



Nature Nuggets: Leave it to Beaver

Audience: 4-7 year olds and parents/guardians. Each station can accommodate 10-15 kids at a time. Younger and older siblings are welcome but content is geared towards 4-7 year olds.

Theme: Beavers provide many benefits and create homes for other wildlife.

Materials:

Blankets for sitting

Books

Stuffed animals

Beaver pelt

Beaver skull

Pictures of beaver dams

Oslo the Beaver – Story

Puppets/pictures – Beaver, ladybug, fish, frog, kingfisher

Cones/flags

Supplies for tree painting

Gloves and protective gear for kids to paint trees

1: STORY CRITTER CORNER

1 MNA

This is a free-flow activity so kids can come and go as they please. It will be a self-lead station on blankets with books and stuffed animals for parents to engage with their children.

Books:

Animals that Build their Homes

Additional books TBD

2: NATURE WALK

1 MN, 1 MNA

Introduction: Let's go on a beaver exploration! Walk along the path to the McMurry pond to see the beaver dam. Look for signs of beavers (chewed sticks/logs) along the way!

Theme: Beavers provide many benefits and create homes for other wildlife.

Stewardship message: While we like our beavers, we still need to control what trees they chew down so we don't destroy other habitats.

Optional talking points:

- Habitats – What is a habitat? How do beavers help make habitats for other animals?
- Adaptations – How are beavers adapted to live under water?
- Pond life – What other animals might like living near a beaver dam?

- Stewardship – the City helps protect some trees by painting gray sand on their trunks so beavers don't chew them down. Would you want sand in your teeth?

Conclusion: Thank everyone for coming to the program and remind them of the other stations available. Encourage kids and parents to come to other events and activities and remind the parents of up-coming programs with the Natural Areas.

3: ACTIVITY

1 MN, 1 MNA

Introduction

Introduce yourself and thank the kids and parents for being there.

Show beaver pelt and ask if the kids know what it is. Let them touch the thick fur and smooth tail.

Ask the children:

- *Have you ever seen a live beaver?*
- *Do you think beavers are good or bad? (They cut down trees which might be bad, but they are great at making homes for other animals!)*

Explain that today they are going to be learning all about beavers and how they help create homes for other animals.

If some have already visited other stations, you may start by asking what they have learned or seen so far?

Body

Beaver Basics

- Start by talking a little bit about beavers and how they are adapted to live in the water. Show beaver pelt and skull.
 - Fur – keeps them warm and dry
 - Tail – used to communicate and send warnings
 - Teeth – used to chew down trees
 - Webbed feet – used for swimming
 - (Nictitating) eye membrane – allows them to see under water

Story

- Now that they know that beavers are expert water dwellers, you are going to tell a story about how beavers help other animals.
- Using puppets and twigs to build the dam, tell the Oslo the Beaver story. Be animated and have fun!
- After the story is over, review how Oslo helped each type of animal by holding up the puppet and asking the kids to recall how beavers helped that animal.

Create a dam activity

- Have everyone stand up. Tell a few kids they will be logs, and the other kids will be water droplets. You can involve the parents and siblings too!
- Create a river path using cones and have the water droplets run, skip and twirl down the river's path.
- Now have the children who are logs, create a dam across the river by lying or kneeling on the ground. What happens to the water droplets? They create a pond!
- Ask the kids who they think might come live in or near this pond?
- You can repeat the activity with different kids creating the dam if there is time.

Conclusion

As we learned, beavers create homes for many different wildlife.

Ask the kids:

- *Do you think beavers are good?*
- *Can you remember one way beavers help another animal?*
- *Can you remember one thing about beavers that allow them to live well in the water?*

Next time you see a beaver dam, look around and see what other animals might be living nearby.

Thank everyone for coming to the program and remind them of the other stations available. Encourage kids and parents to come to other events and activities and remind the parents of upcoming programs with the Natural Areas.

4: STEWARDSHIP CRAFT – Dam Building and Beaver Tree Painting

2 MNAs

This is a free-flow activity so kids can come and go as they please.

Beavers create homes for many other animals. See if you can build a dam.

Steps:

1. Welcome kids and ask if they would like to build a beaver dam.
2. Show pictures of different types of beaver dams.
3. Allow kids to collect twigs and build a beaver dam at the water's edge (will either be by the pond or Poudre River depending on water levels).
4. If they want to, they can paint some grey sand on a tree they want to protect from beavers. (Diane will be there to facilitate this and talk about the stewardship message.)
5. Once they are finished, give them a sticker and thank them for coming.

Thank everyone for coming to the program and remind them of the other stations available. Encourage kids and parents to come to other events and activities and remind the parents of upcoming programs with the Natural Areas.

Written by Alex McHenry, Community Educator, May 2018