

# Habitat

Beavers live around woodland areas but they must also be near lakes, rivers or streams. The beaver home is called a lodge.



*Where do beavers build their lodges?*

habitat

# Teeth

This is a picture of a beaver skull.



*What do you think the beaver uses the large front teeth for?*

teeth

# Diet



*Do beavers eat bark and wood?*

diet

# Tail

The beaver has a large flat paddle like tail.



*What does the beaver use its tail for?*

tail



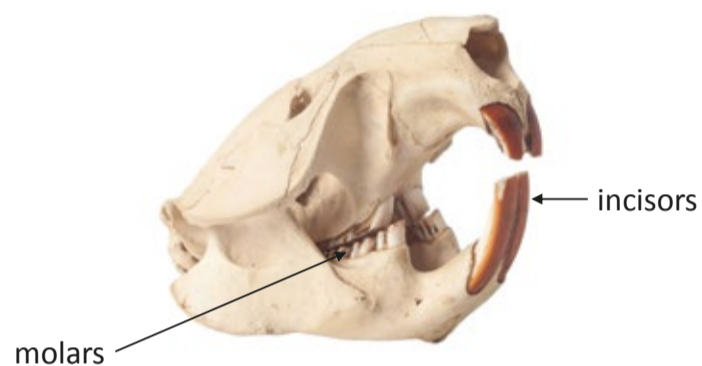
Answer card

## Teeth

The large front teeth are used for gnawing through wood.

These teeth are chisel-shaped incisors and are always growing. They have a hard layer of enamel which contains iron and that is why they are orange.

The beaver also has molars. The molars are used for chewing.



Answer card

## Habitat

There are two main designs of a lodge:

- In rivers and lochs, beavers build their lodge at the water's edge.
- Or if the beavers dam a small stream, the dam creates a pond and in the middle of this they build an 'island' which forms the lodge.

Note that beavers will not build dams in rivers and lochs but they do dam small streams.



Answer card

## Tail

The tail acts like a rudder when swimming.

Beavers slap their tails to warn other beavers of danger.

The tail stores fat which can help the beavers regulate their body temperature.

The tail also helps the beaver balance when on land.

Answer card

## Diet

A beaver will eat bark and some small twigs but they will not usually eat the wood from the tree trunk.

In winter, they will mostly eat bark.

In spring and summer, they will eat a variety of plant material – aquatic plants, roots, leaves, shoots and grasses.

# Reintroduction

Beavers became extinct in Scotland around 400 years ago because of habitat loss and over-hunting but now they are back.

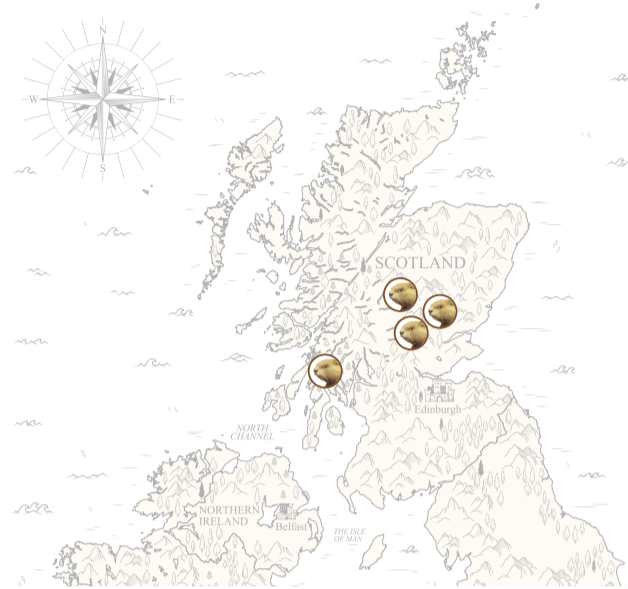


*Try to think of a reason why we should reintroduce a species after so many years. Try to think of another reason why we shouldn't.*

reintroduction

# Range

Beavers can be found in Tayside and Knapdale in Scotland.



*Where else in the world do you find beavers?*

range

# Breeding



*Do you think a baby beaver is born fully covered in hair?*

breeding



Answer card

## Range

There are two species of beaver.

The Eurasian beaver - *Castor fiber*

The North American beaver - *Castor canadensis*

### The Eurasian beaver

**Native in:**

Belarus; China; France; Germany; Kazakhstan; Luxembourg; Mongolia; Norway; Russian Federation

**Reintroduced in:**

Austria; Belgium; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; Hungary; Italy; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Montenegro; Netherlands; Poland; Romania; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Ukraine; United Kingdom.

### The North American beaver

**Native:**

Canada; Mexico; United States

**Introduced:**

Argentina; Belgium; Finland; Germany; Luxembourg; Russian Federation.

Answer card

## Reintroduction

**Some reasons for:**

- Beavers are natural 'engineers' and help return some areas to their natural state.
- Humans caused the extinction of the beaver so it is only right to return them.
- Beavers create wetland areas which will be good for the breeding and feeding of many species of birds and other animals.
- Watching wildlife is an important visitor attraction in Scotland and the reintroduction will bring more people to the area.

**Some reasons against:**

- Fisheries are worried about fishing as the beavers will change the habitat with dams and lodges.
- Farmers are worried about possible flooding of areas.
- National water companies are worried over the safety of public health and quality of the drinking water.
- Since it has been over 400 years, the environment has changed so much that we don't know whether reintroducing the beaver will affect other species and habitats.

Please see additional notes (available on website) for counter arguments to some of these reasons.

The first beavers were released in May 2009. After a successful trial, on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016, the Scottish Government made the announcement that beavers are to remain in Scotland.

The beavers used in the trial were brought over from Norway as this population was the closest to the beavers that used to live in Scotland.

The Scottish Beaver Trial was a partnership between the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, the Scottish Wildlife Trust, the Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Answer card

## Breeding

The baby is called a kit. It is born fully covered in hair. Very soon after birth, their eyes open and they are able to swim.

Beavers are monogamous. This means they usually mate for life or until their partner dies.

The length of time baby grows inside mum (gestation period) is around 105 days.

Babies are usually born from April to June.

The litter size is usually 2-4.

The young suckle milk from mum for about 2-3 months but they can eat some vegetation after only a week. They stay with their parents until about 2 years old.