

Palaeocastor

Common Name:
Ancient beaver

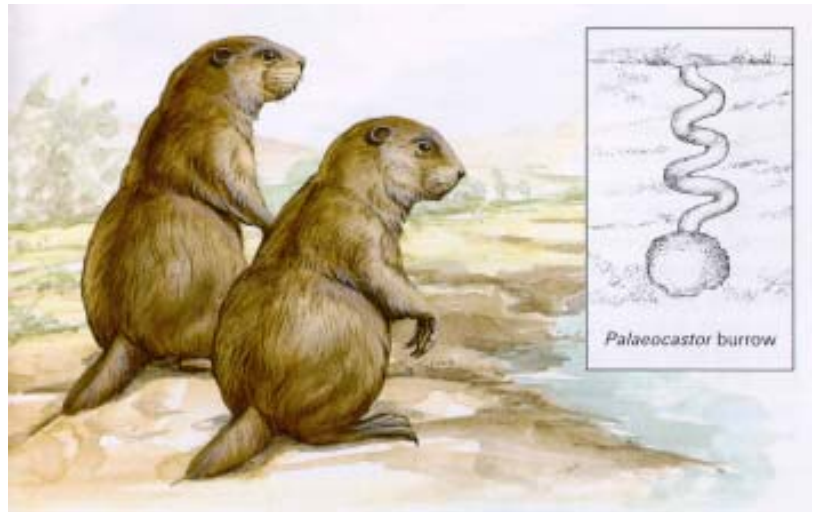
Classification:
Class: Mammalia
Order: Rodentia
Family: Castoridae



Side view of the skull of the ancient beaver *Palaeocastor*. 60 mm long. Miocene Arikaree Formation. Stark County. North Dakota State Fossil Collection.

Description:

Palaeocastor was one of the earliest known beavers. Unlike today's aquatic beaver, *Palaeocastor* was terrestrial. It was about the size of a muskrat, about a foot long. *Palaeocastor* excavated and lived in 2.5 m long corkscrew shaped burrows. Scratch marks on the walls of the burrows indicate that these beavers dug the burrows by using their teeth and scraping movements of their heads. The burrows are preserved as trace fossils and are called 'Devils corkscrews.' The burrows have also been given the scientific name *Daimonelix*.



Palaeocastor and its corkscrew shape burrow *Daimonelix*. Painting courtesy of Kingfisher Publishing.



Locations where fossils have been found