

# Beaver

BAR CODE #: 15703



**Phylum:** Chordata  
**Class:** Mammalia  
**Order:** Rodentia  
**Family:** Castoridae  
**Genus:** Castor

**Beaver:** “Busy as a Beaver” is an appropriate phrase often used to describe a person who is always busy, because Beavers are working hard gnawing down saplings, floating branches, and improving either their lodge or dam. An adult **Beaver** can gnaw through the 4” trunk of a sapling in 15-20 minutes. The **Beaver** (*Castor canadensis*) is an excellent swimmer, moving fully submerged with just the upper part of its head above water. Its large, paddle-like tail is covered with tough scales—not hair—and is used to propel and steer itself in the water. The tail is also used to slap the water surface when danger threatens, serving as a warning to the beavers in the colony. Out of water, the stiff tail also serves as a brace while gnawing a young tree. Adult **Beavers** are usually 25-30 inches in body length. The flat tail can be 9-10 inches long. Their weight ranges from 30-60 pounds. Typical life expectancy is 11 years.

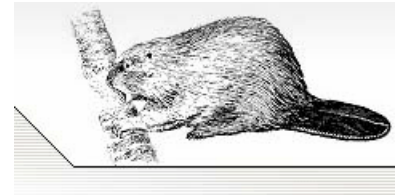
**Beaver Habitat & Range:** **Beavers** are builders. They create dams and lodges (homes) by utilizing branches and trunks of young trees. Most of these tree parts are obtained at night by taking down trees close to their pond or stream and floating them to the lodge or dam. After feeding on the tender young twigs and bark, the remainder is used to build or repair the dam or lodge.

A dam is built of sticks and mud to block the flow of a stream and create a temporary pond called a beaver pond. By raising the water level of the pond, the **Beaver** can easily use the flooded trees for food and building material.

Except for the very dry southwest, **Beavers** have flourished throughout our country and all of Canada’s provinces.

**Beaver Diet & Nesting:** Preferred foods are the bark and small, tender twigs of young aspen, poplar, birch, maple, willow, and elder saplings.

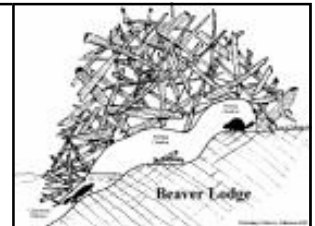
A pair of **Beavers** usually has two to four young called “kits,” born during the spring. Yearlings remain in the family group, while two-year-olds are driven out or leave the parental shelter. They then start their own lodge, which may be in the same area or as far as five miles away.



**At Issue:** Hunting and trapping drastically reduced the **Beaver** population in North America, due to the popularity of beaver pelts used in clothing during the 18th and 19th centuries, including beaver coats and beaver pelts used in gentlemen’s hats. By 1900, **Beaver** was extirpated, or locally extinct from Ohio. During the last half century, the **Beaver** has slowly begun to reappear in the North American forests, including Ohio.

**Beaver Lodge:** The lodge is a dome-shaped structure that can be entered only through an underwater tunnel. A lodge built in the middle of a pond protects the **Beaver** from predators, such as wolves, at the pond’s edge. The twigs and branches forming the lodge roof are coated with mud, enclosing a single-room habitat. The roof has an air-hole affording ventilation for the beaver family year round.

Often the animals’ lodge is part of a dam which has been strategically placed in flowing water. Thus, any floating edible objects will be conveniently brought to their “home” directly with minimum effort by the beaver.



# FUN FACTS ABOUT BEAVERS!!

The beaver's four front teeth continue to grow throughout a beaver's life. They need to gnaw continually to keep the teeth from getting too long.

Beavers use their tails as an extra support when standing on their hind legs.

Beavers slap their tails on the water to warn other beavers of possible danger.

The beaver uses the cleft (split) toe nail on each hind foot to comb oil through its fur. This helps the beaver to be waterproof.

Beavers have a transparent inner eyelid that covers and protects their eyes so they can see underwater.

## Other Beaver resources available from the Science Resource Center:

- Beaver Kit (includes pelt, tracks, molds, and books: *Beaver for Kids*)
- Chewed log
- Book: *Beaver at Long Pond*
- Puppets (1 adult, 1 baby)