

Are beavers welcome back in Scotland?
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Over the last decades, species reintroductions have become a common tool in wildlife conservation. These reintroductions focus on species that are considered to be important from an environmental, social and/or historical perspective but that have disappeared or are scarcely present in a given area. The Eurasian Beaver (*Castor fiber*) is one such species that has been reintroduced in Europe. Beavers affect their environment in various ways which may be seen as beneficial for the landscapes and for other species by some individuals or stakeholder groups. However, these impacts can also be perceived to impact negatively on human activities such as farming, creating conflicts between people over beaver reintroductions.

We studied the Scottish beaver reintroduction which started in 2008. Our purpose was to understand if and how the reintroduction developed into a conservation conflict - that is a conflict between people over a conservation process, and whether social, cultural and conceptual issues were at stake. We focused on three situations in Scotland, where the reintroduction process took place differently: in Knapdale, the reintroduction was planned and scientifically-led, whereas in Tayside and in the Highlands the reintroduction was accidental and/or illegal. Our study, based on a literature review and interviews with stakeholders, revealed that the situation has not yet developed into a conflict at the national scale. At the local scale, however, there was conflict in Tayside, where the reintroduction also occurred within a highly productive agricultural area where the beaver population has since thrived and expanded. Overall, the study showed the conflict was dependent on three main issues: the reintroduction process, relationship issues between stakeholders and broader debates on species reintroductions.

Based on these findings, the study outlines lessons learned in terms of management, guidelines and implications for future species reintroductions. With

reintroductions becoming more common, our study highlights a number of key issues relating to social dimensions of reintroductions that need to be considered in future reintroduction processes, including stakeholder perspectives on their role in nature, their perceptions of landscapes, and the potential issue of lack of control and uncertainty around reintroductions.



Are beavers welcome back in Scotland? Photo credit: [Paul Stevenson](#).

Plain language summary from article: Coz, DM, Young, JC. Conflicts over wildlife conservation: Learning from the reintroduction of beavers in Scotland. *People Nat.* 2020; 2: 406– 419. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10076>