Ministers urged to relocate beavers and end the culling

Wednesday 17 June, 2020

The Scottish Parliament will have the opportunity to ensure a better future for Scotland's beavers today, says a coalition of leading environmental charities.

The Scottish Rewilding Alliance is calling on MSPs in Holyrood to vote to ban the licensed killing of beavers in Scotland at least until their conservation status is clearly secured.

The Alliance is urging the Scottish Government to back the ban and to allow beavers to be relocated from areas where they affect agriculture to areas where landowners would actively welcome them.

If lethal control continues at 2019 levels, there would be serious concerns about beavers' long-term future in Scotland, say experts. Scottish Natural Heritage recently announced it had issued licences for 87 beavers – one fifth of the Scottish population – to be shot in Tayside in the months following the Government's May 2019 decision to give beavers protected status in Scotland.

Today's Holyrood vote will be on an amendment by Mark Ruskell MSP to the Scottish Government's Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Bill. The amendment would prevent the licensed killing of beavers unless the Government is sure the species has reached a favourable conservation status in Scotland – something currently unknown.

"Just a year ago the Scottish Government told us that beavers would be protected in Scotland, and that beavers were hugely important to the country's biodiversity. But with a fifth of our population of these special animals killed in just a few months last year, the Scottish Natural Heritage-operated licensing regime seems little better than a free-for-all,' said Steve Micklewright, Convener of the Scottish Rewilding Alliance and chief executive of conservation charity Trees for Life.

"Beavers' activities around our waterways help protect our towns and cities against flooding, and they restore wetlands and create habitats for a wealth of wildlife. Occasionally, as in Tayside, they can have local impacts on agriculture too, and Ministers are putting landowners around the Tay in an impossible position by blocking beavers' relocation to other more suitable areas of Scotland.

"We urge Parliament to support a ban on killing beavers, given their fragile conservation status here, and we're calling on the Scottish Government to let those beavers in more controversial locations be relocated to areas where landowners would welcome their return for the first time since the sixteenth century."

The Scottish Government currently says beavers will only be allowed to spread naturally – even though several conservation bodies and landowners in Scotland have indicated a willingness to receive relocated beavers. The Government's policy has also not stopped some beavers from being captured in Tayside and released in England.

Other countries successfully manage beavers' occasional impacts on agriculture, allowing beavers and farmers to co-exist. Alongside relocating beavers to suitable locations, the Scottish Rewilding Alliance also advocates the Government paying farmers for having beavers on their land, so that landowners can financially benefit from the species' presence.

"Each beaver shot under the current licensing scheme is a wasted life that could have helped tackle the climate emergency and nature crisis by creating a thriving nature-rich wetland somewhere else in Scotland," said Steve Micklewright.

There are currently two beaver populations in Scotland – in Knapdale in Argyll, and on the River Tay.

Media:



Related Sectors:

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

Related Keywords:

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

Scan Me:

The Scottish Rewilding Alliance is a collaboration of organisations wanting to enable rewilding at a scale new to Scotland, including by working in partnership with landowners, communities, interest groups and government. The Alliance's goal is a flourishing ecosystem that supports self-sustaining nature-based economies and helps secure a future for local communities. See www.rewild.scot.

Company Contact:

Trees for Life

T. 07753 488146
E. richardbunting@gmail.com
W. https://www.treesforlife.org.uk

View Online

Additional Assets:

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