



@elyethefish
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The reintroduction of Eurasian beavers into England

Mark Elliott
Beaver Project Lead, Devon Wildlife Trust

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Photos by David Plummer, Sylvia Meller, Mike Symes, Roger Auster, Nick Upton and David White



Eurasian Beaver (*Castor fiber*)

- Large animals – Around 1m long and 18kg
- Beavers are a native 'keystone' species
- They were hunted to extinction in Britain about 400 years ago
- Entirely herbivorous
- Fiercely territorial
- 1 litter a year with 2-6 kits (average 3)
- Mainly nocturnal and semi-aquatic
- Live in burrows and lodges
- Build dams to create ponds if necessary

England's first wild beavers for 400 years allowed to live on River Otter

Family of reestablished colony legally sanctioned to remain in east Devon habitat

Fiona Harvey *Environment correspondent*

Thu 6 Aug 2020 06.00 BST



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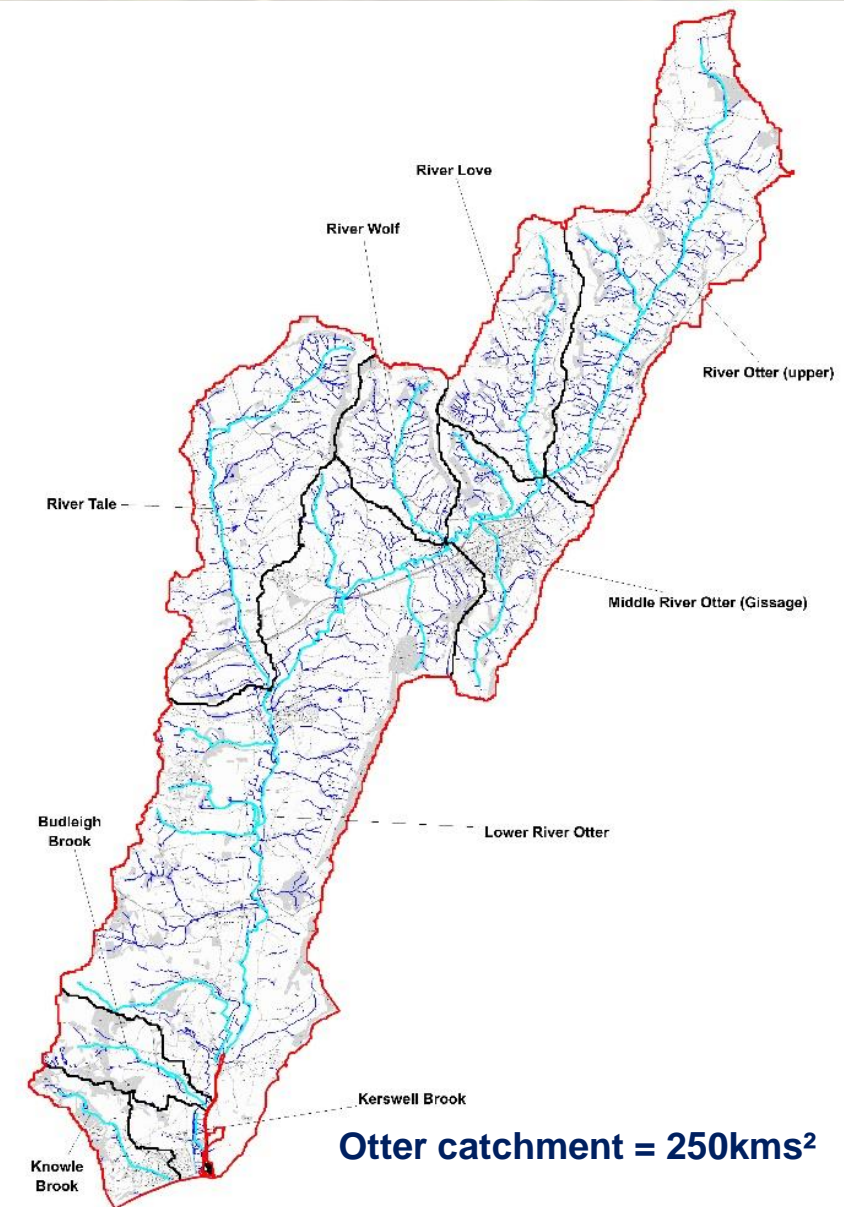
▲ About 15 family groups of beavers are now estimated to live on the Otter. Photograph: Mike Symes/Devon Wildlife Trust/PA

The first beavers to live wild in England for centuries are to be allowed to remain in their **new home on the River Otter** in east Devon after a five-year reintroduction trial.

