

Beavers in Parks

Managers of wildlife aim to find a balance between people and beavers. Some individuals find beaver activity to be beneficial, while others view it as destructive. The creation of wetlands from beaver activity provides habitat for a variety of wildlife. However, some only see the tree destruction that occurs.

The M-NCPPC recognizes the importance of beavers and their activity in parks, but also strives to protect private property. When beaver damage occurs on private property adjacent to parkland, landowners are provided with recommendations on how to prevent that damage. In the event of flooding on private property, steps are taken to confine it to park property. On park property beaver management is restricted to park personnel. Tree cutting on park property does occur as a result of beaver activity; but is tolerated if there is no danger to roadways, power lines, and private property.

Parks serve to provide habitat to a diverse wildlife population, including beavers. Like all creatures, beavers need space to build their homes and thrive. People and beavers can live together and share the resources parks provide. The footprint of people and the paw print of beavers both have a place within our parklands.

Want More Information?

Contact M-NCPPC staff!

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Park Rangers:

14955 Pennsylvania Ave.
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
301-627-7755; TTY 301-699-2544

Park Naturalists:

Clearwater Nature Center
Cosca Regional Park
11000 Thrift Road
Clinton, MD 20735
301-297-4575; TTY 301-699-2544

Watkins Nature Center
Watkins Regional Park
301 Watkins Park Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
301-218-6702; TTY 301-699-2544

Mt Rainier Nature/Recreation Center
4701 31st Place
Mt. Rainier, MD 20712
301-927-2163; TTY 301-699 2544

Patuxent River Park
16000 Croom Airport Rd.
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
301-627-6074; TTY 301-699-2544

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Park Naturalists:

Brookside Nature Center
1400 Glenallen Ave.
Wheaton, MD 20902
301-946-9071

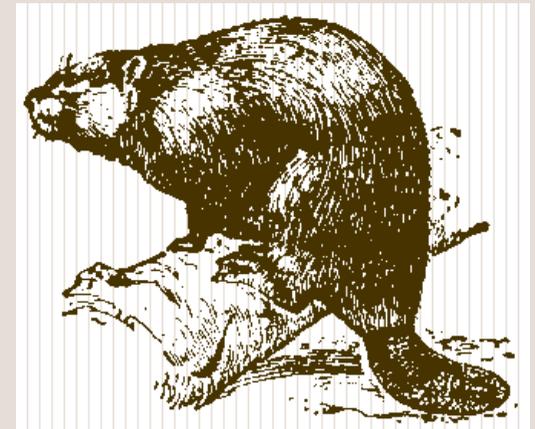
Meadowside Nature Center
Rock Creek Regional Park
5100 Meadowside Lane
Rockville, MD 20853
301-924-4141

Locust Grove Nature Center
Cabin John Regional Park
777 Democracy Blvd.
Bethesda, MD 20817
301-299-1990

The Maryland-National Capital
Park and Planning Commission
Park Ranger Office
14955 Pennsylvania Avenue
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
(301) 627-7755;
TTY 301-699-2544
www.PGParks.com

The Maryland-National Capital Park
and Planning Commission
Department of Parks and Recreation
Park Ranger Office
www.pgparcs.com

Beavers In Prince George's County, Maryland



Beaver Facts

Beavers are a keystone species living throughout North America. In a stream valley setting, beavers construct dams resulting in flooding. These flooded areas become wetlands, which are host to large amounts of biodiversity including fish, turtles, frogs, birds, and waterfowl. Wetlands raise the water table, helping promote aquatic and streamside plant growth. They also serve to reduce erosion and sediment loads, as well as, improve water quality as toxic substances like pesticides are broken down and filtered out.

Beavers are the largest rodents native to North America, weighing an average of 40-60 lbs. and about 3-4

feet in length. Their flat, paddle-like tail can grow to be 10-16 inches long, 5-6 inches wide, and 1/2 inch thick at the center. This trademark tail keeps the beaver standing when on its hind legs, is used as a warning sign when slapped on the water in case of danger, and serves as a rudder while swimming. The beaver's prominently sharp teeth consist of four incisors, also called gnawing teeth. They are about one inch long and grow throughout the animal's life. Beaver's fur protects them from cold water and cold temperatures. The undercoat is reddish brown, while the outer coat and sides are usually dark brown.

