

Bulletin No. 5  
July 27, 1922

Stencil No. 36

By: Walter Fry, In Charge  
Nature Guide Service,  
Sequoia National Park.

SEQUOIA NATURE GUIDE SERVICE

"MOUNTAIN BEAVER IN SEQUOIA"

The Sierra Nevada Mountain Beaver (*Aplodontia rufa californica*) is found in the High Sierras in California at elevations from 5,000 to 11,000 feet. These interesting animals are found in the heart of the Giant Forest tourist camp in Sequoia National Park where their peculiar habits furnish important material for study by scientists and visitors.

The presence of these animals was first noted in the camp on June 5, 1919 when two adult beaver, fine types of the species, were busily engaged in the construction of tunnels in the banks of Deer Creek, a small stream that courses through the Big Trees. The beaver were constructing their new abode within thirty feet of one of the ranger stations.

It was a family party, male and female, and they stayed and worked together with regularity and dispatch. Each seemed to realize the importance of the work, as well as the enormous task that confronted them in building their new home. Nor was there any cessation of activities until all tunnels had been excavated and nest galleries with food pockets built in accordance with the fancy of their architectural minds. The building of the lodge, from start to finish, occupied twenty-four days of the beavers' time, after which all building operations ceased and the garnering of food and furnishing supplies was in order.

On August 25, the female was observed coming from one of the burrows with three baby beaver, less than half grown, following her. The young were somewhat darker in color but otherwise similar to the adults. This was perhaps the first time that the young beaver had been out in the daytime as they seemed very nervous in their new surroundings and soon returned to the burrow whence they came.

Whether or not the two beavers first arriving were old ones that had been forced to vacate their former home on account of congested conditions or poor surroundings for their expected family, or whether they were young ones starting out in life, will never be known. But the one thing certain is that in the choice of their new home no better judgment could have been shown with respect for climate, water, shade food supply and soil formation, for the building up of a large colony of their kind had they searched the entire Sierras from Oregon to Mexico. This fact is evidenced by the fact that the beavers are fast increasing in numbers and now bid fair to become a large colony and great attraction at Giant Forest.

Some people believe that this species of beaver hibernates during the winter months. This is a mistaken idea. The beaver may be found outside their tunnels at intervals of every two or three days throughout the winter. Furthermore, they seem to take special delight in coming out on top of the deep snow during moonlight nights for a few minutes exercise and play together, then returning to their burrows by way of the subterranean entrances.

The food supply of the beaver consists of riparian food plants found near their home stream; but they are not averse to browsing further afield. They will also eat watermelon, muskmelon, and vegetables such as potatoes, turnips, etc.

Young are usually born during the months of June and July and range from three to six in number. Only one litter is produced during the season.

The worst enemies of the beaver are the California lynx, the mountain coyote, and the California gray fox. Undoubtedly the colony at Giant Forest is prospering owing to the comparative protection from these animals afforded by the tourist camps and ranger patrols.

While these beaver may be considered as chiefly nocturnal and crepuscular in habits they may be observed occasionally during the daytime. So watch for this extremely interesting and rare animal as but few people have the opportunity of seeing them in their beautiful haunts of the forest and the wilds.

It is believed that as yet no photograph of the Sierra Mountain Beaver in its native haunts has been made; and the park photographers, Messrs. Eddy and Belden, at Giant Forest, are attempting to secure pictures of the rare animals.

Giant Forest where beaver, deer, bear and other wild animals may be seen by patient observers, is but 29 miles by excellent mountain road from end of concrete highway at Three Rivers.