was always a particularly macho owl. He enjoyed “bonking things” and was described as a “showman” by his keepers, who had known him for 23 years. Which explains their surprise when he laid an egg.

The eagle owl arrived at the Barn Owl Centre in Gloucester aged 17 days, when he was classified as a male. Kaln had spent more than two decades

acting like a “hormonal man owl” when staff grew extremely concerned about his behaviour and posted an appeal for donations to fund veterinary care, worried that there was “something serious going on internally”.

The owl centre warned in an online post last Thursday: “Kaln being the powerhouse, showman and free spirit he is, has not been good today and we are very concerned we could lose him.”

It turned out that Kaln, whose weight



Kaln's odd behaviour had worried staff

had ballooned from 4lb to 6lb, was not ill. He was pregnant. Staff posted online: “He’s just given us the biggest shock of our lives. HE’S JUST LAID AN EGG!!!!” The egg is infertile so will not develop into a chick.

The centre has said that it will change the bird’s name from Kaln to Kalnee. “An amazing door closes and another one opens. Now we have tomboy Kalnee, which is so amazing.”

Eagle owls usually have a lifespan of

about 20 years in the wild but can live for more than 60 years in care.

The Barn Owl Centre had posted last week that it was “worried and scared” about Kaln’s strange behaviour, noting that he was “still quite young” for an eagle owl. “He’s a very fit owl, always busy with his visitors who enjoy flying him to the gloved hand or photographing him. More important, he’s never ill.”

Kalne was taken to a specialist avian veterinary surgeon yesterday.



TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES GLOSSOP

The Glenfeshie estate in the Highlands is owned by the Danish billionaire Anders Povlsen, who is “rewilding” the land by replanting trees and reintroducing species

Meet the philanthropist tycoons making wild investment choices

Harry Shukman

Billionaires looking to leave a legacy may once have plumped for their name on the wing of an art gallery or endowing an Oxbridge college.

Today’s brand of socially conscious and environmentally aware philanthropists are increasingly drawn to forest preservation as a way to “give back”.

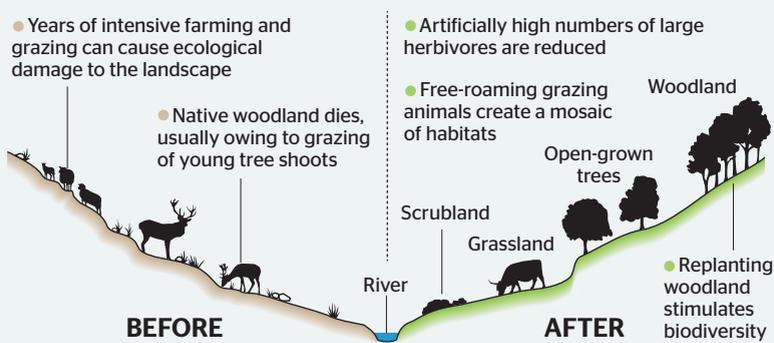
Its advocates call it investing in natural capital. One stockholder is Tim Sweeney, 49, the video game tycoon behind *Fortnite*, who has bought 50,000 acres in his native North Carolina.

He called on others to do the same: “Placing land into conservation has a permanent benefit for people and for ecosystems,” he said, and private efforts such as his were a “great complement to state conservation, bringing a degree of focused spending that couldn’t be justified with taxpayer funds”. He plans to expand his acreage.

Mr Sweeney is joined by Johan Eliassch, 57, the Swedish boss of Head, the sporting goods company, who bought 400,000 acres of the Amazon rainforest in 2005 to protect wildlife. Mr Eliassch said the need for billionaires to follow suit was urgent, adding: “Governments have shown they are incapable of dealing with issues and that’s what it comes down to: individuals. We all have to do things, not just talk about [it].”

