



**New Mexico
Wildlife Center**

Eager Beavers

A Keystone species

Castor Canadensis is the largest North American rodent and can live anywhere in North America where aquatic habitats are found. They once inhabited Europe and Asia. They became extinct in the British Isles about 900 years ago and were extirpated in much of their European range except Norway, Poland and Russia.

Beavers generally weigh between 35 and 50 pounds but can reach nearly 100 pounds. They can remain submerged for 15 minutes. Their large front incisor teeth grow continuously throughout their life. They are herbivores eating mostly woody plants such as aspen, cottonwood, willow, pine and may also eat aquatic plants. They are nocturnal in habit.

Beavers are very social animals, living in families made up of adults, yearlings and this year's young. Females generally have two to four kits each year.

When you walk through a mountain meadow filled with wildflowers you can probably thank a beaver for the beautiful setting. Beavers create wetland and wetlands are important habitats for many species of wildlife. The dams beavers build help reduce erosion and stream entrenchment. A streamside habitat that has been degraded can most quickly be restored by beaver activity.

The down side of beavers that live close to human habitation is that they can cause flooding in areas where we have built roads or grow crops and the aspen trees you planted in your back five acres for shade look like a food source to beavers. They can quickly dispatch a grove of aspen that you have been nursing for years.

You can discourage beaver activity by

- Installing fencing around trees you want to protect
- Using electric fencing
- Installing devices in beaver ponds to drain them
- Contact Animal Protection of New Mexico at 505-265-2322 or visit http://www.apnm.org/campaigns/beavers/land_owner_guide.php. They are working with New Mexico Game and Fish on The New Mexico Beaver Project