

RIVERWOODS

AN UNTOLD STORY



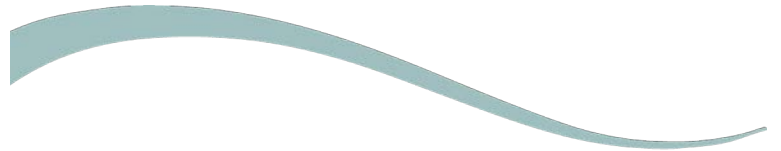
A feature-length documentary for the big screen.
And big thinking.





Imagine a Scotland where wild forests teem with life. Where rivers brimming with salmon and trout flow freely and where a mosaic of wetlands is shaped by the work of beavers and echoes to the calls of cranes.

Such scenes offer a glimpse into the past and perhaps, a promise for the future.



AN UNTOLD STORY

Most people think of Scotland as a land of beauty and drama, but there's a secret hidden within its majestic hills and glens.

Riverwoods is a crucial and timely documentary that shines a light on the perilous state of Scotland's Atlantic Salmon, the King of Fish. This magnificent creature so symbolic of pristine, cascading rivers, is threatened like never before. Its plight mirrors the bare, depleted landscapes through which many of Scotland's once life-rich rivers flow. Against the backdrop of a climate emergency, water temperatures are rising, and the salmon are crying out for the trees and complex vegetation communities that once shaded and fed them.

Salmon are in hot water.





FISH IN THE FOREST

There are salmon in the forest. Not only in the rivers but also in the trees. And in the soil that spawns the trees. And in the predators, scavengers and even herbivores that live amongst the trees. The King of Fish is not only the ultimate angler's prize, but a key building block in a vibrant forest ecosystem and all it supports.

But in return, salmon need the support of a rich and diverse landscape that stretches far beyond the banks of the river. Over many centuries the loss of Scotland's natural woodlands and much of the wildlife that shaped them, has profoundly changed its rivers and their ability to support the huge salmon runs that once flourished.

**The salmon needs the forest. The forest needs the salmon.
And Scotland needs them both.**

High in the river system are the two bookends of a salmon's life – eggs and carcasses. Some eggs provide valuable food for scavengers, but others will hatch into fry that seek the shelter of roots and sunken trees, the building blocks of complex river habitats. Trees help prevent the waterway widening, allowing it to retain depths that resist drought. Their shade keeps the river from overheating, and their fallen leaves, along with insects from their branches, feed all manner of aquatic creatures.

In other parts of the world, this ancient interdependency that has shaped river systems for thousands of years, reaches much further than the water's edge. Across Canada and North America, the salmon travel much deeper into the forest, dragged into the understorey by wolves, bears and eagles. This process returns nutrients to the earth in the form of scat and remains left decomposing on the floor. Far from the river, the salmon are feeding the forest soil.

And the forest grows strong. Fed by marine nitrogen and phosphorus from the fish, the trees provide sanctuary and food for a different cast of species. In a thriving temperate ecosystem, a patchwork mosaic of diverse woodland covers whole river catchments, binding the soil, storing carbon and slowing water run-off. The woodland is complex, dynamic, ever changing. Here there is so much more than just trees.

Across Scotland's woodland-depleted river catchments, these eternal ecological relationships are broken. But today, an idea is taking hold.

The health of Scotland's rivers and the life within them is dependent on the health of the landscapes through which they flow.

REWRITING THE STORY

Its early advocates called it restoration or regeneration. It was about healing nature by bringing back native woodlands and the species we had driven to extinction. That idea is today evolving into a transformative approach to how we relate to nature. Riverwoods reveals the inextricable relationship between salmon and trees and how that fractured connection is being repaired through the insight and foresight of many different people. Scotland's rivers are arteries of life; corridors for myriad species and revitalising them will throw a precious lifeline to the King of Fish.



RIVERWOODS

THE FILM

55 minutes

Narration by a high-profile voice.

By showcasing temperate landscapes where salmon numbers remain strong, Riverwoods will present a vision for catchment restoration across Scotland.

Riverwoods is a spectacular and compelling visual journey, interspersed with fascinating key interviews, showing how the life-rich rivers of Scotland have been greatly diminished, and how they could be reborn. The return of ospreys, sea eagles and beavers are symbolic of fresh thinking and offer a glimpse into what else might be possible. Now more than ever, fresh thinking is key in the future for Scotland's salmon.

OUTPUT TIMETABLE

SEPT
2021

Launch events in Edinburgh and London featuring an introduction from a high-profile speaker, first public screenings of the film and a Q&A session with key contributors. The event will be heavily marketed and press, key policymakers and influencers will be invited.

SEPT-DEC
2021

Riverwoods will screen in ten regional giant-screen venues across Scotland, accompanied by live musical performances. These events will be open to the public but targeted towards rural communities with an interest in and influence over, healthy river systems.

JAN-SEP
2022

Riverwoods will tour European film festivals followed by possible television broadcast and will also be available for screening at venues, clubs and societies subject to any broadcast restrictions.

OCT 2022
ONWARDS

Riverwoods will be made available free online and signposted to key landowners and policymakers via a major marketing campaign.



SCOTLAND THE BIG PICTURE

rewriting nature's story

SCOTLAND: The Big Picture is a non-profit company founded by a group of professional communicators with many years of experience in conservation media.

Through our work we engage with a diverse spectrum of people, recognising that their choices and perceptions are key in addressing the dual emergencies of climate breakdown and biodiversity loss.

PRODUCTION

Riverwoods will employ some of the country's top videographers, sound recordists and production specialists.

Scientific advisors: Tommy McDermott, Edwin Third, Susan Cooksley, Chris Conroy, Peter Cunningham.

THE COST

The budget for film production, musical compositions, live screenings/performances and outputs detailed above: £205,000.

“EVENTUALLY, ALL THINGS MERGE INTO ONE,
AND A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT.”

- Norman Maclean





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