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A Beaver Tale: The Castors of Conners Creek (Great Lakes Books Series)

Gerald Wykes

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When Detroit was settled over three hundred years ago, beavers (then known by the French name “castors”) were one of the most numerous and important animals in North America. Yet the aggressive beaver pelt trade in Detroit and elsewhere decimated the animal’s population, and the region’s remaining beavers were unable to reestablish their homes in the city’s industrial landscape once the trapping ended. In *A Beaver Tale: The Castors of Conners Creek*, author and illustrator Gerald Wykes tells the incredible story of one beaver family’s return to the Detroit River in 2008, more than one hundred years after beavers were last seen in the area.

Wykes shows readers how the beavers were discovered at the Conners Creek Power Plant on the city’s east side, after people noticed trees were being mysteriously cut down. He combines real observations of this pioneering beaver colony with background about the important history of the beaver in Michigan, from its relationship to the Native occupants of the Great Lakes to its “discovery” by Europeans as a source of valuable furs. He explores some of the beaver’s unique physical features, including its impressively webbed hind feet, delicate fingered “hands,” waterproof fur, and famous flat tail, and also explains how today’s strict pollution laws and shoreline improvements have turned the Detroit River into a hospitable place for beavers once again.

Wykes’s full-color illustrations and kid-friendly text tell a serious tale of environmental recovery in a fun and accessible way. Young readers aged 8 to 12 will enjoy the unique natural and cultural history in *A Beaver Tale*.

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