

MOST WANTED

Species: North American
River Otters



Conservation Status:
Least Concern

Most Wanted Because:
They are predators,
meaning they help
control the populations
of food species they prey
upon. This affects the
ecosystem as a whole, and
as a result, their
presence is a signal that
the ecosystem is healthy.

Species Adaptations:

- For water:
 - Short legs and webbed feet for fast swimming
 - Long slender bodies and a thick propeller like tail
 - Built in ear plugs and goggles
- Embryonic diapause:
delaying carrying an embryo until body fat is built up and the time is right

Donate to Otter conservation!



<https://riverotterecology.org/chip-in/>

REWARD!

North American River Otter 2023

World Otter Day Celebration Packet

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PR & Social Media

Refer to the Otter Facts, Conservation Efforts, and Messaging & Action Items portions of the packet for talking points on why otters are important, what organizations are supporting otter conservation and what actionable efforts can be done at home. Our theme this year is Most Wanted so the focus is on emphasizing the benefit otters give to their habitats as well as adaptations otters have to survive in their habitats. Information on this year's theme can be found in the Most Wanted section.

Feel free to utilize the cover page of the packet to advertise World Otter Day on your social media platforms or post at the entrance of your facility!

Hashtags for World Otter Day 2023

Please tag any social media posts shared with #WOD2023

Otters And Why They Are Most Wanted

To celebrate World Otter Day 2023 we are focusing on the 13 species of otters and what makes them most wanted in their habitats.

North American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*)

Most wanted: Semi-aquatic living, indicator species, embryo diapause

Adaptations:

North American River Otters live **semi-aquatic lives** and can live in freshwater and coastal marine habitats such as rivers, marshes, and lakes throughout the United States and into Canada and Mexico. To function in a dual environment, they have evolved several important adaptations that help them to thrive. For traveling in water, river otters developed adaptations such as short legs and four webbed feet for faster swimming. They have long, narrow bodies and a propeller-like tail for streamlined movement in the water. Otters are extremely flexible and can make sharp sudden turns to help catch prey. They can also close their ears and nostrils using valve-like flaps to keep water out when swimming and diving. They use their long whiskers to help them search for food and avoid obstacles while swimming underwater. River otters share these features with other otter species because it enables them to swim quickly and steer effortlessly in the water. For traveling on land between waterways, especially in the winter when water becomes ice, river otters depend on their footpads to provide traction when running or sliding. This ability to travel quickly on land is essential for escaping predators. River Otters spend a lot of time resting and grooming on land which is important as their thick, waterproof coat acts as insulation and must be kept clean to keep them warm in cold water. River Otters will use abandoned burrows or empty hollows for dens that are along the water.

Sightings of North American River Otters are a hopeful sign of improving watershed conditions as they are an **indicator species** and cannot tolerate highly polluted water. If river otters are present then it is a sign of a healthy ecosystem as they are apex aquatic predators and the fish, crustaceans, invertebrates, birds, and amphibians they prey on are thriving as well.

Female North American river otters can delay the process of carrying an embryo after breeding season through a process called **embryo diapause**. This process helps increase the probability of survival as it allows the female to increase their body fat percentage by eating as much as possible and after winter is over the embryo implantation takes place.

IUCN Status: Least Concern.

North American River Otter *Lontra canadensis* has most recently been assessed for *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* in 2020

Conservation Efforts: They were hunted and trapped extensively for their fur in the 19th & 20th centuries, and in some areas are still hunted. While they have not recovered to the point of currently living in the entirety of their historic range throughout Canada, the United States, and Mexico, conservation and reintroduction efforts are helping the populations to recover.

Fun Facts:

- To remain underwater for 6-8 minutes during dives, river otters can slow down their heart rate.
- Rather than having a layer of blubber, they have a high metabolism, so they must eat often, and have very dense fur to stay warm in the water and colder climates.
- They have a third transparent eyelid called a nictitating membrane, that acts like built-in goggles for seeing underwater
- River otters can swim around 5.6 miles per hour. On land, river otters can run at speeds up to 15 miles an hour – they can slide even faster!
- Female otters will live with their pups until they get old enough to leave and males may live in bachelor groups since they are such social animals.
- They have different forms of communication styles and when vocalizing they use noises like whistles, growls, screams, and chuckles!
- Scent marking is an important way to mark their territory. They rub the scent glands that are all over their body and under the tail on surfaces in their habitat and it is extra potent so that it does not get washed away by water.
- River otter poop is called spraint and is known for its distinct odor and often contains scales, shells, and bones of fish or aquatic crustaceans.

North American River Otter Species/Natural History

Introduction

The North American river otter, *Lontra canadensis*, is one of the four species of river otters inhabiting North and South America. There are at least seven subspecies. Some other English names for North American river otters include; common otter, water dog, river otter, and land otter.

Description

Adult North American river otters range in size from 3.3-5ft and weigh between 9.9 and 35.2lbs. Males are typically larger than females.

They have a very dense fur coat, consisting of under hairs and guard hairs. The average hair density is around 57,000 hairs per cm². Their thick hair coat acts as insulation and there is a layer of air trapped between the under hairs and guard hairs. Otters spent a great deal of time taking care of this coat through frequent grooming.

North American river otters have elongated metatarsals and phalanges and there is a web of skin between their digits. This web of skin allows their hind feet to become twice as wide when their toes are spread.

Among mammals, otters have an increased lung size, which is a direct benefit to the amount of time they spend in the water. A typical dive for a North American river otter is 30-40 seconds, but dives have been recorded up to 88 seconds. Due to the configuration of their vertebrae, otters have a hump-backed gait when traveling on land. They have a recorded land speed of 18mph. Otters also commonly slide, or toboggan, especially when traversing in snow or mud. When in the water, otters use their feet to paddle and their tail to propel themselves, up to a top speed of 7mph.

North American river otters typically live between 10 - 13 years in the wild but have been reported to live to 25 years in captivity.

Range

North American River otters historically inhabited most of the United States and Canada. By the later half of the 1800s, their population disappeared from much of their former range, mostly due to over-trapping and habitat degradation. By the 1970s with the introduction of the Clean Water Act and new trapping and hunting regulations, they have returned to much of their historic range.

