

Beavers in the Bristol Avon and River Chew



Avon
Wildlife Trust



Dan Brunton, Beaver Field Officer



Eurasian Beaver

Castor fiber

Beavers have 2 layers of fur. A short dense underfur which acts as an insulator and an outer layer of longer guard hairs which repel water.

Although short-sighted it is believed beavers can see colour. They also have a third, clear eyelid, (nictating membrane) which allows them to see underwater.

An excellent sense of hearing both on land and underwater allows them to identify predators and family. The inner ear is full of dense fluffy hairs which trap air and prevent water from getting in.

Vital for finding food, identifying family members and detecting danger, a beaver's sense of smell is it's most important and one of its strongest senses.

With a lung capacity roughly 3 times that of an adult human beavers can remain underwater for up to 15 minutes at a time.

104

Beaver fossils and other archaeological remains have been discovered at 104 different sites across Britain.



Beavers teeth are reinforced with iron which gives them their distinctive orange colour and allows them to gnaw through wood.

Weigh up to: **30kg**

Up to **1.5 feet (0.5m)**



Large, flat and scaly tail mainly used as a rudder when swimming. Also used to slap the water's surface to deter predators and notify other beavers of danger.



27

27 European countries have reintroduced beavers since the 1920's. The European population is estimated at 1.5 million individuals but Britain only has an estimated 2,000.

Up to **5 feet (1.5m)**



Hand-like forepaws allow beavers to easily grasp food and materials. But unlike us it is the outer digit of the hand which is opposable (imagine your thumb and pinky swapped places).



Large webbed hind feet (up to 7 inches) which are mainly used to propel beavers through water up to speeds of 5mph.

2nd
Largest rodent in the world

Out of 4,660 known species of rodent, the beaver is second only to the Capybara from South America in size.

