

ASSET PROGRAM: Biology & Society

ECOLOGY and HISTORY: Colonial America Module

It is 1684. You are an Abenaki
Indian living in on the
St.Lawrence River.



European traders have come to your village



The fur trade

- The traders offer you many goods in trade.



Europe was in the grip of a cold spell – fur was in great demand.

- At the onset of the fur trade, ten good beavers— adult, winter-prime northern hides that were stretched and cured— bought the Indians one gun. One good beaver bought, variously, half a pound of powder, four pounds of shot, a hatchet, eight jack-knives, half a pound of beads, a good coat, or a pound of tobacco. “The beaver does everything perfectly well,” an Indian trapper told a Jesuit priest in 1657. “It makes kettles, hatchets, swords, knives, bread. In short, it makes everything. The English have no sense— they give us two knives for one beaver skin.”

Outwater, Alice (2008-08-06). Water: A Natural History (Kindle Locations 139-143). Basic Books. Kindle Edition.

QUESTION

- Would you trade ?

If you said yes...

- Then the ecology of Canada and New England would be changed forever.
 - As a result the Native Americans would lose their homes.
-
- Why ?

Because of this animal



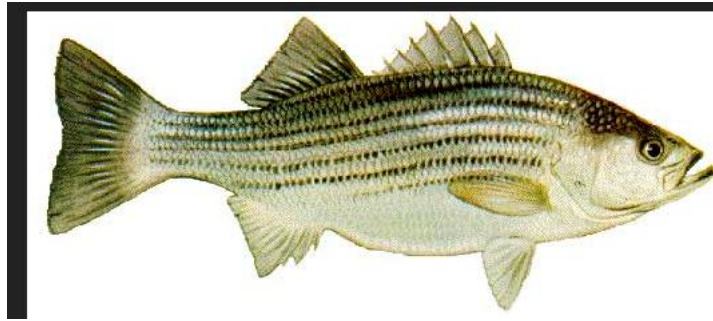
KEYSTONE SPECIES

- Beavers are a keystone species, for where beavers build dams the wetlands spread out behind them, providing home and food for dozens of species, from migrating ducks to moose, from fish to frogs to great blue herons. Outwater, Alice (2008-08-06). Water: A Natural History (Kindle Locations 304-306). Basic Books. Kindle Edition.

These dams created habitats



Habitats for many animals



By 1500

- 200 million beavers in New England and Canada

At the beginning of 1800.....

- Hundreds

The dams fell apart, and the water drained away leaving meadows



Meadows that were best for colonial cattle



Effects on Native Americans

- The ecology of New England had been completely changed.
- It was more suitable to European economies
- By changing the ecology of the land, Native Americans opened new lands to the Europeans.
- That is the story in your packets.