

# Leave it to Beaver

**Theme:** *Children will learn the adaptations of a beaver.*

## Background

**Age**  
K– 2<sup>nd</sup> grade  
**Time**  
1 ½ hours

**T**he beaver is North America’s largest rodent and can be found in every North American state. It has a unique paddle shaped tail and self-sharpening teeth that allow the beaver to take down sizeable trees.

Beavers have many adaptations that help them to live in a wetland, throughout this program children will learn these adaptations and gain an appreciation of how beavers are well suited for the environment for which they live.

## Program Activities

### Introduction

Ask students: What do you already know about beavers?

### Tail Game

#### Materials

- Hula hoops
- Orange cones
- Predator pictures

**Objective:** Children will learn how beavers use their tail as a warning signal and how they lived with families in dens on the pond.

Beavers use their tail to warn other beavers that danger is near. They slap the water surface and it makes a very loud sound that can be heard up to a mile away.

The children will be the beavers eating in their beaver pond. Lay out the orange cones in a big circle to designate the ponds edge. Then lay out the hula hoops on the outside of the circle which will be the beaver lodge where children can run for safety.

Divide children into groups of three or four, this will be their family group. Assign each group a designated hula hoop.

Have the children start in the circle eating and gathering wood then show a picture of a predator. The beavers have to then run to their hoop



slapping their tails all the way. Children will slap their tails by clapping their hands loudly. All members of the family have to make it back in order to be safe.

## Become a Beaver

Objective: To develop an understanding of beaver adaptations by associating them to everyday objects.

- **Foam Pad (Fat Layer)**
  - The beaver's fat layer helps to streamline it's body for easy swimming and also helps in insulation.
- **Goggles (Nictitating Membrane)**
  - The beaver's nictitating membrane helps to shield the eye. It acts as a clear third eyelid used for swimming underwater.
- **Nose Plug (Nose Valve)**
  - The nose valve helps the beaver swim underwater without getting water up its nose. They also have a flap that closes behind their teeth to allow chewing underwater.
- **Earmuffs (Ear Valve)**
  - The ear valve acts as a cover for the beaver's ears, when the beaver goes underwater the valve closes.
- **Flippers & Comb (Webbed hind feet)**
  - The beaver uses its webbed feet for swimming propulsion, grooming and walking. The two inside toenails on each foot are split and are known as the "combing claws".
- **Paddle (Tail)**
  - The beaver uses its tail as a rudder and to store fat in the winter (the tail will enlarge up to three times its normal size). The tail serves as a third leg or "kickstand" for support during tree cutting. The tail is also used as a warning signal by slapping the water the beavers warn each other of predators.
- **WD-40 (Oil Gland)**
  - This oil gland is located at the base of the tail and is used to waterproof the fur. Beavers spend large amounts of time grooming.
- **Paper Cut-out Teeth (Teeth)**
  - The beaver's teeth grow constantly so the beaver chews on hard things to keep the teeth at the proper length.
- **Perfume Bottle (Castor Gland)**
  - Castor oil from the base of the beaver's tail is spread on mounds to mark territory and attract mates.



- **Good Lungs (Have students hold breath)**
  - The beaver can stay underwater for 15-20 minutes. Tell the children this is the same amount of time they are out for recess.

#### Materials

- Pictures of a beaver pelt
- Pictures of a beaver tracks

## Beaver Hike

Hike out to wooded area showing different beaver areas. Show pictures of pelts and talk about when they would be used and how popular they were with the trappers. Look for signs of Beaver activity such as downed trees). Show picture of tracks to give the students an idea of what to look for on the hike.

## Beaver Craft

#### Materials

- Lunch size paper bags
- Orange construction paper
- Paper cut-outs; hands, face, feet, and tail
- Glue
- Brown Crayons
- Newspaper

The children will first be given the lunch size paper bag to write their names on and to color brown. Then the children will need to put newspaper stuffing in the bag and staple it shut. When finished they all will be given a pre cut-out face, tail, hands, and feet to glue on the bag. They will also need the orange construction paper to cut out teeth. Last they can glue on the wiggle eyes over the other ones.

## Beaver Song

Objective: To reintroduce theme.

### Beaver Song

I'm a Beaver , You're a Beaver, We are beavers all and when we get together we do the beaver call.  
Gnaw, Gnaw, Gnaw...

