



AMAZING ANIMAL ARCHITECTURE: BEAVER DAMS

Determine what it takes to build a beaver dam.

Materials

A shallow container (*at least 1 ft. in length*)
Natural materials (*sticks, rocks, leaves, etc.*)
A pitcher of water
Pencil and paper

Results

Dams use a combination of natural materials to stop the flow of water and create artificial ponds.

Beavers are the second largest species of rodent in the world, the capybara being the first largest. They are semi-aquatic mammals which means they spend much of their lives in the water. Beavers cut down trees with their large front teeth. These teeth are coated in hard yellow enamel and constantly grow throughout the animal's life.



Procedure

- Take your materials outside, as this activity can be messy. Use your paper and pencil to draw what your dam is going to look like and what materials you think you are going to use. Keep in mind that the goal of your dam is to stop the flow of water.
- Gather the natural materials you are going to use and place them next to your container.
- Start building your dam in the middle of the container. Make sure to leave a couple inches of room on either side of your dam for water.
- When your dam is fully constructed, test it by slowly pouring water into the container on one side of the dam. Did your dam hold up or did it get washed away? If it didn't get washed away, did it completely stop the water, or did some trickle to the other side? Continue to rebuild and redesign your dam until almost no water passes through it.

Why?

Beavers change their habitat by building watertight dams with branches, grasses, and mud. Beavers build dams to block streams and create artificial ponds where they build their homes or lodges. Beaver lodges are constructed in the middle of ponds and have hidden underwater entrances. Beaver dams filter sediment out of the water, reduce erosion, and create new habitats that support a diverse community of plants and animals.