[Lontra canadensis – Subspecies Map](#)



<i>Lontra canadensis</i> Subspecies	
1. <i>L. c. canadensis</i>	5. <i>L. c. mira</i>
2. <i>L. c. latavina</i>	6. <i>L. c. pericyzomae</i>
3. <i>L. c. pacifica</i>	7. <i>L. c. kodiakensis</i>
4. <i>L. c. sonora</i>	

Both male and female otters occupy home ranges that are typically linearly shaped, as a result of their use of waterways. Within their home ranges, there are important activity centers, such as latrine sites that help them communicate with other otters in the area.

Studies have shown that individual otters have daily movements between 1.5 miles - 26 miles. Male otters have the largest home ranges, especially during the breeding season. It was shown that annual home ranges can vary from 6.1 square miles (a female with pups) to 105 square miles (a male). These ranges vary seasonally.

North American river otters live in both freshwater and marine environments. Habitat use is influenced by the availability of den and resting sites, activity areas, vegetative cover, and adequate food.

Diet

North American river otters are primarily piscivorous, but they also consume crustaceans, birds, small mammals, amphibians, and invertebrates.

Behavior

They are typically considered solitary but are sometimes found in groups of 8-15 individuals when in environments that have abundant resources. This behavior is typically exhibited by males.

North American River otters are monoestrous with a breeding season ranging from November to June. Some evidence shows that this season varies by latitude. They experience a phenomenon known as delayed implantation in which the fertilized egg develops into a blastocyst that remains unattached in the uterus. This results in a total gestation of 290-380 days but an actual gestation of 60-63 days. There are several theories on why they experience delayed implantation, including timing parturition with estrus to make it easier for males to find females in estrus or reasons related to energy requirements during pregnancy. Otters typically give birth between November and May.

North American river otters are typically characterized as crepuscular or nocturnal. Studies suggest that most of their feeding is done between dawn and mid-morning and at night. It is reported that they spend between 41 - 62 percent of their day foraging and feeding.

Otters communicate through different vocalizations, but a majority of their communication is based on their sense of smell. Throughout their territories, otters maintain scent posts, usually marked by defecation and urination.

Otters are also well known for their playful nature. Play behaviors can serve to strengthen social bonds and teach important hunting behaviors to young otters.

Sources

Otter (*Lutrinae*) Care Manual (Association of Zoos and Aquariums 2009)

North American River Otter Notebook, 4th Edition (Reed-Smith 2008)

Otter Facts: Fun Facts about North American River Otters

Otters can hold their breath for up to 8 minutes while underwater and dive to a depth of 60 feet.

Otters can swim up to 7 mph.

Otters spend two-thirds of the time on land.

Otters always wash themselves after every meal.

The otter is the largest member of the weasel family.

Baby otters are called pups.

Baby otters chirp like baby birds to communicate with their mothers.

Otters are playful creatures, frequently seen sliding down riverbanks or burrowing through the snow.

North American otters are playful animals and indulge in water play, mud/snow sliding, and burrowing through the snow. Many "play" activities serve a purpose, such as strengthening social bonds, practicing hunting techniques, and scent marking.

These animals have boundless energy due to their very high metabolism. This means that they have to eat a lot during the day.

Otters have the thickest fur of any mammal, having as many as 850,000 hairs per square inch.

Otters don't have blubber so they rely on their fur to keep them warm in the water.

Otters spend a lot of time grooming their fur to keep it healthy, but it also traps air between their body and their fur. This air warms up from their body heat and when they go swimming that air pocket will protect them from the cold water. When you watch the otters swim you will see a lot of bubbles coming out. That's the air escaping.

Otters are able to close their nostrils and ears in order to keep water out when diving for a long time.

A group of North American river otters is known as a romp, bevy, lodge, or family.

Conservation Efforts

This section details the conservation organizations that the Otter Education Advisory Group is recommending any funds raised for North American River Otters during World Otter Day events go towards. Each of these organizations has been verified and have proven their dedication to the conservation of NAROs and otter species worldwide

On their websites, you can find additional resources to share with your guests to further educate them on otter conservation. A summary of those resources can be found below each organization's information.

International Otter Survival Fund (IOSF)



Their Work:

The International Otter Survival Fund (IOSF) was inspired by observing otters in their natural habitat.

Because the otter lives, feeds, and plays on land and in the water and is at the peak of the food chain it is an ambassador species to a first class environment. IOSF was set up to protect and help the 13 species of otter worldwide through a combination of compassion and science. We support projects to protect otters, which will also ensure that we have a healthy environment for all species, including our own.

IOSF works closely with other organizations to protect otters in the wild and in captivity. In particular, we are concerned with the high level of wildlife crime involving otters and

we are members and partners of Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW UK), Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime in Scotland (PAWS), and Wildleaks.

Mission & Vision:

We want to protect otters so that future generations to come can enjoy one of the world's most charming, elusive, and enjoyable mammals.

The IOSF aims to work with local communities throughout the world to educate, inform and encourage the protection and conservation of otters.

Through a programme of research, the IOSF will become the world's foremost authority on otter behaviour, habitat, persecution, and conservation.

We want people throughout the world to be as appalled by Otter persecution and hunting as we are towards Tiger and Rhino hunting.

We would like to educate people to the benefits of Otters, what healthy populations mean for the environment, and dispel myths that are causing Otters to be intentionally disturbed, persecuted, and hunted.

Website:

<https://www.otter.org>

Resources that can be found on their website: IOSF leaflets (multiple languages), children's educational resources including education pack (multiple languages), PowerPoint presentation, and crafts, otter identification cards (multiple languages), IOSF informational video (multiple languages), World Otter Day informational posters (multiple languages), otters of the world poster, educational posters and publications.

IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group



Their Work:

The Otter Specialist Group (OSG) is part of the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Leading global otter conservation since 1974

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a membership union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organizations. It provides public, private, and non-governmental organizations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development, and nature conservation to take place together. IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. Our experts are organized into six commissions dedicated to species survival, environmental law, protected areas, social and economic policy, ecosystem management, education, and communication.

