

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



WILDLIFE & FRESHWATER FISHERIES DIVISION
WILDLIFE SECTION

Beaver Biology, Laws and Regulations



South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Furbearer Project
PO Box 167
Columbia, SC 29202



South Carolina Furbearers



Beaver

Bobcat

Coyote

Gray Fox

Long-tailed Weasel

Mink

Muskrat

Opossum

Raccoon

Red Fox

River Otter

Spotted Skunk

Striped Skunk



Beaver Biology

- Historically, the beaver was very abundant throughout South Carolina
 - Beavers were extensively trapped throughout this state as well as the U.S., and by the late 1800's or early 1900's, were eradicated, or at best, nearly absent in South Carolina



Beaver Biology

- In the winter of 1940-1941, the USFWS released 6 beaver in the Carolina Sandhills NWR



Beaver from Sandhills NWR and natural immigrants from Georgia eventually repopulated the State

Beaver Biology

- Largest rodent in North America
- Only species other than man that modifies its habitat
- Average weight: 35-40 lbs.
 - (can be much larger 60+lbs.)
- Strictly vegetarians
 - Eats fresh woody stems, bark, leaves, aquatic vegetation



Beaver Biology

- Can remain underwater for up to 15 minutes.
- Breeding occurs in Winter
- Gestation period is 107 days
- Breed at 2-3 years old
- Litter size = 2-4, usually born in March



Beaver Biology

- Webbed feet, comb claw on each hind foot for grooming
- Flattened tail used as a rudder, support, and as a warning device, store fat, exchange heat.
- Inner lips allow beaver to carry sticks in their mouth and keep out water
- Can close ears and nose and have a transparent eye covering for use underwater
- Excellent smell and hearing, poor eyesight



Beaver Biology

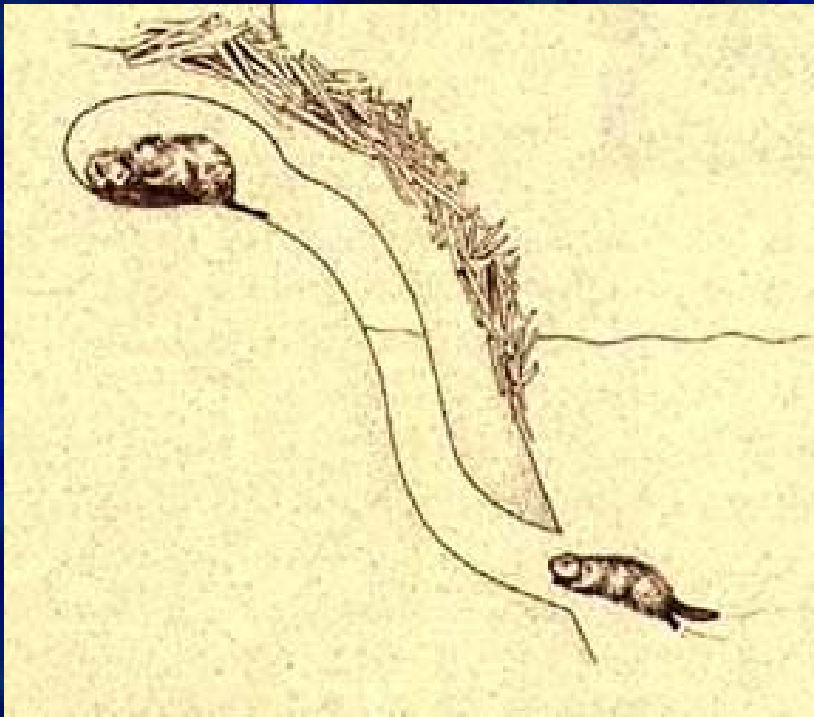
- A typical colony consists of:
 - One mature male and female
 - One set of offspring from 1-2 years of age*
 - One set of offspring less than 1 year of age
- Usually there will be 4-8 beavers in a colony
- In good habitat 2 or more colonies may be adjacent to one another, yet they seldom overlap



*Older offspring will be forced out and disperse an average of 4 miles away from the colony

Beaver Biology

Dens are often dug into banks, entrance is usually at or below water level



Bank den exposed by lowered water level

Beaver Biology



Lodges constructed of woody debris are usually located in the water



Benefits of Beaver

- Provide excellent habitat for a variety of species
 - Waterfowl, wading birds, fish, mammals, reptiles & amphibians
 - The wood duck has benefited greatly from the creation of nesting and brood rearing habitat



Problems with Beaver

- Timber or agricultural damage
- Flooding



- Blocked water control structures
- Weakened shorelines or dams
- Dock damage

Beaver Control - What can you legally do?

- Do nothing
- Non-lethal Control
- Hunting/Shooting
- Trapping



Beaver Control - What can you legally do?

- Non-lethal means
 - Exclusion (wire, fencing)
 - Repellents (taste, texture)
 - Water control devices
 - Dam removal



Beaver Control - What can you legally do?

- Destroying dams
 - Beaver dams can be removed without permits
 - Explosives can only be used by certain trained individuals



Beaver Control - What can you legally do?

