



# Weaselhead Grade 5 At School Teacher's Guide Biodiversity and Ecosystems

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Thank you for your participation in our Grade 5 Weaselhead Education Program! This program is specifically designed to meet cross curricular learning outcomes focused on the new Alberta Science and Social Studies curriculums. This program is focused on Earth Systems, Living Systems, and the Scientific Method. Our program is led by a Weaselhead Naturalist who brings their own expertise and personal experiences to your lessons.

The following items have been enclosed in this Teacher's Guide package:

- Curriculum Connections
- Program Objectives
- Participant Guidelines
- Behavioural Expectations
- Program Outline
- Activities
- In-class Follow Up Activities
- Background Information on the Weaselhead Area

## Curriculum Connections

**Science:** Students learn how trees and beavers are supported by their internal and external structures and systems. They will learn the function of these systems while building a tree and a beaver in fun interactive activities.

**Social Studies:** The beaver fur trade extends overseas - this animal being historically significant, symbolizing Canada.

## Guiding Questions

### Science

#### Earth Systems

- How can climate and its effects be understood?
- What is the difference between climate and weather?

#### Living Systems

- How are organisms supported by vital biological processes and systems?
- What are the similarities and differences between beaver and tree internal and external structures?

#### Scientific Method

- How does evidence lead to understanding?

### Social Studies

- How did beavers shape Canada?

## Program Objectives

Students examine evidence to better understand how our changing climate is impacting flowers, insects, and birds in the Weaselhead natural area. They will learn how structural systems in trees and beavers function.

## Before the Trip

### Pre-trip Preparation

- Students should have a journal or a clipboard with blank paper.

### For any outdoor activities participants should:

- dress for the weather; dress in layers and wear appropriate footwear.
- bring pencils or pens.
- bring a field journal OR blank paper on a clipboard.

### Outdoor behavioural expectations

- Remain with the group and keep in sight of supervisors at all times.
- There is always an adult leader at the front of the group and at the end of the group.
- Never remove natural items from the area. Vegetation, insects, mammals, birds, and amphibian life is to be respected and left in the natural habitat.
- Leave no trace of our visit. All litter must be brought back out.
- Unsafe behaviour such as tripping, wrestling, fighting, and teasing is unacceptable and may result in withdrawal from the activity.
- Cooperation by listening, participating in group discussions, observing and recording is expected during the learning experience.
- Each adult is expected to participate in the activities and to provide due safety and care for each of the students.
- No headphones or earbuds are allowed. This is for the safety of the participants.
- **Parents and teachers: Please keep cell phones away, unless taking pictures or in case of emergency.**

## Program Outline: 1 ½ hours

5 minutes	• Introduction, Land Acknowledgement
45 minutes	• Build a beaver or pond dip
30 minutes	• Build a tree
10 minutes	• Wrap up and discussion of ideas about the changing environment and the influence of a shifting climate on living things

## Activities

- Pond Dip OR Build a Beaver: During a pond dip, learn about the differences between the internal structures of aquatic invertebrates compared to humans. As the pond dip activity is location and season dependent, building a Beaver will be the chosen activity if pond dips are not feasible (i.e. no wetland near the school or weather not permitting). During Build a Beaver children learn about different adaptations beavers have that have helped them be such successful creatures. They also learn about the importance of beavers in building Canada as we know it today.
- Build a Tree: Learn about external and internal tree structures in relation to function. Students take on the roles of heartwood, sapwood, cambium, bark, and roots. They learn how insects and woodpeckers impact their structural integrity and compare these structures to those of a beaver.
- Scientific Method: Naturalist leads a discussion with students regarding ideas about the changing environment and the influence of climate variables.

## Optional follow up in class activities

- Students develop a study based on the scientific method. They consider controlled and manipulated variables and design a methodology to test their hypothesis. They plan and conduct their controlled experiment.
  - Resource to guide students:  
<https://theweaselhead.com/ring-road/swcrr-impact-study/>
- Debates or discussions on current environmental issues affecting natural areas like the Weaselhead, emphasizing democratic decision-making and civic responsibility.

## Weaselhead History

The Weaselhead area has a name shrouded in mystery. Like so many Indigenous stories, how the Weaselhead got its name has been lost over time. What we do know is that although there are weasels that call this area home, the name has nothing to do with actual weasels! Weaselhead is a traditional Blackfoot last name so the name may be related to someone from the Blackfoot Confederacy. There is written history of a man with the name Weazel Head on the Tsuut'ina reserve as well, but little is known about where he originated. Early settler Sam Livingston, whose house is now part of Calgary's Heritage Park, was the first European to settle in the Elbow River valley, now known as the Weaselhead.

Between 1910 and 1990, Tsuut'ina reserve and parts of the Weaselhead were used for military training exercises. Foxholes and signs warning of ordinances possibly left behind remind of

this history even today. The last time an exploded device was found was during the floods of 2013.

The City of Calgary bought what is now the Weaselhead from the Tsuut'ina Nation in 1929 to build the Glenmore Reservoir, which still provides roughly 40% of Calgary's drinking water.

Today, this protected area spans 404 hectares (989 acres) and is bursting with diverse habitats. Wander through dense White Spruce forests, leafy Balsam Poplar groves, and colourful wildflower meadows. The Elbow River winds through it all, with floodplains, beaver ponds, and wetlands teeming with life.

As you explore, you'll uncover clues to the area's rich history. Fossils in sandstone cliffs date back 35 million years, and traces of ancient river paths still shape the landscape. You can find evidence of Indigenous campsites and buffalo hunts, as well as remnants of a military training base that once operated here.

With over 480 plant species, including rare ones like the Western Wood Lily, the Weaselhead is a wildlife haven. Frogs, salamanders, and more than 200 bird species thrive here, while larger animals like moose, bears, and even cougars visit throughout the year.

The Weaselhead is a living tapestry of Calgary's natural and cultural history, offering a rich, engaging experience for all who visit.

*REMEMBER: This is a natural area park. It is illegal to remove anything from the area. Fossils and certain plant species are protected in Alberta*