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a science-based network of more than 10,000 volunteer experts from almost every country of the world, all working together towards achieving the vision of a just world that values and conserves nature through positive action to reduce the loss of diversity of life on earth.

The Otter Specialist Group (OSG) is one of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's specialist groups.

Mission & Vision:

IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group: Otters in Captivity Task Force (OCT)

OCT Mission Statement: The IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group Otters in Captivity Task Force (OSG OCT) promotes worldwide communication between individuals working with otters in captivity and all other settings

IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group: Otters in Zoos, Aquaria, Rehabilitation, and Wildlife Sanctuaries (OZ Task Force)

OZ Mission Statement: The IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group's Otters in Zoos, Aquaria, Rehabilitation, and Wildlife Sanctuaries Task Force (OZ) promotes worldwide communication between individuals working with otters in captivity and all other settings.

For captive biologists: All institutions holding otters should support in-situ and ex-situ conservation efforts for these charismatic species. Providing financial and or technical

support for these efforts is crucial as is the proper captive care of these species. The OZ Task Force recommends that all captive facilities work together to further improve care of, and sound breeding/contraceptive management of the world's captive otter populations, including the development of, use of, and distribution of best care practices via husbandry manuals based on captive and field study experience. We support and encourage efforts being made to advance all of these goals by professional organizations such as the African Association of Zoos and Aquaria, Australasian Association of Zoos and Aquaria, Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums, European Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and many others. Copies of current husbandry manuals are available at the IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group website, <http://www.otterspecialistgroup.org/Library.html>.

For field biologists, The OZ encourages all in-situ researchers to become involved in some capacity with the zoos/aquariums working with otters in their range countries. This can take many forms including; offering technical advice regarding behavior or habitat requirements, offering to do informative talks for employees or zoo/aquarium members, or providing informative materials for use in fundraising.

Goals:

- to provide leadership for the conservation of all 13 otter species
- to determine, review and share on a continuing basis the status, threats, and needs of otters worldwide and update the IUCN Red List
- to promote the wise management of otters in the wild and in captivity through ongoing collaboration with zoos and the publication of studbooks and husbandry manuals
- to present and promote the new research, conservation, and management programs necessary to ensure the recovery of threatened and endangered otter populations
- to train and mentor a new generation of otter researchers
- to present and promote actions to curb the illegal trade and decrease otter-fishermen

The complete mission statement can be found here:

http://www.otterspecialistgroup.org/osg-newsite/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/OZ_Full_Mission_Statement_2008.pdf

Website:

<https://www.otterspecialistgroup.org>

Resources that can be found on their website: otter species fact sheets, species-specific husbandry guidelines & manuals, enrichment lists, publications, wildlife trade reports, conferences, otter mortality web

River Otter Ecology Project



Their Work:

Our first goal for The River Otter Ecology Project was to convene a broadly-based group of experts in conservation population biology, marine mammals, tracking and genomics to help guide our research. Understanding that a far-reaching web of partnerships would be key to achieving our mission, we began networking and partnering with international, national, state, and local organizations and agencies. Backed by a strong and hands-on Board of Directors, our work has achieved goals, been recognized with awards, and inspired many to support watershed conservation in many ways.

Mission & Vision:

Our mission is to engage the public in supporting conservation and restoration by linking river otter recovery to the health of our watersheds through education, research, and community science.

Our vision is to inspire personal connections and motivate meaningful actions to preserve our shared natural landscapes for future generations.

Website:

<https://riverotterecology.org>

Resources that can be found on their website: understanding watersheds and NAROs video (also in Spanish), NARO fact sheet, children's projects – water diary, saving water, watershed finger puppets, story, NARO hat/mask craft, otter spotter poster,

camera trapping basics, Track casting, and Otter 101. They also have a blog, webinars, and community based science opportunities.

Zoos Partnering in Otter Conservation

Aside from working to conserve our natural environment, educating visitors and participating in the NARO SSP, zoos use other unique programs to help contribute to otter conservation. Just a few past examples are:

Grizzly Wolf and Discovery Center- Has a ZPP partnership with Yellowstone national park. Staff will go into the field and partake in conservation/research projects with the biologists who work in YNP.

Brookfield Zoo- Vet staff have assisted the Forest Preserve District of Cook county with several wild otters by placing radio transmitters on otters in and around the Chicago River. The long-term surveillance project looks at otters in dense urban areas.

Sequoia Park Zoo- Participate in and promote a local citizen science project run through Humboldt State University. The project, called Otter Watch, tracks the local otter population demographics and population changes. They also have supported in situ conservation projects with grants such as Save the Giants and the Lake Earl Otter Project.

Messaging & Action Items

Messaging

- What makes this species of otters most wanted?
 - NAROs are great indicators or keystone species for watersheds. Their presence indicates the presence of good, clean water, and healthy habitat.
 - They are a true wildlife success story! As habitat/watershed conservation and restrictions on hunting/trapping have taken place over the United States, otter numbers have continued to rise over the last 50 years.

- Special adaptations of the species
 - Have webbed feet and a propeller-like tail for quick swimming

- Can slow down their heart rate to remain underwater 6-8 minutes during dives
- High metabolism and very dense fur to stay warm in the water and colder climates
- Nictitating membrane, like built-in goggles for seeing underwater
- Long whiskers for sensing prey underwater
- Can close their nostrils during dives
- Threats to their environment
 - Destruction or pollution of watersheds
 - Excessive or unregulated trapping
 - Declining fishery

Visitor action items

- Keep local watersheds clean from litter and pollution
- Volunteer with a local group to help on a water clean up day (zoos should try and provide a local volunteer opportunity when possible, with information easily available for follow-through)
- Engage in citizen science monitoring programs (again zoos should provide the local resource information when available)
- Donate funds or items to projects like: [The River Otter Ecology Project](#), [The Otter Specialist Group](#), or [The International Otter Survival Fund](#)
- Use Amazon Smile and choose one of the listed conservation projects

Facility Activities

Level 1: Head-in-a-Hole Activity

This was a fun project that a couple of keepers and I worked on years ago for World Otter Day which we now pull out for many events. We planned it out in advance and set a little bit of time to work on it throughout the week so that we would have time to complete it. Once completed, it is a great activity to set up if you can't monitor a station all day. We put an informational poster about World Otter Day and an instructional sign about taking a photo and sharing it on social media next to it so visitors can use it throughout the day, even if we aren't there.



