

Essex beavers give birth to two healthy kits

Back in 2019 a pair of Eurasian Beavers were welcomed back to Essex for the first time in 400 years to help reduce flood risk in Finchingfield.

18 months on we are thrilled to announce the pioneering partnership project with the Environment Agency, Spains Hall Estate, the Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust, Essex Wildlife Trust, and the Anglian Eastern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) has been a big success – and now there are four extra paws to help them continue their vital flood defence work.

The beaver duo, recently named Woody and Willow, have been working relentlessly over the last year in their Finchingfield enclosure on the historic Spains Hall Estate.

They have been building dams to reduce flood risk to the village and creating wetlands which release water during drier periods.

This is complemented by a human-made natural flood management scheme on a second strand of Finchingfield Brook, which features a “leaky dam” approach.

This consists of securing tree branches or trunks across a watercourse, which helps slow the flow after heavy rain.

We are excited to see how much more the beavers manage with the additional help.

Spains Hall Estate Manager Archie Ruggles-Brise said he was excited to see how much more protection the new additions to the beaver family will bring.

He said: “We are delighted that our beavers have settled in so well that they have bred successfully.

“We always hoped that their woodland home would provide the right habitat to support a family, and the arrival of two kits is fantastic news.

“If they are anything like their parents the two kits will become phenomenal dam builders, and we will be watching closely as they expand the wetland and provide even more protection against flood and drought, and provide homes for loads of other wildlife.

“We are fortunate to have wildlife photographer, Russell Savory, keeping a close eye on the family, and providing everyone with such inspiring insights into their watery world.”

The Environment Agency’s Matt Butcher said: “This is a fantastic project for the Environment Agency to be part of.

“It has been really exciting to see how the beavers have engineered their environment by building dams, slowing the flow and holding up water to reduce the risk of flooding downstream.

“The complex habitat they have created along the way is amazing and improving all the time, which makes this a real win-win for people and wildlife.

“The news of the beaver kits has just taken things to another level, and it will be incredible to see what the new members of the family will do to in the coming months and years.”

Brendan Joyce, Director of Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust, said: “We are delighted to learn of the birth of two beaver kits at Spains Hall”

“We are very proud of our association with this exciting project and I can’t wait for the opportunity to get down there and see the beavers at work.

“It will be fascinating to see what effect the new additions to the family will have on shaping the landscape and creating natural features to reduce flooding”

Darren Tansley, River Catchment Coordinator at Essex Wildlife Trust, says “We always hoped that having beavers present would benefit the wildlife on site, but the changes we have mapped over the past 18 months have exceeded our expectations.

“DNA samples from the main beaver pond recorded everything from deer to tiny pygmy shrews and all this to create the perfect environment for their young kits, the first beavers born in Essex since the Middle Ages. We are thrilled by the addition of two more ecosystem engineers in the county.”

The gender of the baby beavers is unsure at the moment but Archie Ruggles-Brise is asking social media users to head to his Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/spainshallestate>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/spainshall>) to vote for what they would like them to be called.

Previous press releases on the beavers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/beavers-to-return-to-essex-for-the-first-time-in-400-years>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/beavers-arrive-in-essex-to-play-their-part-in-flood-prevention>