Habitat

Beavers are semi-aquatic mammals that spend much of their time in water. Their

webbed feet and flat tail allow them to be great swimmers. Transparent eyelids and closeable valves on their ears and nose allow them to go underwater, and remain there for long periods of time. They usually stay submerged for 3-4 minutes, but

are estimated to be capable of staying underwater up to 15 minutes. When on land, their movements are less nimble due to their short, heavy legs making them weak runners or climbers.

Beavers alter the landscape by building dams in order to construct their living space. Their homes, called lodges, are domed structures consisting mostly of tree limbs they cut and gather using their sharp teeth. Outside of the lodge, mud is layered on top of the limbs to create a weather-proof structure with holes for air.

Beaver Lodge

Beavers are monogamous creatures who only mate with one partner and breed annually. The life span of a beaver is between 5-10 years, with some living up to 20 years. In the event one mate dies, the other may find another partner. Beavers normally live in family units consisting of an adult pair and two years

Lifecycle and Reproduction

of offspring. Typically when they reach age two beavers leave their parents in search of a place to build their own lodge and start a family. Bachelor beavers, either male or female, are not common and live alone.

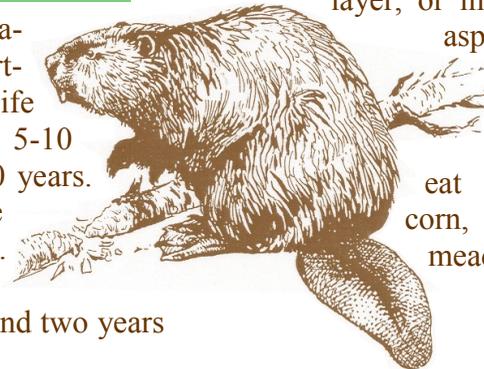
Sexual maturity for beavers occurs before age three. However, breeding does not begin until a suitable mate and a good area to build a home is located. Breeding season is January through February. Beavers use oil producing glands to mark their territory and signal to potential mates they are welcome to share the area. Gestation lasts about four months and litters usually are between two and six young, called kits.

They are born with a full fur coat, open eyes, and underwater swimming usually happens within a few hours of birth.

Beavers are vegetarians that eat the cambium layer, or inner bark, of trees, such as aspen, willow, cottonwood, dogwood, and many other tree and shrub varieties. When in season, they also eat water lily tubers, clover, corn, wheat, oats, and various meadow and wetland plants.

Diet

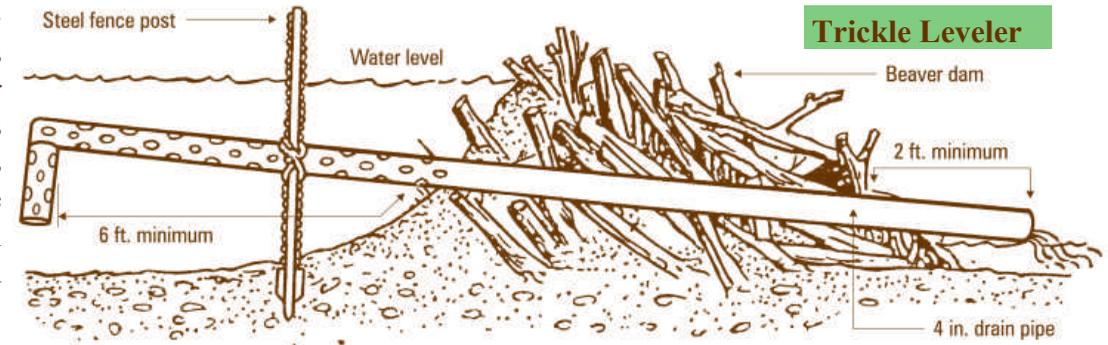
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Living With Beavers

Although a beaver's habits have many positive effects, conflicts between human and beaver land uses can arise. When dam construction causes backyard tree damage and flooding, beaver habitat creation can become a nuisance. Before beginning beaver control action, it is best to assess the problem thoroughly. Are beavers truly causing damage or creating a hardship? Is the beaver's activity creating a safety concern or just an aesthetic concern?

Trickle Level



Flood Prevention

A trickle level, or drain pipe, is a perforated pipe that is put through a dam allowing water levels to stabilize. The beavers can continue to maintain their dam while flooding into roads and yards is prevented.

Tree Damage Prevention

Sturdy fencing at least three feet high made of wire mesh can prevent beavers from destroying backyard trees. The fence should be placed 8-10 inches from the tree and supported by metal rods to avoid damage.

