Scottish Wild Beaver Group

NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN 2025

Join us at Bamff Rewilding

This year Bamff Wildland is offering a 15% discount to SWBG members for Wildland Walks and Beaver Watch walks. Just add the Discount Code "SWBG15/25* to your email. Details below:

Wildland Walks
£48 per head: minimum 2
Children up to 16 free. Group size up to 6.
Students / unwaged £24 each.
Groups of over 6 at £30 for each adult. (Max group size 10).
Wildland walks take about 2 hours and require moderate fitness only.
Usually held at 10 am or 3 pm but with flexibility to where possible.
Dogs are allowed, but on leads only.

Beaver watch walk
£48 per head, minimum 2. Children under 16 free. No dogs.
Students/unwaged £20 per adult., max Group size 6. Usually at around 7.30 pm.
Once the time is agreed an invoice will be sent.

Combined Walks also available
2 hour wildland walk followed by beaver watch @ £48 per person. Students/unwaged £36. Groups of over 6: £45 per person.

In each case price assumes a minimum of 2 people.

Please contact bamffwalks@gmail.com or call 01828 632992 to book a tour. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Welcome to our newsletter!

Hello and welcome to the second Scottish Wild Beaver Group newsletter of the year, sent out to all our members. Here you will find the latest news from the group, along with details of what's been happening, what's coming up and how you can help with any campaigns. Let us know if there is anything in particular that you'd like to hear about, too.

A message from our Treasurer, Phil Bland.
Did you know that there's a great range of beaver merchandise available through our website? Well worth a look as Christmas approaches to gift your loved ones the opportunity to wear the beaver message with pride!

I especially love our hoodies - renowned Perthshire artist Martin Ridley, best known for his work documenting British wildlife, has reproduced his mesmerising depiction of a Scottish beaver diving in a unique collection especially for Scottish Wild Beaver Group. See pic below.

Meet our Trustees and volunteers

We have very dedicated Trustees and volunteers to help us achieve the aims of the Scottish Wild Beaver Group. Find out more about us below...

Nico Baxter - I started volunteering with zoos and wildlife charities from a young age, later studying a BSc in Zoology and a MSc in Wildlife Conservation & Management. I am now working as an ecologist across Scotland. My main interest lies in rewilding or renaturing - hence where beavers come in! As our countryside struggles with intensive farming, how can we make space for nature that deserves to be there, that we also desperately need? The dream is to help land owners and farmers thrive alongside beavers and nature.

Beavers are great ecosystem engineers, creating homes for a whole host of wildlife through their wetland creation and woodland management.

Summary of International Beaver Symposium, Inverness 2025 by Emily Simpson.

Over 150 beavers experts from 23 countries gathered for the 10th International Beaver Symposium at the University of Highlands and Islands, Inverness this September. This was an opportunity to showcase latest global beavers research in long and short form presentations and posters (and one prose-poem) across seven overarching themes – Population Status, Behaviour, Physiology and Disease, Interspecific Interactions, Biodiversity, Ecosystem Services, Beaver-Fish Interactions, and Human Coexistence. Each presentation was followed with Q&A sessions and facilitated discussions which continued into coffee breaks and poster sessions.
The second day of the symposium featured excursions to the Cairngorms National Park beaver sites as they begin to develop following recent reintroduction projects. This included a guided tour of Rothiemurchus and Glenmore, alongside meeting some of those working on other reintroductions at the Highland Wildlife Park with the Saving Wildcats team, including the perhaps lesser known Scabious Mining Bee (Andrena marginata). The day was rounded out with a ceilidh at the Drumossie Hotel that was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

I was fortunate enough to present my ongoing research from my first PhD chapter investigating the carbon stored in the sediment across Bamff's exemplary and extensive beaver wetlands. There were many highlights across the conference; we heard about the potential for beavers to form a core part of North America's firefighting tactics, how the Netherlands are developing plans for coexistence with beavers in how much water can be retained on low-lying land, and the future of beavers in the Alaskan Arctic as their populations spread further north. Scotland-based works were similarly various and fascinating, from using remote techniques in identifying beaver burrows on the Isla, through to the partnerships of beavers and salmonids, and the development of the Beaver Impact Assessment Toolkit.

The symposium ended with prizes for student research and with an honest and open feedback session on any improvements to be made for future symposia. This will hopefully include wider access via online streamed sessions to open the floor up more, though the logistics are still to-be-determined.

Join us at our AGM!

Join us online via Zoom for the SWBG AGM on November 20, 2025, at 7pm.

This is a chance to chat to fellow beaver enthusiasts and put forward any ideas you'd like us to work on in the future.

