

Secret of Beaver Lodge



Besides
the beaver,
each double page
shows an insect.
Can you find it?



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Ecoregion SKAT



BRATISLAVSKÝ KRAJ



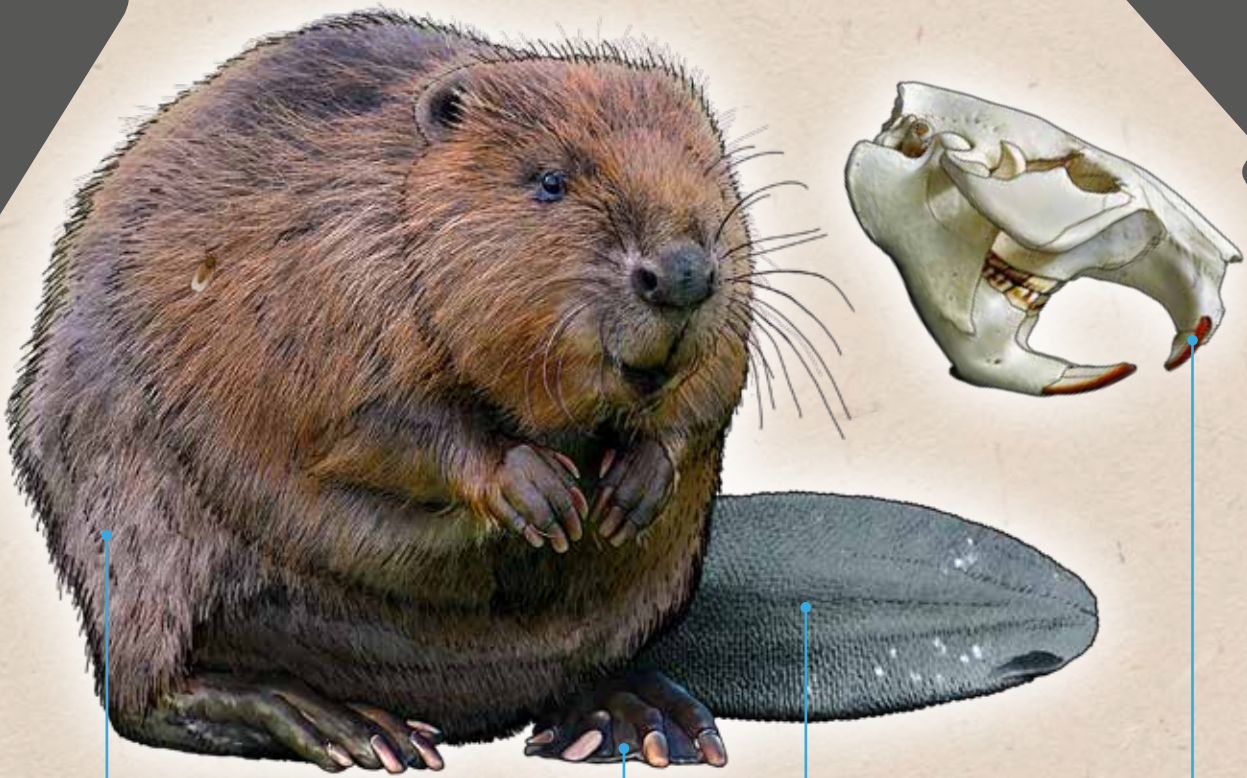
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European beaver

(*Castor fiber*)

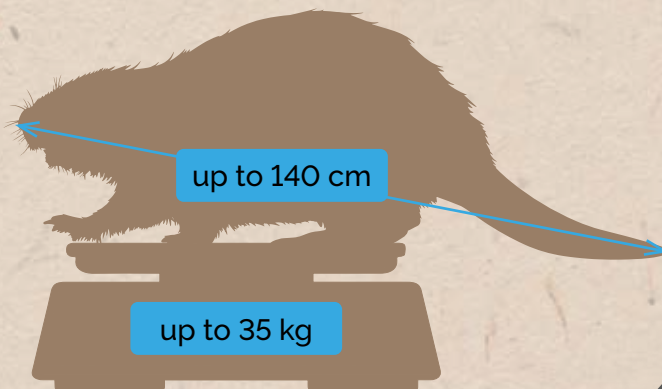


I am the largest European rodent and I am perfectly adapted to aquatic life. I can use my webbed toes to move swiftly in water.

I have very strong teeth, my orange-coloured incisors grow continuously.

