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Living with Beavers

Beavers are found all over Ontario. Most common in forests, beavers also expand into unforested areas where waterways are bordered by trees or shrubs. This can bring beavers into parks or green spaces created by people.

The beaver's life is connected to logging both for food and to build a home. These animals cut down an average of 216 trees a year. They can fell trees up to about 40 centimetres in diameter.

Beavers shift from eating wood to plants as new growth appears in the spring. During summer, beavers will eat grasses, herbs, leaves of woody plants, fruits and aquatic plants.

Although water offers excellent protection from predators, beavers are vulnerable in many ways. Beavers fall prey to wolves, coyotes, bears, lynx and wolverines when foraging on shore or migrating over land.

A beaver takes only one mate, which it keeps for life. The family is the basic unit of the beaver's society. Mating occurs in January and February.

Conflicts happen

Beavers can become a problem if their eating habits or dam/den building activity cause damage or flooding on property.

Did you know?

Beavers are the largest rodent in North America, weighing an average of 18 to 28 kilograms.



Please keep in mind...

Wild animals have the same basic needs as humans – food, water and shelter. Sometimes, humans and wild creatures come into conflict when animals are trying to meet their basic needs. Often, conflicts can be prevented if we're willing to make small changes to how we think and act.

People and wild animals live side by side in Ontario. We all share responsibility for preventing and handling human-wildlife conflicts. If you must take action against wildlife, please consider all your options and follow all relevant laws and regulations.

This fact sheet is one in a series about living with wildlife. The complete set is available at ontario.ca/wildlife.

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Conflicts with Beavers

How Can I Prevent Conflicts?

Make your property unwelcoming

- It is almost impossible as well as cost-prohibitive to exclude beavers from entire ponds or lakes.
- Eliminate foods, trees, and woody vegetation where feasible.
- Choose plants and trees carefully. Beavers do not like species such as elderberry, ninebark and twinberry.
- Place plants you care about away from known beaver trails to limit losses.
- Wrap individual trees in metre-high, galvanized welded wire fencing, hardware cloth, or multiple layers of chicken wire.
- Painting tree trunks with a sand and paint mix (120 millilitres of masonry-grade sand per litre of latex paint) has proven somewhat effective in protecting trees from beaver damage.
- Protect large areas by installing 1.5-metre high field fencing. Keep the bottom of the fence flush to the ground to prevent beavers from entering underneath.
- Protect areas along river and stream banks with electric fencing.

How Can I Handle a Conflict?

On dam removal

- Dam destruction is a temporary solution and should only be considered after other techniques have been tried.
- If dam removal is necessary, it is important to exercise extreme caution to prevent downstream flooding, damage to natural habitats and property damage.
- Notify Fisheries and Oceans Canada at least 10 working days before starting your work to remove a dam.
- If you remove a dam, you may be held liable for any property damage that occurs downstream due to your actions.

To prevent flooding

- A variety of techniques (e.g. bafflers, deceivers, culverts) can be used to control the level of water behind a dam. Your local Ministry of Natural Resources office can provide advice on construction.
- To prevent culverts being blocked, v-shaped, semicircular, or trapezoidal fences of woven wire mesh can be used.

Lethal action is a last resort

- A landowner may humanely kill or trap beavers that are damaging or about to damage their property. Firearm regulations and bylaws must be followed.
- You may also hire an agent, including a trapper, to act on your behalf.

For more information and assistance...

To locate a local wildlife control agent...

- Speak with your neighbours, family, and friends. Look for "animal control" in your phone book or online.

To locate a licensed trapper...

- Contact the Ontario Fur Managers Federation at (705) 254-3338 or by e-mail at furman@furmanagers.com

For information on beavers...

- Call your local Ministry of Natural Resources office or the Natural Resources Information Centre at 1-800-667-1940.
- Check out Hinterland Who's Who - <http://www.hww.ca/en/species/mammals/beaver.html>.