

*Would you like to own a house?
 Would you like to own a house with a swimming pool?
 Would you like to own a house in a swimming pool?*

Lake Living

by David Hill

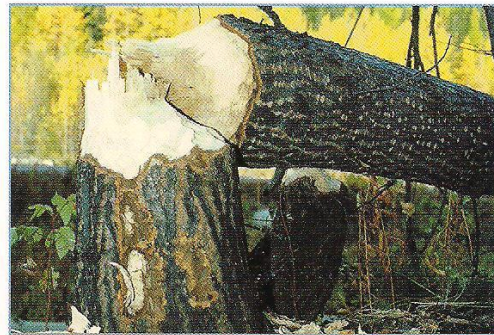



You could if you were a beaver! Beavers are good swimmers. To keep themselves safe from wolves and wildcats, they build a home, called a lodge, in the middle of a lake. But first, they have to make the lake!

The Dam

A beaver's four front teeth (two at the top and two at the bottom) are

shaped like **chisels**, and they keep growing all the time. They use their teeth to chew through small trees and branches. They gnaw away at a tree until it falls over, then they drag it to the nearest stream. Sometimes, they even dig a canal to a tree so that they can float the log to a stream.



 **chisel:** a metal tool with a sharp, angled edge




Fact File

- A grownup beaver can weigh as much as a large dog.

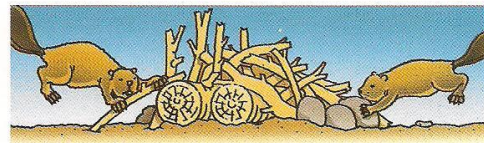
Prehistoric beavers

may have been as big as bears!

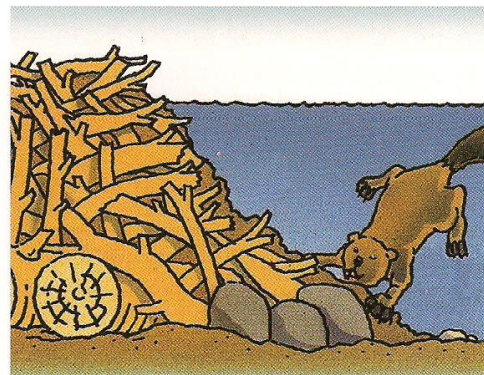
- Beavers live for up to twelve years.
- They have furry coats and a layer of fat to keep them warm in the water. Their webbed feet and flat tails make them fast swimmers. They can stay underwater for up to fifteen minutes.
- A beaver can chew through a tree 40 centimetres wide in one night. A family of beavers may **gnaw** down three hundred trees in a year.
- A beaver dam is often 12 to 18 metres long. Some are as long as a football field.
- One beaver lodge that was found in North America may have been a beaver home for a thousand years!

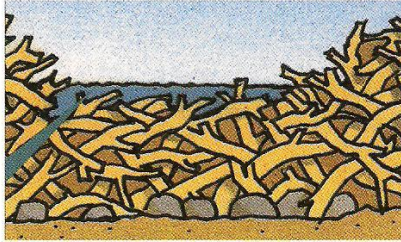
-  prehistoric: belonging to a time very long ago
gnaw: to keep chewing or biting on something

Now the family of beavers starts building a dam across the stream. They push heavy sticks into the streambed with their front paws. They lay trees and long branches across these sticks and hold them down with rocks.



Next, they push smaller rocks, sticks, and roots into the gaps and cover them with mud. After two or three days, the dam is quite solid. The dam has a steep upstream side and a sloping downstream side so that it's strong enough to hold back the water.





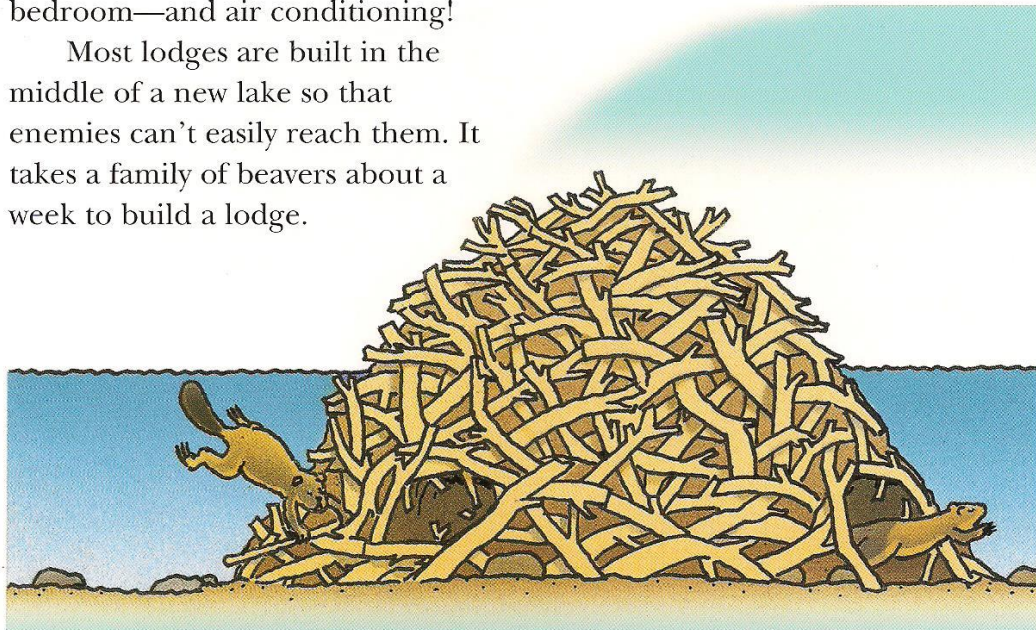
The beavers leave a gap at each end so that sudden floods can flow around the edge of the dam.

