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Where might a beaver build a dam or a lodge?
By Keira

On Friday, May 7th, at 8:30am, I set out for an observation at an unnamed pond that connects to the Powow River in South Hampton, New Hampshire. The edges of the pond were surrounded by elephant grass, cattails, lily pads, birds, assorted plants, and geese splashing around in the water. As I was observing the pond, I was surprised to notice a small beaver, with just its head poking out, swimming in the water. The beaver appeared to be carrying a small stick in its mouth. I wondered if the beaver was carrying the stick to go build a dam, and that led to me wondering where the dam was, if there were multiple dams, and whether there were more beavers around somewhere?

After doing research, I found that beavers normally build dams in low-lying areas with shallow moving water. I also discovered that beavers build their dams in areas with plenty of woody plants for food. The pond that I observed was low and flat, with barely moving water, and there were lots of plants, but I did not see a dam. Beavers normally create dams to make ponds and control water flow. This pond, however, was already made and there was little water movement. So, there might not have been a need for the beavers to build a dam.

I walked around the edge of the pond, close to the trees, and observed what looked to be a small beaver lodge. A beaver lodge is a dome-shaped home for beavers so that they have a safe place to sleep or to hide from predators. The lodge was hidden at the edge of the trees, barely above the water level. It was surrounded by plants, sticks, and grasses. The lodge itself was made of sticks piled up and put together with mud. A large tree that appeared to have beaver teeth marks on it had fallen over the lodge. Lodges also have underwater entrances towards the back of the lodge.

A beaver colony normally selects one pond to build their lodge, so that lodge must have meant that there was a whole colony of beavers in this pond. I did observe fish in the pond, along with grass and plants, so there was definitely plenty of food for them to eat.

This topic is important because beaver dams are essential in ecosystems. The ponds that are created from these dams provide a habitat for many other animals, such as birds and fish. These ponds also prevent erosion and reduce flooding. Beaver dams also raise the water level so that organic carbon can dissolve from the soil. As time passes, abandoned dams decay, and meadows appear. This shows how much of an impact beavers and their dams have on the environment.

An investigation could be conducted to determine whether beaver dams are also damaging to the environment, since they alter the flow of water and control what and how many animals occupy their habitat. This investigation could be conducted by visiting a pond with a beaver dam and recording the state of the dam, the water, and the habitat over a period of a week to observe if anything has changed.

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