



continues, but it used to be worse and more widespread. The third element is that we have reintroduced some species such as bears in the Pyrenees, lynx in the Jura and vultures, and it has worked.

**They are here but in much smaller numbers than other parts of Europe. In your book you say there 1.5 million roe deer in France, 2.5 million in Germany, 2,000 griffon vulture couples in France, 24,000 in Spain. So France has still a long way to go?**

It is true but it depends on whether you look at a glass half empty or half full. If you look at it as a glass half full you see that we started from near-zero figures and now we have impressive numbers. In Brittany there were no more seals, but now there are more than 500 which have come over, without human intervention from the UK. That might make you laugh, because there are 120,000 in the UK. But it is superb they have come back to France and 0-500 is progress.

**What other animals would you like to see in France?**

At the end of the 19th century there were a handful of bison left in Poland, and so a reproduction programme was introduced. Now there are 5,000 in Europe and they have been reintroduced in Spain, Germany, Romania, and there is plenty of room in France to have bison living here, in the Jura for example. We need to accept that they could live here in the wild once again. We could also have elk here – they like humid, marshy forests and we have areas like that.

**Is it possible to have so many wild animals living back in France in a country which has a much bigger human population now?**

Of course. We have one of the lowest human population densities in Europe. It is not always necessary to divide a territory into human or wildlife areas.

There are many animals which will live happily alongside mankind. In Romania bears live near to villages. But in France wolves and bears are controversial and not everybody wants them nearby.

Those who complain are in the minority, but they make more noise than those who accept them. The wolves came back on their own from Italy because now there are enough wild boar, roe deer, red deer, chamois and ibex for them to eat.

There are 72 wolf packs now in the Alps and they do not survive by eating sheep, these are accidents that happen, just from time to time.

**What do you think needs to be done to continue rewilding France?**

We need to allow the forest to continue to grow and to leave it alone and not manage it. Fallen trees and old trees make a forest a richer ecosystem. We need to add to the list of protected species and stop barbaric hunting practises.

**Are you optimistic?**

Yes, because the figures prove we can be optimistic. But also because people are in general increasingly in favour.

Before two female bears were introduced into the Pyrenees in 2018, there was an IFOP opinion poll in France which showed that nearly 84% were in favour of maintaining the bear population, compared to 76% 10 years earlier.

The big challenge now is to ban all use of pesticides, so that the small wildlife of our everyday countryside, the snails, the butterflies, the birds, the frogs, can come back and that would be a really huge turnaround.

**Why should we encourage biodiversity?**

The politicians always want figures and economic figures. Some answers to satisfy them include the fact that forests beginning to grow near to rivers purify the water through their own filtration system, rather than having to introduce huge artificial systems and factories.

More forests mean better quality of water. Bats which live in forests are the biggest consumers of insects and will get rid of mosquitos and other harmful pests without chemicals.

Vultures will clean up the carcasses of farm animals which die of natural causes or illness. Many sheep die in the fields, far more than those eaten by a wolf. At present the farmer has to ring the authorities and pay to have the body removed. It is far cheaper and ecological to leave that job to the vultures.

People are ready to pay – often huge sums of money – to visit beautiful landscapes and see wild animals and we have a huge potential for eco-tourism. In Scotland, people pay to go and see the seabirds around the Shetlands and the seals and the ospreys. Why not in France? So there are thousands of reasons to welcome back our wildlife, but the greatest is the pleasure of living in a world which is rich and varied.

*Ré-ensauvageons la France*, Stéphane Durand et Gilbert Cochet, Actes Sud; *20,000 Ans ou la grande histoire de la nature*, Stéphane Durand, Actes Sud

**Stéphane Durand (left) says there are plenty of reasons to be optimistic about the state of nature in France, with wolf, bear and deer numbers among those on the rise**



## Wash and go green

After tourism and food, France's cosmetics industry is the latest to take the 'slow' lane to success. By Jane Hanks

### #trending

**W**e have had slow food and slow tourism – now the latest 'slow' is in cosmetics, which is beginning to influence a change in the type of products to be seen on our bathroom shelves.

More people are turning to solid shampoo in soap form, and recyclable bamboo toothbrushes.

Even the big companies are in a quest to be seen to be greener. In October 2018, L'Oréal launched its organic La Provençale range based on olive oil and sold in 100% recyclable packaging.

An association, called *Slow Cosmétique*, launched in Belgium in 2013. It has rapidly spread through Europe and is most active in France, where its spokesperson is Constance Sycinski: "In the past six years we have grown so that now we have more than 100,000 who are committed to our movement.

"There is a lot of coverage in the media and more and more people want to use products that are natural, good for the environment and good for our health."

The association of volunteers campaigning for eco-friendly change in the bathroom was created after a Belgian, Julien Kaibeck, published a book called *Adoptez la Slow Cosmétique*: "Every day we use on average 10 different lotions and creams and cleaning agents on our bodies," said Mrs Sycinski.

"Around 80% of those contain petrol derivatives, which is not good for the planet and not good for our health."

Every year the association awards a *Slow Cosmétique* label to companies that adhere to its principles.

This does not only include the ingredients but also the type of packaging, which must be minimal and recyclable, and its marketing strategy so it is sold as locally as possible. L'Oréal's new range will not be included: "It is no doubt organic and a step in the right direction," said Mrs Sycinski. "But this is only a small part of a huge company using synthetic materials which are gathered from all over the world, so does not comply with our guidelines."

In 2019, they warn people to be aware of another new addition to the language, "greenwashing", where products with pictures of flowers or fruit seem to be green,

but the list of ingredients would not be passed by *Slow Cosmétique*.

When they started, they gave the award to 13 brands. In 2019, that has risen to 188 and 90% of those are in France. To help the companies market their products they can be bought on the association's website, *slow-cosmetique.com*.

One is Comme Avant, a family firm based in Marseille and which makes soap, shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant and face cream, using a maximum of four natural ingredients, without fragrance or dye.

It started just two years ago when Sophie Lauret and Nil Parra wanted to find a soap which would not irritate the skin of their baby, who suffered from eczema.

"Even organic, off-the-shelf products did not work so I found a recipe and made my own soap and it worked," said Nil Parra. "Word got around, I started making more and developed other products. Now we are a team of five, we have taken 50,000 orders, we hope to open a small shop and we are looking for a sixth member of staff. I believe the public want to



**More and more people want to use products that are natural, good for the environment and good for our health**

understand what is in the products they are using and know that the ingredients are good for them and good for the planet. I really think this is a growing trend which is here to stay, and not just a buzz.

"We are taking ingredients our grandparents used and making products adapted to a 21st-century clientele and are learning all the time," said Mr Parra.

"When you use our shampoo your hair has to evacuate the silicones in classic shampoos and it might take a month or two to get really shiny hair with our product."