

# Riparian Zone Wildlife

Many land owners rate viewing wildlife from their homes as important to them. Yet, the landscape design and maintenance traditionally used for lawns destroy or degrade an area's value as wildlife habitat. Conversion of native riparian zones is especially detrimental. A blue grass lawn does not provide the basic habitat needs of food and shelter for most woodland and aquatic wildlife species. High maintenance lawns require pesticides which degrade the surrounding habitat and eliminate invertebrates that are needed by many creatures as food. Wildlife species, such as Canadian geese and mallard ducks, may become nuisances when they utilize manicured riverfront lawns. These lawns are ideal food sources for ducks and geese.

There is often abundant wildlife along the banks of the Red River, even in urban areas. Whitetail deer, beaver, woodchucks, and bats (evening and after dark), are common.

Red River catfish anglers may catch a snapping turtle and will possibly see painted turtles sunning on exposed snags. The River is home to just these two turtle species, the largest of which is the snapping turtle.

Some days you just never know what you'll hook onto or see along the banks of the Red River.

**Spotting Wildlife** - Some wild animals are easy to see, but some are hard to find. Sometimes when you do not see an animal; you still see signs of its presence.

**Tracks** - animals footprints are called tracks. Look for them in muddy places or snow. Notice the number of toes, the shape, and the size.

**Scat or droppings** - Scat comes in many shapes and sizes. It tells a story about what an animal has been eating. Use a stick to break it apart and investigate.

**Signs** - Signs are anything that tells where an animal has been and what it is doing such as nests, marks on trees, tunnels in the ground, a depression in the grass, etc.



**White-tailed deer** - is a medium sized deer that is native throughout the U.S.

Along the Red River, you will find Whitetails munching on acorns, plant shoots, fruit and mushrooms. Their special stomachs even allow them to eat poison ivy!

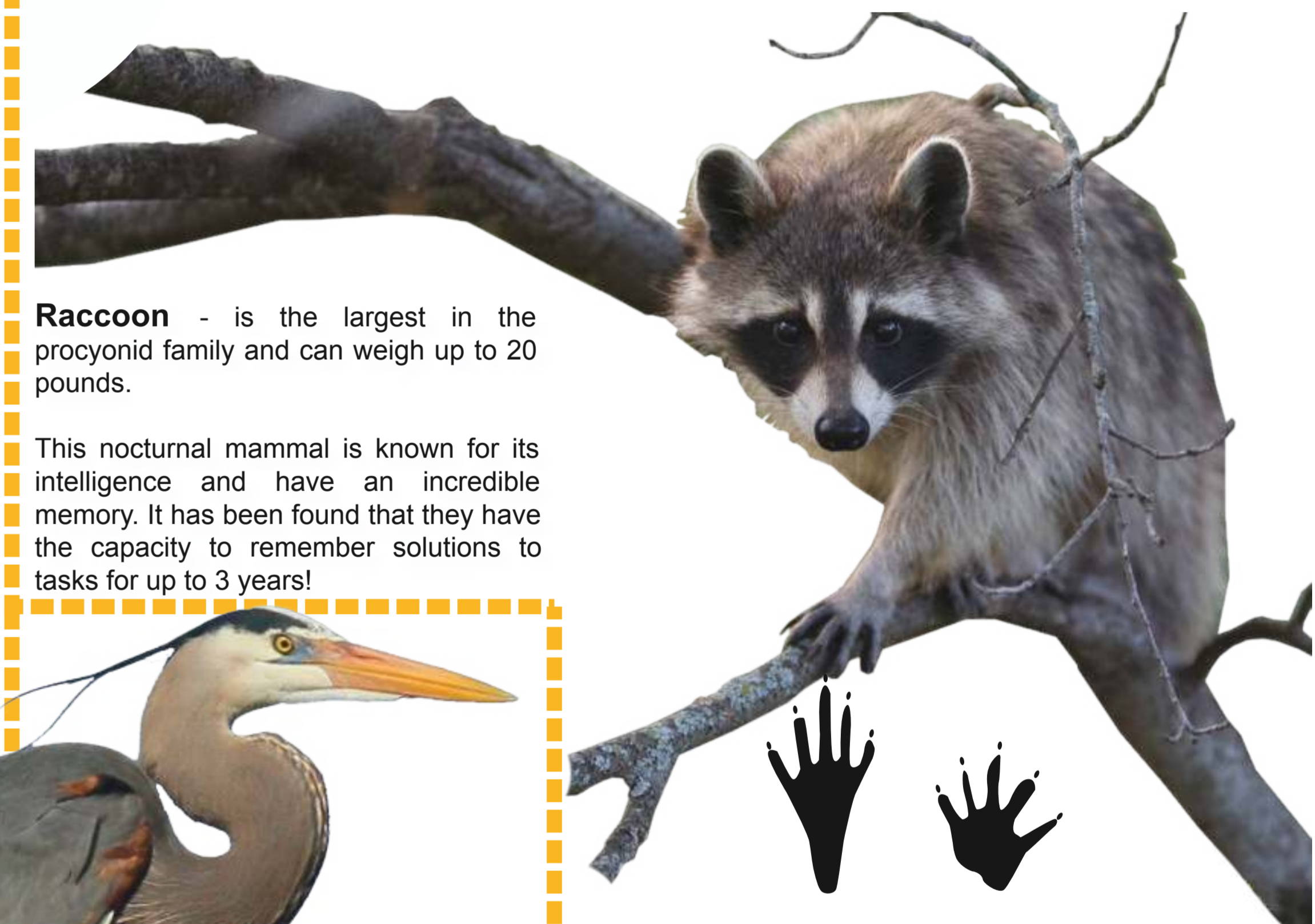
## How old is that deer?!