I have thick fur so I can survive under the water even in winter.

When I swim, I use my flat tail for steering. By smashing it against water I can produce signals warning others of a danger.



How I live

On land, I am a little bit clumsy.

However, I am a proficient swimmer and feel confident in water. To find my home, I need a place where water is deep enough to avoid drying out in summer and freezing through completely in the winter. If the water is too shallow, I build a solid dam that retains water, rising its level.

I like both still and flowing waters surrounded by banks rich with softwood trees:



Poplar



Willow



Alder



Birch

The Lodge



I live in an underground den, which I build by burrowing into a high bank. If I cannot find such bank, I use branches, plants and mud to build a lodge. Usually, it has at least two exits under the water level, so that I can feel safe. The spacious den is positioned on land, at a higher location. My family has ventilation shaft in the upper part of our lodge so we can breathe easily.

Channels around the den are usually inundated and I build them by burrowing in the surrounding soil and peat or by biting the reed and damming the shallow sections.

Channel



Diet



I like to eat tree bark, juicy branches, leaves as well as plants that grow in and around water.



Tree bark



Branches and leaves




Plants

It does not take long and the thick growth of young willows turns into a group of sharpened "pencils".




A close-up photograph of a beaver with dark brown fur, sitting and gnawing on a tree trunk. Wood shavings are scattered around the base of the tree.

Gnawing Traces

A photograph of a large, freshly cut tree stump on a riverbank. The wood is light brown and shows clear signs of being gnawed. A beaver's tail is visible on the left side of the stump.

I am a champion in gnawing at trees. Sitting and leaning on my tail, I can gnaw around a tree trunk, which then falls into the water, so I do not need to carry my wood and stocks very far.

A photograph of a beaver gnawing on a tree trunk that is partially submerged in water. The water is calm, and the surrounding area is covered with fallen leaves and twigs.

Then I debranch the felled tree and deliver the material near my den or another suitable place. Before I use the wood to build my dam or the lodge, I gnaw at it and eat the bark. I make use of everything.

