



beaver

Castor canadensis

Kingdom: Animalia
 Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
 Class: Mammalia
 Order: Rodentia
 Family: Castoridae

FEATURES

The beaver may grow to three feet long and weigh up to 60 pounds. It has brown, waterproof hair and thick under-fur on its body. The back feet are webbed for swimming. The nose and ears have valves which may be closed while swimming. Its nearly hairless tail is flattened and paddle-like. There is a special membrane to protect the eyes while it swims. The lips can be closed behind the front teeth.

BEHAVIORS

The beaver lives in streams, ponds, lakes, ditches, canals and backwaters. Trees should be present along these waterways for a beaver to reside there. The beaver eats the bark, twigs and leaves of trees and shrubs and also aquatic plants like duckweeds, some grasses and water lilies. This animal is nocturnal and has an aquatic lifestyle but will come to land to feed and raise its young or to move to a new water body. A beaver may slap its tail on the water's surface to communicate with other beaver. It is also capable of making vocal sounds. Its incisors can be used to gnaw through trees. Trees are cut above the ground as the beaver sits upright. The branches and other tree parts are cut into small pieces and taken to the bur-

row or lodge. Burrows containing resting and nesting areas are dug into the bank, and the entrances are placed below the water level. Generally, only one or two beaver occupy a bank burrow. The beaver will sometimes build a dome-shaped lodge of small trees, limbs and sticks. Several beaver may occupy a single lodge. The entrances to the lodge are below the water level, but the living area inside the lodge is above the water level. Mating occurs in January or February, and the young are born in May or June. Litter size is usually three or four. Young are covered with fur at birth. The beaver is native to Illinois. This animal was originally present in Illinois until the late 1800s, when it was extirpated due to excessive killing for beaver pelts. Beaver were stocked in the state and others moved in from adjacent states to restore populations.

HABITATS

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> bottomland forests | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> rivers & streams |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> lakes, ponds & reservoirs | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> swamps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Michigan | <input type="checkbox"/> temp water supplies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> marshes | <input type="checkbox"/> wet prairies & fens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> peatlands | |

ILLINOIS STATUS

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> common | <input type="checkbox"/> endangered | <input type="checkbox"/> threatened |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> native | <input type="checkbox"/> exotic | |

ILLINOIS RANGE

statewide

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999. *Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume I: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.