



The beaver is a vital component of wetland conservation that is unfortunately often regarded as a pest. When beavers dam too close to human establishments they can cause flooding in undesired places. The removal of unprotected trees as a winter food source may impact some property owners. Damming creates wetland habitats for many species, and involves a cycle that is vital to the health of a northern ecosystem. Fortunately, for both beavers and humans there are ways to co-exist without harming each other, or nature's delicate balance.

## Beaver Dams

Most people have seen trees chewed by beavers, and the dams they make with the trees they fell. But how do they do it? And why? Beavers make dams for a variety of reasons, number one being a home. Beavers will live within the dam or in lodges protected by deep water behind, and eat the bark of the trees they bring down.

Beavers will choose a stream and begin to build their new home out of sticks and mud. When the building is finished the blocking of the stream creates a beaver pond which is excellent habitat for many creatures, including birds, amphibians, reptiles and insects. The pond allows the beaver underwater access to stored food throughout the summer and winter. As well, this creates perfect growing conditions for the beavers other food sources, aquatic plants. The beavers will live and work in this pond until they have exhausted their resources and must move to a new area and start again.

## Beavers and the wetland cycle.

Although the building of a beaver dam seems to be purely for the benefit of the beaver, it plays a vital part in the life cycle of a temperate deciduous forest. They create habitat for so many other creatures.



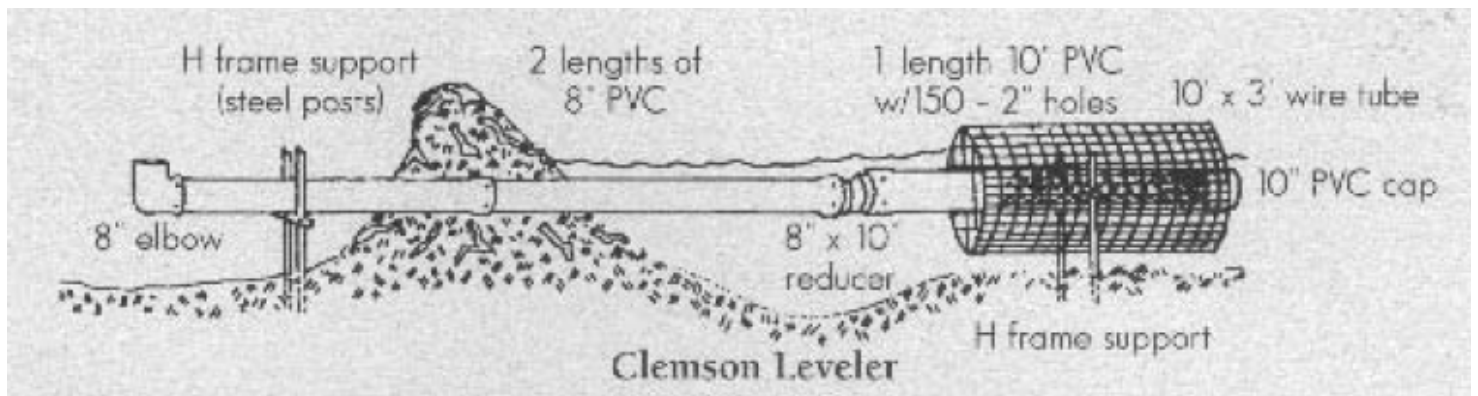
Since the retreat of the glaciers beaver have influenced wetlands in every landscape. Today they retain an important role in wetland creation. Beavers begin on an area that is generally forested with a stream or small river. The beaver build a dam and will create a healthy thriving wetland. Over time the water stagnates and

the wetland begins to lose oxygen making it more and more difficult for plants and animals to live there. When the pond has become anoxic (devoid of oxygen and productivity), and the trees they favour have been removed the beavers will leave. In the absence of the beaver the ponds dry up. A meadow takes advantage of the rich sediments and supports a new set of life. This cycle is necessary for the health of Ontario forest ecosystems.

## Beavers and people, making it work.

Beavers are a pleasure to view and observe. However, many people consider them a pest. Beavers often choose to dam in a location that for humans, are unpractical and can cause problems with agriculture and homes. This has led many to the point of trapping and killing them. Although each year new beavers return. If your land is deemed suitable, beaver after beaver will move in. Fortunately, there are practical and inexpensive solutions for both humans and beavers. The easiest and least expensive way is wrapping trees with chicken wire or other beaver proof material. The beaver quickly moves off and finds a better spot. In some areas this is not practical.

Another method is by using beaver bafflers. They allow the beaver to build its dam, create the wetland and not interfere with beaver activities. The baffler consists of a pipe appropriately sized for water flow in the area with a wire cage fit around the upstream end that lets the water flow through to the other side. Varying the height of the upstream pipe controls water depth. Beavers cannot figure out where the water flow is from and will continue to go about their daily business.



With instruction almost anyone could install a baffler themselves, but because of the delicacy involved with beaver wetlands it is best to have an experienced professional install it for you. Some rural city councils have guides for installing your own bafflers, or access to professionals that will do it for you. If you are experiencing beaver issues consult your local authorities about what is within your rights and abilities before you call pest control or take matters into your own hands.



Picture from <http://www.beavercone.com/>



Blanding's turtle trapped in beaver baffle © Rebecca Geauvreau. Care should be taken when selecting baffle materials and sizes to avoid harming other wildlife

## Where can I get information on humane beaver control methods?

Information is found all over the web about how to make, install and hire a professional for beaver bafflers, some local sources are:

- [http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?doctype=&pageid=heritage\\_beaver\\_management\\_policy&startpos=0&pagenum=0](http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?doctype=&pageid=heritage_beaver_management_policy&startpos=0&pagenum=0)
- <http://www.biotactic.com/wildlifemanagement.htm> (installers of Bafflers, from Kitchener)
- <http://el.erdc.usace.army.mil/elpubs/pdf/tnwrap01-1.pdf>
- <http://www.beavercone.com>

Other sources outside Ontario can be helpful as well such as:

- <http://www.shawsheen.org/Beavers/beavers.html>
- <http://www.beaverdeceivers.com/>
- <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/beavers/solutions/control.aspx>
- [http://www.hsus.org/wildlife/wildlife\\_news/us\\_beaver\\_management\\_tool\\_crosses\\_the\\_pond.html](http://www.hsus.org/wildlife/wildlife_news/us_beaver_management_tool_crosses_the_pond.html)