

Beaver Believers

Where the stream enters Sprague Lake, there are several old beaver dams. The Beaver Ponds picnic area in Kawuneeche Valley provides an excellent view of an old pond as well as evidence of current beaver activity (freshly gnawed twigs in the mud and “pruned” willows).

Read Beaver at Long Pond ,by William T. George. (You may want to have students verbalize the sounds as you read.) How has the beaver affected other animals and plants? Ultimately, the beaver will deplete the food resources and move to another location along the river. The old ponds will fill in with silt and dying plants and become a meadow usually in 30 to 50 years.

Look for evidence of aspen trees and willows that were cut by beaver. See if the students can find beaver-gnawed twigs at the edge of the pond or lake. Locate the beaver dams. The dams and lodges may be overgrown with sedges, grasses, willows, and other plants.

Talk about how beavers changed the area when they built their dams. Review information previously discussed in Kit B–Nature Specialists, Activity 2: Build A Beaver Lodge. Explain that beavers build their dams to provide themselves with ponds that are deep enough for their lodges to have

underwater entrances. Inside some lodges beavers have a dry, safe place to live above the water level. Other heaps of sticks may be food caches rather than dwellings. Beavers also store twigs in the mud at the bottom of the pond as a food source in the winter when there is ice on the pond.

After exploration of the area and discussion, ask the students to draw a picture of what the area might have looked like before the beavers were there. Ask them to draw a picture of what it looked like while the beavers were active. How will it look in 50 years? Beaver ponds eventually fill with decaying plants and sediments. When the beavers stop maintaining the dam, the pond drains or dries out. Sedges, rushes, willows, and meadow plants will become established

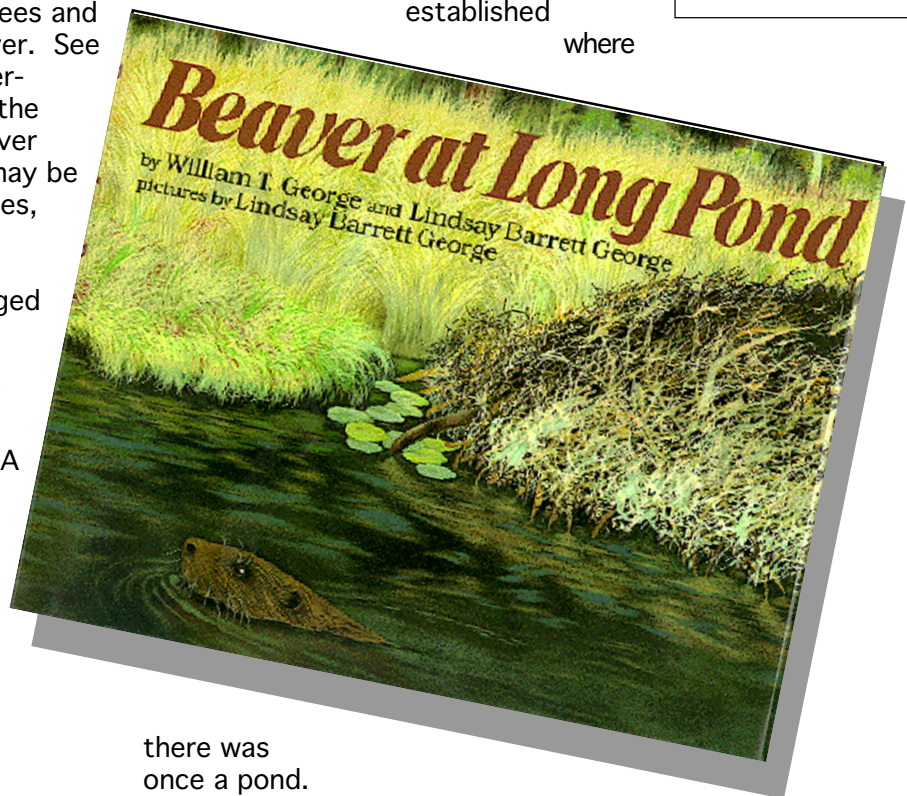
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Materials

- Beaver at Long Pond, William T. George
- Pencil
- Clipboards and paper
- If possible, take along the beaver pelt and beaver foot from the Kit B–Nature’s Specialists: Beaver and Porcupine.

Site

Sprague Lake or the Beaver Pond picnic area in Kawuneeche Valley



there was
once a pond.