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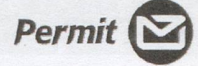
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HELVEVIA

Magazine for Members of the Swiss Society of New Zealand Inc

FLORA/FAUNA IN SWITZERLAND

Swiss aim to boost beaver count

There are an estimated 900 beavers in Switzerland. Pro Natura, the country's leading conservation agency with an annual turnover of SFr 12 million, says beavers should once again feel at home in Switzerland, and wants to expand beaver-friendly habitats.



A beaver sunning itself

A new campaign aims to build up the network of natural rivers and streams, which will benefit not only the dam-building rodents but also many other species. The Hello Beaver! campaign is one of the most significant protection programmes in Switzerland. Places where beavers settle are seen as ecologically healthy and attractive for many other endangered species.

At present only one in ten Swiss waterways is natural - the rest have either been blocked up, dammed or turned into canals or artificial drains to deal with flooding.

The beaver went extinct in Switzerland in 1805 but returned in the middle of the 20th century.

There are estimated to be 700-900 beavers currently with Swiss residency.

Pro Natura wants to work with riverside power stations to open the so-called "beaver barriers" that such utilities often build. It seeks cooperation with cantonal authorities and communities to ensure that



Holding a twig in its claws, a beaver gnaws the bark with its sharp teeth

the beavers' habitat be preserved and riverbeds and sections of riverbank be restored to their natural state. It also aims at raising awareness of beavers through excursions, exhibitions and school trips.

More natural rivers would benefit not only beavers but also many other species of flora and fauna, including dragonflies, kingfishers and trout.

Beavers are best known for their natural trait of building dams in rivers and streams, and building their homes (lodges) in the resulting pond. Beavers continue to grow throughout life. Adults weighing over 25kg are not uncommon. Females are as large as or larger than males of the same age, which is uncommon among mammals. *swissinfo*