The largest landowners in Scotland are also in on the movement. Anders

Rewilding: investing in natural capital



Povlsen, 46, the Danish Asos billionaire, and his wife, Anne, 41, who lost three of their four children in the Sri Lanka bombings at Easter, are trying to improve biodiversity via rewilding, which invigorates land by replanting trees and reintroducing species.

Thomas MacDonell, 54, director of conservation at Wildland, the Povlsens’ 200,000-acre project, said: “This investment will be realised in tens of decades. You’re investing in it for the future, it’s a bit like cathedral thinking. It’s ecology — a natural succession of habitats and it all takes time. It’s almost a gift for future generations.”

The motivation behind projects such as these, according to Isabella Tree, 54, co-owner of Knepp Castle in West

Sussex, where a rewilding project is under way, may be “eco-anxiety”. She said: “Giving has been sparked by this real ecological need out there to restore systems. If you’re thinking about leaving a legacy, this will benefit huge numbers of people and perhaps the planet rather than a tourist attraction.”

Her husband, Charlie Burrell, is involved in a project backed by Hansjorg

Anders Povlsen, 46, is Scotland’s largest landowner



Wyss, 83, the Swiss billionaire, to buy 500,000 acres in the Carpathian mountains in Romania.

Paul Lister, 60, heir to the MFI furniture fortune who runs a Highland rewilding operation, called on more philanthropists to prioritise environmental conservation. He cited the decision by the French billionaire François-Henri Pinault, 57, who promised €100 million to repair Notre Dame. “I hope there is a growing amount of philanthropists who are more concerned about the environment,” Mr Lister said.

However, Ben Goldsmith, 38, who runs the Environmental Funders Network, said: “There isn’t enough money to go around in philanthropic terms to save the land acre by acre. It’s much better that philanthropists

with cash to give away put it into system-change. It’s an environmental version of ‘Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.’ Let’s try to change laws, let’s try to change the way companies behave, let’s mobilise the public, let’s mobilise investors.”

Oysters bed down in the Thames once again

Rhys Blakely Science Correspondent

Oysters are to be reintroduced to the Thames estuary in the hope of reviving production of the shellfish on a scale not seen for centuries.

The oyster population of the Thames has suffered an estimated 95 per cent decline in the past 200 years, due to habitat loss, pollution and disease.

Human intervention is now the mollusc’s only hope, according to conservationists from the Zoological Society of London, and work will begin this month to build a new oyster bed in Essex.

Recycled shells from oysters bred in Mersea Island, Essex and sold in Borough Market in London and cockle shells from the Thames cockle fleet have been used to “lay the cultch” — a colloquial term used to describe the process of laying crushed shells and stones onto the estuary floor. This step is required because oysters need a hard surface on which to grow, not the muddy surface there at the moment.

Once the cultch-laying is complete, adult females, also known as mother oysters will be introduced. It is hoped that they will spawn in the coming weeks, beginning the first stages of the oyster’s life cycle.

Alison Debney of the ZSL said: “It may not be glamorous work, but laying mother oysters at the right time is vital to the success of the restoration programme, and therefore vital for the survival of this native British species.”

Oyster farming has been recorded in the Mersea region since Roman times, with the shellfish forming a staple part of the ancient British diet.

In 2010 Museum of London archaeologists analysing the thousands of seeds, pips, stones, nutshell fragments, shellfish remains and fish and animal bones found on the site of the Rose Playhouse on the South Bank realised that oysters were one of the most popular snacks for Tudor theatregoers. Others included crabs, cockles, mussels, periwinkles and whelks, as well as walnuts, hazelnuts, raisins, plums, cherries, dried figs and peaches.

The molluscs also create the conditions for other species to thrive, both by filtering water and providing food for coastal wildlife. One adult oyster can filter more than 140 litres of water in a day.

The project involves a coalition of oystermen, local communities, NGOs, universities and the government.

Rebecca Korda, senior marine adviser at Natural England, said: “We are thrilled to be part of this collaboration, which sees an array of stakeholders coming together and showing incredible innovation and drive to work to restore the native oyster and oyster beds back to the Essex waters.”