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They are back!

The beavers of Eurasia

Around 1900, the beavers in Eurasia were at the fringe of extinction. Man had hunted down the population of an estimated 100 million beavers to about 1 to 2 thousand, scattered over about 10 relic sites.

The 20th century brought the comeback of the species, first with the protection of the few survivors and then with more than 150 reintroductions in many countries.

The first reintroductions in the 1920 to 1950 had a simple reason: beavers were valuable fur animals, but too expensive to breed in captivity So: just put them back in the wild, let them breed, and if there are enough, start harvesting. This worked fine in Russia, Siberia, Scandinavia and the Baltic States.

For the second wave of releases, from the 1950s to the 1990s, hunting was no reason. With the growing awareness for nature conservation, the aim was simply to bring back the extinct species as part of the original fauna. Back to Bavaria, Austria, Netherlands, Switzerland and other countries.

With beavers being back again in more and more areas, scientists began to study the “new” animal. They found, that there was not only a species back, but a prime eco- engineer, re-creating lost habitats and increasing biodiversity. This was then the main reasoning for the next releases from the late 1990 into the new millennium: bring back THE agent for restoring nature and natural water courses. Beavers were then released in Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Belgium, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegowina, Spain and the UK.



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The last releases of beavers were also due to the benefits of beavers, this time mainly for one other species: Homo sapiens. Beavers were released to build dams for flooding prevention (in England), and for water purification and management (in Mongolia).

In total, the number of animals in Eurasia has grown back to 1.3 million, still on the way up, and only a few counties don't have them - yet.