

Setting Beaver Castor Mounds
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Castor mound sets usually take the most territorial minded, biggest, oldest beavers in the area. It's rare to catch small beavers on castor mound sets, and it seldom happens until you've already taken the bigger ones. Small beavers have very little castor glands and visit castor mounds because of curiosity. They smell them much like a canine smells a scent post.

Beavers have poor eyesight and an excellent sense of smell. They build scent mounds throughout their territory. They use them as markers to inform other beavers they are inhabiting the area.

These mounds are constructed of mud and leaves, but may also contain small sticks or any other bottom debris they can scrape up. Sometimes the size of a castor mound is a good indicator of how big and old the beaver making it is. Beavers add mud and debris to their mounds after each rain or wet period and return to scent them because their old scent gets washed away. Over a period of years, their mounds can get pretty big. The biggest one I have ever seen was nearly two feet tall. It was located in an area, which flooded frequently so the water level fluctuated a lot. They added to it often whenever only a small portion of it was exposed.

Beavers make castor mounds for two reasons. They enable them to advertise for new mates. They serve as territory markers. They seldom fail to mark the farthest boundaries of their territory with some kind of castor mound. These may be a small daub of mud and leaves, or a big, old mound of mud. In either case, the beaver making it will squat over the mound and deposit its scent. Beavers have two castor glands located on each side of the anal opening. These glands produce a sweet smelling, yellowish liquid, which is deposited on the castor mound. Each beaver's castor smell is unique, making it different from all others. The beaver secreting it recognizes its own smell.

You can often determine beaver population by counting the number of castor mounds in an area. You must determine the ones that are active. Most heavily populated beaver areas will contain a large number of mounds in a small area. Only a certain percentage will be active and will belong to a different beaver. Unused mounds have been vacated for a number of reasons. Something usually has happened to the beaver that made it for it to vacate it. I've never seen a beaver take over another one's old castor mound and activate it. They may do so, but the large numbers of old ones in some areas indicate they prefer to construct their own.

Beavers don't like to make their castor mounds on high banks or steep surfaces, and only do so when necessary. They prefer flat areas in shallow water so it's easier for them to get to. That's bad news for the trappers, because it makes them harder to trap in such areas. Castor mounds along a high bank area have only one exit to them. It serves as a funnel to set your trap in. Beavers can approach the mound from any angle in shallow, flat areas, so there are not natural funnels for trap locations. You must fence off the area and create your own funnel.

On some stretches of rivers and large ditches, there will be no bank holes, lodges, channels, or any other natural set locations for beavers. There will be sign such as castor mounds and peeled sticks indicating there are beavers in the area. You have to use your imagination and create your own sets. Most trappers won't do so and simply avoid such areas. They miss a lot of beavers by not being able to set up the castor mounds and take the beavers using them. They don't seem to know how to construct artificial castor mounds near the peeled feed sticks and take the beavers feeding there. I took 17 beavers this past season in Ohio from such an area on a river, so I was glad nobody else knew how to trap it. I once took 38 from such an area in Arkansas that was heavily trapped. None were less than 40 pounds so it's a great way to catch the big ones.

How can you tell active castor mounds from inactive ones? The easiest and best way is to smell them. Active

ones have a strong castor smell while inactive ones don't. It's best to check them a day or two after a heavy rain. They'll have fresh mud and fresh castor on them. They'll have fresh tracks leading to them and the water around them may be muddy. Inactive mounds will appear to be dried up and have a dead, unused look.

What traps should you set at castor mounds? I let the water depth and the situation at each mound be the determining factor. On high, steep banks, I use footholds on drowner cables. They work best because you can determine exactly where the beaver will place its feet. There's also sufficient drowning water depth.

In flat, shallow water locations, I prefer 330 bodygrips, but will use snares if I can get the beaver into the water. Fencing must be used to guide the beaver into the trap or snare. I rarely set my fence sticks straight, but put them into the ground on a 45-degree angle so the beaver won't be tempted to run over them. I use debarked sticks, because the beaver can see them easier and they'll have no food interest in them.

I've used logs and heavy limbs for fencing at castor mounds. I prefer them to sticks whenever they're available. Beavers don't like to climb or drag their big bodies over such obstacles, so they make excellent fencing. A limb or log with a bow in it, large enough for a beaver to go under, makes a deadly set. I will construct an artificial castor mound on the bank side of the bow and set a 330 bodygrip in front of the bow. I make this set at the edge of the water. Beavers seldom exhibit any fear of going through the bow with the 330 in front of it because they try to knock the 330 out of their way to get to the castor mound. I've taken some huge beavers in this set.

Weather is the biggest deterrent there is to castor mound sets. You have to have open water. Iced over conditions render them useless. As soon as the ice leaves, castor mounds become hot set locations, as beavers rush to freshen them up. They feel an extreme urge to remark their territory.

Be patient with castor mound sets and they'll pay off. During periods of dry, stable weather, beavers don't visit them often because they remain loud smelling. During wet weather periods, beavers visit them often to keep them fresh. If you set a mound that's active, the beaver using it will return sooner or later. Don't tie up your traps or snares on castor mound sets if you can't afford to wait until the beaver returns to them. They will return if you haven't caught them in other sets, so be patient. Castor mound sets require that virtue.