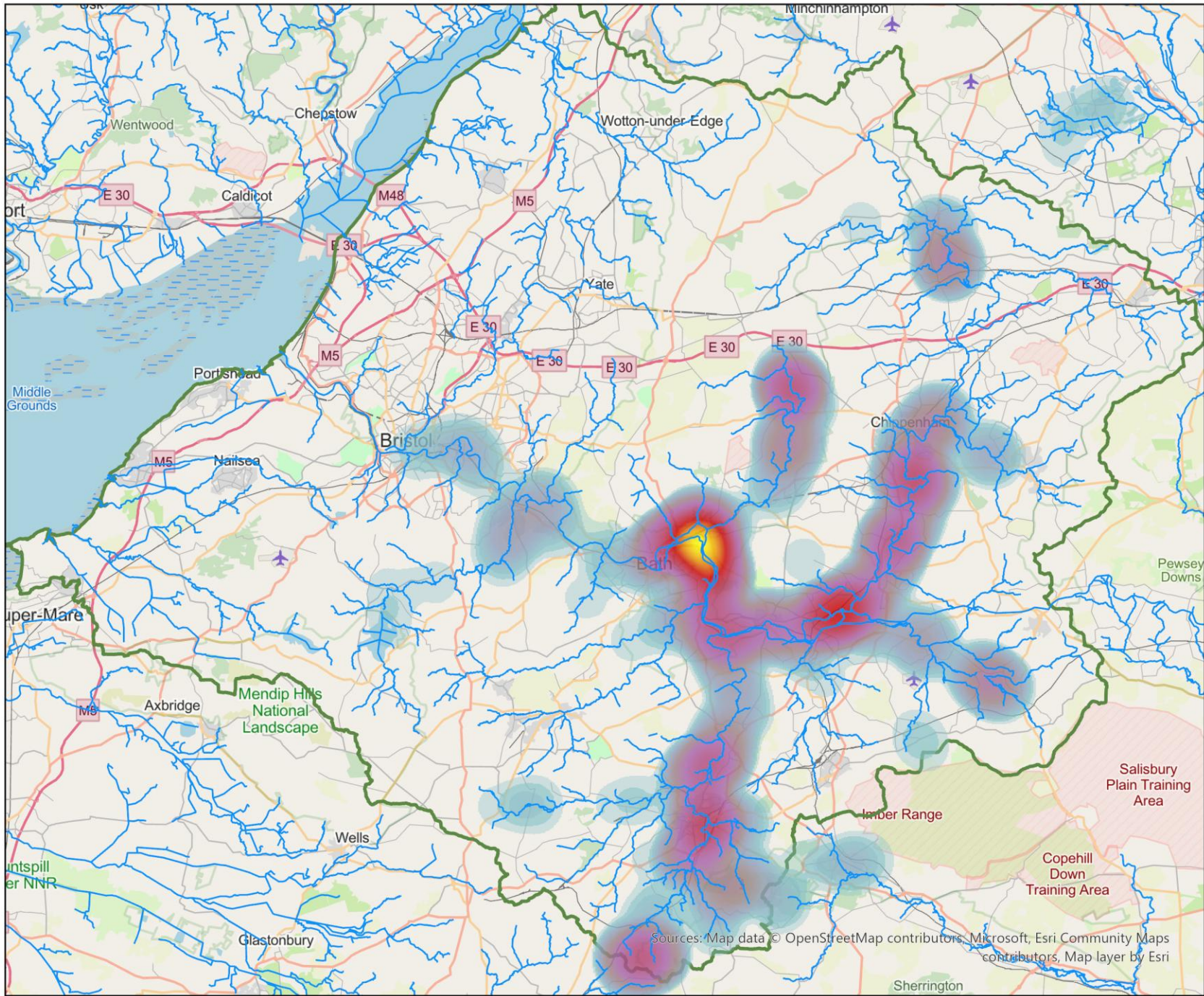
Beaver basics

- Nocturnal
- Live in monogamous family groups
- Live in bank burrows or lodges
- Vegetarian
- Build dams from sticks and mud



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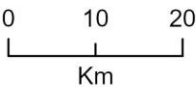
Beavers in Avon



Beaver Advice and Support Team (Bristol Avon & Somerset Frome)

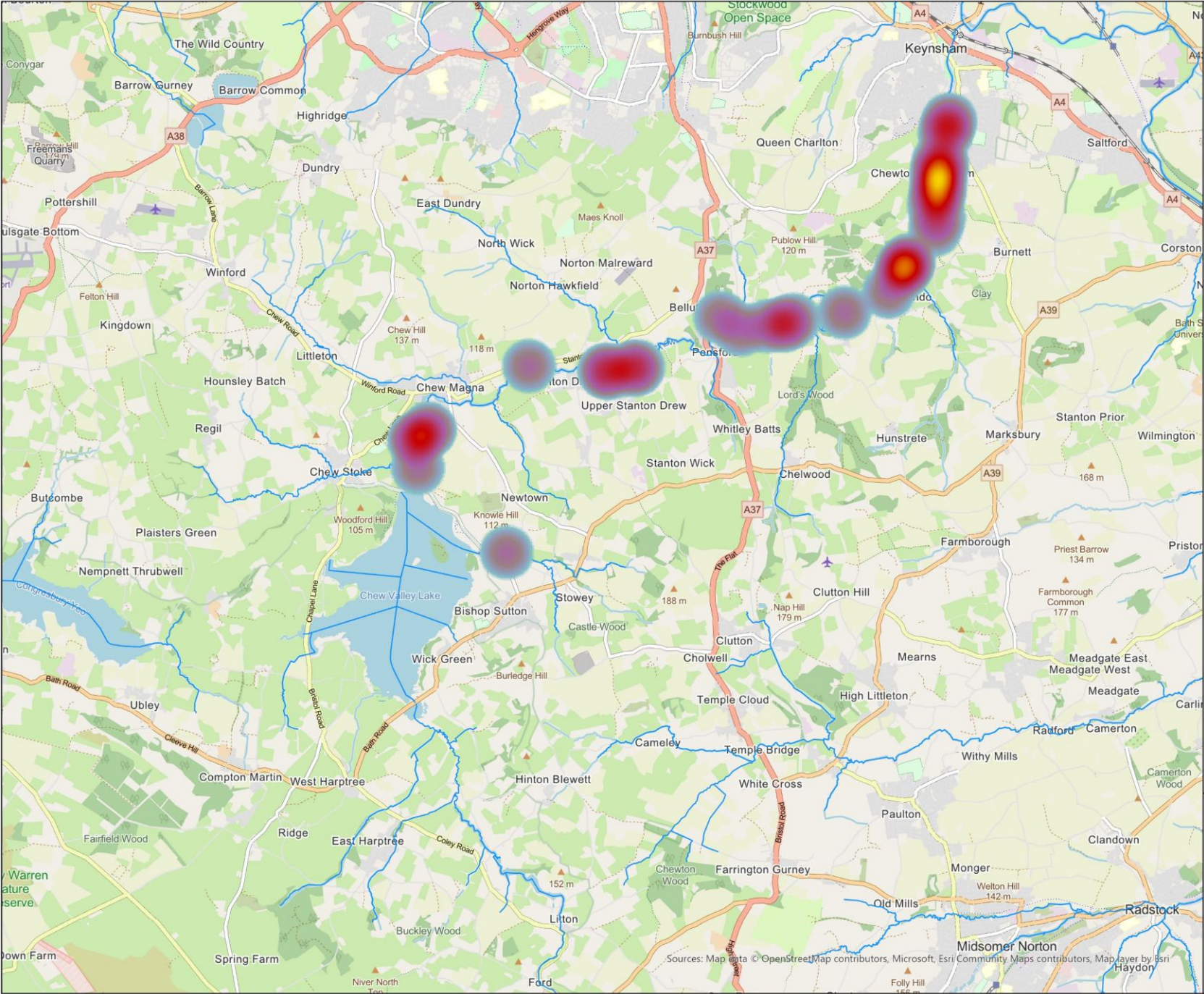
Avon Catchment Beaver Records

- Sparse
- Dense
- Project Area
- OS Open Rivers



Sources: Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, Microsoft, Esri Community Maps contributors, Map layer by Esri

