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# Beavers



# Beaver Characteristics

### Appearance

- Largest rodent in North America.
- Thick fur is usually dark brown and consists of long, coarse outer hairs and short, fine inner hairs.
- Large, flat, paddle-shaped, scaly tail.
- Large, webbed hind feet and smaller front feet with claws.

### Behaviour & Habitat

- Nocturnal but can be active during the day.
- Excellent swimmers and can remain submerged up to 15 minutes.
- Construct lodges and dams in lakes, streams and rivers using branches, sticks, twigs, rocks and mud.
- They can cut down trees using their large front teeth.
- They use their front paws for digging, carrying and placing materials.
- Beaver dams provide deep, calm water around their lodges to protect them from predators and provide safe access to food.
- Beavers have a number of predators in Saskatoon including coyotes, foxes and birds of prey.
- Beavers usually mate for life and are monogamous.
- Have one litter per year consisting of two to six kits.
- Kits can swim within 24 hours of being born.
- Kits remain with their parents for up to two years, creating large family groups with up to 12 beavers living in one lodge.
- Most beavers reach sexual maturity around three years of age.

### Diet

- Beavers are herbivores that feed on leaves, buds and the inner bark of growing trees. They also eat cattails, water lilies and other aquatic vegetation.
- Prefer aspen and poplar but will also feed on other deciduous trees.

# Co-existing with Beavers

Beavers are a long-time resident of Saskatoon's river valley. This presents certain challenges in riverside parks and along pathways, including tree loss and safety hazards from partially chewed trees.

### Beaver Management Strategies

#### *Tree Protection*

- Metal fencing can be placed around the trunks of mature trees to prevent chewing.
- This will need to be monitored and adjusted to prevent girdling as the trees grow.

#### *Trapping*

- There are a number of traps designed for beavers.
- Traps are often placed in the beaver's frequently used pathways around lodges.
- Traps are often only a short term solution as new beavers will often move in and recolonize an area with suitable habitat.

