

Outdoor Recreation

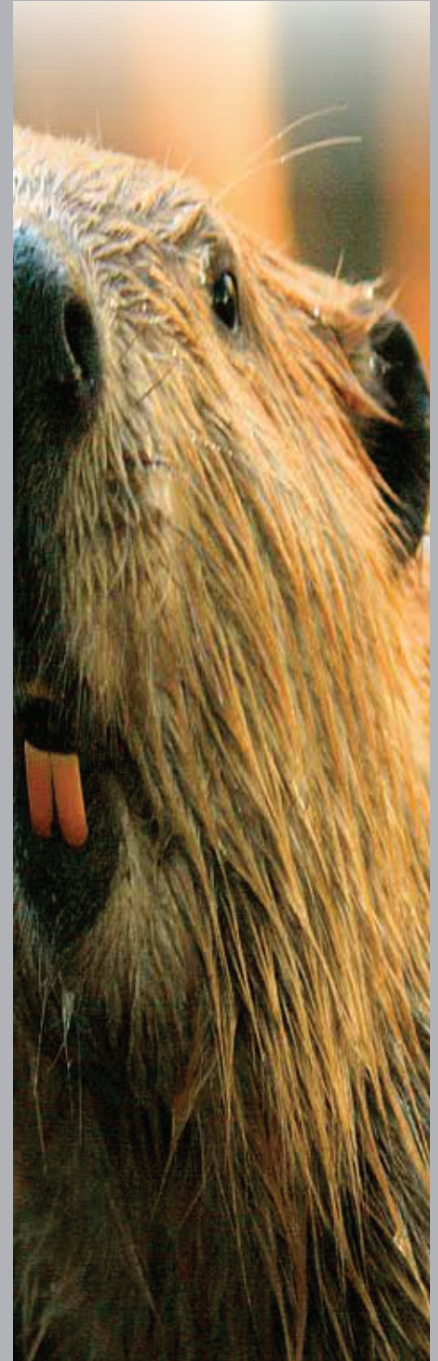
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Outdoor Education

Learning About New Mexico's Wildlife Beaver

Beaver

Beavers are the largest members of the rodent family in North America. Adults weigh an average of 44 pounds and measure approximately 42 inches. Noted for prominent chisel-shaped front teeth (incisors) and large paddle-shaped tails (a third of the body's length), beavers are notorious woodcutters and industrious dam builders. Incisors grow continuously and are selfsharpening. The orange front layer of hard enamel is backed by softer white dentin, enabling teeth to wear to a sharp edge as the beaver gnaws trees and shrubs. The broad tail and webbed hind feet serve this semi-aquatic mammal well. Small eyes with transparent inner eyelids enable vision underwater, and the ears and nose can be closed while submerged. Able to remain underwater for considerable periods, dives may last up to 15 minutes. The beaver's brown fur is pale underneath on the chest and belly. Fine wool underneath coarser top fur traps air to provide warmth and keep skin dry. A layer of fat under the skin also insulates the beaver. Beaver fur also hosts flea-like beetles that feed on surface skin particles and keep fur clean. The larvae of these beneficial parasites live and pupate in the nests of beaver dens.



New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

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