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BEAVERS AT KNEPP



Matt Phelps | Lead Ecologist

A couple of weeks back, in my blog post about water pollution and the March for Clean Water I delved briefly into the subject of beavers and alluded to their current rather uncertain future in England.

Here at Knepp, since early 2022 – when they were transported to us from Scotland – we have had a pair of beavers in an enclosure in our Southern Block, quietly 'beavering' away, getting on with what they do (more on that later). Most exciting of all, since 2023 they have been breeding, producing two youngsters (kits) last year and another two this year.



Beaver adult and kit in the enclosure at Knepp

The impacts our six beavers have had on the hydrology and ecology of their enclosure in less than three years is astonishing. They have coppiced multiple trees to help them build the three dams they have now constructed, one of which spans pretty almost the entire width of the enclosure at the outflow end (approximately 60 metres). The result of this has been an extraordinary transformation of these six acres into a wetland wonderland, teeming with life both above and below the surface. It sounds like a cliché but the fact is that when one steps into the enclosure here – or anywhere there are beavers, for that matter – it *feels* like a different sort of place.

A landscape that has had new life breathed into it and is more vibrant and more biodiverse. We have seen sea trout in our beaver enclosure, the offspring of which are presumably, among things, feeding the kingfishers which we see and hear daily. Other birds which visit the beaver wetland regularly include mandarin ducks, gadwall, grey herons and various egrets. We've even seen some of our white storks in there on occasion. Trees which have been coppiced or flooded are providing an abundance of woody habitats for all manner of species to nest in, from woodpeckers to wrens.



The year of the hawfinch?

12/DEC/2024

Matt Phelps | Lead Ecologist Seven years ago, in the autumn in 2017, hawfinches streamed across the North Sea towards us in great numbers. That

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