

BEST PRACTICES



Beavers in the Urban Landscape Part 2

A Day-In-The-Life with Your Friendly Neighborhood Beaver

A day in the life of a beaver can vary depending on the season and local environmental conditions. In general, this is what a 24-hour day might look like:



Dawn

As dawn approaches, the beavers will return to their lodge to rest. They plug the entrance to their lodge with mud or vegetation to keep out predators.



Day

During the day, beavers typically rest inside their lodge, where they can regulate their body temperature and conserve energy. They might take short breaks to swim around their pond or stream, and they will periodically emerge to collect food or work on their dam or lodge.



Late Afternoon

As evening approaches, the beavers become more active and begin foraging for food and working on their structures once more.



Dusk

Beavers are most active at night. As evening sets in, the beaver family emerges from the lodge to begin looking for food and small twigs and branches to use for building materials.



Night

Throughout the night, beavers will continue to forage and work on their dam and lodge. They may take short breaks to groom themselves or each other, and they will periodically dive down to retrieve stored food from their underwater cache.

Overall, the beaver's daily activities are focused on foraging for food, building and maintaining their structures, and resting inside their lodge. Because they are primarily nocturnal, much of their activity occurs at night or during the low-light hours of dawn and dusk.

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Dam building

Beavers build their dams using a combination of branches, twigs, mud, and rocks. The process typically begins with the beavers identifying a suitable location for a dam, such as a small stream or creek. They then begin to cut down nearby trees and shrubs using their powerful front teeth, which can grow up to several inches in length—as we learned in [Part 1](#).

Once the beavers have collected enough branches and other materials, they pile them up in the water, using mud and rocks



to fill in gaps and create a sturdy structure. As the dam grows, the water backs up behind it, creating a pond or wetland habitat.

Beavers can construct large dams, with some reaching up to 10 feet in height and several hundred feet in length, significantly impacting the local ecosystem, creating new habitats for fish, birds, and other wildlife.

Symbiotic Relationships

Beavers are involved in several forms of symbiotic relationships with other species because of their damming.

Beaver damming:

- Creates ponds and wetlands that attract waterfowl, such as ducks and geese. These birds feed on the vegetation and insects found in the wetland habitats created by the beavers, and their presence can also help to protect the beavers from predators.
- Slows the flow of rivers and streams, which can create an ideal habitat for certain fish species. For example, slow-moving water behind a beaver dam can provide a place for young salmon to rest and grow before continuing their migration downstream.
- Increases the amounts and types of invertebrates in the surrounding habitat by creating microhabitats. Aquatic invertebrates following beaver damming include predatory dragonflies, sludge worms, filtering mussels, midges, water beetles and chironomids. Typical terrestrial invertebrates in a beaver pond include fruit flies, weevils, leaf beetles and bark beetles. Aquatic invertebrates provide a good food source for fish, while aquatic and terrestrial invertebrate species provide protein and calcium-rich food for birds.

Symbiotic Relationship:

A close relationship between two different kinds of organisms or living things. The relationship can be beneficial to both or just one of the organisms or living things.

As we continue our 4-part-series, we will share how to manage beavers in the urban environment and some of the things we can all do to help our friendly neighborhood beavers thrive.

In case you missed it! Check out Beavers in the Urban Landscape Part 1 in the Spring 2023 Stream Team Newsletter at <https://bit.ly/3ZmukGD>.

Source: Stream Team News, Summer 2023

Photo Credit: Jen Vanderbilt, (she/her), Senior Ecologist, King County Water and Land Resources Division