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Dave Algar Talks about Beaver Despite many years of man's association with the beaver • an association virtually to the edge of extinction • the life of the beaver is still incompletely known. We talked to Dave Algar, who spent the summer of 1976 observing beaver and interpreting what he learned for visitors to the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. To this conversation, we have added in, parenthesis information from other sources. They would come over. Every beaver knows the smell of water and the smell of poplar • and these beaver had no access to poplar. About the 3rd night they would come around for it. Later on they got to know my voice. Some nights I would sleep beside their lodge all night so that they would be that much more familiar with me. And unless you are there all the time, you can't really get to know the personalities of individual animals. They have a wide variety of sounds • a similar tone range to our voice • and you can really detect the state that they're in. There was no danger to me, sleeping there. A beaver's first impulse is to run and get into water at any sign of danger. Although they can be dangerous; when they have to fight against a dog or an otter they can do a very good job protecting themselves. Their first blow is normally to try to bite with the teeth to the throat. Grey Owl reports that there are dogs that have had their throats slit open with one bite. That was the end of the fight. A full grown beaver and an otter would be a pretty fair fight, pretty rough fight. Of course the main predator is men with traps. On land the lynx and bobcat and wolf prey on the beaver. But the otter can elude all the beaver's defences, which are based primarily on water. The otter is carnivorous, built for fighting, hunting fish mostly • the otter goes into the beaver's I selected the pond that was most suitable for photography • then I spent the evening for about 3 weeks, 3 hours after supper, sitting there getting to know them, so they'd come close to me. After the 3rd night they would come up to within 3 or 4 feet of me. But that's partly because they're used to people in the park and partly because I've been around wild animals a lot. I used to bring down poplar so

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