



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
and the *Jamestown Post-Journal* on Saturdays



Whittle While You Work

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I love the beavers.

I have fought Pomfret over their attempts to rid the area of them – particularly when they allowed – no! encouraged – trapping. Higher powers (and I do say thank you) must have intervened for a huge cast iron screen was installed at the edge of the road and has worked perfectly ever since. It can be lifted when it seems time to release some of the backed-up water and debris, hardly needed this summer. And it also allows enough water to remain. I stop anytime I'm out to check now for mallards – frequently still seen in mid-December.

I hope Mayville has been able to use this same piece of equipment for, in 2014, flooding had become such a problem that war was declared. “The solution would require landowners to apply for a permit to trap and eradicate beavers outside of trapping season, excavate the beaver dams currently in place and continually monitor the locations with beaver activity, utilizing preventive maintenance when necessary.” As is probably obvious, I am pro-nature whenever possible.

The beavers actually predated my coming here for Mern and Cecilia made sure I knew that one beaver would eagerly swim to the edge of the shore for a handful of Cheerios. I happily met him – it – and remember sitting at the water's edge, Cheerios in hand, feelings so blessed to be able to commune with one of nature's gifts. (Sadly, it didn't seem like much later, I found a beaver in the road, obviously killed by a car. I just knew.)



The only rodent larger than the beaver is the South American capybara. (Let's just say there are good rodents and, in my estimation, bad rodents. Beavers top my “good” list.)

Mark Trail answers our question about how beavers avoid a mouthful of dangerous splinters while they chew: fur-lined folds close tightly behind their protruding teeth as they work, allowing them to avoid injury while the chips fly. “The beaver's ears and nostrils also have furry folds, and, with them closed tightly, these great swimmers can work and chop as easily underwater as they do on the surface. Growing continually throughout its life, the

beaver's teeth are kept sharp by grinding against each other, forming a sharp chiseled edge.”

Others continue to live here. I will stop whatever I'm doing if I see one in the water. I watch, and admire, and I always thank God for these experiences few get. Of course I have also watched them climb up onto shore where they look so huge. They'll linger, munching away until, most likely spotting Molly, they'll quickly slide back into the water and disappear. Oh, yes. I wait. And I hear that distinctive slap. Glory be!

I don't know if it's one animal to a tree or if they share the chewing. One got started earlier this fall near a window where I can easily watch but the tree seems neglected. Perhaps until spring.



They (or is it "it"?) felled a tree I never would have noticed had it not been pointed out to me. After that, I made many visits to check their progress. Most of the tree is gone now though the "to where?" continues to mystify. I know there's a swamp area not far away (which I have never completely explored – beyond once decades ago finding the "Flying Saucer" landing spot. OK – no Flying Saucer only what else made a large and perfect circle in a completely inaccessible piece of mucky water?)



I've been witness to many beaver "tree-attacks" but never have I had the opportunity to watch the progress (if, sadly, not the animal) on a daily basis.

The tree was already down, its remaining point as pointed as in a picture. The tree (or most of it – it wasn't an especially big one) lay across the yard but not where anyone would be bothered by it. Piles of "sawdust" (tree shavings) were evidence of the places where it had been chewed into much more usable pieces.

It definitely must have had plans for the wood – but where? As I said, there is no water immediately close by. I've been keeping an eye on what appears to be the start of a new "island" – it's flat and very long and could be a nuisance to boaters. I don't need a dam. Even if beaver-made, the tree is not close to the water for that. There are far easier trees closer for the taking.

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