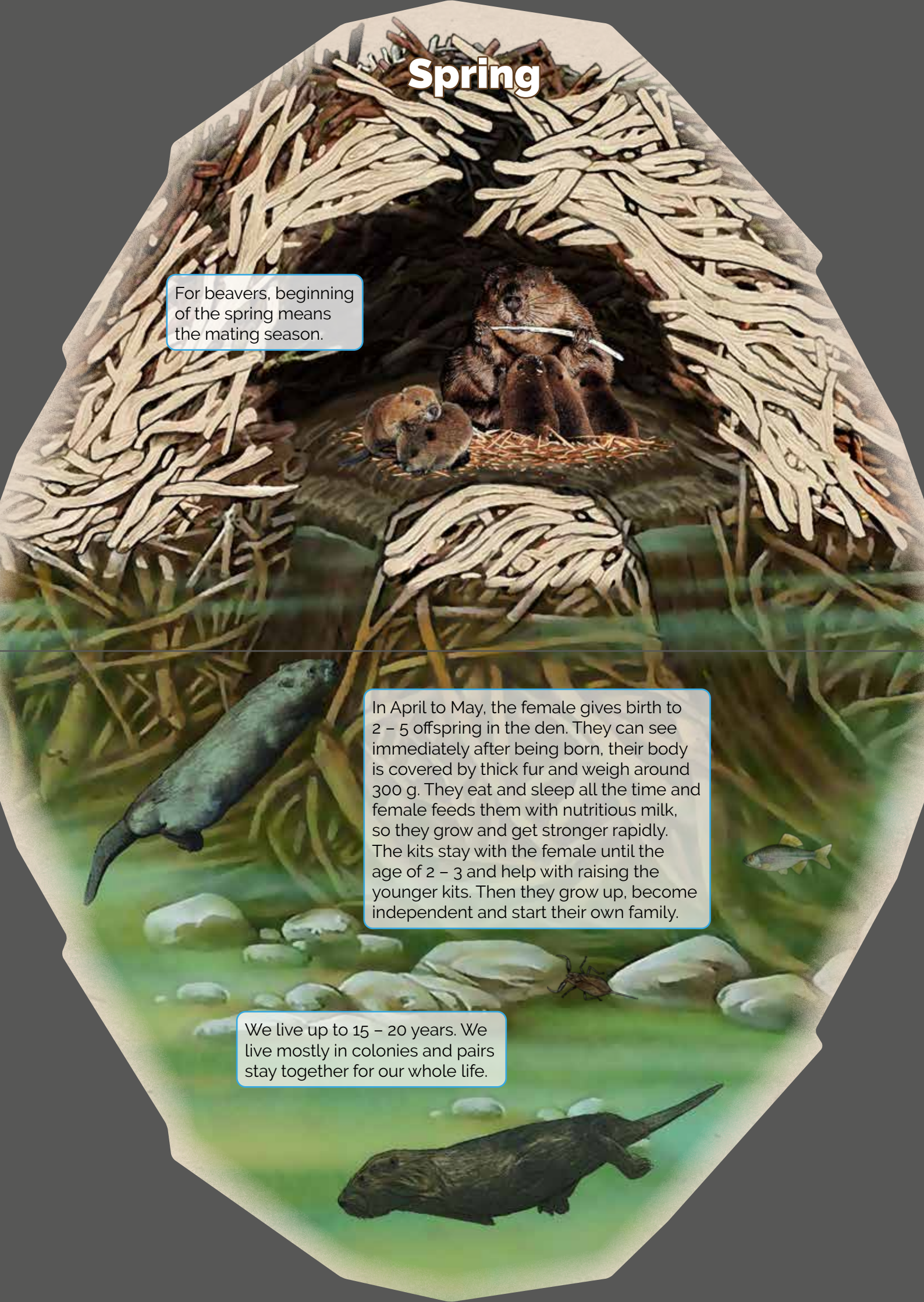


Spring

For beavers, beginning of the spring means the mating season.

In April to May, the female gives birth to 2 – 5 offspring in the den. They can see immediately after being born, their body is covered by thick fur and weigh around 300 g. They eat and sleep all the time and female feeds them with nutritious milk, so they grow and get stronger rapidly. The kits stay with the female until the age of 2 – 3 and help with raising the younger kits. Then they grow up, become independent and start their own family.

We live up to 15 – 20 years. We live mostly in colonies and pairs stay together for our whole life.



Winter

I am active in every weather, I do not even hibernate during winter unlike many other rodents. However, I need to prepare for the winter – a thick fat layer and food stocks will not leave me hungry. Therefore, I overfeed myself in the autumn and hoard some stocks.

I pull the fresh tree trunks and branches underwater and catch them at the bottom – they will serve as food during long winter when the water freezes over.

