

Beavers on the River Otter, east Devon. [28 February 2014]

Licensed keepers:

There is only one licensed keeper of European beavers in the Otter Valley area:

██████
Escot Ltd (Escot Country Park)
Ottery St Mary
Devon.

Beavers at Escot are kept in a fenced enclosure of ~1.2ha which is about 100m from the River Tale, a tributary of the R Otter.

It is understood that they originally obtained a male and female in 2006/7, both wild-caught in Bavaria and quarantined for 6 months.

The requirement for a 'possession' licence came into force in 2007 and Escot subsequently obtained a licence to possess up to 2 live beavers. They reported that two kits were born in their enclosure in 2009 (as these were captive bred they did not need to be covered by the licence).

In May 2010 the adult female died and was found to be carrying *Echinococcus multilocularis*. A new female was introduced in August 2010 (another wild-caught Bavarian beaver from 'Wildwood' in Kent) but shortly afterwards this animal was electrocuted by the electric fence. It is understood that this was replaced again. The fate of the kits is unknown. As far as is known, Escot still only have two beavers in their enclosure.

Animals at liberty:

March 2010 report of evidence of beaver (felled trees) on the R Otter at Fenny Bridges (~SY114987). At the time, █████ maintained that he still had 'both' his beavers and that the animal on the Otter had been an 'open secret' for about 2 years.

July 2011 beaver reportedly filmed on the river between Otterton & Clamour Bridge (~SY077847), approximately 15km downstream from the previous evidence.

April 2012 adult male (18.5kg) found in extremis – location not known – possibly R Tale. Died shortly after recapture and was PM'd – possibly drowned.

September 2013 evidence of activity (felled trees) reported at location south of Ottery St Mary (~SY095940), between the two previous locations.

January 2014 single animal filmed on a remote camera – shown on BBC. Precise location unknown, but description in February TV report suggests between Ottery St Mary & Tipton St John (central point ~SY092934).

February 2014 (reported to NE 25 Feb) three beavers filmed – shown on BBC News 27 Feb. Location presumed ~the same as January film.

██████ (beaver expert/importer/keeper) has suggested that the single animal that has been on the Otter for several years is an adult female. The animal PM'd in 2012 was described by █████ (AHVLA) as a 'young male'. █████ says that this was introduced to the Escot enclosure when it was mistakenly thought that the resident male had died, but it was actually the female, and he thinks this new male was driven out by the resident male. In a conversation on 27 Feb █████ said that he thought the three animals in the BBC video appeared to be an adult pair and a yearling.