River Otter Beaver Trial (ROBT) (March 2015 - August 2020)



- First licensed release of beavers into the wild in England
- Covered the entire River Otter catchment (250 km²)
- Science and Evidence Forum chaired by Prof Richard Brazier (Exeter).



Science and Evidence Forum published their final report in January 2020

<https://www.exeter.ac.uk/creww/research/beavertrial>

Science and Evidence Forum

- University of Exeter
- University of Southampton
- Devon Wildlife Trust
- Environment Agency
- Clinton Devon Estates
- Devon Biodiversity Records Centre

River Otter Beaver Trial Science and Evidence Report



The River Otter Beaver Trial is a 5-year trial reintroduction of Eurasian beavers, *Castor fiber*, into the wild in south east Devon. It began with two family groups of beavers in 2015 which have now bred and dispersed throughout the catchment. The Science and Evidence Forum have overseen a detailed research programme, the findings of which are summarised within this report.

Pink-tagged female beaver with a kit on the River Otter near Otterton in 2017

Photo: Nick Upton / naturist.com

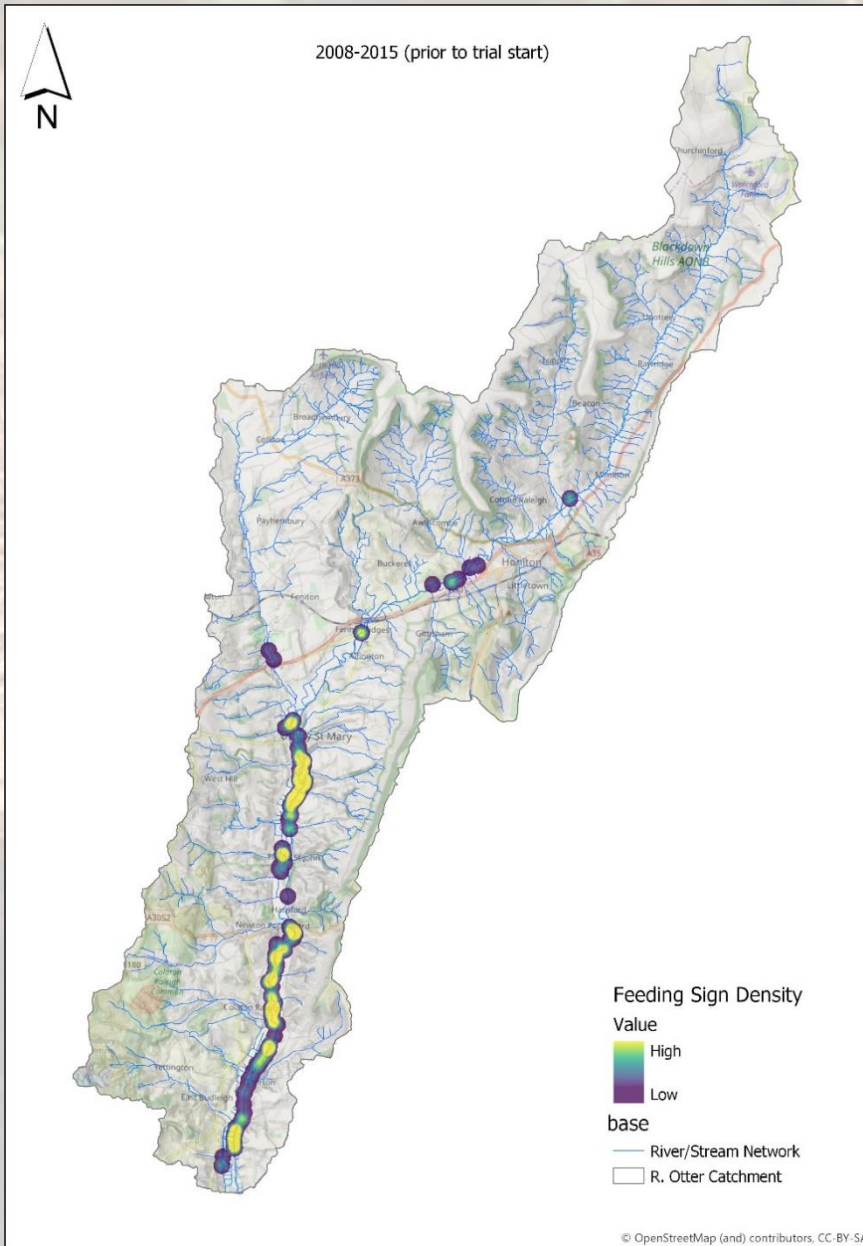
This document should be cited as: Bracie, R.E., Elliott, M., Anderson, E., Austen, R.E., Bridgewater, S., Burgess, P., Chant, J., Graham, H., Knott, E., Puttock, A.K., Sansum, P., Vowles, A. (2020) River Otter Beaver Trial: Science and Evidence Report



