
Beaver and poplar: when a protected species threatens " forest ".... Disservices highlighted by poplar owners

Amélie Robert*¹

¹Cités, Territoires, Environnement et Sociétés (CITERES) – CNRS : UMR7324, Université François Rabelais - Tours – 33 allée Ferdinand de Lesseps BP 60449 37204 Tours cedex 3, France

Résumé

Hunted for its fur or due to damages to crops, beaver had almost disappeared in France at the end of the 19th century. In 1909, protection measures began to be taken and the beaver status changed. It allows this species to reconquest some areas, like the Loire watershed. But are the effects of this reintroduction only positive? Loire watershed is still a place of production. Agriculture retreated in the valleys but, from 1950's, it was sometimes replaced by poplar plantations. In the framework of a project funded by the French ministry of agriculture, we conducted interviews with poplar owners in Centre-Val de Loire and Pays de la Loire Regions and they reveal their points of view about this protected species. It is a great, even growing concern for them. In fact, beavers are more and more numerous in the area, what could be good. But, according to poplar owners, beavers are also source of disservices. Indeed, they do damages, destroying poplars. A part of the owner's investment can then be compromised, sometimes leading to the abandonment of the practice. This involvement is all the more a problem that the poplar plantations area decreases. Different reasons explain this trend, like the declining prices of poplar wood. Moreover, beaver is not the only reason of the damages affecting poplar plantations. There is wind, which pollards or uproots trees. There is also fungus or insect pests, which compromise the production. There is finally other wild animals, other rodents or deers, which can damage poplars. To protect their plantations, owners use fence or plastic casing. But this is sometimes not enough, against deers but also beavers, due to the rising water level in poplar plantations during floods. The poplar owners feel powerless against this species that threatens their plantation but that they can not hunt. From threatened species, beaver became protected species, which now threaten. Protecting a species is not without consequences for the other element of an ecosystem. The Human decision has good and/or bad fallouts on nature and this nature itself provides services but also disservices, what the litterature often forgets nowadays.

Mots-Clés: poplar, beaver, disservices, protected species, forest owner, interviews, forest plantations

*Intervenant