Call for fresh approach as Scotland's beaver killing season begins

Monday 17 August, 2020

The future of Scotland's fragile population of wild beavers is at risk as this year's beaver killing season begins, says the Scottish Rewilding Alliance, a coalition of 24 leading environmental charities, countryside access organisations, businesses and community groups.

Scotland's baby beavers are officially seen as no longer dependent on their mothers from 17 August – meaning farmers with unwanted beavers on their land can again apply for licences to shoot beavers. Last year, 87 beavers, a fifth of the Scottish population, were shot. There are fears the scale of the killing could be replicated this year.

The Scottish Government says beavers cannot be relocated outside of their existing river catchments, and can only spread naturally from their ranges in Knapdale in Argyll and Tayside – leaving farmers whose crops are sometimes damaged by beavers with little option but to apply for a licence to kill the animals.

The Alliance says each beaver shot is a wasted life that could have helped to rewild Scotland. Beavers build small dams – creating nature-rich wetlands that support a wealth of wildlife and soak up carbon dioxide, and which reduce flooding and improve water quality. Beavers can also benefit local communities by becoming a tourist attraction.

"Beavers are brilliant for wildlife and people, but in Scotland they're at risk as a species because the Scottish Government allows their legal killing. Needless bloodshed could be reduced by allowing beavers to be moved to where they would be welcome," said Steve Micklewright, the Scottish Rewilding Alliance's Convenor and Chief Executive of rewilding charity Trees for Life.

Since Scotland's beavers became a protected species in May 2019, those wanting to kill beavers or remove their dams or lodges must obtain a licence from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

Rebecca Wrigley, Chief Executive of Rewilding Britain, said: "Beavers can be key allies in tackling the climate and nature crises. Every signature on the Scottish Rewilding Alliance petition will help show the Government it should save the country's fragile wild beaver population."

The petition – which can be supported at treesforlife.org.uk/savebeavers until 27 August – has already been signed by almost 8,000 people. It is on track to being one of the most supported on the Scottish Parliament's petition website in recent years.

The Alliance hopes to trigger a parliamentary debate. It says that allowing beavers to be relocated within Scotland would support the Scottish Government's stated commitment to tackle the connected crises of climate breakdown and nature loss.

"There are many landowners who would love to have beavers on their land. Moving not killing beavers would be a more humane and forward-looking approach to the conservation of this struggling species. It will also help address fears that a genetic bottleneck is developing in the Tayside beaver population," said James Nairne, Trustee of Scottish Wild Beaver Group.

SNH has identified over 100,000 hectares of 'core beaver woodland' in Scotland where beavers can thrive. In areas of the Highlands, for example, SNH has identified many beaver-friendly locations, often surrounded by land with low sensitivity to beaver impacts.

"Despite warnings that beavers could be facing a second extinction on these shores, right now the Scottish Government's policy is leading to preventable beaver deaths – putting this recently reintroduced and protected species into danger. Most people want beavers back – moving not shooting would help ensure beavers fully establish themselves in Scotland and remain a feature of our countryside," said Peter Cairns, Director of SCOTLAND: The Big Picture.

Carol Evans, Director of Woodland Trust Scotland, said: "Allowing beavers to be shot in huge numbers, rather than simply allowing them to be moved to areas where landowners would welcome them, makes a mockery of their protected species status. We're calling on the Scottish Government to show the political will to welcome the species back properly once and for all."

Media:



Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits :: Environment & Nature ::

Related Keywords:

Beavers :: Wildlife :: Nature :: Biodiversity :: Scotland :: Animals ::

Scan Me:

Scotland’s beaver killing season restarts just weeks after the first official Red List for British Mammals, produced by the Mammal Society, included beavers as an endangered species.

It also comes just over a week after the UK Government’s landmark decision that England’s first breeding population of beavers for 400 years could remain in Devon, following a trial that highlighted how beavers benefit people and wildlife.

The Scottish Rewilding Alliance is a collaboration of organisations wanting to enable rewilding at a scale new to Scotland. See www.rewild.scot.

Company Contact:

Scottish Rewilding Alliance

T. 07753 488146
E. richardbuntingpr@gmail.com
W. https://www.rewild.scot

View Online

Additional Assets:

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.scottishrewildingalliance.pressat.co.uk