Part 1: The Concept

- Sketch out a few ideas of what you would like the result to look like. One otter or multiple otters? Cartoony or realistic? Square board with a background or just an otter cut-out?
- If you have someone on your staff that is artistically inclined and wants to help, they can draw up the image. If not, I recommend googling river otter coloring pages. There are a lot of options and they are easy to transfer to the board since they are outlines.
- You can also decide to paint the otters' faces as they are and cut the head shape out and attach it with a hinge, as we did, which allows up to three people to take a photo as an otter or one or two people to take a photo as an otter and have other holes closed so that the otter's faces are there.

Part 2: The Work

- You'll need plywood or a cheap presentation board. It depends on how long you want it to last and if you can store it, white primer paint, colored paint, paintbrushes, power drill, Sawzall, hinges & gate hook & eyes if you want to keep the painted holes attached, matte finish spray sealer if you want to seal it

Step 1: Prime the board

- Paint a good coat of white primer on the board and allow it to dry.

Step 2: Getting the image on the board.

- We borrowed our Education Department's projector and projected the image we chose onto the board and traced the lines in pencil. This made it so much easier and allowed us to figure out the scale of how big the otters needed to be to work with an average head size by moving the projector closer or further away.

If you don't have access to a projector then you can sketch your image onto the board with a pencil. If you are cutting out the hole and have a mask you can trace for the head hole you can do that now, if not get a measurement of your head and draw an oval in place. Since we hinged ours, we did not do this step until after it was painted.

Step 3: Paint

- o It took 2 coats of colored paint to get a good covering. Start with the background and then move to the otters. Black lines can be added around the colors to help cover up brush strokes and give it a cartoony look.

Step 4: Cut out the hole for the face & cut out the body (if you chose to do so)

- o If you are just cutting out the hole, drill holes using a power drill, and then use the Sawzall to cut out the face hole starting from your drill hole.

- o If you are keeping the painted otter faces like we did, pencil in your head outline and drill a small hole along the outline. Then take the Sawzall and cut out the shape starting from that hole. After it is cut out put it back in place and attach the hinge on one side. We also added a gate hook & eye to the opposite side of the hinge so that didn't swing open.



- o Sand the inside of the hole so that it is smooth and clean. Paint the inner portion of the hole.

- o We kept the board square so it could have the background of the image we chose but you can cut out the body if you want.

Step 5: Clear coat

- o If you choose to seal it spray it with a matte sealant and let dry.

Step 6: Stand it up

- o There are a few ways you can stand it up. If it is not too heavy and you are setting it up on grass, you can screw stakes into the sides of the boards and push them into the ground.

- o We built a triangle stand with plywood and 2x4s to hold ours up because it is a full sheet of plywood. It breaks down into three pieces for easy storage. There is a triangle for each side of the board and a piece of plywood that is screwed into the back of the 2x4s in the center of the triangles to hold it together. There is

a channel made with the 2x4s on both triangles for the board to fit into so once the base is set up it can slide right in.

- o Because two of our heads are a little bit taller, we put cinder blocks behind the board as steps so anyone can access them.



Step 7: Instructions

- o Make a sign that you can put on the head in a hole that says #worldotterday or has your facility's logo, and an instructional sign that lets visitors know that they can take a photo and encourage them to share it on social media! You could paint these on the board too. We use ours for a lot of events, so we didn't.

Level 1: Otter Habitat Scavenger Hunt

Encourage guests to search for common items in the otter habitat at the zoo. When otters utilize different parts of their habitats, they showcase some of the adaptations that make them Most Wanted in their ecosystem.

Otter Habitat Scavenger Hunt: Can you find these five common features of a zoo otter habitat?

1. Den or hiding spot
2. Haul out or sunbathing spot
3. Pool, pond, or stream
4. Slide or tunnel
5. Enrichment or toys



Level 2: Rudder Activity - Most Wanted Edition

Using a kiddie pool and a small toy boat, demonstrate how an otter's tail acts as a rudder. Have participants simulate an otter turning by steering the boat in the water and talk about their adaptations for swimming.

- You'll need: a tub or kiddie pool that holds water, a small toy boat that has a working rudder
- To theme it out for 2023 World Otter Day - Most Wanted, focus on the adaptation of the otter's tail acting like a rudder and how that enables otters to efficiently move and hunt in their habitat. In lieu of a toy boat, you can also have guests use their hands to act like an otter tail in a shallow pool or tub of water to see how water moves around it. Try having them mimic different animals such as fish, muskrats, and beavers to show the differences between an otter's tail and other animals that swim.

