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urge to wander. So they leave the pond area. A mate from another colony would be found in spring or early summer hopefully. They would build a dam if necessary. And as they're sexually mature they are capable of having kits that winter and they would stay together in the lodge. (Will he build a dam if he fails to find a mate?) Yes, for his own protection. Beaver out of instinct will build dams when there's running water nearby (Wilsson demonstrated that the sound of running water will stimulate building) • however how good a job depends on a lot of other things: how old the beaver is, how well his family taught him. Beavers living in a lake don't need to build a dam so if that beaver went out into a creek area he would not do as good a job as a beaver who had lived in a creek and worked on dams with his parents. Others have reported where an older beaver will go and help a younger beaver build or fix up a dam • and dams of younger beaver aren't anywhere near the quality of older beaver. The beaver is very aware of water and he really uses it to decide how to build his lodge, what type of dam and canal construction he needs. If his food supply is far away instead of going overland, which for him is very dangerous, he will build a dam to back the water up to where the trees are so he can float them back. He can build a dam and a system of canals with locks to keep the water in the pond. Occasionally there are mistakes in engineering. He may get flooded in the spring. Here in the park they have a contingency plan • they make burrows at different heights along lakes and rivers. These burrows open underwater but then slant upwards so there is an airchamber at the end. Then, depending on conditions of the lake and past experience, they might build a lodge either on the side of the lake or in the lake itself, an island lodge. This would be a place to live. And despite most of his entrances are underwater, he likes a dry bed. When he swims into the lodge he'll bring a stick. That stick is soaking wet. So he eats the bark off it. The inside stick is dry. He carries the dry stick up to his sleeping area • 4 to 6 inches above the water level --and shreds it into fine fibres. He arranges them and sleeps on them, and once they become soiled he takes them out and brings in a new stick. They mate in January or February, in the water under the ice. (Most sources agree that there is no complicated mating ritual. This is probably because the beaver are already paired and living together for some time. They have travelled together, built together and gathered a winter's food • and very importantly, they have groomed one another, thoroughly covering themselves and one another with the mysterious musk oil, castorium • a yellow substance found in two pockets alongside the genital organs. It waterproofs the body, is used to mark territory • and plays a role in establishing close physical and social relationship. LaRue says they mate in traditional animal fashion • both facing the same direction, the male behind the female • but Wilsson and others have observed beaver mating face to face. It has been argued that this may be wrestling.) Algar: The beaver love to wrestle and have real matches. Grey Owl records them on land where the beaver stand up on their hind legs, grab each other



by the neck and under the arm, and the idea is to push one beaver over. They prop themselves up with their tails. As soon as one beaver is over he lets out squeals and the other one stops immediately and the tussle is over. (The gestation period is 105 to 120 days, and the kits are born alive, furred out and toothed. Most records state that the female chases the rest of the family away, but considerable recent evidence indicates that birth, also, is an important family event, the male not only staying with the BEAVER CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 Picnic Tables Well-water Ice Cubes Morrison's General Store WRECK COVE Best wishes to Cape Breton's Ken-Mac Plumbing & Heating Englishtown 929-2214 Main Street 736-6929 " I, ?? " Main Street /'jo-ov'v GordieS ESSO WeVe moved to Sydney Mines Brake Drum Re-surfacing Car Undercoating Inspection Station SAME QUALITY SERVICE