Beavers

For more information on urban wildlife in Saskatoon, visit saskatoon.ca/wildlifemanagement or contact Urban Biological Services at 306-975-3300.
Beaver Characteristics

Appearance
- Largest rodent in North America.
- Thick fur is usually dark brown and consists of long, coarse outer hairs and short, fine inner hairs.
- Large, flat, paddle-shaped, scaly tail.
- Large, webbed hind feet and smaller front feet with claws.

Behaviour & Habitat
- Nocturnal but can be active during the day.
- Excellent swimmers and can remain submerged up to 15 minutes.
- Construct lodges and dams in lakes, streams and rivers using branches, sticks, twigs, rocks and mud.
- They can cut down trees using their large front teeth.
- They use their front paws for digging, carrying and placing materials.
- Beaver dams provide deep, calm water around their lodges to protect them from predators and provide safe access to food.
- Beavers have a number of predators in Saskatoon including coyotes, foxes and birds of prey.
- Beavers usually mate for life and are monogamous.
- Have one litter per year consisting of two to six kits.
- Kits can swim within 24 hours of being born.
- Kits remain with their parents for up to two years, creating large family groups with up to 12 beavers living in one lodge.
- Most beavers reach sexual maturity around three years of age.

Diet
- Beavers are herbivores that feed on leaves, buds and the inner bark of growing trees. They also eat cattails, water lilies and other aquatic vegetation.
- Prefer aspen and poplar but will also feed on other deciduous trees.

Co-existing with Beavers

Beavers are a long-time resident of Saskatoon’s river valley. This presents certain challenges in riverside parks and along pathways, including tree loss and safety hazards from partially chewed trees.

Beaver Management Strategies

Tree Protection
- Metal fencing can be placed around the trunks of mature trees to prevent chewing.
- This will need to be monitored and adjusted to prevent girdling as the trees grow.

Trapping
- There are a number of traps designed for beavers.
- Traps are often placed in the beaver’s frequently used pathways around lodges.
- Traps are often only a short term solution as new beavers will often move in and recolonize an area with suitable habitat.