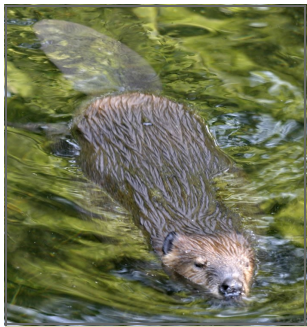




The Heron Reporter

The Mercer Slough is Home to Beavers

By Curtis Kukal



North American Beaver

If one had to design the perfect animal for early spring in the Mercer Slough, it would be difficult to do better than the North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*). Beavers are the masters of their aquatic habitats, and multiple adaptations allow for life in the water.

Webbed rear feet propel the beaver through the water. A large, flat tail acts as a rudder and can slap the surface of the water as a warning. Dense fur and a layer of fat protect the beaver from

the frigid waters of the slough. Their eyes are covered by a nictitating membrane to protect them while underwater. Beavers can even close their ears and nostrils while diving!

Beavers are considered ecosystem engineers. Beavers build dams to slow and deepen the water when necessary. Deep water also allows beavers to cache (store for later) vegetation under the water level for the winter. Dam-building also can create wetlands where none previously existed. In addition to dams, beavers construct lodges. To humans, a beaver lodge might just look like a pile of branches, sticks and mud surrounded by water. In fact, lodges

have under-water entrances that lead to living-quarters. Lodges help keep the beavers safe from predators and warm during the winter. In some areas, dams cannot span a river because it is too wide or too fast. In these areas, beavers dig burrows with their sharp front claws.

Adult beavers can weigh upward of 75 pounds (they are the largest extant rodent in North America) and sport an impressive set of incisors. Teeth have to be strong if you are going to use them to cut down trees! Beaver incisors grow continuously throughout their lives, and the front are tinted orange from iron compounds. Beavers' teeth can also get them into trouble with humans. Beavers fell trees for their tasty bark, as well as for building material. This can be a problem in urban and suburban areas where trees can add to property values. Beavers also have a nasty habit of clogging up culverts and water effluent pipes.

For more information about beavers, join ranger Dustin Van Nieulande for a program about beaver adaptations and ecology.

Beavers – Nature’s Architects (Ranger Program)

March 4, 2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, Douglas Fir Community Room

No registration required. **Ages:** Best for ages 8 and older. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult **Cost:** Free!

Mercer Slough’s Lesser-known Wildlife: The Coyote



The coyote (*Canis latrans*) is heard more often than he is seen. Wily indeed, these animals are well-adapted to living near humans, and many residents of Bellevue are unaware that these animals live within the city limits. This is the largest predator at the Mercer Slough, and may frequent your backyard! Coyotes and other predators can kill or injure pets, so do not leave them outside at night.

Wanted... DEAD!

Invasive species are a serious problem in urban forests. Himalayan blackberries can dominate forest openings to the detriment of native ground-cover. They are listed as a Class C noxious weed.



* To Register for City of Bellevue Programs:
Call: 425-452-6885

To Register for * Environmental Education
Programs with Pacific Science Center:





The Heron Reporter

Adult Enrichment Series

“Geology from Mountains to Sound” (Adult Enrichment Series)
February 17, 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, Douglas Fir Community Room

Take a virtual trip from mountains to sound, and explore the long and dynamic geologic history of the I-90 corridor. Geologist Rob Viens will discuss the geologic history of the region as it is expressed in the trails and parks along the Mountains-to-Sound Greenbelt, including the Mercer Slough, Cougar Mountain, Tiger Mountain, Mount Si and Snoqualmie Pass.

Ages: Best for ages 12 and older. Children 12 and under must be accompanied by a registered adult. **Cost:** \$5. **To register:** call (425) 452-6885, course #64216. **Info:** mseec@bellevuewa.gov or 425-452-2565.



Timely Film Playing at the Mercer Slough

Wolves are making a comeback in Washington State. Last year, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) confirmed that a second wolf pack had taken up residency in the North Cascades region. Join us for a film at the Mercer Slough that investigates how wolves became an outlaw, and how we understand them today



Movies at Mercer Slough: “Wolf - Legendary outlaw”, February 24, 5 p.m.. – 6:00 p.m.

Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, Douglas Fir Community Room, 1625 118th Avenue SE
No registration required; free.

Every Saturday at the Slough...

Mercer Slough Nature Walk
2 p.m. - 3 p.m.

Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, 1625 118th Avenue SE

Meet a park ranger at the Visitor Center for a free guided tour and learn about the fascinating flora, fauna, and history of the Mercer Slough Nature Park – Lake Washington’s largest remaining wetland. Please dress for weather. All ages welcome. **FREE. Registration:** not required. **Info:** 425-452-2565 or mseec@bellevuewa.gov.
NOTE: No walk on April 21.

Family Discovery Series

Animal Adaptations (Ranger Program), Feb. 5, 2:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, Douglas Fir Community Room

Do you ever wish you had super powers? Many of the animals living in the Mercer Slough have amazing abilities that allow them to survive extreme conditions. Come find out about the special adaptations of our wetland wildlife. No registration required. **Ages:** Best for ages 8 and older. Children 12 under must be accompanied by an adult. **Cost:** Free!

Bird Basics (Ranger Program), April 1, 2:30 p.m. - 3 p.m.

Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, Douglas Fir Community Room

From the tiny tropical hummingbird to the enormous emu, to the penguin that flies underwater, birds come in all shapes, colors, and sizes, and have managed to colonize every continent on earth. Learn more about what makes birds unique, and find out what kind of bird you’d like to be! No registration required. **Ages:** Best for ages 8 and older. Children 12 under must be accompanied by an adult. **Cost:** Free!

Go Paperless

If you would like to receive *The Heron Reporter* by email, send request to: MSEEC@bellevuewa.gov

New: Follow us on facebook (Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center) or Twitter @MSEEC.

