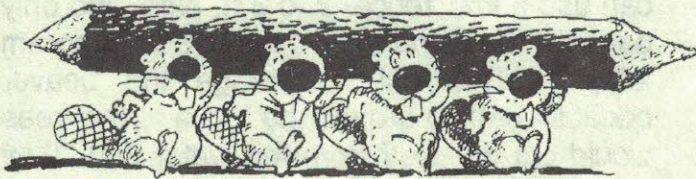




Conflict Solutions



Let's Do Lunch!

IN COLORADO, beaver eat a variety of trees including alder, apple, birch, and boxelder, but they prefer willow, aspen and cottonwood, which are fast growing members of the poplar family. In fact, as beaver prune these trees with their orange, sharp-chisel-shaped incisors, it stimulates the growth of these trees even more the following spring. **NOTE:** Along with the leaves, beaver eat the cambium (green living layer) between the bark and the wood of the tree. The beaver use the branches to build their homes, called lodges, and dams that impound the water, creating a pond/wetland.

It's important to know: Because beaver are literally the foundation for a healthy and productive aquatic ecosystem they are considered a "Keystone" species. For instance, beaver: create wetlands, help prevent soil erosion, promote biodiversity; and improve water quality, and quantity which provides fish and wildlife habitat while enhancing forage and cover for livestock and wildlife. Beaver dams also reduce high flows and downstream flooding. It's estimated that 85% of wildlife in the west, at some point in their lives, depend on the habitat that beaver create. Because beaver are vitally important and belong in our water-ways, **Wildlife 2000** recommends that only the large esthetically valuable trees be wrapped and leaving the smaller trees be left for the beaver. The most active time for beaver taking trees is in the spring, when they're building a lodge and dams, and in the fall, when they're creating a food supply, or cache, for winter. In the summer, aquatic plants like grasses, sedges and water lilies, and terrestrial herbaceous vegetation, such as grasses and forbes become a major part of their diet.

Of all the human/beaver conflicts, perhaps the easiest and inexpensive one to solve is beaver munching on trees.

How to protect trees from beaver: Using 1 x 2 inch, or 2 x 4 inch hardware cloth or similar stiff material, not chicken wire, you create a cylinder cage, at least 4 ft. high, around the trunk of the tree, leaving a space of 4 to 6 inches between the tree and wire, giving the tree room to grow. To fasten the sides together, cut every other horizontal wire on one end of the cylinder and bend them into hooks that you connect to the other side of the wire cylinder, pinching them tight with pliers. If the cage needs to be stabilized, you can anchor it to the ground with lengths of heavy wire or tent stakes. For trees that are close together you can encircle them with one cylinder of protective wire, instead of wrapping them individually.

Use a 4 ft. high cylinder so if it snows beaver can't get on top of it to chew on the tree.

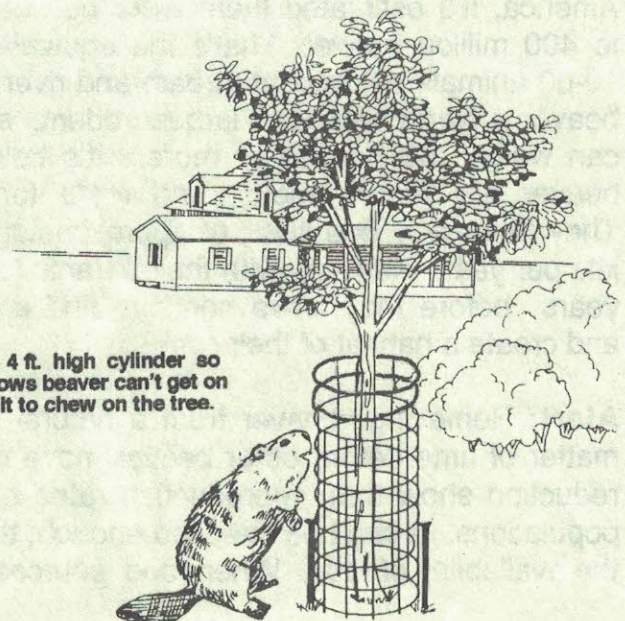
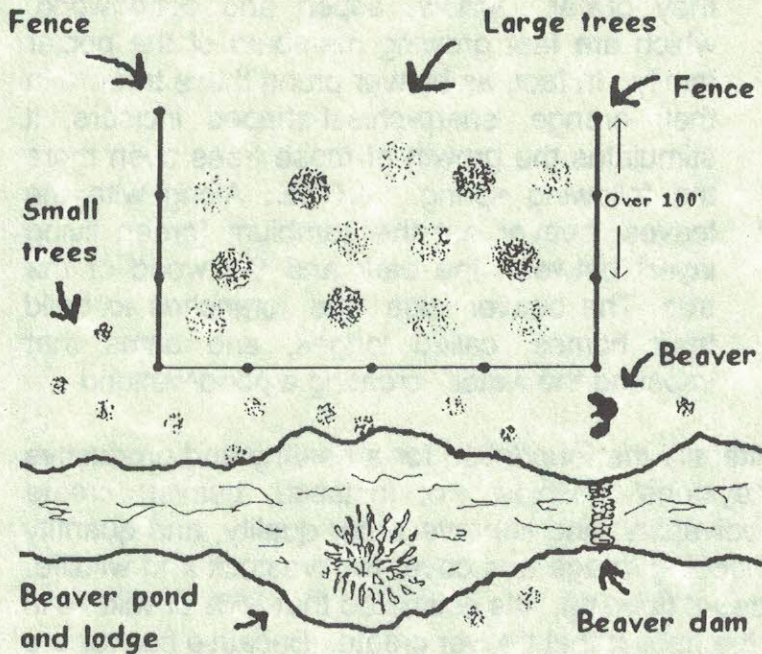