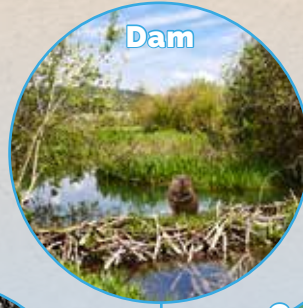


Evidence

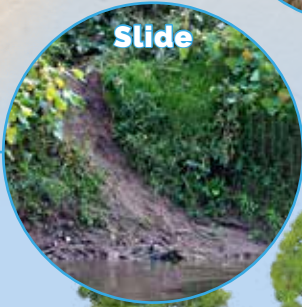
Lodge



Dam



Slide



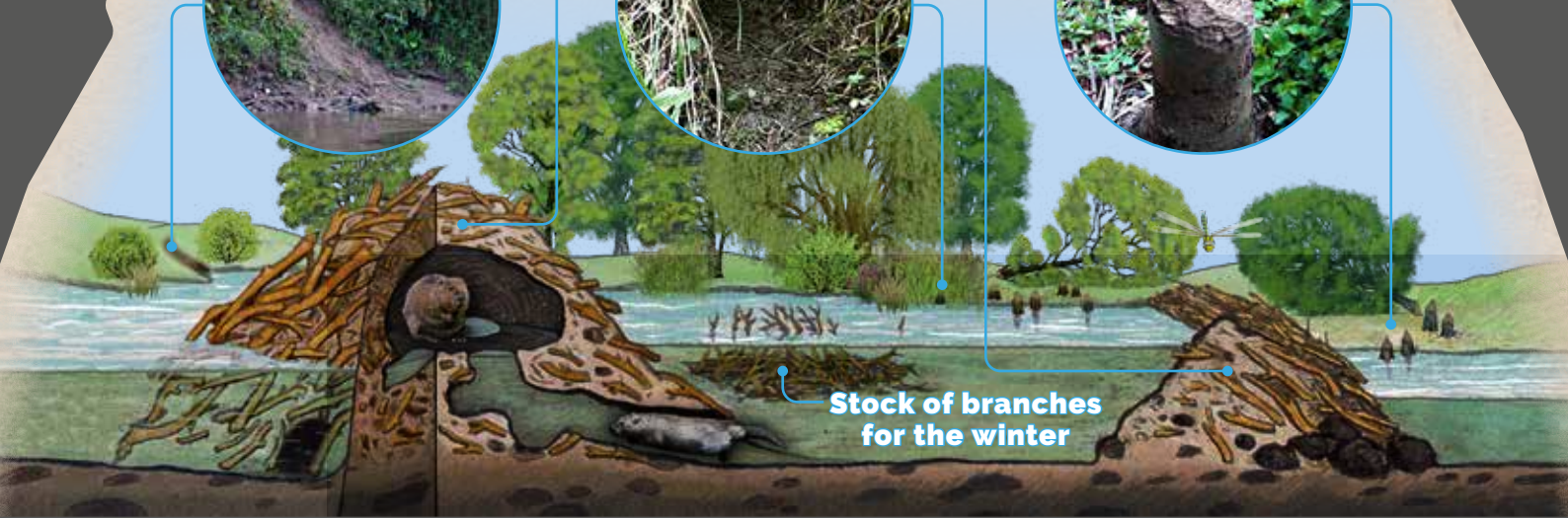
Channel



Gnawing Trace

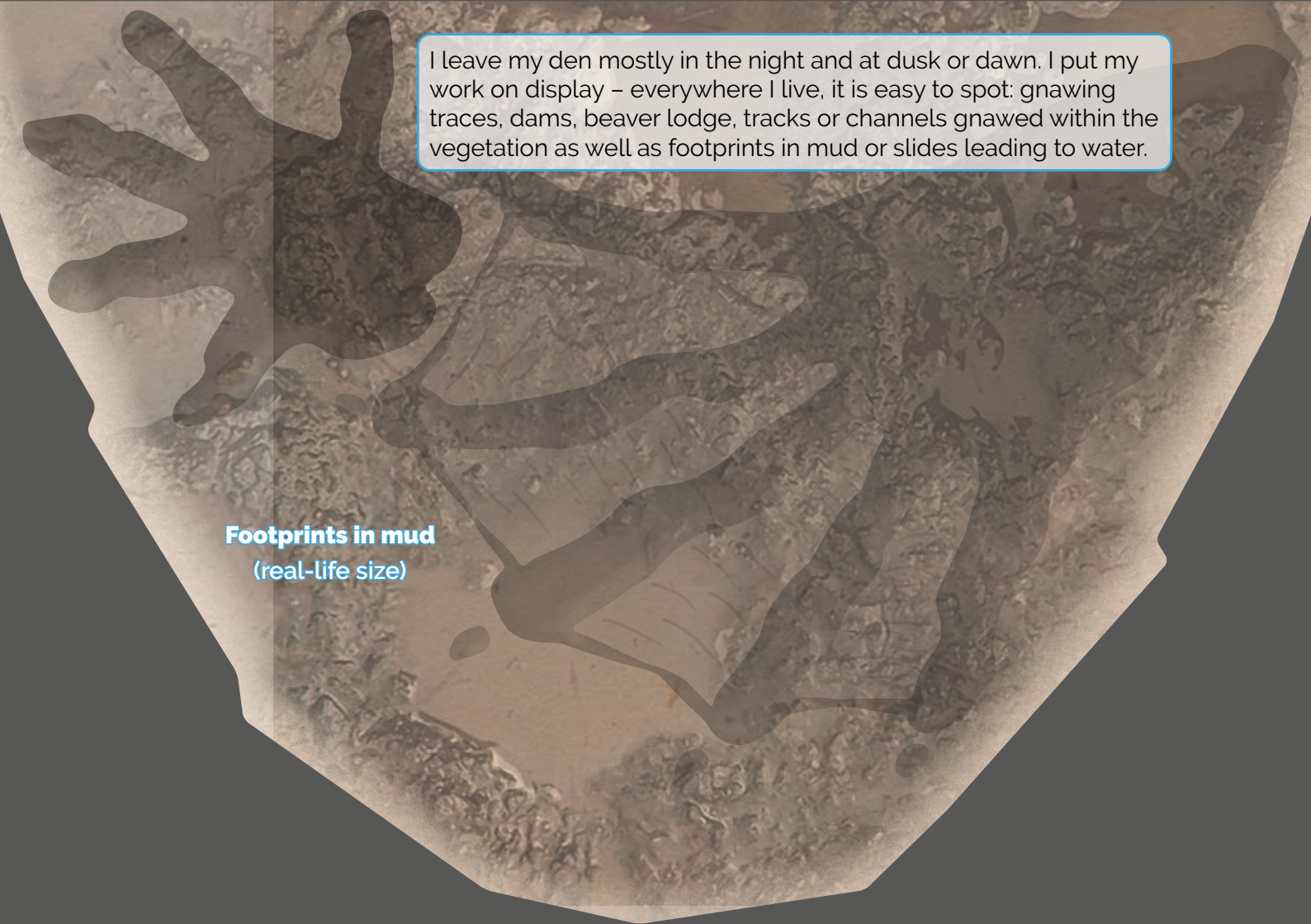


Stock of branches
for the winter



I leave my den mostly in the night and at dusk or dawn. I put my work on display – everywhere I live, it is easy to spot: gnawing traces, dams, beaver lodge, tracks or channels gnawed within the vegetation as well as footprints in mud or slides leading to water.

Footprints in mud
(real-life size)



Is it me?

I am frightened of humans and like to hide away. If you feel you have seen me, look for the characteristic body features because in the wild, you could easily mistake me for other animals:



Muskrat

25 – 40 cm | 1 – 2 kg

Characteristics:

lighter teeth, vertically flattened tail covered with tiny scales.

Diet: plants and smaller animals (molluscs).

Info: native to North America.

Nutria

30 – 45 cm | 10 – 12 kg

Characteristics:

orange teeth, strong tail with round shape in cross-section, white- and grey-coloured fur around nostrils and mouth.

Diet: plants.

