# Wild beavers reappear on River Dyfi after 400 years, sparking hopes and concerns



A recent sighting of a wild beaver on the banks of the River Dyfi in Wales is being hailed as a significant event, marking an important comeback for a species that vanished from the British landscape approximately 400 years ago due to overhunting. The encounter was captured by naturalist and presenter Iolo Williams, who described the moment as one of the most remarkable experiences of his career while filming his BBC series, *Iolo's River Valleys*. Speaking to the BBC, Williams stated, "I've seen some incredible wildlife in Wales, some amazing things, but this ranks up there, not just with the best, but as the very, very best."

The beaver was filmed near Machynlleth and appeared to be "very chill," according to Williams. He recounted how the crew was initially sceptical about spotting the animal after previous attempts yielded no results. However, conditions improved, and they managed to see the beaver during a scheduled visit at 18:00 on a dry evening. The animal exhibited little concern for the presence of the crew, continuing to feed and swim unaffectedly.

Beavers were last present in Wales during the times of the Welsh princes, who hunted them to extinction. Williams remarked on the historical significance of the sighting, noting that the last individuals to see wild beavers in Wales would likely have been those same princes. Although there are currently four managed enclosures housing beavers in Wales, the actual number living freely in the wild remains unclear.

Local residents have reported multiple sightings of beavers along the River Dyfi in recent years, yet the source of these animals is still a mystery. Nearby enclosures have been investigated, ruling out the possibility of any escapees contributing to the wild population. Alicia Leow-Dyke from Wildlife Trust Wales indicated that there is evidence of breeding activity along the river, which adds further intrigue to the situation. “On this occasion we know it's one family. It could be two families - one family split into two,” she explained, noting that young beavers had also been spotted.

The Welsh government has been considering new legislation to protect beavers, as wildlife charities advocate for their reintroduction into local rivers. Dr Robert Needham from the Beaver Trust articulated the ecological benefits associated with beavers, calling them "ecosystem engineers." He explained that their natural behaviours—such as dam building and habitat modification—can enhance biodiversity and help restore wetland habitats, which have significantly declined across Europe. Additionally, Dr Needham noted the role beavers play in flood mitigation, describing how their dams can help manage peak water flows during storm events.

However, the prospect of beavers returning to the wild is not universally welcomed. Concerns have been raised regarding the potential negative impacts on agriculture. Aled Jones, president of NFU Cymru, expressed apprehension about the consequences of allowing beavers to thrive unchecked, particularly regarding flooding and crop damage. "The management [of beavers] is crucial," he said, emphasising that a balanced approach is necessary to safeguard farming livelihoods while considering ecological benefits.

As the complex interplay between wildlife conservation and agricultural practices continues to unfold, the recent sighting of the beaver may signify not only a step forward for species recovery in Wales but also a challenging dialogue about the future coexistence of wildlife and farming in the region.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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