

SNH Report on Effect of Beavers on freshwater fish

The partnership project between the Scottish Wildlife Trust and the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland which is already conducting a five-year trial introduction of beavers in Scotland has welcomed a new report which reviews the effects of beavers on freshwater fish.

The report, which examines issues raised both in favour of and against the reintroduction of the beaver to Scotland, states that there are more references to the positive effects the presence of beavers can bring to fish populations than there are negative effects and that results of more than half expert respondents surveyed on the issue agree that the beavers impact on fish stocks is, on the whole, positive.

Allan Bantick, Chairman of the Scottish Beaver Trial Steering Group comments that: " the independent review of the effects of beavers upon fish and fish stocks is very much welcomed by the Scottish Beaver Trial partners: the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) and the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS). The review highlights the overall beneficial impacts of beavers on fish in general and the positive impact that beavers can have on the abundance and productivity of migratory salmon. It is particularly encouraging to note that the analysis indicated that for a greater number of [fish] species, beaver presence was associated with an increase rather than a decrease in productivity."

Simon Milne, Chief Executive of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, states: "It is entirely understandable that some anglers and associated organisations raised questions about the impact of beavers on salmon and other fish. However I very much hope that this report will allay their concerns and provide them with further evidence of the potential benefits of a beaver reintroduction. The report will provide very useful additional

information to the Scottish Government when the long term future of beavers is considered at the end of the Scottish Beaver Trial.”



DAVID WINDMILL

David Windmill, Chief Executive of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland also welcomed the study’s findings that the positive effects of beavers were greater than any negative effects and even where negative impacts have been identified there is evidence that these are likely to be temporary and locally variable. He added: “it is essential that the reintroduction of any species must be looked at in terms of the overall ecological, and socio-economic factors, and that addressing the perceptions of people is an essential part of any reintroduction project.”

The Scottish Beaver Trial has already released four breeding beaver families into the wilds of Knapdale Forest, Mid-Argyll. The impact the beavers will have in the current Scottish environment and how the beavers will prosper in Scottish habitats is to be tracked over a five-year trial period and Scottish Natural Heritage, the independent body co-ordinating the scientific monitoring of the Trial, will report their findings to the Scottish Government.

SNH is working with a number of independent organisations to carry out the monitoring work. They are Argyll and Bute Council, Argyll Fisheries Trust, Historic Scotland, British Dragonfly Society, Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, University of Oxford Wildlife Conservation Research Unit and University of Stirling. Each organisation is contributing resources towards the monitoring of the trial, along with SNH who is contributing £275,000. For information about the monitoring go to www.snh.org.uk/scottishbeavertrial. For more information visit www.scottishbeavers.org.uk