



# The Tail of the Beaver

## Wood you care to learn about beavers?



Beavers have likely been in the Umpqua watershed for millions of years. Beavers are brown **rodents** (like mice) with thick water-resistant fur that allows them to spend most of their life in and out of water, even in winter. Beavers are therefore **semi-aquatic**, since they do not live in water all the time. Beavers are **herbivores**, meaning they only eat plants. Beavers are able to eat and digest wood with their big teeth, giving them a plentiful food source when they live in the **tributaries** (small streams) that lead into the Umpqua river. Beavers are primarily **nocturnal**, so like owls, they are active at night, and can stay underwater for up to 15 minutes!

Beaver families create dams out of sticks and mud to create deep ponds where they can store food and hide from predators. Beavers have big tails, which they slap on the water to warn that danger is near. They build a lodge in the middle of these ponds where they crawl in to stay warm and dry. These dams help spread out water and create amazing ecosystems for other wildlife. For this reason, beavers are known as **ecosystem engineers** and are very important for the health of our watershed.



**Watch this video to learn more! →**

## Don't confuse them with Nutria!

Many of us around here may think that we have been lucky enough to see a beaver! But alas, it is much more common to see a **Nutria**. A nutria is also a large semi-aquatic rodent with brown fur and orange teeth. However, nutria are an **invasive species**, meaning that they are not from here, and are taking away habitat and resources from animals that are local. Nutria are originally from South America and were introduced in the United States by fur trappers who use beavers and nutria fur to make hats.

## So how do you tell the difference?

For one, beavers have a large, flat, rounded tail (where they store fat in winter). Nutria have a long thin tail with fur on it. Nutria are generally smaller than beavers and they have much more distinct white face and whiskers. If you want to see a nutria, just take a walk over at the Stewart Wildlife Pond behind Fred Meyer (follow social distancing guidelines) and you are likely to see nutria running around in the grass or swimming in the pond.



Beaver



Nutria



## Beaver Fun Facts

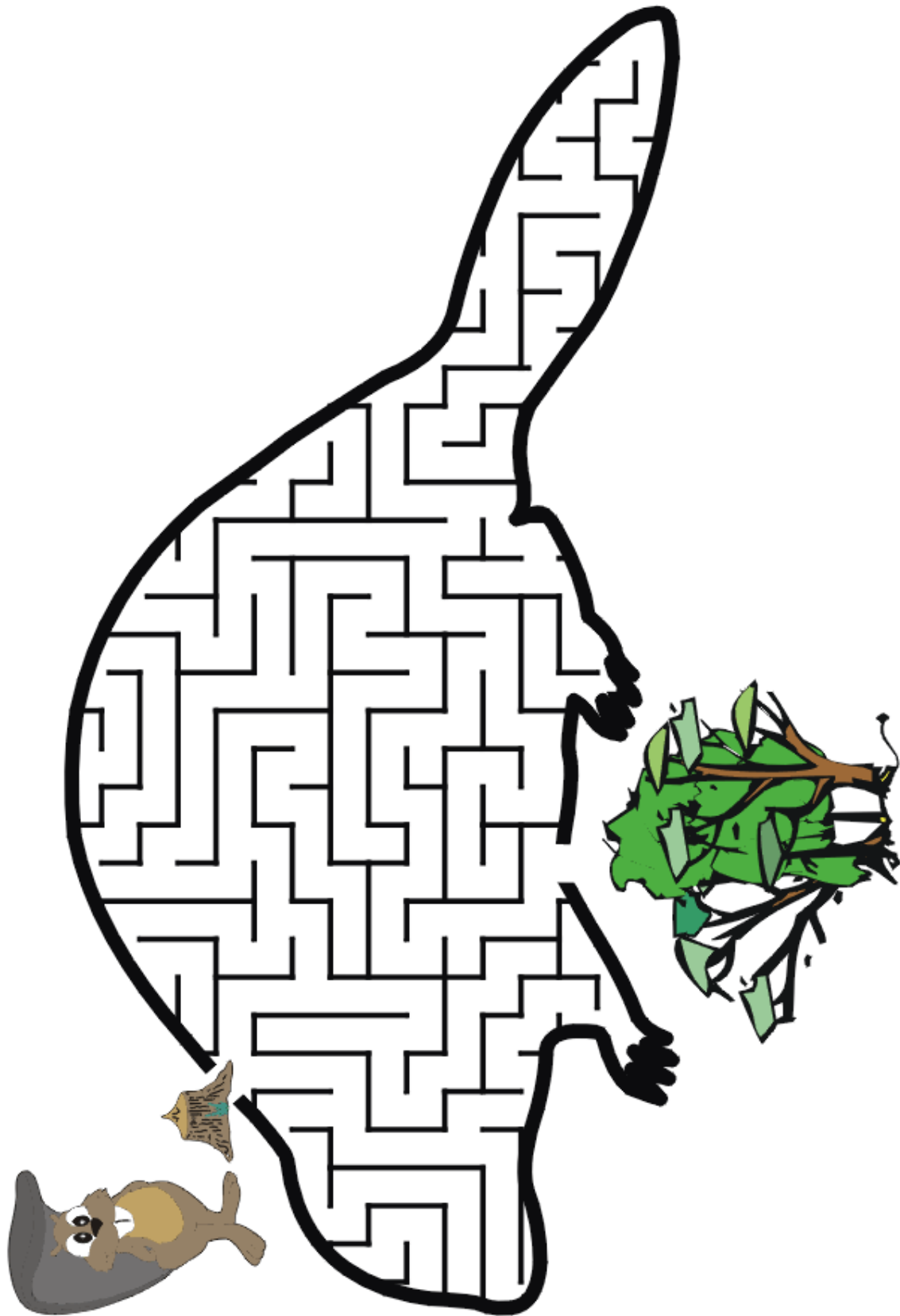
Beaver babies are called 'kits' and they are born in late spring.

