

# RIVERWOODS

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AN UNTOLD STORY

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



SCOTLAND  
THE BIG PICTURE

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rewriting nature's 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.

## AN UNTOLD STORY

Across much of the northern hemisphere, there are salmon, not only in the rivers but also in the trees. And in the soil that feeds the trees. And in the predators, scavengers and even herbivores that live among the trees. The King of Fish is not only the ultimate angler's prize, but a key building block in a dynamic forest ecosystem and all the life 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 river catchments and their ability to support the huge salmon runs that once flourished.

Scotland's Atlantic salmon are threatened like never before. The reasons are many and complex, but against the backdrop of a changing climate, river temperatures are rising, and the salmon, so dependent on clean, cold water, are crying out for the trees and vegetation communities that once shaded and fed them.

**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. 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 complex 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.**

# REWRITING THE STORY

The left of this image mirrors the millions of treeless acres that dominate much of Scotland's landscape. On the right, a glimpse of what our river catchments could look like – a vibrant mosaic of habitats supporting an abundance and diversity of life.





*Riverwoods* is a crucial and timely multimedia campaign that shines a light on the perilous state of Scotland's salmon and the degraded river catchments we have come to accept as normal. But crucially, *Riverwoods* tells a story of hope.

We've brought together a group of expert scientists, writers and filmmakers to reveal the inextricable relationship between salmon, trees and countless other organisms that create the dynamic natural processes on which Scotland's rivers depend, and of how these fractured connections are gradually being repaired through the foresight and positive actions 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*.**



## THE FILM

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A feature-length documentary, *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 through a shared vision for river restoration and recovery.

## THE MUSIC

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In partnership with *Salt House*, one of Scotland's most exciting folk bands, the *Riverwoods* film will be accompanied by a unique collection of songs portraying a landscape in urgent need of recovery.

The tracks will be performed live alongside film screenings, as well as being available on CD.

## MULTIMEDIA

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Over the term of the project, *Riverwoods* will build into a comprehensive multimedia portfolio of inspiring stories that catalyse further river restoration and recovery.

# OUTPUT TIMETABLE

SEP  
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.

SEP-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.



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SCOTLAND: The Big Picture is a charity that supports and enables the transformational recovery of Scotland's nature to benefit wildlife, climate and people.

Our advocacy work relies on creating impactful communications that inform, inspire and influence rewilding actions and policy. Our team of writers, videographers, sound recordists and production specialists are knowledgeable, creative storytellers committed to opening minds, changing perspectives and bringing about positive change.

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

# #RIVERWOODS

The health of our rivers and the life within them, is directly dependent on the landscapes through which they flow.

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