

BEAVERS ON DENMAN submitted by Laura Pope (chair of the DIRA Parks Committee)

- *Beavers usually cause damage to agricultural or residential property as a result of dam construction, flooding, bank burrowing and tree removal. Habitat modification by beavers usually benefits fish, furbearers, reptiles, amphibians, waterfowl and shorebirds.*
- *Beavers often will dam: culverts, bridges or drainpipes resulting in flooding and property damage.*
- *Under section 9(1)(b) of the Wildlife Act, a person commits an offence if the person disturbs, molests or destroys a beaver house, den or dam without a permit.*
- *Under section 9(2)(b) a person can legally remove a dam to provide irrigation or drainage under lawful authority for the protection of property. Under all other circumstances, a person must have a permit to remove beaver dams, dens or houses.*
- *Several permits are needed in order to remove or alter beaver dams or houses. These approvals must be in place before any work can take place.*
- *A permit under the Water Act is required to divert or make any changes in or about a stream.*
- *A permit issued from Wildlife Branch is needed to remove beaver dams or houses*
- *A permit from Fisheries and Oceans Canada is needed if there is going to be any alteration of fish habitat or depositing of deleterious substances (silt), as a result a beaver dam or house being removed.*
- *Water level control pipes can be installed in ponds to control water levels and prevent flooding.*
- *Usually the only way to control beaver related damage is to have the beavers removed through trapping.*
- *Beavers are classified as furbearers under the Wildlife Act and may be trapped in-season by a registered trapper. Excerpt from B.C.Ministry of Environment Provincial Regs.*

In May 2013, Dean and I drove across B.C. on Hwy 3 to Nelson, up the east Side of the Arrow Lakes to Nakusp, on through Banff to Alberta to Redder via Calgary, and then up to Fort MacMurry. On the way back we diverted to Jasper, down on through the interior and back via the Coquihalla.

Early on in the trip I started to notice just how often I saw beavers altering the waterscapes that were visible from the highways. They were absolutely everywhere, managing streams, creating awesome ponds, dams and dens.

One particularly amazing set of structures was on the highway up the east side of the Arrow Lakes. The beavers had constructed a huge, many miles long series of terraced small dams to control the fast flowing stream that ran beside

the highway. It was an utterly amazing feat of engineering. I could not imagine the amount of hours of labour involved in designing, constructing and maintaining this fabulous series of small dams, water diversions and pools. Without the work of the Beavers the erosion to this roadside creek would have been unmanageable.

Once we went north of Edmonton the beaver activity really took off. At virtually any point along the highway their habitat adjustments were visible. Ponds, dams, dens, mile after mile. Hundreds and hundreds of beavers busily doing what they do best, rearranging water to better fit with their view of how it should behave.

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Andrew Fyson has reported to the Parks Committee that the Chickadee Lake den is uninhabited, although there does seem to be at least one beaver in Lake. Chickadee Lake is actually a very large beaver pond.

The beaver that tried to set up a new habitat in Central Park was struck and killed as it tried to cross the road at Middle Marsh by Hornby traffic in the spring of 2013. A new beaver took up residence in late 2013 in the marsh by the Central Park boardwalk and subsequently disappeared. The beaver population on Denman appears to be a very low point. There may be someone with a legal trap line license on Denman, or someone illegally trapping beaver on Denman; if so they may have been overly successful and perhaps need to take a break from trapping to allow the population to recover. There are huge benefits in having beaver managing their dams and ponds on Denman. It can be challenging to have them in residence, but there are effective strategies to help manage the negative impacts.

In 1989 I visited with Bud Cobo in Merville. He had a contract with the Province to trap and control beavers in the Comox Valley, Denman and Hornby. Bud's way of getting paid was to submit the top two teeth from the Beavers he had trapped to the Province, but he also kept the lower two teeth so he would know how many he had trapped. Bud had 15 large coffee cans full of Beaver teeth. It is hard to know how many Beavers this represented - but it would be in the hundreds, many of which had come from both Denman and Hornby Islands.

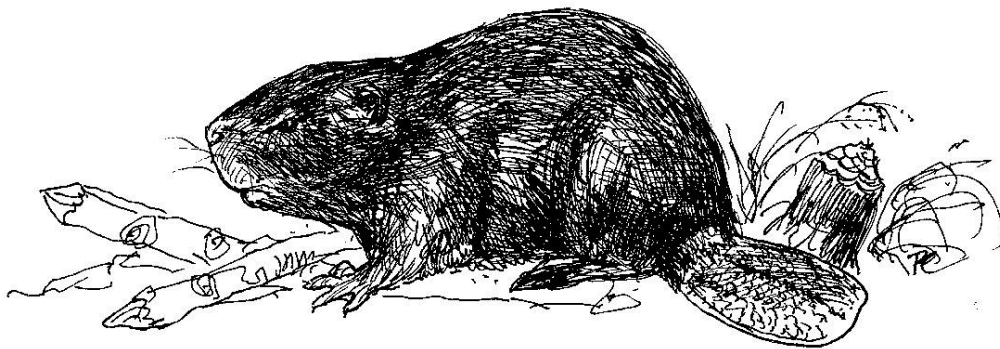
Last year a few of us crew watched with binoculars from the Quinitsa bridge as a large beaver made it's way along the shore just to the north of the Denman West terminal. We watched for an hour as it swam through the salt water and tested the shore. It spent quite a long time at the stream outlet that flows below the NO COAL sign, leaving the water and walking up the beach to the bank, but in the end it retreated to the salt chuck and swam below the dock and made it's way south along the shore and out of sight. This was the third

time that I have seen beavers in the waters of Baynes Sound, once at Buckley Bay and twice around the Denman West Terminal.

However, the importance of beavers is not limited to consideration of direct economic values. They create and maintain wetland habitats important to numerous other wildlife species, including other furbearers (otter, muskrat, mink), moose and other ungulates, and a large variety of birds, fish, amphibians, and many kinds of invertebrates. Their damming and channeling activities also help stabilize watersheds, filter sediments, and enhance the local cycling of nutrients and biological productivity. Excerpt from Furbearer Management Guidelines (Province of B.C.)

The Land Trust of B.C. has developed a very informative pamphlet to aid landowners in managing beavers in residence, allowing them to live in better harmony with landowners. (Google: South Okanagan Samilkameen Stewardship Program Beavers to find their excellent PDF Pamphlet on successfully co-existing with beavers)

The Parks Committee would like the help of Denman Islanders to do an informal beaver census over the coming year. We would especially like to know about any beavers that are seen on the borders of, or in the Provincial Park (both north end and south) especially Chickadee Lake, the Beaver Pond and the surrounding area. We feel it could be critical to certain Park habitat to have beavers back in residence. If you have beavers on your private property we would also like to know about it; any beavers seen in transit overland and which way they are seen to be going would be welcome information. If you would like to help with our census please call Laura Pope 335-1203 or Andrew Fyson 335- 9047.



Sketch by Peter Karsten