Fawn	Yearling doe	Adult doe / young buck	2-1/2 yr. old buck	Mature buck
1-1/2"	2"	2-1/2"	3"	3"

**Wild turkey** - is the largest native upland ground bird in North America.

Adult males, called toms or gobblers, have a large, featherless red head, red throat and red wattles on the throat and neck. Males typically have a 'beard', a tuft of feathers growing from their breast.

Turkeys are very agile fliers, despite often being seen on the ground. They are known to fly low to the ground for up to 1/4 of a mile.



**Raccoon** - is the largest in the procyonid family and can weigh up to 20 pounds.

This nocturnal mammal is known for its intelligence and have an incredible memory. It has been found that they have the capacity to remember solutions to tasks for up to 3 years!

**North American beaver** - is the largest rodent in North America. Some very old beavers can reach a weight of almost 90lbs!

Its large paddle like tail and webbed rear feet make the beaver an excellent swimmer. The beaver has the ability to stay submerged under water up to 15 minutes.

**Striped skunk** - are known for their ability to spray a liquid with a strong odor.

Skunks are omnivores, meaning they eat both plant and animal material. Their diet typically consists of larvae, earthworms, rodents, salamanders, birds, eggs, berries, roots, leaves and grasses.

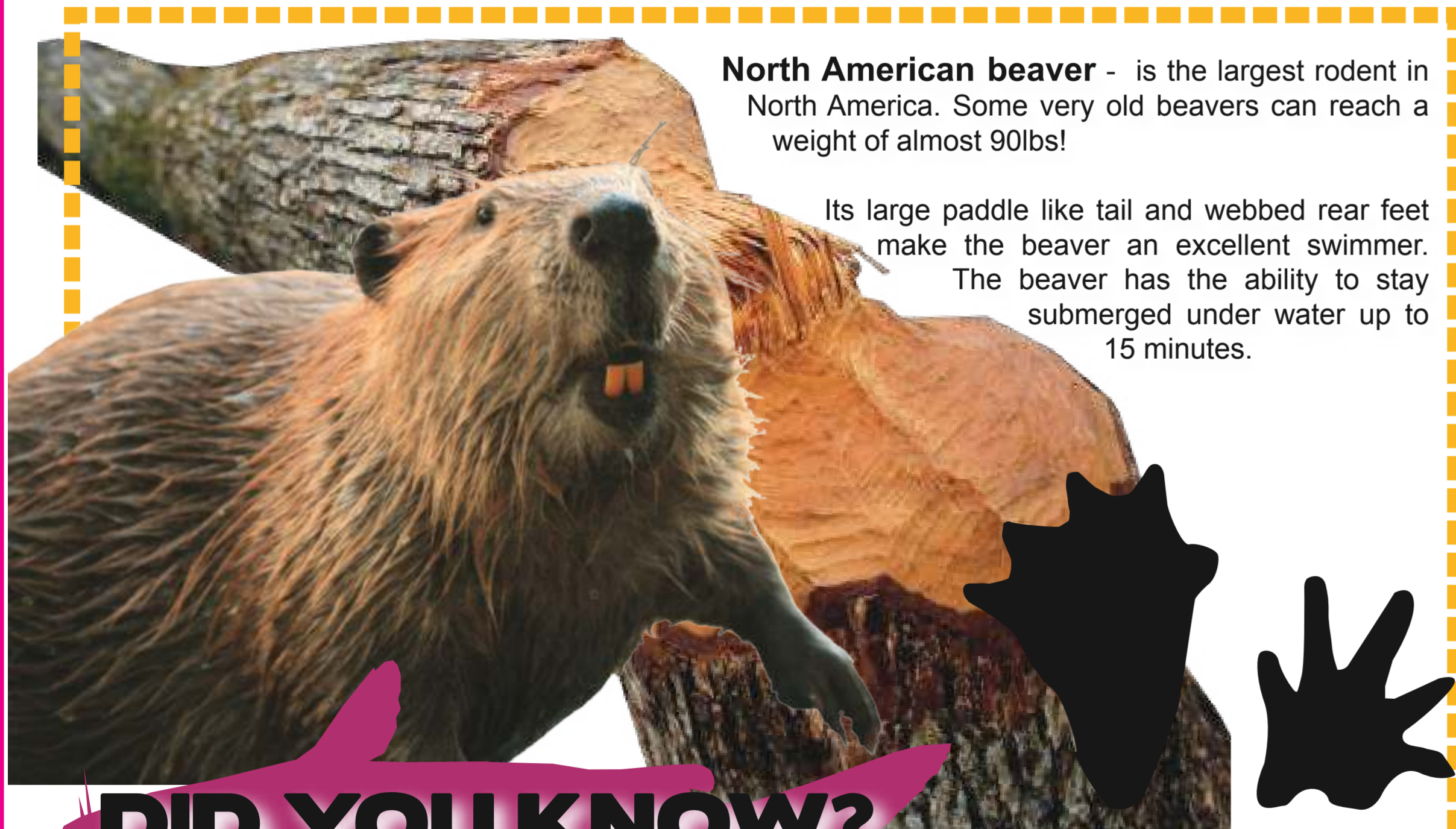
**Great Blue Heron** - can be commonly found along the banks of the Red River and in riparian wetlands.

It's diet is primarily made up of small fish, but will also feed on aquatic insects, rodents, amphibians, reptiles and small birds.

**Muskrat** - is a medium sized semi-aquatic rodent native to the U.S.

The name was given to this animal for a reason, its musky odor is derived from its habitual territory marking.

Muskrats build nests to protect themselves and their family from the cold and predators.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Along the Red River, beavers will more commonly burrow into the river bank rather than build a hut, like what is typically seen on our regions' lakes. Can you guess why that is?

One hint: wood floats and our River typically floods at least once a year.