Illustration courtesy of Saskatchewan Environmental and Resource Management

Note: When food is abundant beaver have larger litters, so by limiting the availability of food i.e. wrapping trees, you are helping to limit their population.

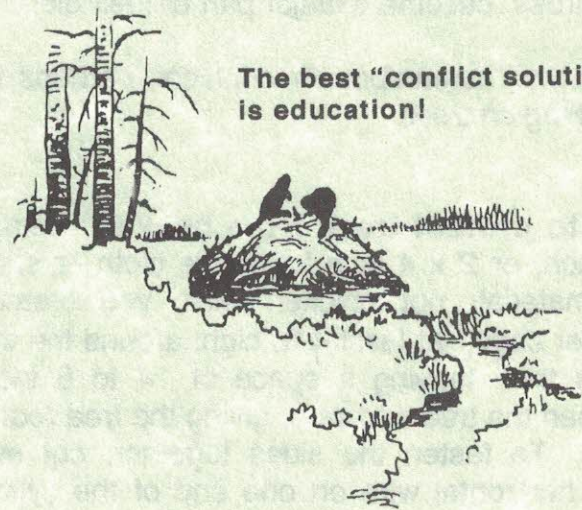
Aerial View



Studies have shown that 90% of the trees beaver cut are within 100 ft. of the water's edge. You can use this information to your advantage if you're protecting lots of trees. Because beaver are not good climbers, you can use a low fence, 2 to 3 ft. high, and only partially surround the trees. (See diagram left.) This will discourage the beaver because getting around the fence to the trees would cut them off from the water and they would be totally unprotected and vulnerable. It would also be too much work to drag the tree back to the water. An electrified wire strung four inches off the ground can serve the same purpose. **Remember:** Use strong fencing, like hardware cloth or similar stiff material. It not only looks better than chicken wire, it lasts longer.

Important: When solving beaver/human conflicts, be creative. If something doesn't work the first time - maybe all it needs is a little tweaking. Also, it's important to understand the animal you're dealing with. Sometimes what we see as destructive behavior really isn't, it's actually an important part of the natural processes a healthy ecosystem experiences. **Remember:** The only thing constant in nature is change.

Note: Before Europeans came to North America, it's estimated there were between 60 to 400 million beaver. That's the equivalent of 10-60 animals per mile of stream and river! The beaver is North America's largest rodent; adults can weigh 50 pounds or more. It's believed beaver are monogamous, and mate for life. They have only one litter, of approximately 3-4 kits per year. Kits stay with their parents for two years before they leave home to find a mate and create a habitat of their own.



Alert: Removing beaver from a natural habitat is simply a band-aid solution, since it's just a matter of time before other beaver move into the vacated site. Also, studies on lethal population reduction show that reproduction rates are greatest among highly exploited (hunted/kill-trapped) populations. It can't be stressed enough; the most effective way to manage beaver is by controlling the availability of food. When food sources decline, so does the beaver's reproductive performance.

Our Goal Should Be To Coexist With Colorado's Wildlife.



For more information about this amazing "keystone" species, please contact: **Wildlife 2000**, P.O. Box 6428, Denver, CO 80206. or call Sherri Tippie (303) 935-4995 or Pam Graves (803) 649-0693.