Understanding beaver distribution



Heat maps of winter feeding signs showed approximate territory formation



Pre-Trial feeding activity

(2008-2015)

>2 family groups



**River Otter
environment able to
sustain a healthy,
expanding beaver
population.**



March 2019 survey
13 focuses of activity
(7 known breeding pairs)



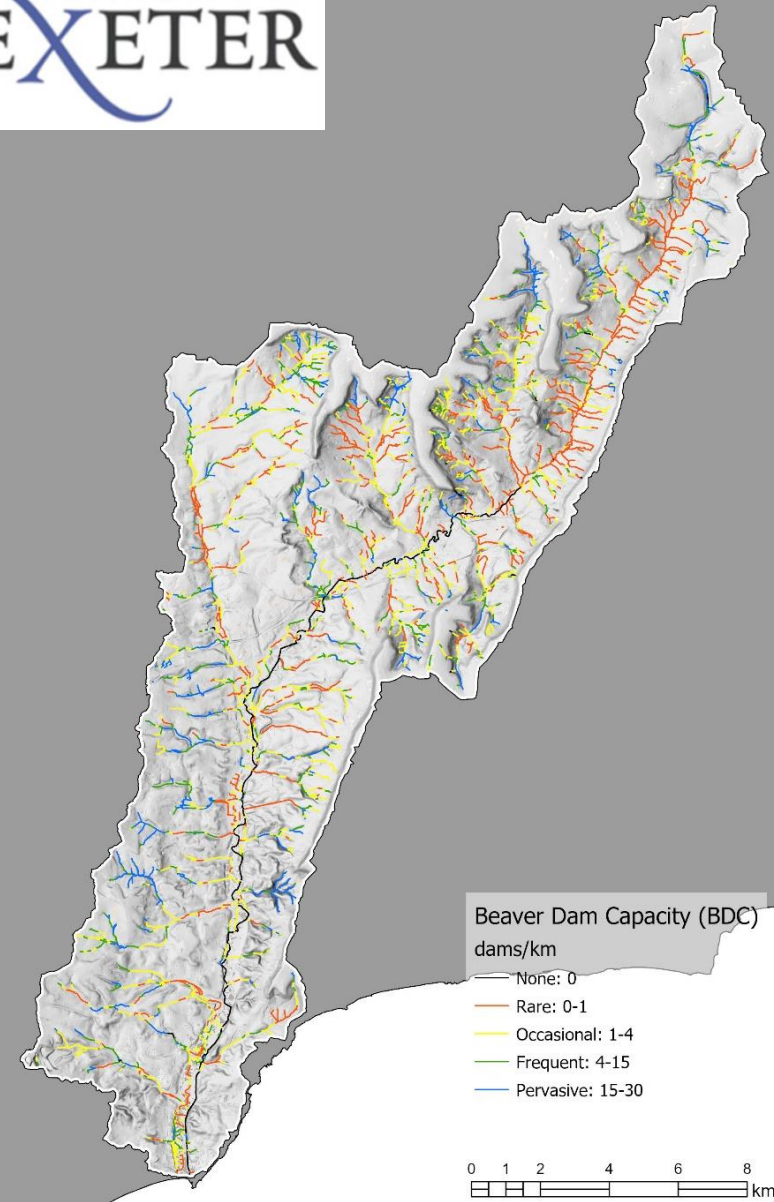
Beaver dams:

- Built to create deep water where necessary
- Highly variable and dynamic structures
- Snapshot in October 2019 identified 28 dams in six of the beaver territories



Beaver Dam Capacity (BDC) modelling shows watercourses capable of supporting beaver dams.

