



Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve



CROMMET CREEK

Nature's Engineers

Punch your way
around Great Bay

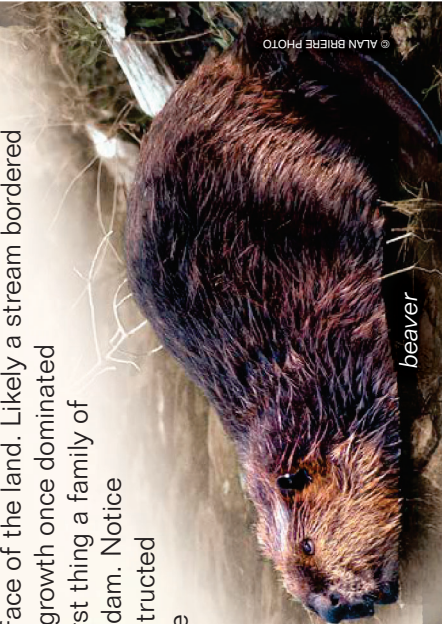
For centuries, New Hampshire's fields and forests have been evolving. One furry resident that has played an important role in this changing landscape is the beaver (*Castor canadensis*). The beaver is the largest rodent in North America and the only species that actually creates its own habitat! Although the beaver is mainly a nocturnal feeder, you can see evidence everywhere of its presence. This parcel of land is the perfect place to see this in action and explore a landscape that changes almost right before your eyes. Part of the Crommet Creek watershed, it is within the largest unfragmented block of natural vegetation around Great Bay. From the parking lot, follow the short trail to the observation platform. Begin your journey here at the pond, teeming with wildlife year-round. Keep your eyes peeled for nature's most ingenious engineer, the beaver!

EXPLORATION LOGISTICS

- Directions:** From Route 108 in Newmarket, take Dame Road, 2.0 miles. Park on right in designated lot.
- Terrain Rating:** Universally accessible trail to viewing platform. Remainder is self-guided exploration on fairly difficult terrain.
- Exploration Time:** Allow at least 1 hour.

NAVIGATING THE LANDSCAPE

As you sit on the observation platform, think for a moment what your surroundings may have looked like before the presence of beaver. When a colony of these adaptive creatures first arrived in the 1960s, they began to change the face of the land. Likely a stream bordered by mature trees and undergrowth once dominated the landscape here. The first thing a family of beaver does is to create a dam. Notice the long and carefully constructed dam to your east. Once the dam is in place, beaver begin to build a lodge. Since the beaver is a master of avoiding predation, the lodge



© ALAN BRIERE PHOTO

always sits deep in the pond and provides water access and escape at all times, even during the winter. Explore the descending waters and look for signs of feeding and claiming of territory. If you go in early morning, you may even be lucky enough to see feeding signs like a freshly cut sapling, dripping with moisture from within. Look for "scent mounds" at the water's edge, politely informing potential transients that this part of the watershed has already been claimed. If you happen upon a busy beaver toward dusk, don't be surprised if you hear a loud "crack" on the water. This is just a beaver's way of telling you to back off. During your exploration here, notice the dramatic boulders, or erratics, left when the last glacier retreated over 10,000 years ago. A closer look in spring will reveal thousands of bullfrog tadpoles jetting about the pond. Listen for the sounds of migrating songbirds or the drumming of the grand pileated woodpecker searching for insects in the dead trees.

WHILE YOU ARE HERE:

- During a warm spring rain, sit by the pond at dusk and listen for the first peepers of the season.
- Bring a sketchbook and capture the changing light on the water.
- Watch for great blue herons gliding to nest in the lower marsh.

GEOCACHE: Beavers are us!

COORDINATES: N43° 05
58.9055 W70° 54 09.16902

WHAT I SAW:

