

5. Report from Wild Ennerdale

Rachel Oakley from Wild Ennerdale is unable to attend the meeting but has sent the following update to be shared.

Red Squirrel Monitoring (from contractor Brian Graham)

This year's squirrel monitoring and grey squirrel control has been undertaken and completed. In total Red squirrels were seen at 75% of the monitoring locations and 18 grey squirrels were captured and dispatched.

Bird Sightings (13th Oct from Pete Ullrich, Ornithologist)

24 Whooper Swan rested on Ennerdale this afternoon, undoubtedly exhausted after their mammoth migration from Iceland. This is the longest migration undertaken by any Swan species in the World . A change of wind has seen many other winter visitors arriving from the north; large skeins of Pink footed Goose have been streaming south mainly over the western end of the Lake. Redwings and Fieldfare are now busy gorging themselves on the plentiful berry crop, particularly hawthorn.

Phytophthora Larch Disease

Summer and Autumn surveys have been carried out by Forest Research across England. These have identified a number of suspect trees in Ennerdale which are being investigated, samples taken and sent for lab testing. Forestry England are waiting for these lab tests to be completed and results shared back for a full understanding of the extent of any expansion of the diseased area and what further containment works will be needed. Timber despatch from the current phase of larch felling is continuing. An outstanding small area of diseased larch is planned to be felled in the next few weeks. This should not take more than a week and will have no impact on the main routes around the valley. To protect wet soils, the timber will then be left over the winter and extracted next Spring.

Volunteer Work Parties

The team have been out weekly, undertaking various tasks including: drain runs, litter picking, ditch clearance, wildflower seeding & tree maintenance at Low Moor End, butterfly field maintenance at The Mill, weed control, checks/maintenance of fence enclosures in upper valley, birch thinning on mire at Mireside, garden maintenance at Beckfoot. Around Moss Dub and the along the River Liza, the team have been involved in 3 days of rhododendron control. All the rhododendron around Moss Dub including on the island have now been cut down, seedlings pulled out and large stumps treated to prevent regrowth.

Hosting Visits

It's been a busy year for different groups requesting to visit the valley. We have hosted an average of four visits per month, including organisations at local, regional and national level. Examples include: Forestry & Land Scotland, Natural England, Defra, North York Moors National Park, England Woodland Biodiversity Group, Cumbria Wildlife Trust along with some school and university groups. We were also able to meet a few requests for talks to local interest groups. These events are useful for knowledge sharing, advocacy and learning.

Beavers

Update provided to PC by Hayley Dauben.

We have been processing the feedback we have received so far and identified a major obstacle to our plans for a partially-enclosed beaver release. The proposed barrier across the River Liza would need a 100mm bar spacing to securely keep beavers in. Bar spacing would need to be twice this width to avoid deterring salmon and trout which migrate to spawning grounds in the tributaries of the River Liza. The Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act prohibits any activities that may impact

fish movements. While we are disappointed with this set-back, we acknowledge that restricting other natural processes, to bring beavers into the valley, would be contrary to the ethos of Wild Ennerdale. For now, we are unable to proceed with the development of a licence application for the release of beavers into a partial enclosure.

Free-living beavers have always been the long-term ambition for our beaver project and a release directly into the wild may be an alternative option for Ennerdale. The government is currently considering its approach to wild releases in England and we await clarity on this. This option has additional complexities. It requires further feasibility work to consider the wider implications of free-living beavers. This will help inform whether we apply to release free-living beavers if this option becomes available. There will be opportunities for feedback and discussion, with an emphasis on impacts for local landowners.

If you have any comments or concerns about this change in direction, please contact Hayley Dauben, Species Reintroduction Project Officer at hayley.dauben@forestryengland.uk or 07425 732513.