The locations of dams constructed, have been used to validate the model.



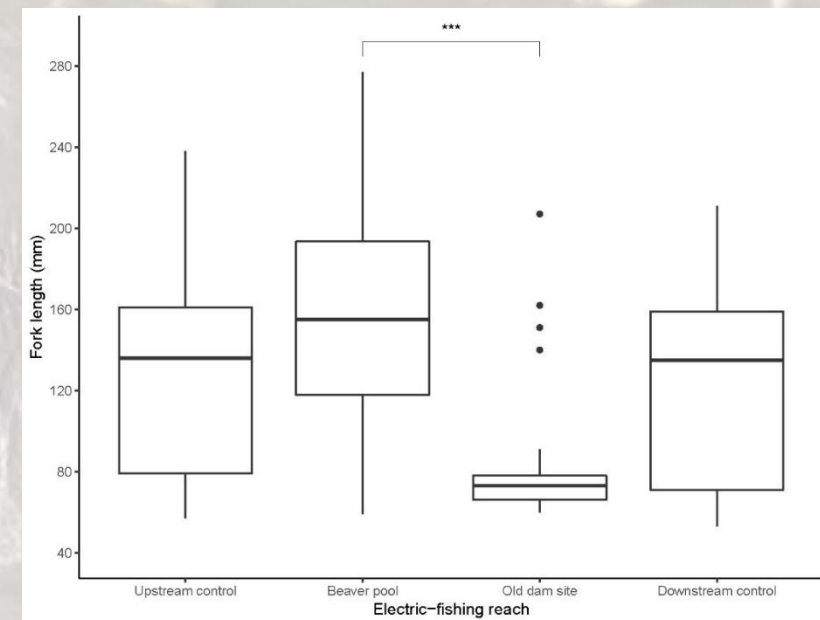
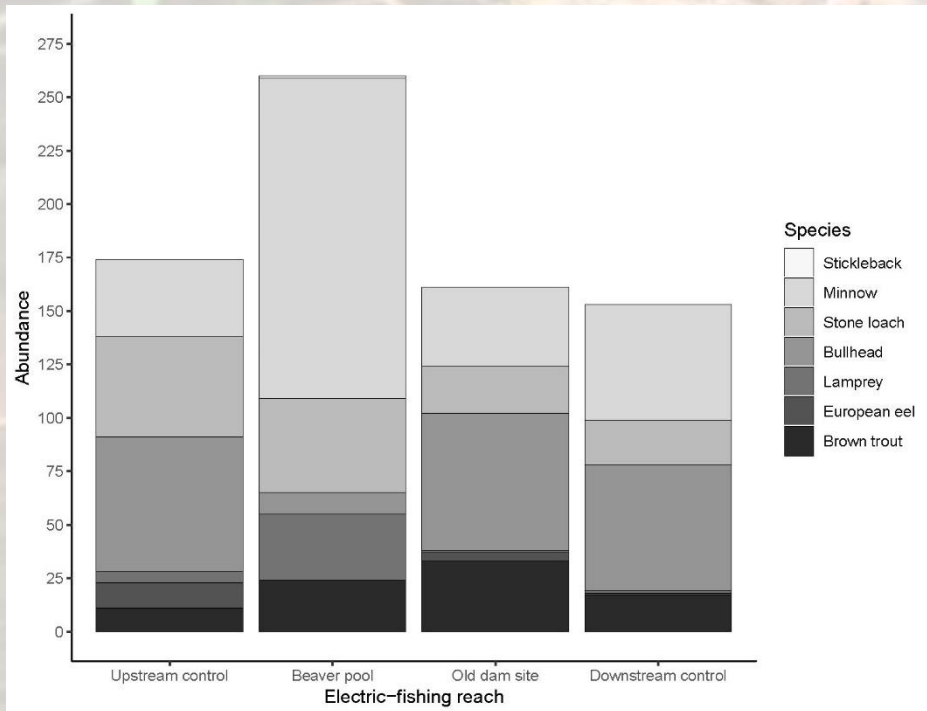
The dynamic nature of beaver dams in natural streams creates in-channel habitats (riffles and pools, eroding cliffs etc)



Fish populations have been studied in the one stretch of the River Tale, where beavers have been damming

