

American beaver

Castor canadensis

Family: **Castoridae**

Herbivore / Prey

Native to Virginia



The American beaver is an intelligent animal, fairly common within the James River Park System. It is perhaps best known for constructing dams using tree branches and mud. The dams flood the surrounding area, creating habitat in which the beaver forages for food and construct its lodge, which it uses as a shelter and home for its young. Beavers are nocturnal herbivores (see videos) and cut down small trees to eat the leaves, buds, and inner bark of trees. They are preyed upon by coyotes, bobcats, foxes, bears, and eagles.

Fun Facts

- The oldest beaver fossil was found in Germany and is estimated to be between 10 and 12 million years old. They are thought to have migrated to North America across the Bering Strait.
- Beaver fur was once highly sought after in North America and the beaver was hunted almost to the point of extinction.
- The ponds created by beaver dams help protect beavers against predation and also create habitat for waterfowl, migratory birds, juvenile fish, and amphibians.
- Beavers use their paddle-shaped tails to pat the mud down when building their lodges.