

Eager Beavers

At a recent Lamprey River event, someone shared some awesome photos of beavers that she had seen while kayaking on the Lamprey. Enjoy!



Photos by Beth Fisher, used by permission

Beavers, weighing between 30 and 100 pounds, are the largest rodents native to North America. Their orange incisors are strong enough to cut through trees and they do not wear down due to continual growth. They use their large, webbed back feet for swimming. Their scaly, paddle-like tail helps with steering and, when slapped on the water's surface, serves as a warning to other beavers that threats, such as predators, are near.

Their oily fur is very dense, composed of two very different layers. The inner layer is composed of soft, curly hairs that help to trap air for warmth under water. The outer layer is made of stiff guard hairs that help to shed water and form a protective layer over the inner layer. This dense, warm fur is the reason most beavers were hunted and trapped to point of near elimination in New Hampshire in the late 1800s. Restoration efforts have been successful and beavers can once again be found throughout the state.



www.hsu.edu

Beavers are natural engineers and build extremely functional dams and lodges. And like true engineers, they are excellent problem solvers. This sometimes causes conflict with people who build structures near waterways to serve their own needs. Although beaver activity is sometimes perceived to be a nuisance, the effects on the local environment are almost always positive. Their dams help to store water while providing and improving habitat for other animals. Unlike most human dams, beaver dams usually are not barriers to animals that need to move along rivers. Dam decent of the beavers to be such good neighbors!