Our Oregon State flag actually has a beaver on the back -because beavers are our state mammal!

Beavers are helping to slow down climate change by creating wetlands and wet meadows that store carbon from the air.

**BRAIN TEASER 1: Tail Maze**

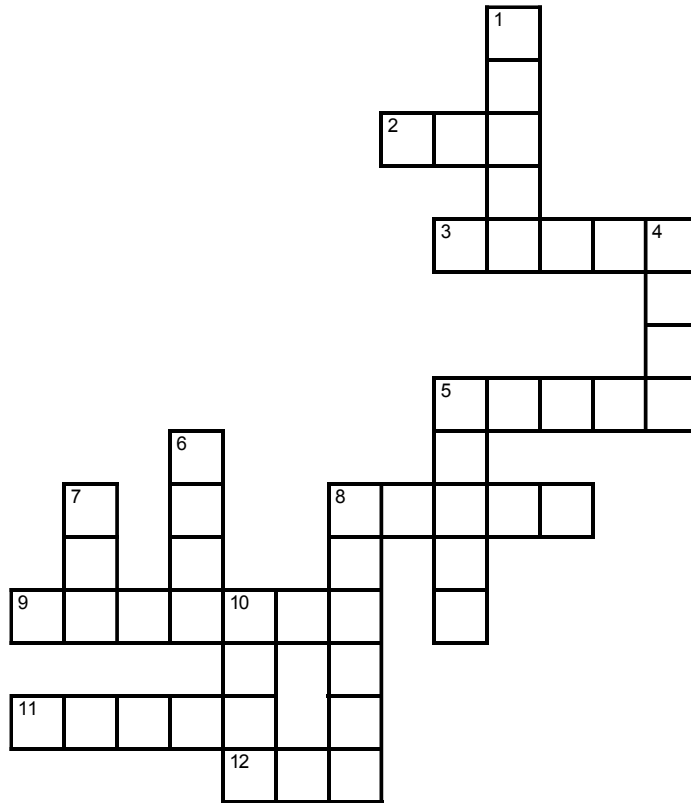
See if you can help this beaver find its way to a new tree. Beavers sometimes have to walk far away from the protection of their lodges to find new trees to cut down.



## BRAIN TEASER 2: Beaver Crossword

Use the information on the first page to fill out this Beaver crossword!

If you get stumped, the answers are at the very bottom of this worksheet.



### Across

2. What do beavers use to hold sticks together in their dams?
3. Beavers have large front \_\_\_\_\_ which they use to cut down trees.
5. Beavers cut these down with their teeth.
8. A small piece of wood.
9. Somebody who catches beavers.
11. What color are beavers?
12. What do beavers build?

### Down

1. What do you call a beaver's home?
4. What did people use to make out of beaver fur?
5. Beavers have very large \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Beavers \_\_\_\_\_ the water with their tail when there is danger.
7. What do you call a beaver's hair?
8. A small river.
10. A small area of water that beaver's make.

Check it out this awesome drawing below to see all of the wildlife that benefits from the beavers ecosystem engineering!

How many of the animals can you identify?



At the center of it all

### Experiment 3: Build like a Beaver

#### You will need:

- A stream or river with flowing water
- Sticks
- Mud
- Small stones



#### Instructions:

1. Find a safe place by a river or stream where you can safely be by the water's edge
2. Gather some sticks, small logs and stones and bring them to the water.
3. Find a place where the water is shallow and try constructing a dam!
4. Place rocks, stick and mud together to seal off the water's path and force it to pool up (make a pond) or flow down in another direction.
5. Depending on how strong the river is, this can be very difficult - imagine being a beaver and having to do it with your teeth!

#### Digging Deeper:



For more information about the life history of the beaver and how it survives in winter, watch this wonderful video from Sir David Attenborough.

Thanks for conducting science with me for this Home Explorer activity from Umpqua Watersheds Education Program. I had help this week from the South Umpqua Rural Community Partnership's Beaver Advocacy Committee! Click on their beaver icon for more information.

Join me for new activities posted every week!

- Ms. Robyn



#### Crossword Answers

Across: 2: Mud. 3: Teeth. 5: Trees. 8: Stick. 9: Trapper. 11: Brown. 12: Dam  
Down: 1: Lodge. 4: Hats. 5: Tails. 6: Slap. 7: Fur. 8: Stream. 10: pond