



TAY BEAVER

PHOTO RHONA FORRESTER

SWBG Newsletter



SCOTTISHWILDBEAVER.ORG.UK

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our fourth newsletter! We, the SWBG Trustees and helpers, have had another busy year topped off by the momentous and long awaited decision to afford all Scottish beavers legal protection.

Scottish Government Decision on Beavers

SWBG is absolutely delighted at Environment Minister, Roseanna Cunningham MSP's decision to give legal protection and native status to beavers in Scotland as announced on the 24th of November 2016. We would like to congratulate all our members and Social Media supporters and all the people who have campaigned so tirelessly for this historic outcome. The European beaver is the first mammal to

be reintroduced to the UK after being driven to extinction on our island.

The part played by the Tay Beavers in this long and fascinating story is not to be underestimated. By developing responsible tourism and enabling hundreds of people to see the animals without disturbing them, the growing public support has helped to bring about this decision. Furthermore the beavers themselves should be congratulated on their tremendous success, spreading across a huge area from Tentsmuir to the Dochart in a remarkably short period of time.

The hard work of the Tayside Beaver Study Group and the beaver officers that carried out the monitoring was also a vital part of the story. This established the health and genetic credentials of the Tay

Beavers beyond any doubt.

We have always agreed that there needs to be a well thought through approach to management, especially on some of the low-ground farms so we are happy that this has also been highlighted in the Minister's statement.

We look forward to collaborating with our allies in the conservation world to develop more public information, educational and volunteering programmes to support the spread of this fantastic keystone species about Scotland.

Louise Ramsay, Co-Convener SWBG

What next for Scottish Beavers?

Beavers are unfortunately not fully protected yet, while answering Angus MacDonald's question (S5W-04978) on

beaver protection Roseanna Cunningham stated, *"The intention is that beavers in Scotland will be given protection under the law as a European Protected Species as soon as is practicable after completion of the Assessment processes."*

Roseanna has also responded to Mark Ruskell's 30/11/16 question (S5W-05173) about the expected timeline of beaver protection that the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is due for completion in January 2017 and that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) may then be required. Roseanna did concede that, at present (13/12/2016) *"It is not illegal to shoot a beaver"* however this is strongly discouraged. At SWBG we would like to see the assessment processes carried out swiftly and effectively to allow legal protection preventing unlicensed shooting of beavers to commence as soon as possible in 2017.

Another aspect of the wider debate is now to consider the distribution and spread of beavers in Scotland. Currently we have two populations that are thought to be entirely isolated. The Knapdale population is very small and in order to survive will require its numbers to be supplemented

by unrelated individuals to allow for successful genetic diversity of the population in the future. Trees for Life recently issued a statement outlining their desire to see beavers reach the Northwest Highlands where they have carried out extensive planting. Currently it is thought that the Great Glen is likely to be a geographical barrier to beavers naturally colonising these areas. Trees For Life's chief executive Steve Micklewright said, *"the only way to be sure they will return to the northwest Highlands would be to give them a helping hand."*

We agree in some places licensed translocations will be necessary to secure a viable future for beavers.

An Intern for SWBG

In autumn 2016 SWBG Trustees made the decision to take on an intern with the aim of progressing the charity further. Our successful applicant is Kirsten Brewster from Dundee who has been taking up her new post with great enthusiasm since November.

Like many of our supporters Kirsten had been following news of Beavers in the Tay catchment with interest since 2011. Kirsten says: *"My interest in the Tay beaver population stems from my passion to*

conserve native Scottish species."



Kirsten's background is an MSc in Conservation and Sustainability and a BSc in Zoology as well as volunteering experience with the RSPB, SNH and Plantlife in both practical reserve management and social engagement events. With this addition to our team at such a pivotal time for Beavers in Scotland we are hopeful that over the next year we can really grow the charity and expand upon our public engagement activities to promote education about beavers and mitigation of beaver conflicts. We also plan to drive membership and offer more to our members while continuing to be advocates for Beavers in Scotland and further afield.

Educational Visits to Schools in 2016

"In May 2016 I did a beaver presentation to the Junior Science class at Strathallan

School. The pupils were full of enthusiasm and really enjoyed hearing and learning all about our beaver ecosystem engineers. They also enjoyed feeling the beaver pelt, looking at photos and bark chippings. Their teacher, Mrs Julie Summersgill has asked me to do one yearly, which I am more than happy to do."