Info: native to South America.

Eurasian otter

60 – 85 cm | 6 – 15 kg

Characteristics:

does not have gnawing teeth, strong tail with round cross-section and thick fur.

Diet: animals.

Info: hydrodynamic body shape – adapted to fast swimming.



Reshaping the landscape



My skills make me capable of reshaping the landscape. Hence, I create living space for myself as well as for many other animal species. Wetlands created by my activity soon become home to dragonflies, frogs, fish or birds.

Yellow iris



**Green
drake mayfly**



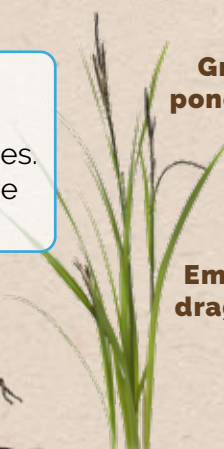
Dice snake



**Amber
snail**



**Greater
pond sedge**



**Emperor
dragonfly**



White willow



**Common
kingfisher**



Arrowhead

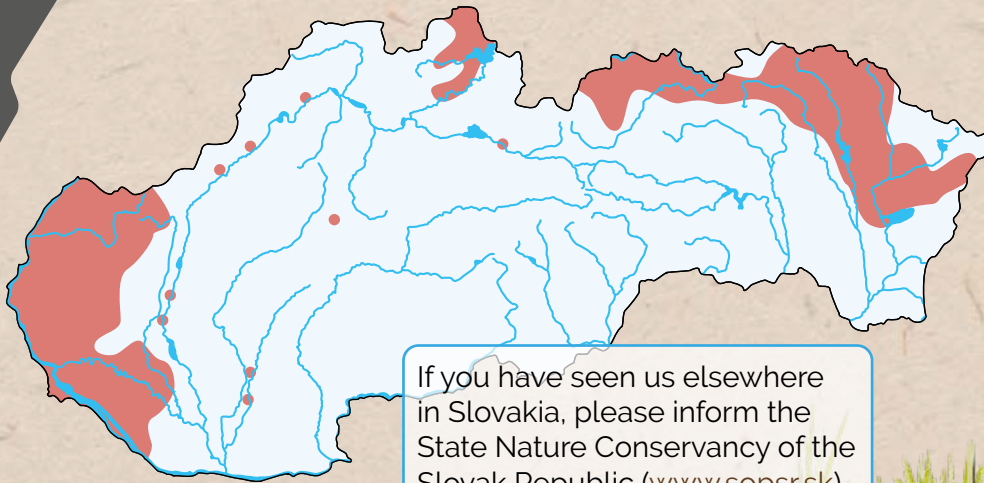


Edible frog



Distribution

In the past, we were almost driven to extinction for our precious fur and fat. For some time, beavers did not live in Slovakia. Zoologists were excited to re-confirm our presence at the end of the 20th century. Since then, we have expanded, and you can see us in the Morava and the Danube basins or in the north near the Poprad river or in the east near the Ondava.



