

# ASIAN SHORT CLAWED OTTER *Aonyx cinereus*



My coat is made of two layers, one thick and short, and one sparse and long, which makes it very warm and waterproof

My body is short and compact, and very agile

My back teeth are wide and strong, ideal for crushing the shells of my prey

My tail is short and thick, and I use it as a counterbalance as I perch on the bank feeling for my food

I can close my nose and ears as I submerge into the water

I have long whiskers called vibrissae which are able to feel every little vibration in the water and locate the prey with extreme precision. In fact I have similar hairs all over my body!

To help me see underwater, I have a muscle around my eye that changes the curvature to adapt to underwater view

I don't have webbed feet because I use my strong, sensitive fingers to feel for my prey in mud and gravel

### Where do I live?

We are distributed in India, across south east Asia to the Philippines and north to China. We prefer shallow freshwater, for example rice fields, lakes and streams.

*We used to be very common, but now we are disappearing fast because our food is being polluted, the areas we live in are being destroyed, we are being hunted for our skins, and we are being killed so our babies can be taken as pets.*

### What's for Dinner?

We mainly eat crabs, crayfish, snails and insects. We feel through mud and gravel and under stones for our prey, then crunch it up whole with our powerful jaws.

## Poo - what's that smell!

Otter poo is called scat - traces of scat tell you that an otter has been here. Otters' poo can be found in well visible places along the rivers and coast to mark their territory and signal their presence to other otters. Scat consists of food remains such as crushed shells from molluscs, crayfish and crabs, and is often pale and slimy.



## You know I've been here...

...when you see my footsteps in the sand or mud along the banks of the rivers. They are easily recognised by other mammals by their characteristic shape.



If you look along the banks, between the rocks and at the base of trees you can find traces of the food I've eaten, for example the remains of crab.



## Family matters!

We live in families and older offspring stay around to help bring up new cubs. Our families can get very big.

