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BEAVERS – Adaptations – SLIDE SHOW SCRIPT (Grades 3-6)

Please remember that getting outside and exploring a real beaver pond is the most important part of this workshop. If time is tight, we suggest shortening this slide show to slides # 1-5 only.

1. BEAVER

The beaver is the largest rodent in North America. Today, a big beaver can weigh nearly 70 pounds. The prehistoric beavers of long ago were even larger. They could grow to be 7 or 8 feet long and weigh up to 800 pounds!

2. BEAVER CHEWING ASPEN LIMB

The beaver is well adapted to its aquatic habitat. Its ears and nose have special valves that close automatically when the beaver goes under water. A beaver's eyes have an extra set of clear lids that act as diving goggles and give the beaver good vision underwater. Their back feet are webbed.

3. BEAVER SWIMMING

Eyes, ears and nose are all placed high on the head, so they remain above the water when the animal is swimming.

4. BEAVER SHOWING TAIL

The tail serves as a rudder for steering and for diving. Beavers do not use their tail for carrying or packing down mud. For this they use...

5. BEAVER SHOWING FEET

...their front feet. The beaver's front feet are not webbed and are not used for swimming. They are small and hand-like, and are used for carrying mud, twigs, and baby beavers as well as for grasping food.

6. BEAVER SKULL

Beavers are vegetarians. They eat bark, grasses, water lily roots and other plants. Like those of all rodents, the incisors, or front teeth, of a beaver continue to grow for as long as the animal lives. It is estimated that the teeth may grow at a rate of 4 feet a year! Fortunately the beaver is always chewing on wood, which wears the teeth down and keeps them the proper length. Since the back side of the teeth is softer, it wears down faster than the orange enamel on the front, so the teeth stay sharp as well.

7. GNAWED TREE

You can see the individual tooth marks on this tree. What do you think would happen to a beaver's teeth if they were not always growing? (*They would wear away!*)

8. FALLEN TREE

Some people think beavers can make a tree fall in the direction they want it to, but that's not true. More than one beaver has been killed when the tree it was cutting fell on top of it.

9. BEAVER CHEWING BRANCH

After the beavers nibble off most of the bark, they use some of the smaller trees and branches to make...

10. DAM

...a dam. Beavers need water at least three feet deep so that they can swim under the ice in the winter. By blocking a stream with a dam made of mud, sticks and stones, they can usually make a fairly deep pond. When the pond gets deep enough, it's time to build...

11. LODGE IN SUMMER

...a lodge. They start by making a pile of sticks and mud, then chew out the middle of the pile to create a small room, which is above the water level. Two underwater entrance tunnels lead into the lodge. Inside, there is usually a low ledge that serves as a "mud room," where beavers can drip dry and groom themselves. Above this is the main room, snug and dry, where the beaver family lives.

12. LODGE IN WINTER

Before the pond freezes, the beavers make piles of sticks for food on the bottom of the pond, anchoring them down with rocks and mud. When they're hungry, all they have to do is swim out through their underwater tunnel, and bring some of the sticks back to the lodge to nibble on.

13. TREES CLEARED

Eventually beavers clear all the trees and shrubs that grow around their pond, forcing them to venture further from home for food and building materials.

14. CANAL

To help float trees and branches back to the pond, and to give themselves a bit more safety, they will often dig canals.

15. DAM BLOCKING ROAD

Beavers can sometimes become a problem for humans. This beaver dam is blocking a road. Sometimes beaver dams can flood farmland and yards or block drainage pipes.

16. BEAVER SITTING UP

Beavers are fascinating creatures that are extremely well adapted for the lives they live.

17. BEAVER POND

Even if you don't happen to see a beaver, any visit to a beaver pond is sure to be filled with interesting discoveries and plenty of signs of this animal's busy life.