Level 2: Clean vs. Dirty Water Fishing Activity - Most Wanted Edition

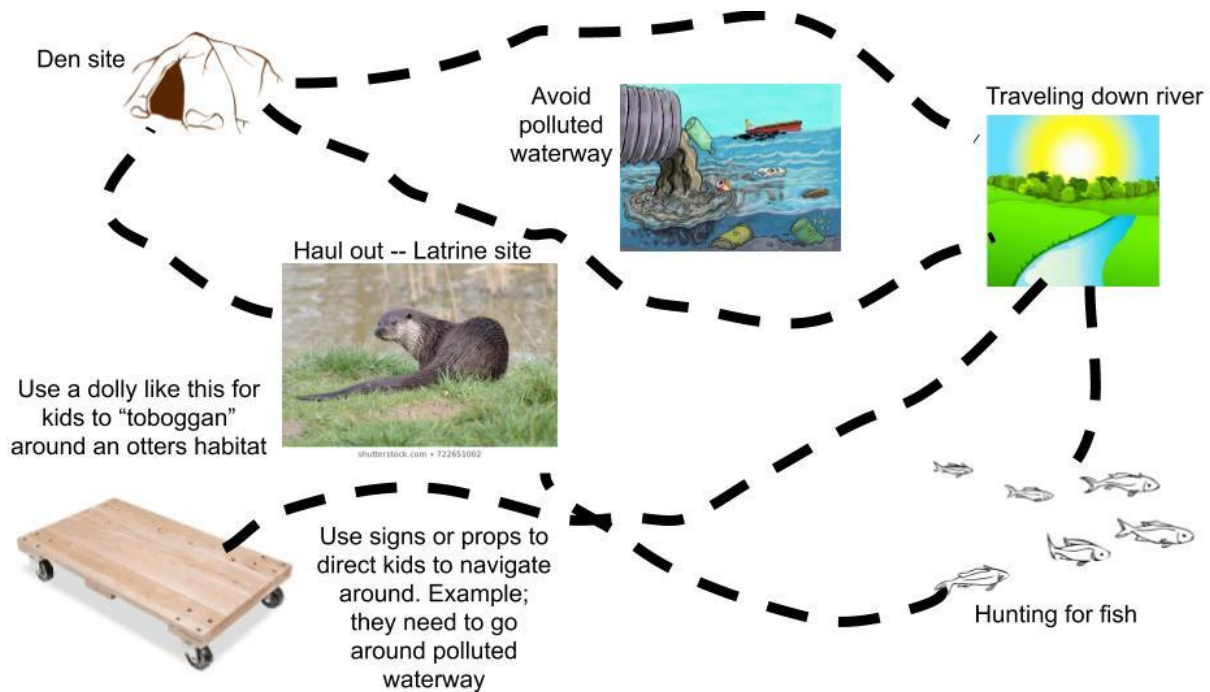
Set up a "clean" kiddie pool with toy fish and have one guest be timed on gathering those fish. Have a second pool be a "dirty" pool with other debris hiding the fish and time the guest gathering the fish from around the debris. An additional challenge can be added to either pool by having another person act as a fisherman competing to get the fish. Compare the times to see how long it took the guest to collect fish in the different environments and talk about how pollution affects an otter's ability to catch fish and how important it is to keep our waterways clean.

- You'll need: at least two tubs or kiddie pools that hold water, toy fish, items to act as debris, and a timer
- To theme it out for 2023 World Otter Day - Most Wanted, focus on the difference in time it took to "hunt" for fish in the polluted water. Otters need clean waterways to thrive. If otters can successfully hunt and live in a waterway, that ecosystem is likely healthy. Otters are Most Wanted in their habitats as an indicator species.

Level 3: Toboggan Activity

Using a dolly, guests "toboggan" around an otter's habitat by following props or signs. Educate the guests on the different aspects of an otter's natural habitat and how otters are Most Wanted in their habitats.

- Latrine site: Otters are Most Wanted for creating a latrine site - which they use as a social hub.
- Den site: Otters are Most Wanted for building their own den site into the river banks, they excavate the dirt and then use grasses to line their nest.
- Avoid polluted waterways: Otters are Most Wanted as an indicator species in their habitats - otters need clean, healthy waterways to thrive. The presence of otters in a habitat can indicate a healthy ecosystem.
- Hunting for fish: Otters are Most Wanted as an important predator, however, they target slow moving fish and are not a competition for sports fishermen.



- You'll need: dolly, signs and/or props to act as the different areas of an otter's habitat

Facility Virtual Activities

1. Host a Facebook Live event with questions & answers
2. Otter-themed art contest where the public sends in their artwork submissions - could tie this into a give-away as well for First, Second, Third prizes.

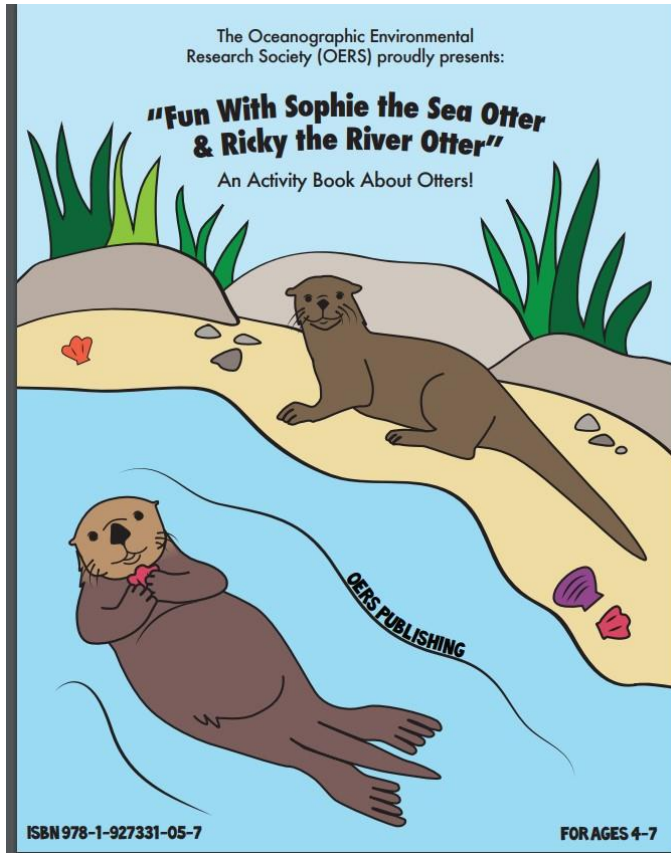
Interactive Online Activities

[Otter Madness Game](#)



Children's Activity Packet

[Fun With Sophie the Sea Otter and Ricky the River Otter](#)



Facility/Home Activities

Encourage guests to participate in a local waterway clean-up in their area, or host their own.

- American Rivers has some information about hosting a river clean up in your own area
- <https://www.americanrivers.org/make-an-impact/national-river-cleanup/>

Encourage guests to visit a natural area in their home state (National park, State park, county park, or even a zoo) to learn more about otter habitat.

