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# Beaver Hunt

## A Beautiful Spring Evening a Cup of Coffee and a Beaver Pelt

by Evelina Aslund



Up here in Jämtland, Mid Sweden, where I live beaver is the only game you can hunt here in the spring and the hunting season lasts until May 15th. Usually the ice doesn't melt from the ground along the seashore here until the end of April and it is only around this time that we have a good chance to see the beaver. So the beaver hunting season is pretty short, after all.

We always look forward to the arrival of spring which is a glorious time as the temperature starts to rise a bit and the evenings are bright and long and we enjoy the sound of the babbling brooks and birds chirping. Then it's great to bring the gun out, make a thermos of coffee, a couple of sandwiches and some warm clothes for an evening stalking.

You get to sit quietly by a stream where you see that the active beavers. They are highly skilled woodsmen these small rodents and you might think that a storm has devastated the forest regions at the riversides where they have "worked" with its harvesting of the tree trunks and branches to make their dams and homes which are called, lodges.

The beaver I shot on was when I was out on a beautiful spring evening. It had rained all day and I had planned to go out and set myself up in a place where my uncle Pelle



had seen that the beavers were inhabiting. I was excited on that evening and I hoped that the rain would subside before it was time for me to move out.

At about six in the evening I made up my mind that no matter what, I would go out anyway and sit a while by the river bank and just wait. By the time that I reached the place to park my car the rain had stopped and the sun had come out, I could even leave some of my rainproof clothes in the car. The whole forest smelled so wonderful and fresh as forests always do after rain.

Getting to the place I wanted to be by the river was very difficult as I had to negotiate and climb over all the trees that the beavers had felled, and I walked with great effort until I eventually reached the river. The beavers are very sensitive to sound and scent so it's vitally important to make sure that you sneak quietly up on them and that the wind is in the right direction.

Eventually I found a good spot about fifteen meters from the flooded creek where I could see both the hut and a good chunk of the stream. Perfect place. I sat

myself down with my back against a tree and quietly waited. I had not been sitting for more than about ten minutes when I saw a beaver come out from his lodge and swim past me in the creek approximately fifteen meters away. My adrenaline started to course through my body and my excitement reached its peak.

The beaver swam past me totally unaware of my presence and then disappeared behind some bushes. I gently rose from my sitting position to take up a good support for my rifle and wait for the beaver to swim into the open on the Nadra side of the creek.... And it did!

I got a good shot opportunity as the beaver swam ashore and I had the beaver in the crosshairs of my rifle sight. Pang! There, I got it, what a joy; my shot was good and the beaver never knew what hit him. Those are the best shots for me of course.

After retrieving him I sat down on a tree stump that the beaver or his cousins had

been working on and in the evening sun I poured myself a cup of coffee and enjoying the moment, and drank in the atmosphere in this wonderful place of nature, as well as my coffee.

The skin is now ready and will grace one of the chairs in my little cottage.

FACTS: The Beaver always live near rivers or lakes where they build their dams and lodges of branches, twigs and mud. These dams and lodges often have significant size, the longest was found in 2007 in the Canadian state of Alberta, with a length of 850 meters. Usually the lodge entrance is underwater and an adult beaver can gnaw through the trunk of a tree with 50 cm diameter.

When the beaver fells a larger trees they only looking for the thin branches at the top. It will then gnaw through the thin trunks and branches and then carries them down to build its remarkable wooden dams and lodges. >







## big game hunting

Beavers do not hibernate but are active throughout the year but in the northern parts of their range, they are forced to stay in their lodges due to ice and snow. In spring the female will give birth to as many as four pups as the young are called.

Despite all the gnawing and chewing of the trees that they do a beaver does not eat wood it only cuts down trees to get materials for the construction of dams and lodges. Their diet consists mainly of leaves, bark, herbs and aquatic plants.

Beavers will mate for life and the young will stay with their parents until they are about two years old, thus there are usually two groups, the graduating class, who are cared for by the mother, and the ones from the previous year, who are trained in dam building and tree felling by the father.



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**GUN FACT.** For beaver hunting I use my favourite calibre which is 6,5x55. That calibre does for almost all my hunting. (I just bought a new SAKO Blackbear Thaw, for the bear hunting this coming autumn.) The ammunition I use is usually Norma Oryx. You can also hunt beaver with a shotgun but that is just for short distances so always prefer to use my scoped rifle. 