Rhona Forrester, Trustee

Dear Mrs Forrester

Thank you so much for visiting us in class I very much enjoyed your talk about beavers I came away knowing a lot about beavers. The leaflet and pictures were very nice and I especially enjoyed touching and looking at the things you have collected. I think it is a very interesting hobby. And once again thank you for visiting us!

From Chloe 1J

SWBG look forward to a new programme of school visits in 2017.

Tree Wrapping

On Saturday 17th October 2016 we had a morning meeting in Bridge of Earn to do some tree wrapping along the public path side of the Deich Burn. I was joined by Paul and Louise Ramsay, Jean Oudney, Alan Wilkinson, Alan Ross, Ellie Stirling and Eddie Palmer. It was a lovely rainy day but it didn't stop our top team of volunteers! Alan Ross was our great adviser on which trees

should be our priority to wrap and we got lots done in our two hours. Paul and Louise kindly donated some of the wire to do the job. Having done lots of voluntary tree wrapping myself on the residents side of the Burn since October 2014, it was great to have so many join me for the public side and I'm very grateful to all of the above mentioned volunteers. Thank you!

Rhona Forrester, Trustee



SWBG are available to be contacted for free beaver advice and help. This includes a free volunteer tree wrapping service for anyone who has a valued tree close to a waterway with beavers or information about flow devices and other mitigation.

Advice & Help: 07761104305

TREE DOWN!

This has caused a fair bit of interest up at Aberfeldy recently. Within a few days of

Roseanna Cunningham MSP announcing that beavers would be allowed to stay in Scotland and receive legal protection, they started to take down this tree just off the main road between Aberfeldy and Kenmore.



There is a long, narrow strip of mixed riparian woodland between the road and the Tay, and the beaver or beavers had went through and taken down about six of the willow trees on that stretch. Most of them were taken down parallel to the road, and you couldn't really see them properly, but this one fell towards the Tay, and was spectacularly visible, especially given the wide area of bark chippings around it. It looked like the Aberfeldy beavers were out having a big celebration meal.

Apparently, it took four evenings to bring the tree down. Henry Murdoch from Aberfeldy put up a video on Facebook, and it caused a lot of interest among people usually not associated with the Save the Free Beavers

Facebook site. Some were positive. Some were admiring. Others were aghast, and wondered what the Scottish Government was letting itself in for? One person suggested we need to start logging these beaver incidents. Another, playing on the name of Henry's band, Trees Don't Travel, suggested this tree will most definitely now travel once the river comes up a bit.

On a more serious note, if one of these trees comes down across the road, who is liable for it? Landowners are liable for trees on their property, and they should by right check annually to make sure there are no dead or obviously dangerous trees near roads. What would happen if a beaver felled a tree down around a bad bend, with very little warning given?

This is the sort of thing that we are going to have to work out in relation to these animals. All new and exciting in some ways, but with problems to resolve as well.

Victor Clements is a woodland advisor working in Highland Perthshire.

"Tree felling by beavers may save millions in flood repairs"

As the Herald article of 21st December says Ben Notley, National Trust for Scotland property manager in North Perthshire confirmed the presence of beavers on NTS property at The Hermitage, near Dunkeld. Mr Notley stated that Alders were recently planted by the Hermitage site and that he expects that Beavers will coppice the trees in future thus promoting new growth at no cost. As a result the NTS

believes that Beavers will reduce their costs arising from flooding and that there may be a significant impact as beavers spread.

Have you seen any Beaver signs, or sighted any Beavers or Kits this year?

Share your stories or photos on the Facebook page: **Save the Free Beavers of the Tay** or get in touch with us if you'd like them added to the next Newsletter or our Website.

scottishwildbeaver@gmail.com

If you haven't done so already have a look at our website

scottishwildbeavers.org.uk

We can also be contacted through our Twitter @TayBeavers.

Photo supplied by Rhona Forrester.



Scottish Wild Beaver Group Trustees

Patrick Stirling-Aird. Sue Stirling-Aird. Rhona Forrester. Jean Oudney. Louise Ramsay. Paul Ramsay.

We can be contacted on scottishwildbeaver@gmail.com and a quick response is guaranteed.

We are looking to organise Social Engagement events in the coming year so please let us know if there are any fairs, gatherings or events that you think we could attend.