- **Hunting/Shooting***
 - No closed hunting season (hunting license required)
 - Depredation permit (no license required)
 - Shooting at night requires a depredation permit from a local DNR Officer
 - 100-yard exemption



*Check local ordinances regarding discharging firearms

Beaver Control - What can you legally do?

- **Trapping**

Trapping season is Dec. 1 – Mar. 1

Trap throughout the year with a Depredation Permit or within 100 yards of your *residence*.



*Generally recommend a shotgun with #4 buckshot or similar

Legal Traps

- Snares

In water sets only



Legal Traps

- Conibear or Body-gripping traps

In water or slide sets & in a vertical position without baits or lures



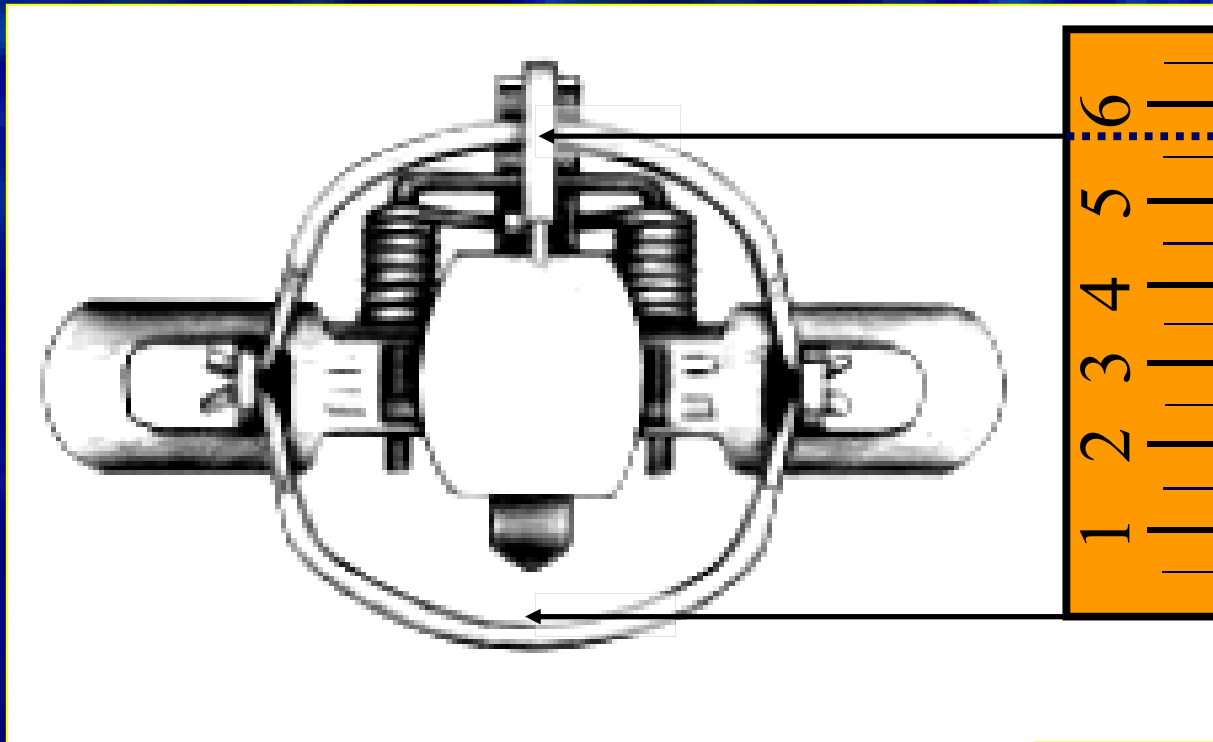
Legal Traps

- Foothold traps
 - 6 1/2" or smaller in water*
 - (5 3/4" or smaller on land)*
 - Should be set as part of a submersion system.*



Measuring Foothold Traps

Old nomenclature (#2 on land, #3 in water) is no longer used.



Measuring for Legal Traps

Inside jaw spread measured at widest point perpendicular to pivot points:

5.75" or smaller for land sets

6.50" or smaller for water sets

Legal Traps

- Live traps

Hancock, Bailey, Ezee Set, & other live traps are legal to use for beaver, but live beaver cannot be relocated



Hancock



Bailey



Ezee Set

Other Trapping Regulations

- Mandatory licensing
(for Commercial & Sport trappers)
- Restrictions on trap types and sizes*
- Mandatory daily trap checks*
- Written landowner permission*
- Mandatory trap identification tags
with owner's name & address*
- Mandatory reporting of all captures *



* *Applies to trapping under depredation permits and NWCO work*

Depredation Permits

§ 50-11-2570 – Issuance of special permit to capture destructive animal

- No permit required to control damaging furbearers or squirrels within 100 yards of property owner's residence.
- A depredation permit is required outside of the 100-yard distance exemption
- Animals caught must be destroyed or released on site.
- Required to shoot at night (with local DNR LE approval)

Questions?



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