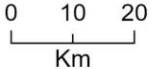
Beavers in Chew



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Chew Survey March 2026 Beaver Records

— OS Open Rivers
■ Sparse
■ Dense



Sources: Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, Microsoft, Esri Community Maps contributors, Map layer by Esri

Spotting Beaver Signs

Woody Vegetation Feeding

- Distinct teeth marks – feel for ridges
- “Pencil tip” gnawed ends



Spotting Beaver Signs...2

Slides and Dams



Spotting Beaver Signs...3

Burrows and Lodges

- Burrows typically underwater
- Lodges constructed from wood, mud & vegetation



Beaver benefits



More opportunities for **ecotourism and recreation**



100 tonnes of carbon stored per hectare of beaver pond



Complex wetland habitats support a range of plant and animal species



Lower nitrates and suspended sediments in water downstream



30% reduction in flood peak flows lowers downstream flood risk



> 1 million litres of water storage, increased downstream water supply



Reduced flood risk



Improved water quality



Increased biodiversity



Resilience to drought



Carbon storage



Recreation and ecotourism

Enhanced water quality



Impacts

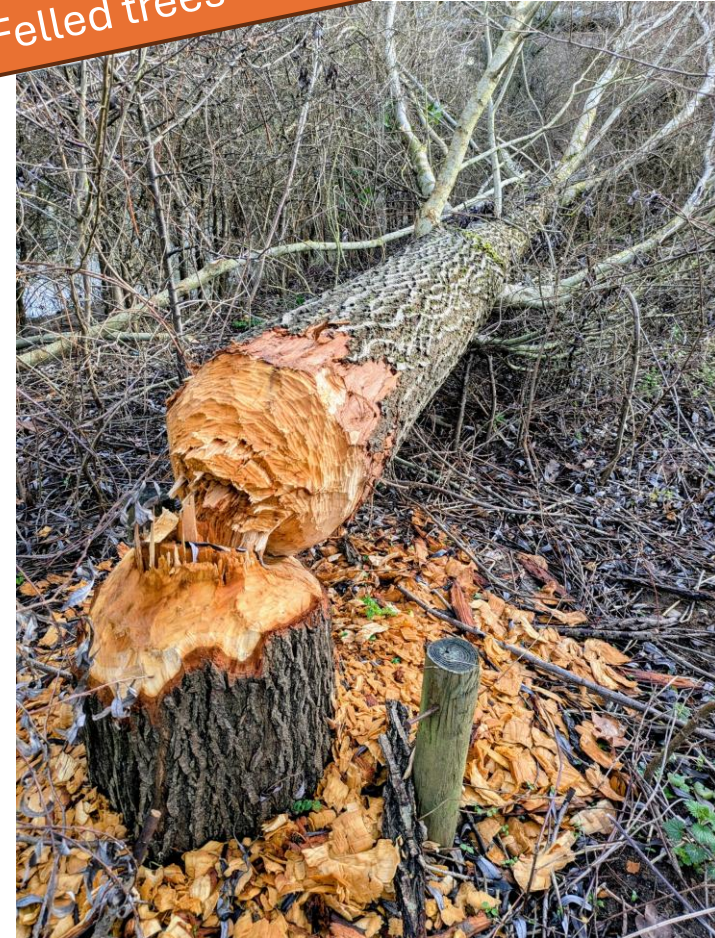
Collapsed burrows



Damming



Felled trees



How we can help

Beaver Advice and Support Team

Email: beavers@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Please log sightings to help us track population

Visit: www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/beavers



(C) Barry Edwards

Avon Wildlife Trust

Have I popped up near you?

Beaver Advice & Support Team

If you have questions or concerns about how beavers may impact your land, get in touch.

A dedicated team providing advice and support to farmers, landowners and communities living alongside wild beavers.

Contact us for:

- General information about beaver behaviour and legal protections
- Advice for managing beavers on your land
- Information about grants to protect trees and crops, as well as grants for expert dam management
- Training opportunities and workshops in your area (including Beaver License Training)

General enquiries: beavers@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Farmer and landowner advice: alex.preston@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION FUND

www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/beavers

Any questions?



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