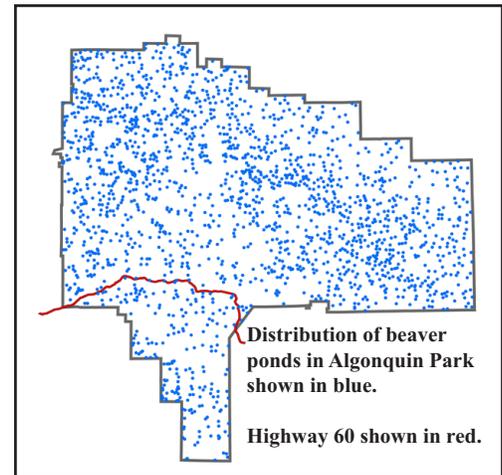


## Algonquin Beaver Ponds

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The beaver pond is the only one of the five major habitats in Algonquin Park that has been created to suit the needs of its primary resident. Other than man, the American Beaver is the only animal to modify its environment. In this case, the damming of a stream or creek creates a pond where the beaver can live. While the beaver is Algonquin's largest rodent, it moves awkwardly on land and is better suited to a life in the water. Instinctively, beavers will dam a stream at or near the sound of rushing water which in turn floods the upstream area creating a pond one to two metres deep. The pond then provides a safe refuge where the beaver can eat, sleep, and raise a family.



A pond does not last forever though. If the beavers move to a different area to find more food or die, the dam will eventually break draining the pond. Grasses and sedges will then become established in the drained pond creating a beaver meadow. Eventually, beavers will return to the area, re-dam the stream and create a new pond.

Aside from the dam, the other main structure in a beaver pond is the beaver lodge. This is a large mound of mud and sticks that protrudes as much as one metre above the water. The lodge has an underwater entrance to allow the beaver to come and go safely. The thick mud walls provide protection from predators and from the cold of winter.

The creation of a beaver pond creates a habitat for many aquatic plants. The Water-shield, Common Bladderwort, White Water-lily, and Bullhead Lily are common plants in a beaver pond. Water lilies are an important food source for beavers during the summer. Eating the leaves, stems and roots, this ample food supply allows the beaver to remain in the safety of the pond all summer.

Algonquin's beaver ponds are also rich in animal life. The pond is an excellent habitat for mosquito larvae and other insects, such as dragonflies and damselflies. The rich insect life provides an ample food source for frogs, snakes, and insect-eating birds, such as the Eastern Kingbird and the Tree Swallow. Great Blue Heron and Broad-winged Hawks take advantage of the rich amphibian and reptile life



# The Science Behind Algonquin's Animals



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found in the pond and meadows. A variety of waterfowl such as Black and Wood ducks feed on the abundance of water plants. Standing dead trees will also provide nesting cavities for Tree Swallows, Wood Ducks, Black-backed Woodpeckers, and other birds. Moose also benefit from the beaver's creation by exploiting the sodium-rich water plants. Nowhere is a Moose more commonly found in Algonquin Park in the summer than standing belly-deep in a beaver pond munching on water plants.

The beaver has a significant impact on the lives of the plants and animals in the environment in which it lives. If it were not for beavers, many of Algonquin's animals would have to look for suitable habitat elsewhere.



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