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Great Lakes Books Series



A Beaver Tale

The Castors of Conners Creek

Written and Illustrated by Gerald Wykes

"A *BEAVER TALE* IS AN ACCURATE ACCOUNT OF THE SURPRISING REAPPEARANCE OF BEAVERS IN DETROIT AFTER 150 YEARS. GERRY WYKES'S ARTISTIC TALENT BRINGS THE BEAVERS TO LIFE WITH ENGAGING ILLUSTRATIONS AND THE BEAVER FACTS WILL HELP US ALL TO BECOME BEAVER EXPERTS. AS GERRY SAYS AT THE END OF THE BOOK, 'LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE BEAVERS!'"

-ROBERTA URBANI, RETIRED DTE ENERGY ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER AND 2013 DETROIT FREE PRESS MICHIGAN GREEN LEADER

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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Gerald Wykes is a retired museum and nature center director and freelance author, illustrator, and presenter. His 2014 *Michigan History Magazine* article "A Weed Goes to War" was honored as the "Best Article of the year" by the Michigan Historical Society. He also occasionally steps out from behind the computer and drawing board as the French Canadian storyteller and voyageur Alexander Boyer.