European Beaver, *Castor fiber*, Pinned by a Felled Tree

NILS B. KILE and FRANK ROSELL

Telemark College, Department of Environmental Sciences, N-3800 Bø, Norway

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The death of an adult European Beaver (*Castor fiber*) caused by a felled tree in Southeast Norway is reported. The trunk fell on the beaver's tail pinning it to the ground.

Key Words: European Beaver, *Castor fiber*, Southeast Norway, felled aspen, *Populus tremula*.

On the morning of 21 November 1987 we found the remains of an adult European Beaver (*Castor fiber*) in Southeast Norway (58°39′N, 7°58′E). The animal apparently died after being trapped by a felled tree. It is uncertain whether this beaver, or another, actually felled the tree, though beaver reportedly most often fell trees alone (Wilsson 1971). Owesen (1979) reported that beaver run quickly to the side when a tree starts to fall. The felled aspen (*Populus tremula*) was about 40 cm in diameter at the base. The trunk had fallen across the Beaver's tail about 10 cm from the tip and 2 m from the stump of the tree. In an attempt to escape, the beaver had scraped a circular channel to the front and sides of where it lay. The carcass was frozen and still intact, suggesting that death had occurred recently. Beaver apparently cannot predict where a tree will fall. Wilsson (1971) observed that trees fall in all directions, though more frequently towards shore simply because they often lean waterwards, or have better developed crowns on that side.

North American Beaver (*C. canadensis*) have been reported trapped or killed by felled trees on four occasions (Table 1). Scotter and Scotter (1989) reported two, and Hitchcock (1954) reported one such death. These Beavers were dead when found. Ellarson and Hickey (1952) described the trapping

TABLE 1. A review of beaver (*Castor canadensis* and *C. fiber*) trapped or killed by trees.

Source	Locality	Time of year	Age	Species	Part of body trapped	Status
Ellarson and Hickey, 1952	Dane County-Iowa County, USA	October	Adult	*Castor canadensis*	Right hind foot	Alive**
Hinze, 1950	Revier Großkühnau, Dessau, Germany	August	?	*Castor fiber*	?	Dead
Hinze, 1950	Germany	?	?	*Castor fiber*	?	Dead
Hinze, 1950	Germany	?	?	*Castor fiber*	Right hind foot	Alive
Hitchcock, 1954	Bristol, Vermont, USA	September	Adult	*Castor canadensis*	Head	Dead
Owesen, 1979	Norway	?	?	*Castor fiber*	Hind foot	Alive***
Piechocki, 1977	Germany	Between 21 March – 7 June	Adults*	*Castor fiber*	?	?
Scotter and Scotter, 1989	Sturgeon, Alberta, Canada	?	Adult	*Castor canadensis*	Across the upper back	Dead
Scotter and Scotter, 1989	Edmonton, Alberta, Canada	October	Adult	*Castor canadensis*	Across the shoulders	Dead
Stocker, 1978	Kanton Thurgau, Schweiz	August	?	*Castor fiber*	Right hind foot	Dead
This study	Aust-Agder county, Norway	November	Adult	*Castor fiber*	Across the tail	Dead

* Two separate individuals
** Later released
*** Later killed

of a North American Beaver when the tree it had felled landed on one of its hind feet. This beaver was released unharmed. Four specific references to European Beaver being trapped or killed by trees have been reported previously. Hinze (1950) mentioned three incidences of beaver trapped under felled trees, of which one survived. Piechocki (1977) mentioned two and Stocker (1978) one incident. Owesen (1979) described how a beaver survived being trapped when a felled tree pinned its hind foot to the ground.

Most tree-felling by beavers occurs during autumn at the peak season for dam and den building, and six of eight animals were reported killed between August and November (Table 1). Only adult beaver were involved and only one (a male) had been sexed (Scotter and Scotter 1989). Felled trees were not considered as a significant mortality factor in North American Beaver (Hill 1982). What was once thought to be a freak event now appears to occur, although infrequently, with some regularity in Beaver populations in both Europe and North America.

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