

The Otter in Derbyshire.

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PROBABLY few people are aware that the otter, which was considered a scarce animal forty years ago, is now not uncommon in a part of our county. No doubt its nocturnal habits and shyness tend to make it appear scarcer than it really is. The headquarters of these animals may be said to be the river Dove, between Ashburne and Rocester, whence they make their way up to Alstonfield and down to the Trent. Here, since 1898, none have been killed, and in consequence there has been a decided increase in their numbers, but on the upper Dove they are still relentlessly trapped and shot, nine having been killed within a space of three years.

Mr. Andrew informs me that early in May of the present year, two were taken on the river Goyt, at Waterside, near New Mills, and sent to Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester. The presence of these animals in such an unlikely spot (for the Goyt is much polluted at this point) is interesting as showing the wandering disposition of this species. Probably they were in search of "pastures new," and in time would have moved on to a more congenial home.

May I put in a plea for the preservation, in limited numbers of course, of this interesting mammal in our fishing rivers? It is hardly necessary to say that the otter is to a great extent a fish eater, but it does incalculable good to a river by the destruction of the large eels, and by killing off the big cannibal trout. Grayling and trout certainly flourish on the Dove where the otter is preserved, and it never becomes unduly plentiful.