



WHAT IS THE SCOTTISH BEAVER TRIAL?

This is the first formal reintroduction of a mammal to the United Kingdom.

The Scottish Beaver Trial involves the release and monitoring of a small number of beavers in the Knapdale area of Argyll under licence from the Scottish Government. The Trial will determine if the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland is beneficial to people and wildlife, and if other more widespread reintroductions of beavers to Scotland should take place.

Between 2009 and 2014 the Trial will assess the impact beavers' activities have on the local environment and how well they settle into their new habitat here in Scotland.

The Trial is a partnership between the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and the Scottish Wildlife Trust, and is taking place on land owned and managed by Forestry Commission Scotland. Scottish Natural Heritage have been appointed by Scottish Government to coordinate the independent scientific monitoring of the Trial, and ensure the licence conditions are addressed on site.



WHY ARE BEAVERS IMPORTANT?

Beavers are a missing part of our native wildlife and biodiversity. They can significantly influence the survival and abundance of other wildlife by their felling and damming behaviour. They are natural engineers and can help to regulate flooding and improve water quality. Beavers also feed selectively and assist with the restructuring of forests.



WHY KNAPDALE?

Knapdale Forest is the right kind of countryside for beavers. The area is covered by mixed forest, with a number of small freshwater lochs and interconnecting burns. The site is large enough for any population expansion during the Trial.



OUR BEAVERS

Three beaver families, originally captured in Telemark, Norway, were released in Knapdale in May 2009.

The Scandinavian beaver is considered to be the closest type to that once found in the UK and the Telemark terrain has many similarities with the landscape of Scotland. They were released after completing a six-month statutory quarantine period.

BEAVER BASICS

- Beavers were once widespread across Europe but numbers dwindled due to hunting. By the 16th century they were extinct in Scotland and the UK. Since the 1920s beavers have been reintroduced to 24 European countries.
- The beaver is the largest rodent in Europe, measuring around a metre in length and weighing around 25 kg.
- Beavers live in small family groups and have two or three young each year.
- They are active throughout the year and do not hibernate.
- Beavers are vegetarian, eating a wide range of plants and trees.
- Beavers prefer slow-moving freshwater streams and lochs. They live in waterside lodges, built of branches and mud, which have a submerged entrance allowing the animals to swim, dive and store food safely underwater.
- Beavers are superb swimmers; they have waterproof fur; webbed hind feet and a large paddle-like tail which aids swimming. The tail is also slapped on the water surface when a beaver is alarmed, before diving underwater and swimming away. They can stay underwater for up to fifteen minutes.
- Beavers have very strong incisor teeth which grow all the time. They are worn down by gnawing trees and wood. Beavers also have long claws on their front feet for digging, they can also use them to hold onto food.



SEEING THE BEAVERS

The release sites are around the Barnluasgan and Loch Coille-Bharr area of Knapdale Forest, west of Lochgilphead. At Barnluasgan there is a small car park and an information centre about the forest and the Trial. There is an easy access trail around Loch Barnluasgan (not a beaver release site) and a more demanding walk around Loch Coille-Bharr. Sightings of the beavers are more likely in the early morning and towards the end of the day. Visitors are asked not to disturb any wildlife, including the beavers and follow the Forest Code when visiting the forest.

TRACKING THE BEAVERS

Field staff and volunteers are involved in tracking and observing the beavers and following their movements and impacts throughout the Trial. This involves a variety of techniques including radio-tracking.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE TRIAL?

At the end of the Trial, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) will submit an independent report to the Scottish Government, based on the findings of the scientific monitoring programme. The Scottish Government will take account of all relevant information and then decide on the future of beavers in Knapdale Forest. If the beavers are believed to have benefited the area, then they may remain in Knapdale or even be allowed to expand to other areas.



Top; releasing the beavers, May 2009
Middle; radio tracking the beavers on the loch

www.scottishbeavers.org.uk

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Where Is It?

OS Sheet 55 NR766884 Nearest town : Lochgilphead.
Follow B841 (off A816) towards Crinan, turn left at Bellanoch onto B8025 (Tayvallich).

SCOTLAND'S BEAVERS



The Scottish Beaver Trial would like to thank all our supporters, including:



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BEAVERS IN
KNAPDALE,
ARGYLL