

# BEAVER RE-INTRODUCTIONS

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**ANGLING TRUST**  
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# Background

Beavers are a native species to the United Kingdom. They were hunted to extinction in the 16th century and are now being re-introduced into England and Wales. This follows successful re-introductions in Scotland and across Europe.

In Europe, hunting, mostly for their fur and castoreum, severely reduced beaver numbers. At the turn of the 20th century, only about 1,200 beavers survived in eight relict populations in Europe and Asia. Some European countries instigated re-introductions of beavers, notably Bavaria in the first instance (at a cost of employing 1,000 beaver officers and paying farmers half-a-billion euros per year in compensation). The recovery of numbers across Europe has been such that across their range beaver populations have been designated as being of least concern when it comes to the future of the species.

Re-introductions into England and Wales have been via a licensed system, initially in fenced enclosures and more recently allowing for 'wild' releases in the sole case of the River Otter. Wild releases have subsequently been halted by the Secretary of State. There have also been some illegal releases into the wild across England.

Supporters of beaver re-introduction claim that as "nature's engineers" they bring benefits including the creation of wetlands, improvements in water quality, and natural flood protection, though some of these benefits are contested.



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## Why it matters

There are a number of potential issues that arise from re-introducing beavers, and their impact on fish and angling infrastructure, if there are not effective management measures in place.

### **Fish:**

Of particular concern is the impact of beaver dams in preventing fish from moving to their spawning grounds both within river systems and those fish that migrate from the sea to freshwaters. Salmon are particularly vulnerable. Salmon are a protected species and their number have declined rapidly in recent years. To aid recovery, we need to ensure free passage in our rivers both upstream (for adults) and downstream (for smolt migration).

Other species like barbel could also be prevented from migrating to reach spawning gravels. The actions of beavers in creating pools through the construction of dams could also cause those gravels to become smothered by sedimentation.

### **Angling Infrastructure:**

Contrary to popular opinion, beavers are just as comfortable living in still waters as they are in flowing rivers and streams. In still waters they burrow into the banks as opposed to building dams. They will happily colonise all forms of still waters from lakes in country parks to former gravel pits, including those that have been created by the building of dams. Risks include the collapsing of pathways around such lakes and the possible impacts on dam infrastructure.

## What is the Angling Trust doing?

We are not against the re-introduction of beavers to England and Wales. Done sensitively, they can be an important addition to our rivers and streams. But we have

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concerns that in the rush to bring them back the impact they can have on fish species, such as salmon and sea trout, and their habitats must not be overlooked.

In partnership with other organisations, we commissioned an [independent report](#) on the possible impacts on fish and are calling for the recommendations from this report to be implemented in full. There must be a robust management plan in place for the protection of fish and the habitats they rely on to complete their life cycles.

We are working with government departments and bodies such as Natural England to ensure that this is in place and have raised the issue repeatedly with government ministers.

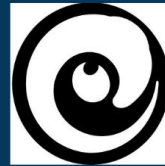
## How can you help?

Should you see any sightings of beavers on your waters please report to [kristian.kent@anglingtrust.net](mailto:kristian.kent@anglingtrust.net) so that we can monitor the increase of populations. This is particularly important with regards to illegal releases and those that have escaped from fenced enclosures.



# Thank You!

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IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE ANGLING  
TRADE AND WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT  
OUR WORK, FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN  
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## ANGLING TRUST

We are a not-for-profit organisation representing anglers, fighting for fish, fishing and the environment. We are recognised by the Government as the National Governing Body for angling in England and partner with Visit Wales and Natural Resources Wales to promote Fishing in Wales. We are a member-based organisation made up of anglers of all disciplines providing a united front to represent, grow and protect our sport. By becoming a member of the Angling Trust you are helping to protect the waterways you fish in and the fish which live within them, ensuring their health and protection for future generations.

[Click here for more information about how to join the Angling Trust](#)

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