

“Ivan, What’s that Chewing Sound?”

Canadian beavers are chomping their way across Russia

Article: MacLean’s Magazine July 28th, 2008

This was an interesting article that deals with a number of important issues. Some being:

- a. invasive species
- b. animal rights
- c. Canadian symbols

This article talks about the Russian government’s concern with the quickly growing Canadian beaver population. A few pairs of beavers were released into the wild in Russia in 1937 in order to replace the local beaver who Russians had over hunted. There are some issues, the Canadian beaver is much larger, more energetic in its eating habits, reproduce more quickly, and builds stronger and larger dams. These beavers are causing a great deal of flooding and destruction. (Now there are over 20,000 Canadian beavers in Russia)

The question that Russians are asking is what to do to stop these animals? Should they just shoot them? They need to do something because there are not a lot of natural predators to the Canadian beaver.

They are worried because this isn’t the first time that Canadian beavers have taken over. In 1946, 25 Canadian beavers were released in Argentina to help with the fur trade. When this failed the beavers were moved to a nearby island (Tierra del Fuego) where there were no wolves or bears. Their numbers quickly grew from 25 to 200,000! They have all but destroyed all of the trees on the island which will take hundreds of years to grow back. The Argentina population see these beavers as an “unstoppable plague.”

Russia is not as worried but their dams are hurting farming and making spring floods worse. Also neighbouring countries are worried that they may migrate to a town near them!

I am not sure what the Russian’s should do about this problem. But it teaches us that sometimes introducing an animal into another area can yield unpredictable results. Plus beavers are so cute.... How can we stay mad at them! Lastly, should Canada have to help get this problem under control?