If you have seen us elsewhere in Slovakia, please inform the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic (www.sopsr.sk).



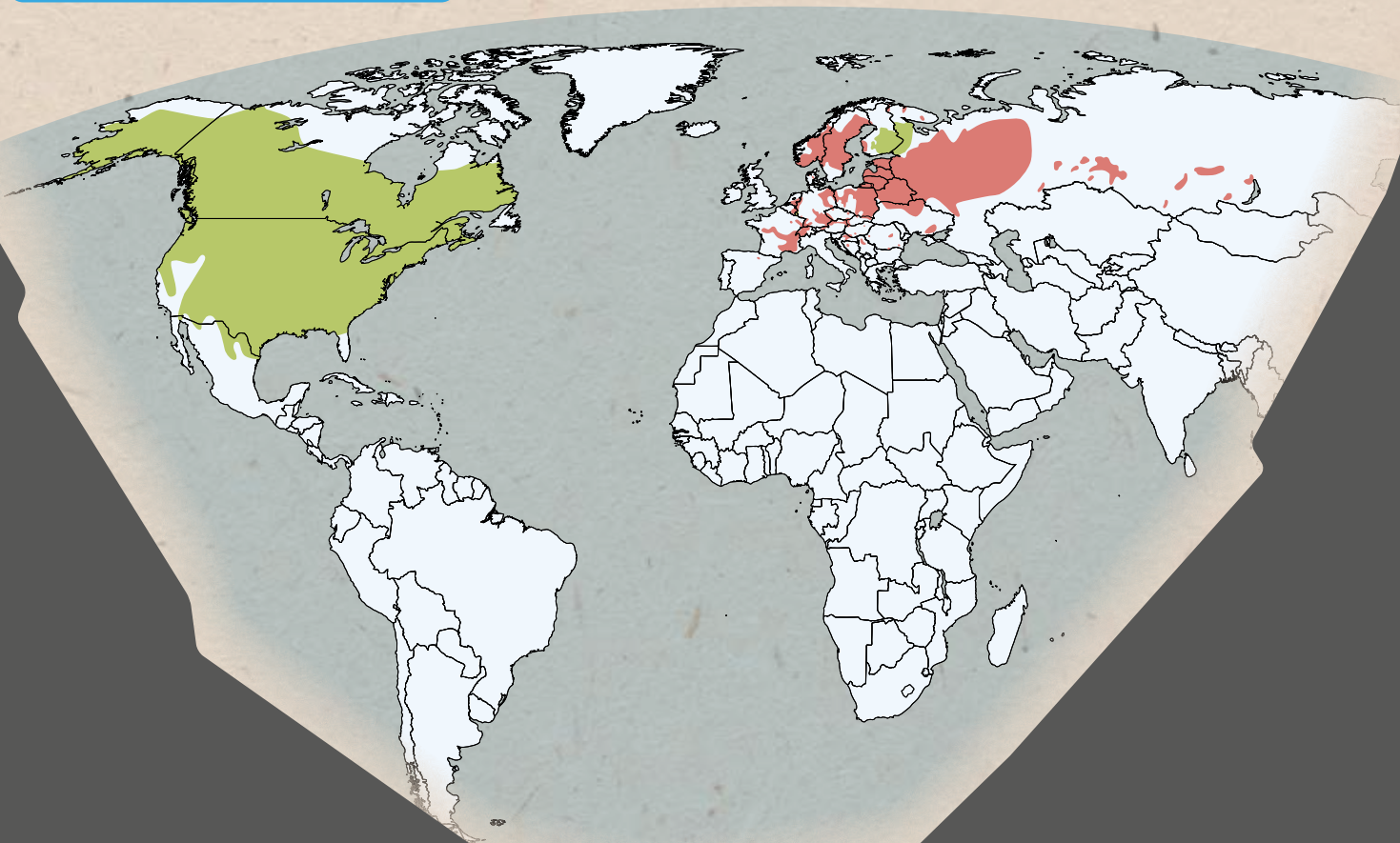
With my close relative, the North American beaver, we occupy distinct ranges:



European beaver



North American beaver





Have
you found all
the insects hiding in
the beaver pages? You
can check your findings
here:



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