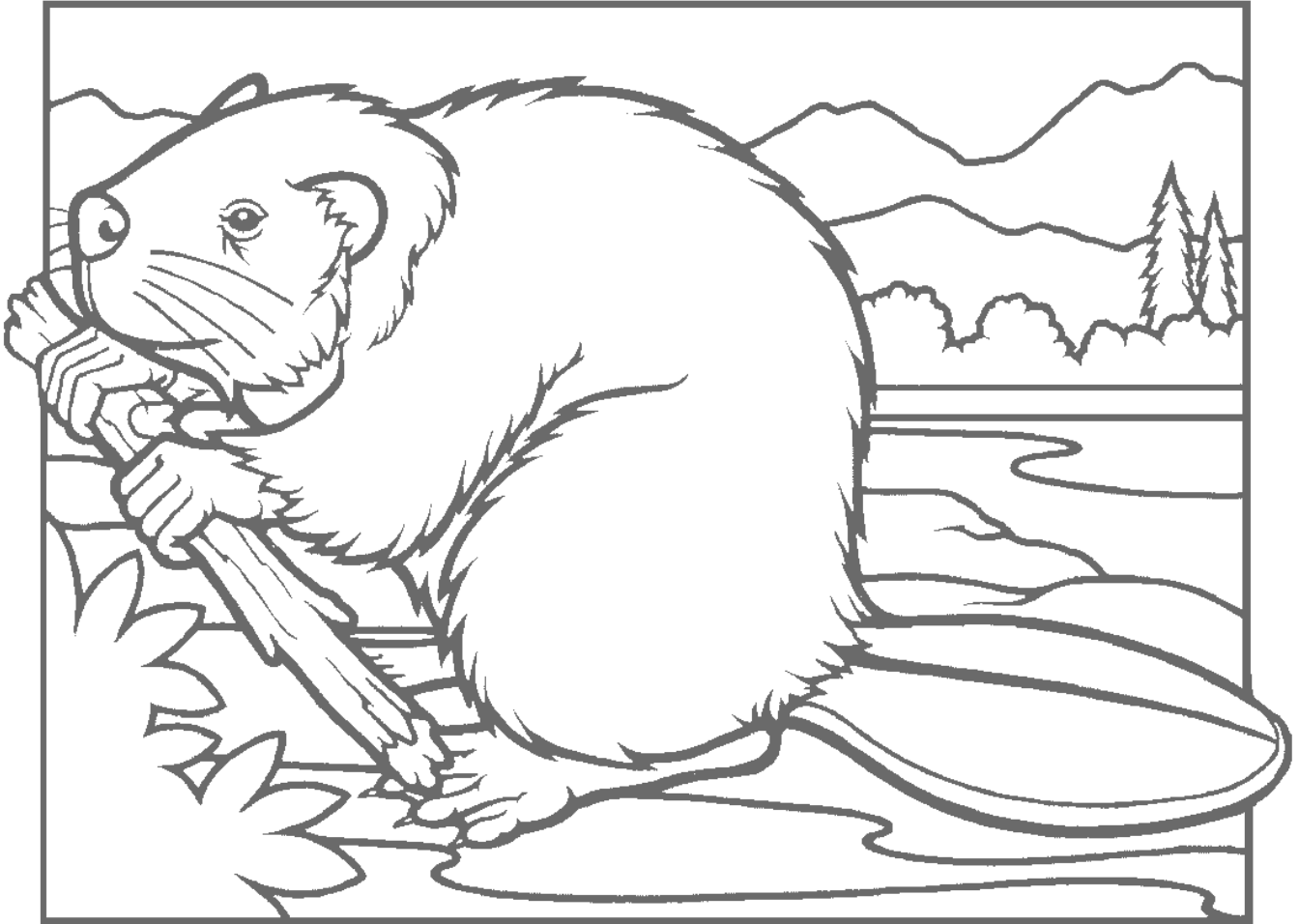


ARIZONA EDVENTURES

Beavers in Arizona



Believe it or not, beavers were at one time found nearly everywhere in Arizona that there was permanent water. In the mid-1820s, Anglo-American fur trappers entered Arizona and began trapping beaver. Famous Arizona mountain men such as Sylvester and James Pattie, Ewing Young, Jedediah Smith, and Bill Williams trapped along the waterways in northern and southern Arizona. Although the heyday of fur trapping lasted only a few decades due to a population decline of beaver in such former strongholds as the San Pedro and Santa Cruz rivers, beaver were still widely distributed in limited numbers throughout much of the state during the late 1900s. But habitat loss caused by settlement and the drying up of the state's streams caused a further decline in beaver populations. Introductions and natural colonizations have since enabled the beaver to recover much of its former distribution. These mammals can now be found along several permanent streams, some of the larger rivers, certain shallow lakes, and even a few dirt-lined canals. Although beavers are rarely seen, dams of sticks and brush along streams and backwaters are evidence of beaver activity. In Arizona, beavers commonly dig their dens in the bank along the stream, river, or canal where they live. The beaver's diet is almost exclusively plant material, especially bark. The beaver is Arizona's largest rodent, weighing between 30-60 pounds and exceeding two feet in length. This animal is easily recognizable with its flattened oar-like tail, webbed hind feet, dense fur, and eyes positioned high on the head. Arizona beavers are typically a light cinnamon color in contrast to the browner animals found in other states.