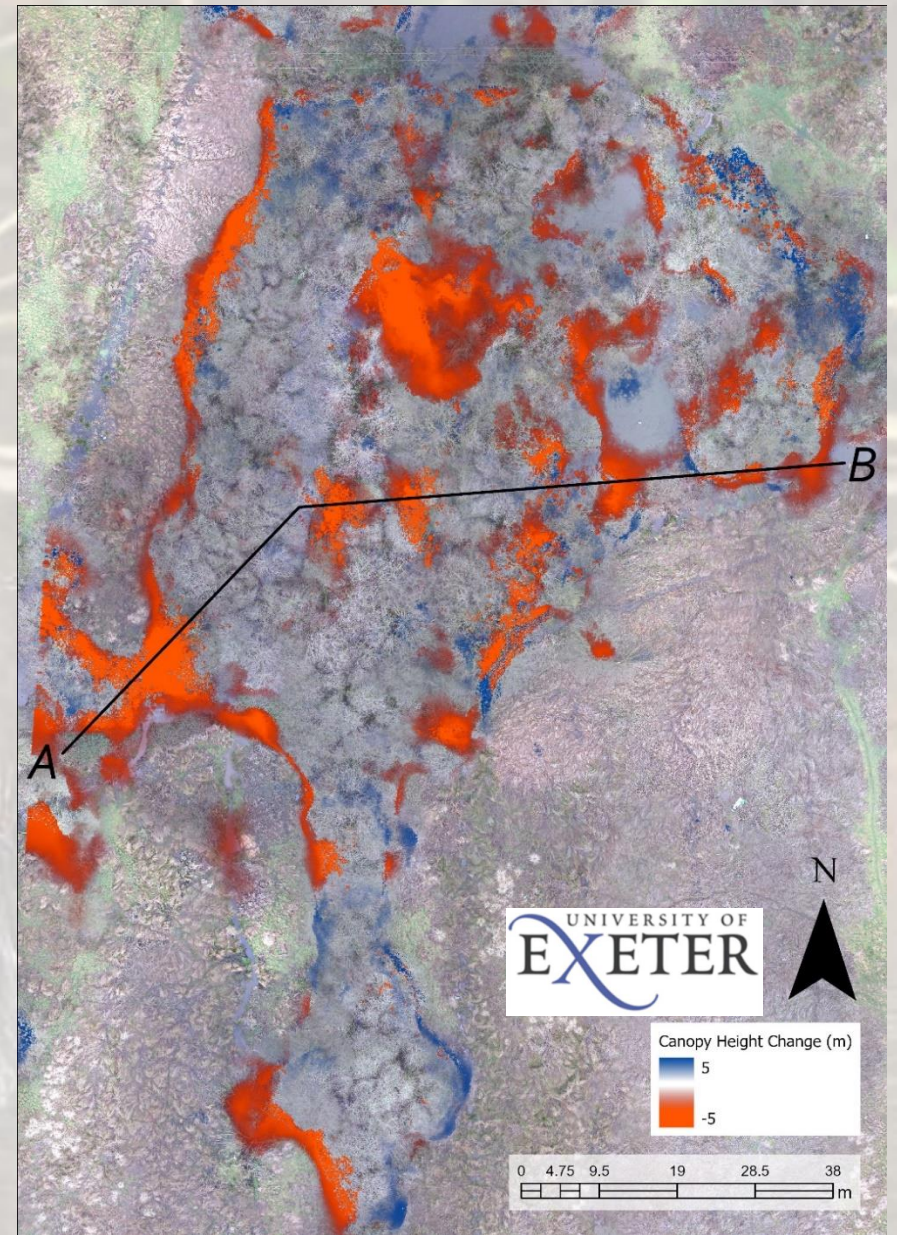


Total abundance of fish was 37% higher in beaver pool, with highest biomass and more trout than in control sites. New gravels created by dams provided habitat for juvenile trout, which were abundant