The dam has turned part of the stream into a lake. Now the beaver family can build their lodge.

The Lodge

The lodge will have a front door, a back door, a dining room, a bedroom—and air conditioning!

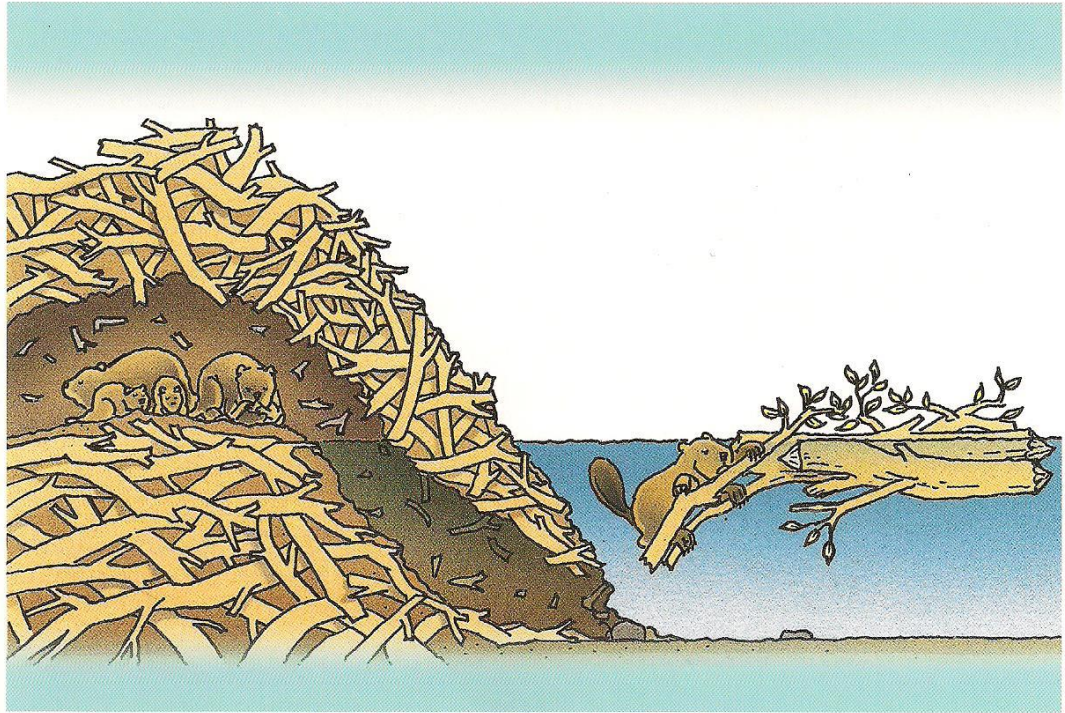
Most lodges are built in the middle of a new lake so that enemies can't easily reach them. It takes a family of beavers about a week to build a lodge.



First, the beavers make a big pile of branches and rocks. This pile may be 4.5 metres high. The top of the pile rises above the surface of the lake, and its walls are often almost 1 metre thick.

Then the beavers cover these outside walls with mud. The mud dries hard and stops rain from getting in.

Two underwater tunnels lead into the lodge. The beavers can easily enter or escape this way, but the tunnels are built so that their enemies can't get in. Narrow gaps in the roof let fresh air into the lodge.



Inside, above the water, there are dry, flat places where beavers eat and sleep. Baby beavers (called kits) are born here.

Beavers don't just build houses with trees. They eat trees too. Mostly, they eat small aspens and poplars, but they also like the bark from willow and maple trees. They keep this food in piles that float outside the lodge. At dinnertime, the beavers swim out through one of the tunnels, chew off a branch or some bark, and take it back inside the lodge to eat.

After they've made their lake and their home, the beavers work

to keep the dam and the lodge strong. Some lodges last for over a hundred years.

Slowly, dirt, leaves, and twigs sink to the bottom of the lake, and it becomes shallow. After many years, it isn't a lake anymore—it's a swamp. After many more years, the swamp turns into a flat green field. By then, the beavers will have moved away to find a new stream and new trees. Then another dam and lodge will appear. No wonder people sometimes say that a hard-working person is "as busy as a beaver."