

In the swim...Britain's first baby beavers for 500 years

By Geoff Maynard

THE first beavers born in the wild in Britain for more than 500 years swim into the limelight thanks to the incredible devotion of photographer Mike Powles.

He led a spartan life for 16 days on a floating hide to catch the shy kits – or yearlings – on camera.

"I was ecstatic when I saw the two youngsters for the first time," said Mike, from Norfolk. "It was just a fleeting glimpse with one of them riding on its mother's back.

"They had their own swimming pool which the adults made for them and when they leave their lodge for the first time they hang on to their mother for safety.

"After they learned to swim, the kits were tearing round after each other like terriers.

"Young beavers have not been photographed in the UK before.

"The pictures aren't works of art but the rarity value is enormous."

Beavers became extinct in England by the 12th century and by the 16th century in Scotland, as they were hunted for their pelts and meat. But four years



These secretive youngsters are learning to build a dam from branches that they gnaw down at this lake in Gloucestershire where they were born

ago six European beavers were introduced to Lower Mill Estate near Cirencester, Glos.

They leave their dam home only briefly at dawn and dusk and Mike took the pictures after 9pm using ultra-high-speed film to capture as much light as possible because using flash "would have sent them into the next county".

Jeremy Paxton, 48, owner of

Lower Mill Estate, believes the success of the project could see beavers released into the upper Thames Valley.

He said: "Beavers are vegetarian, do not cause damage to crops or farmland or prey on other animals.

"By building shallow pools they are a positive asset to other species."

