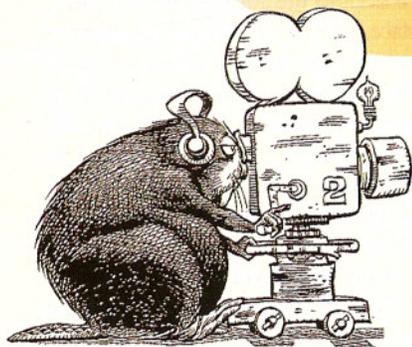
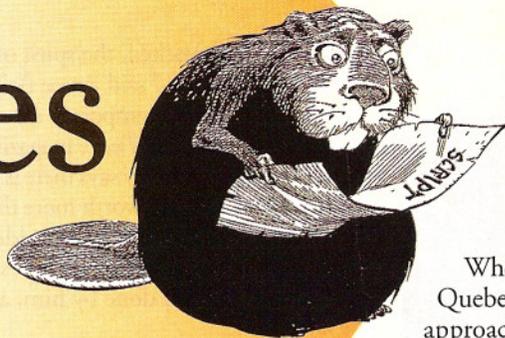


Opening

Notes

Edited by Tanya Davies



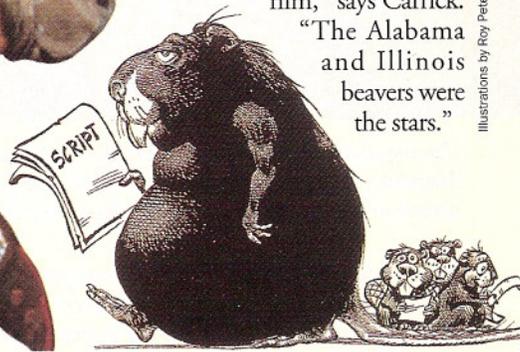
Big bucks for beavers

Two young beavers—known as kits—play a pivotal role in the current film *Grey Owl*, which presents the true story of the famous impostor Indian conservationist from Northern Ontario, who was revealed to have been an Englishman after his death in 1938. The small furry creatures cause the title character, played by Pierce Brosnan, to stop trapping and ultimately become the father of Canada's environmental movement. But the irony is that the beavers used in the movie aren't Canadian, but come from a more Southern clime.



When the film crew started shooting the movie in Quebec in 1998, wildlife film-maker Bill Carrick was approached to find 10 beavers. Carrick also acts as an animal consultant for movies—and beavers are his favourite animals. He was told the crew needed beaver kits between the ages of two days old to six months to portray Grey Owl's pets. "But film companies always throw a curve," says the Toronto-based Carrick. "They needed the kits for shooting in April and May, but beavers aren't born in Canada until mid-May."

So the search was on. Carrick and his then-assistant, Kelly Whitlock, started scouring North America. They eventually found some the right age in Alabama, where they paid \$300 a beaver, and in Illinois, where Carrick had to pay \$750 a beaver "as we were getting desperate." But the film company still needed kits of varying ages. So the search took Whitlock to the southern-most tip of Argentina, Tierra del Fuego. "I did some research and discovered that in the 1940s some Argentinian decided to make money selling beaver pelts, so he got a couple from Saskatchewan," says Carrick, who adds that with transportation and handling, two kits cost \$12,000. And how did the South American beavers act in the movie? "They never did get used in the film," says Carrick. "The Alabama and Illinois beavers were the stars."



Illustrations by Roy Peterson

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