Please contact Jean on scottishwildbeaver@gmail.com for the Zoom link.

Did you know? Stones and mud are used in the building of dams as well as sticks. We love to watch the beavers at Bamff diving to the bottom of the pool to collect mud and then push it into the gaps in the dam to make it more waterproof. What wonderful engineers!

Like A River, by Sophie Ramsay. From the International Beaver Symposium on 17-19 September 2025 in Inverness.

This story, like a river, has many beginnings. It begins with some children paddling in a farm ditch. Us. Us in flannel tracksuits, green and red. Us in blue and white striped shorts with red stitching. The sunlight coming back at us from the water. The smell of sheep, pieces of their fleece and their faeces on the ground around us. Water cress tangled by the stone bridge. Sometimes we try to dam the ditch. It is only a metre wide. We lift big, wet stones in our hands and arms. We slip on wet stones in our bare feet. We patch the dam with mud. We watch the water fill up behind and spill through the gaps.

It begins with Paul, my father, at a meeting in which a presenter describes how our ancestors slaughtered thousands of beavers from the rivers of Britain, erasing their peak backed, flat tailed, 50 pound forms, extinguishing the warmth of their bodies, to steal the coats off their backs. 'Yes' he cries out, with his hand in the air 'we must bring them back.'
It begins in a wetland, the start of a ditch, becoming a burn, which joins a burn, which joins a river, which joins a river, which flows into the sea at Dundee, our water becoming lost amongst all the other waters, becoming brackish, becoming the sea.

It begins in a wetland, the start of a ditch, becoming a burn, which joins a burn, which joins a river, which joins a river, which flows into the sea at Dundee, our water becoming lost amongst all the other waters, becoming brackish, becoming the sea. This wetland, the 'Wet Wood', is where it starts. An enigmatic flat place, peered into by a half naturalised conifer wood on one side, and a young oak wood on the other. Between these, a line of accidental grey alders, and some dancing willow.
It begins when two beavers arrive, and are released into an enclosure in the Wet Wood. A winter day in early 2002. I am visiting from university with my friend Kate.

This is what she says:

'I remember that day very well… As one came out of the crate, it put its paw on my hand. I remember how velvety the leather felt and my surprise at the fingernail-like-ness of the short claws. We looked at each other for what felt like a long moment and then we went our ways'.

Coming and going from Bamff, over months and years, I see the landscape change. The Wet Wood shifts and shifts over seasons and time. Its enigmatic power seems to redouble. A dam is built, 100 metres long, sinuous, and low, and the water collects behind. The pond that John artfully constructed with a digger is increasingly hard to identify. Wet areas fill over time with plants: starwort, bog starwort, water mint, water forget-me-not. Many evenings, guests come to look, to wait, coming across the higher end of the West Wards field to the south, over a narrow bridge and through the chicken wired gate. They brush and duck past the spruces, and stand quietly watching. In time, we also have beaver families on the old boating pond by the front drive, and then further up the ditch. When, eventually, there is no need for them to be fenced, two families spread the length of the ditch, west to east. They fell trees that hold memories, and I forget what I once remembered. It's confusing and confronting, but should I prefer stasis?

Where trees stood, low coppice appears. They cut whole trunks of downy birch, and willow and sycamore, and then scratch the bark and through the orange cambium with their teeth, leaving pale marks like some ancient text. Saprophitic fungi feast on deadwood. Turkey tail. Tinder fungus. The beavers dam again and again, rearranging water until it is no longer a ditch, but a many pooled river. Greater spearwort and marsh marigold flourish, with their lavish yellow flowers. Melancholy thistle and marsh orchid appear on the banks.
The landscape is a poem we cannot deconstruct, but all the science starts to tell us the same story our eyes and ears are telling us. Diversity is increasing. Infinity looks back at us from the water. We understand the meaning of 'trophic cascades' or 'dynamic habitat' or 'keystone species' in the same way that we know the feeling of a coat on our body.
But the land around remains under sheep. 300 of them on 12 fields. What possibilities are lost to their hard grazing?
Another beginning quietly opens on Hogmanay of 2020, when the Mitchells round up and remove all of the sheep from those fields, and, after a fallow year, we bring a small herd of cattle and a few pigs, and later Exmoor ponies, to roam freely around the area: The fields, the woods, the beaver lands. When did an Exmoor pony - the closest we have to the original wild pony - last roam through a beaver wood?

This story, like the sea, has no end, but is an ever moving present, a torrent of memory and forgetfulness, of breath and motion, of chaos and order and urgency and calm.