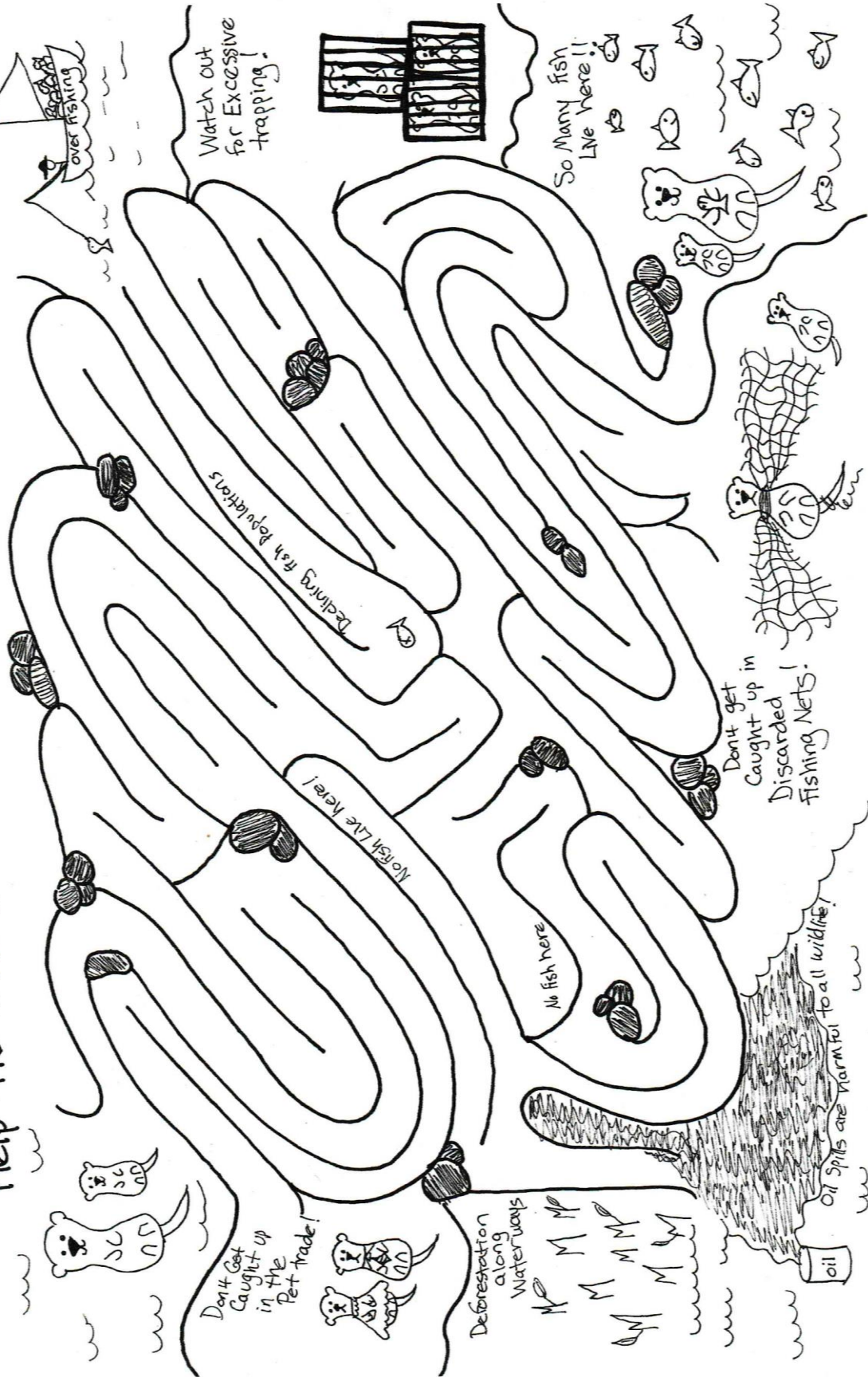
- The National Park System has a park-finder tool on its website
- <https://www.nps.gov/findapark/index.htm>

The following activities can be done on grounds for World Otter Day but they are also able to be done at home! Each activity comes with a set of instructions that can be shared with our guests so that they can celebrate World Otter Day if they aren't able to visit their local zoo.

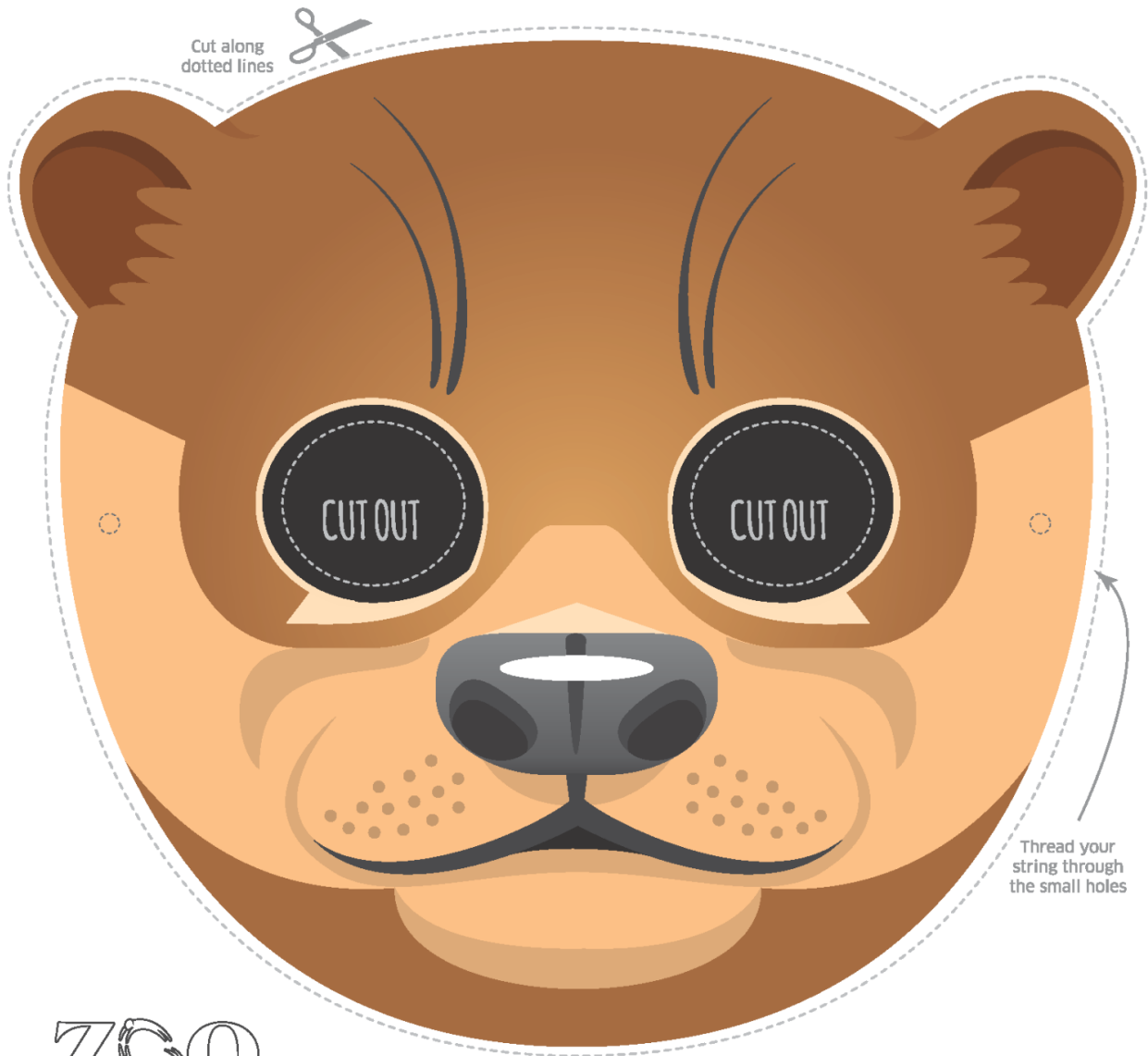
- Otter Maze - Print out and help the otters down the river to the cache of fish!

