

*They are Back: Notes on the Presence and the life Activities of the Eurasian Beaver (*Castor fiber* L. 1758) from the Territory of Bulgaria*

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Abstract. This scientific note reports on the recently detected presence of the Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber* L. 1758) on the territory of Bulgaria. The species was previously a part of the Bulgarian fauna, however it disappeared from the territory of the country more than 150 years ago. Currently, one site in North Bulgaria was an object of long term monitoring and our team was able to detect the life activity of the Eurasian beaver in that particular habitat. The main goal of the present publication is to inform both the scientific community, as well as the public for the presence of the species in Bulgaria, but also to encourage the competent authorities to undertake initiatives for the protection of the species and its habitat.

Key words: faunistics, zoogeography, range, rodents, mammal, vertebrate.

In the past, the European beaver (*Castor fiber*) was widely distributed on the territory of Bulgaria and inhabited the low streams of many rivers (see Boev & Spasov, 2019). The species' populations declined dramatically in the XVIII century (Boev, 1958) and vanished from the Bulgarian fauna presumably in the middle of the XIX century (Boev & Spasov, 2019). According to the information provided by Wrobel (2020), the beaver population in Europe is growing during the last decades and had reached over 1.2 million specimens. However, the same author reported that data on the occurrence of beavers are missing for Bulgaria.

With the present short note, we would like to inform the scientific community, the

public, the competent authorities and the government on our findings concerning the presence and the detected life activity of *C. fiber* in a particular habitat on the territory of Bulgaria. We were able to document bite marks on tree logs - predominantly from *Salix* sp. and *Populus* sp. (Fig. 1a), as well as fresh footprints of adult beavers (Fig. 1b). The data were collected from a territory under protection of the NATURA 2000 network, however we received some alarming information from the local residents related to negative attitude toward animals in the local society. That was the main reason to release this short note before the publication of the data from our long term monitoring on the Eurasian beaver's activities from the location.

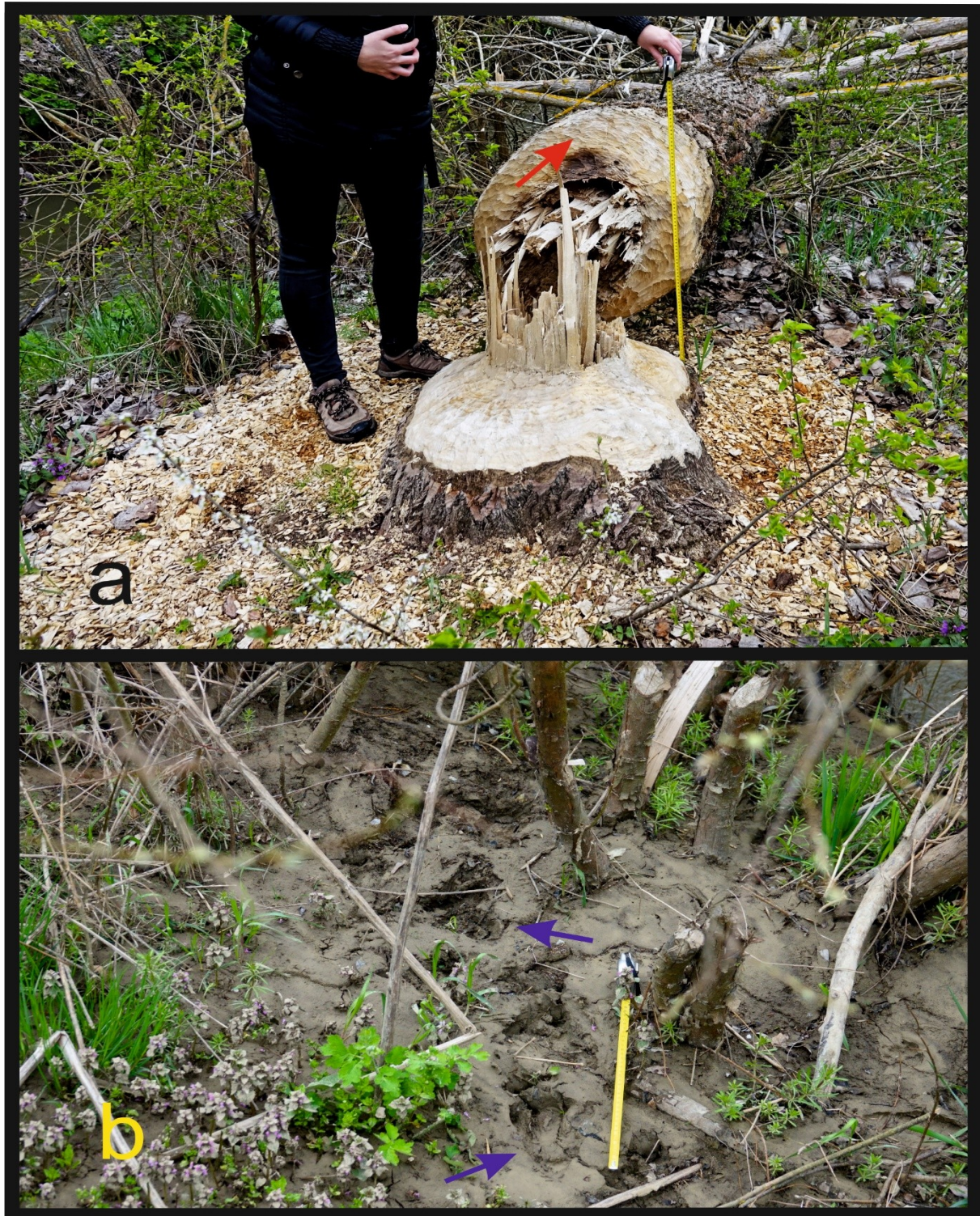


Fig. 1. Indications of the presence of the Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*) on the territory of Bulgaria: a. marks from gnawing activities of the beaver on a fallen tree and its log rests – note the typical serration traces on the wood material (indicated by a red arrow) and the abundant wood raspings at the base of the log; b. foot prints from an adult beaver in the mud shore besides the river – the violet arrows indicate the typical shape of the beaver traces; both photographs were performed by the use of “Sony RXIII” (Sony corporation, Minato, Tokyo, Japan).

The construction activities of *C. fiber* impact the morphology of their habitats to large scale and these changes may concern other vertebrates that live in the same territory (Collen & Gibson, 2001; Herr & Rosell, 2004; Hartman & Tornlov, 2006). The Eurasian beavers demand some special characteristics of the sites they inhabit (see Kiss et al., 2012). Our data (and also data of N. Kodzhabashev and T. Teofilova, pers. comm.) revealed, that *C. fiber* had occupied a defined territory in Bulgaria for prolonged time (since January 20-th, 2020 in our case), which indicates on the high suitability of that particular habitat for the species.

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