

Questions and discussion following talk by Alan Watson-Featherstone

Scotland's missing mammals – Targets & visions for their return

Q = Question A = Answer S = Statement

- S.** Are the goals for lynx and for wolf reintroduction too distant? Don't we need proposals for action in the short-term?
- S.** Bring the targets forward, and don't spread them out. Ask for Brown bear too.
- S.** Aim high and aim for earlier dates, and for more species.
- S.** I want beavers in Sussex as well as Scotland. There is a UK and European context to this.
- S.** Take a European perspective not a sluggish British approach, being a slave to all the bureaucracy – 'get on with it!'
- Q.** How long does it take to create habitat conditions suitable for beavers?
- A.** It depends on the exact location – can do it now in some places.
- S.** Wolves can move long distances and so there needs to be a British-wide context for debate.
- S.** 2009 is the 'Year of Homecoming' in Scotland, which is an important symbolic time. Political support could accelerate interest and action in reintroducing key species.
- S.** Beware of getting too constrained by forecasting in a way which weighs up all the factors as we judge them now. Attitudinal change can go in waves and can sometimes be galvanised by politicians, so views can sometimes shift rapidly.
- S.** Who owns the process of reintroducing species? People need to be encouraged to embrace it at a local level, and even call for it to happen in their locality.
- S.** We should not overlook the existing mammals we have now whose populations are under pressure. They need help all the while we are considering the return of others.
- S.** Note that the cost of returning wolves to Yellowstone in the United States was \$6.7m
- Q.** Does an effective lobby need to be set up to identify and argue for funding sources for additional reintroductions?
- Q.** Is lynx here in places already (I and other people have seen them in SW England).
- A.** Answer from within audience: There have been several lynx sightings in Scotland over recent years, but these individuals would not create a viable population for a variety of reasons.
- S.** How about setting up a public opinion survey of people's attitudes to the candidate species for reintroduction? This would help indicate where there is potential for focussing action.
- S.** Ecologists working on reintroductions need input from other disciplines such as sociologists and lobbyists. This debate is taking part in a wider political and cultural context, so a mix of such skills is needed to engage with the modern world.