- Otter Masks - Print out and color a North American river otter mask. There are three to choose from, each highlighting different adaptations of North American river otters. Cut out the mask and the eyes and punch holes on either side and use yarn to tie behind your head. Wear this mask while performing other World Otter Day activities!
- Otter Coloring Page - Print out and color an image of a North American river otter!

Help the Otters down the River to the Cache of fish!



This mask highlights the North American river otter's whiskers. You can see where they are located by the long hairs on the eyebrows and dots on the muzzle underneath the nose. Otters also have whiskers on their chins! Otters use their whiskers to detect prey in dark or cloudy waters by sensing the vibrations in the water.

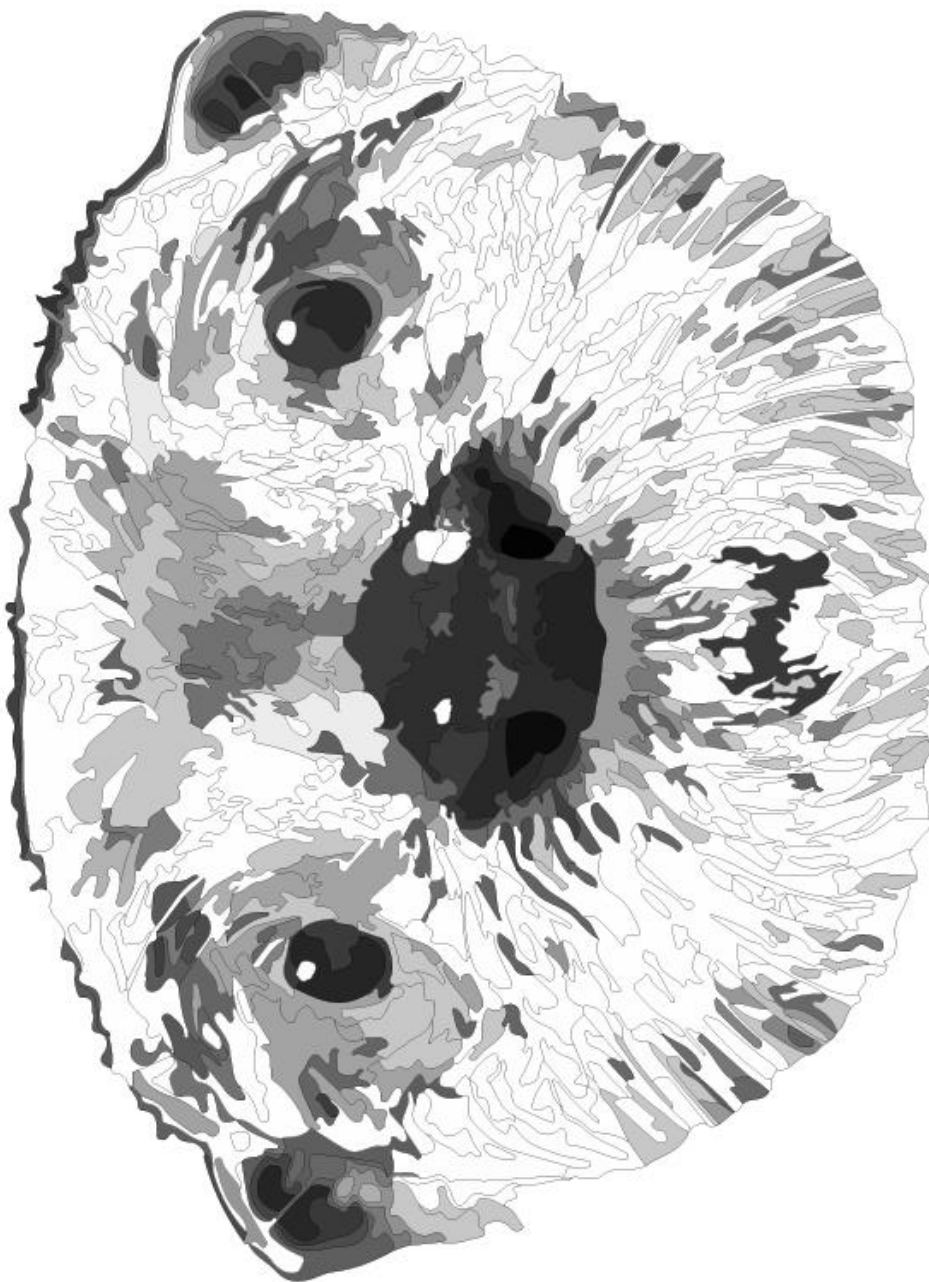


RIVER OTTER MASK

INSTRUCTIONS: cut out mask and eyeholes along the dotted lines. Use a pencil or hole punch to poke out the small holes, then thread a string through the small holes to hold the mask on.