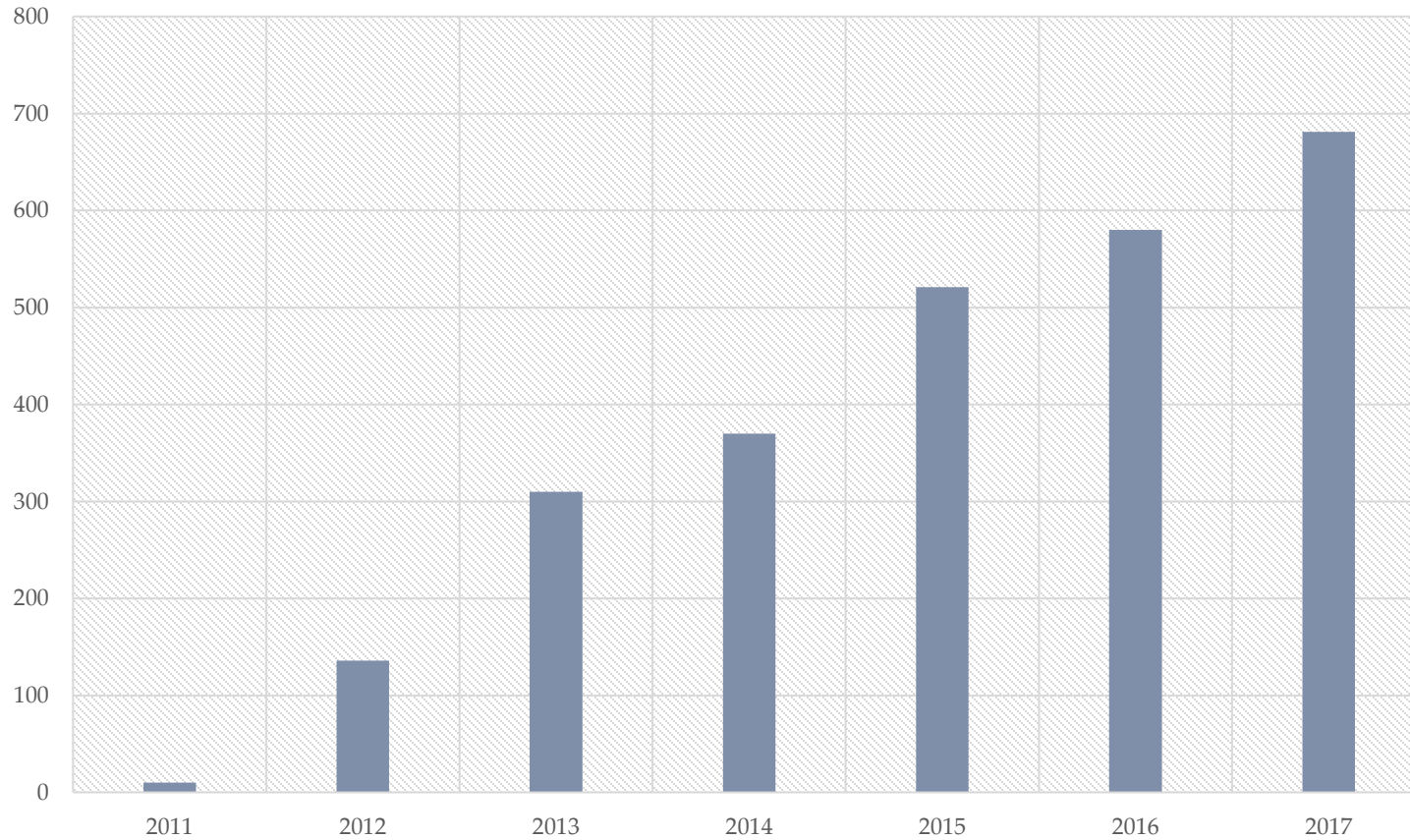
Beaver engineering and feeding has delivered significant ecological benefits with new areas of wetland habitat created and managed.

The condition of Cyst William Cross CWS has improved from red to amber as a result of structural change in tall herb fen community.



10 clumps of frogspawn in 2011, up to 681 in 2017

Frogspawn clumps counted





Impacts on agriculture and other land-users

- Five sites have seen land drainage impacts on agricultural land,
- Riverside maize has been impacted in three territories, and
- Small riverside orchards have experienced beaver feeding.

It is essential that high-quality, pragmatic, one-to-one advice and support is rapidly available to land and property owners

A suite of practical management interventions are available which will be deployed where there is a risk to key infrastructure from beaver activity



When beavers move into new areas, targeted education and engagement work is essential to dispel myths and raise general awareness.





Thanks to the ROBT funders and partners



Picture: Nick Upton / www.Naturepl.com

