

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

People and Wildlife Living in Harmony

Baffled by Beavers? Build a Baffler!

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A low-tech way to co-exist with beavers

By Bruce Hopkins

“With all the rains we have been having this year, I don’t need any beavers flooding my lower fields,” a farming friend told me the other day. “I’ve got enough trouble already without help from any of those tail-slappers. I’ve got to get rid of them.”

As usual, Irv had a point. And as usual, he didn’t want to be told otherwise. But I decided to push my luck. “Natural floods just create temporary wetlands,” I said. “Your fields will dry out. But we do need some permanent wetlands for birds and other animals that are being pushed out of the county by development. So, beavers are really helping us by creating wetlands. You can keep your beaver pond and still maintain most of your lower fields.”



I was on a roll, so I went on to tell him about clever devices that John Hadidian, who works for The Humane Society of the United States, has developed.

These devices, called bafflers or levelers, can be installed to control the water level on a beaver pond without removing or affecting the animals. Beavers always want to stop up running water and leaks in their dams, so they usually rebuild their dams no matter how many times they are destroyed.

Instead of constantly battling beavers, Hadidian recommends concentrating your energies on regulating the water level by dispersing the excess through a pipe or pipes installed on an angle through the dam and held in place by stakes driven into the ground.

Cover the upper end, in the pond, with screening so the pipe does not get plugged with vegetation. Using two-by-two-inch metal mesh fencing, enclose the outlet so beavers cannot get at it. The beavers will patch their dam over the pipe.

Make sure that the water in the pond is at least three or four feet deep so that it does not completely freeze in cold winters. The beavers need to be able to move around under the ice.

“Well, I have to admit,” Irv said, “I control the water level on my man-made pond, so I guess I could do it on a beaver-made pond. I can have my beavers and my fields, too.”

For more information about bafflers, buy or borrow a copy of *Wild Neighbors: The Humane Approach to Living With Wildlife*, a book produced jointly by the Humane Society of the

United States (www.hsus.org) and Fulcrum Publishing (\$16.95), or write for a copy of How To Prevent Beaver Flooding from Beavers, Wetlands & Wildlife, P.O. Box 592, Little Falls, NY 13365 (518-568-2077).

Materials to build a baffler might cost \$150. Commercial bafflers are also available either in a kit or preassembled.

The last I saw of Irv, he was heading off to the building supply store. He's a do-it-yourselfer.