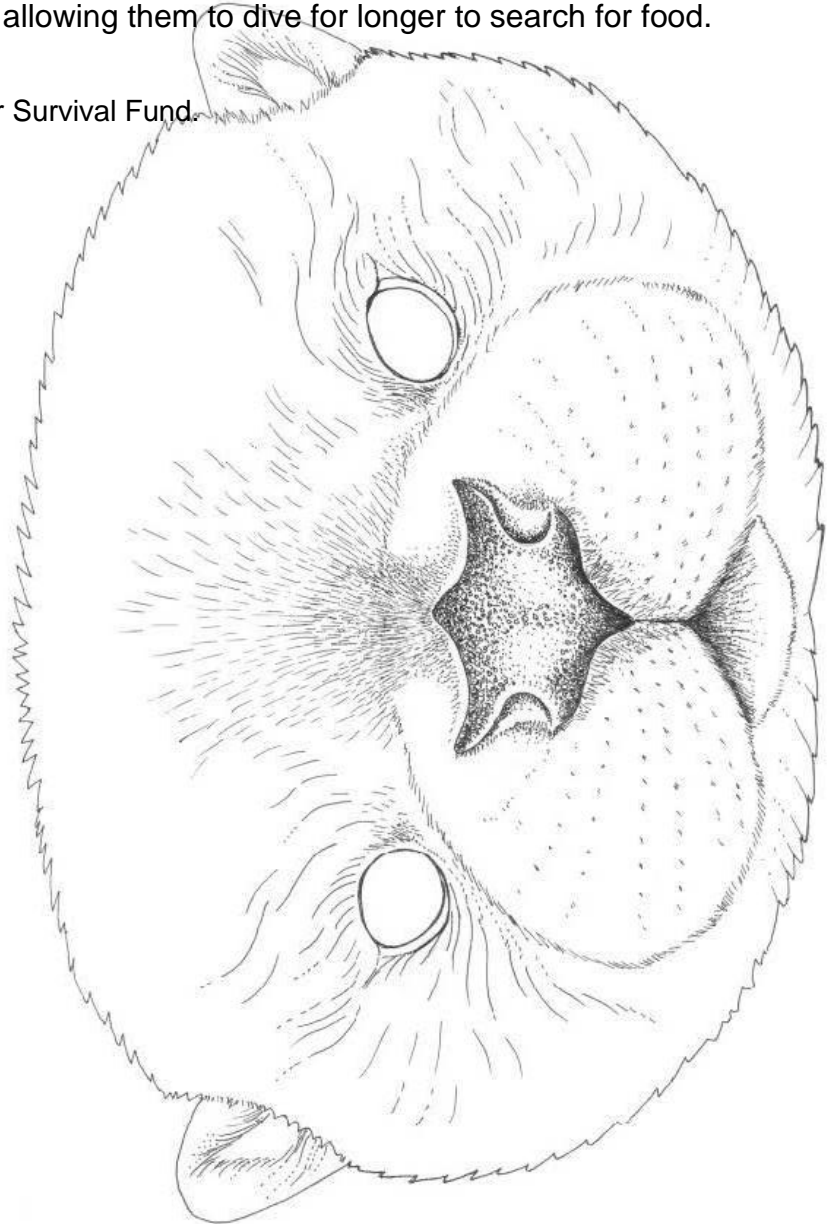
This mask highlights the North American river otter's fur. All otter species have fur that is fine, dense, and velvety. Otters have two types of fur: long, stout guard hairs, and a dense arrangement of short fine underhairs. Their thick fur helps to keep them warm while also repelling water. Their fur is dark brown over much of the body, and lighter brown on their belly and muzzle. River otters have between 100,000-450,000 hairs per square inch depending on what part of the body it's on. In comparison, human's have between 800-1,290 hairs per square inch on their head!

Otter Mask by Amy Corcoran



This mask highlights the North American river otter's eyes, ears, and nose. Otters have a keen sense of smell, and good eyesight and hearing. Their eyes & ears are located high on the head for surface swimming and they have a transparent inner eyelid to protect their eyes when swimming. Like all otters they have evolved skin flaps that cover their ears and nostrils, allowing them to dive for longer to search for food.

Otter Mask by the International Otter Survival Fund.







Crafts

Ideas below for items to sell or make at a World Otter Day event or for guests to try at home:

- Pom Pom otters - requires pom poms (2 large brown, 1 large tan, 4 small tan, 2 small brown, and 3 extra small black) and two googly eyes. Using a threaded needle, start with a small brown as the *base of the tail*, sew thru the second small brown and into the first large brown. Sew on 2 small tan on either side as the *rear legs*. Going back thru first large brown, sew into second large brown and repeat with 2 more small tan as the *front legs*. Then sew on the large tan as the *head*. Use crafting glue to attach eyes, ears, and nose.
 - Video Demo: [PomPom Otter Video Demo](#)
- Hand-painted mugs, rocks, and tiles



<http://kidsandseacreatures.blogspot.com/2014/09/sea-otter-art-project.html?sref=pi>

- World Otter Day ribbons - requires brown ribbon, fish and/or shell beads, safety pins, and a hot glue gun. First, cut three-inch pieces of brown ribbon, cutting the ends at an angle. Hold the ribbon horizontally at its midpoint and fold the left end down and slightly

across the midpoint. Then, fold the right end in the same way so the ribbon crosses itself slightly below the fold. At this cross-point, put a drop of hot glue to hold the ribbon in place. Once the ribbon is secured, glue a fish or shell bead over the midpoint. These can be handed out to guests with a safety pin as they enter the front gate or for participating in World Otter Day activities! They can also be handed out to staff members to get them excited about World Otter Day and encourage them to inform the guests of otter activities happening that day.

