

Frequently Asked Questions about Beavers

Q: WHAT DO BEAVERS EAT?

A: Their favorite foods include water lily tubers, spatterdock, clover, algae, apples and the leaves and green bark from aspen and other fast-growing trees. After eating, beavers use the peeled sticks to build a teepee-like lodge and to construct dams.

Q: DO BEAVERS HIBERNATE?

A: Definitely not. Beavers have an active life all winter long, even when trapped under the ice in the North. They normally store enough food underwater to last them until the ice melts and retrieve it through their underwater doorways in their lodge floors.

Q: DO BEAVERS EVER MOVE TO A NEW WETLAND?

A: Generally beavers live about 10 years in the wild. They stay in the same wetland until the food runs out, which may be in a few years or a few decades. They migrate by water or land, and if by land, this is where much mortality occurs from predators, such as coyotes, dogs and accidents. They have been known to travel for miles to find new wetlands. The two-year olds usually leave home to find their own territory. Beavers are limited to only a fraction of the landscape; that portion in, and adjacent to, waterways.

Q: DO BEAVERS MATE FOR LIFE?

A: Yes. Beavers live in close family units throughout their lives. In the spring, one to four kits (beaver babies) are born. They are raised by both of their parents, along with older brothers and sisters. Beavers have been observed to mourn the loss of a mate before selecting another partner.

Q: ARE BEAVERS AGGRESSIVE?

A: No. But the adults of both sexes tend to be very territorial once the family unit, or colony, is established. They post their territory with scent mounds that tell other beavers that this wetland is occupied. Beavers are very gentle social animals within their own colonies. Wildlife rehabilitators find beavers to be kind, reasoning beings who enjoy playing practical jokes on each other.

Q: HOW DO BEAVERS BUILD THEIR HOUSES?

A: Beavers begin by damming a stream, which may create a pond. In the middle of the pond, they may pile up mud, rocks and sticks to form a platform, or floor, elevated above the water level. On top of this, they weave sticks into a large mound. They then burrow up through the mud floor and chew out branches from within to create a "room" inside the stick pile. "Bank beavers" will dig a burrow in the side of a bank, lay sticks on top and then tunnel up and chew out a room. In the winter, beavers pack mud over the sticks so that when the temperature drops, the mud freezes hard like concrete, protecting the beavers within from strong predators.



Q: WHEN ARE BEAVERS ACTIVE?

A: Beavers are active mainly at night, but occasionally can be seen out during the day. The best time to see beavers is at dusk, about an hour before darkness or at sunrise.