ARGATY RED KITE CENTRE

Key facts

- Located in central Scotland.
- Only the second site in Scotland to have wild beavers translocated to after the reinforcement of the Scottish Beaver Trial.
- 1,400 acre estate. Working livestock farm with 750 ewes and 75 native breed cattle.
- Mixture of parkland and moorland.
- Hosts a red kite feeding station.

Summary of project

In 2020 the Scottish Government announced that it would allow beavers to be relocated from conflict areas to new sites in Scotland. Argaty applied for a licence and became the first private estate to relocate beavers to unenclosed ponds. Two families of 5 were released in November 2021 and February 2022, and a pair of subadults were released in June 2022. One of the families has since had two more kits, so the total number of individuals is now 14 (as of 2022). The beavers mainly inhabit pre-existing ponds but have also constructed one dam.

The beavers have excavated canals branching out from the ponds, which have provided a habitat for breeding amphibians and highways for otters.

During the dry summer of 2022, the beavers maintained the depth of their pond by digging channels through its bed, in order to enable them to swim whilst remaining fully submerged. They also piled the sediment into small islands, which could benefit other aquatic species by increasing structural complexity. The beaver pond maintained its water throughout the summer whilst other ponds on the farm dried up.

The beavers have opened up the canopy of the woodlands.
Landowner perspective

“In these times of ecological decline and catastrophic climate change, beavers are a vital ally. We need them across the UK’s waterways. We are proud to have them here and so grateful to Roisin Campbell-Palmer, Beaver Trust and Five Sisters Zoo for helping us to relocate them.”

Tom Bowser, landowner.

surrounding the ponds. This is likely to increase the diversity of plant communities. Small guided tours to watch the beavers - with up to 4 participants each - are run 3-4 times per week.

Studies are underway with the University of Stirling to see how the beavers are affecting the flow of water throughout the site.

Argaty has managed to combine food production with the enhancement of the natural environment. The farm has 750 ewes and 75 native breed cattle, and roughly one fifth of the land is woodland, linked together with large hedgerows. In recent years the estate has created 4.5 acres of wildflower meadow and increased the number of ponds to 16.

Soon after their 1996 reintroduction to central Scotland, red kites began nesting at Argaty. The estate set up a supplementary feeding centre where visitors can watch the birds and learn about their history - from persecution to extinction to reintroduction and beyond.

As well as kites, kestrels, ospreys, goshawks, ravens, and owls also nest on the estate, and all these nests are monitored, and their chicks ringed as part of the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme.

Red squirrel viewing hides have also been constructed, and the estate runs dragonfly walks.