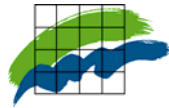


**IUCN**

# **OTTER SPECIALIST GROUP BULLETIN**

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## **IUCN OTTER SPECIALIST GROUP BULLETIN**

The IUCN Otter Specialist Group Bulletin appears biannually. Articles, reports, symposium announcements and information on recent publications are welcome. All submissions should be typed double-spaced. The submission of an electronic manuscript on diskette or by e-mail is strongly recommended. Reports should not exceed 2000 words in length, i.e. not to exceed four printed pages, including diagrams and tables. Articles may be longer. Diagrams, maps and tables should be included as a photocopy ready for reprint. A short abstract for translation into Spanish and French has to be included.

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## **NOTE FROM THE EDITOR**

Thanks to the efforts of Aksel Bo Madsen and the generous sponsorship of NERI the printing of this issue of the IUCN Otter Specialist Group Bulletin was made possible. For the rest, there was almost no reaction at all in response to my complaint about the inactivity of approximately 90% of those receiving the Bulletin in the last issue. No – I am not going to be cynical about that! In addition, Christoph Schenk of the Frankfurt Zoological Society took over the extra costs for the inclusion of the Giant Otter bibliography that was mentioned some time ago. In this issue we finally had the space to insert it. My sincere thanks to both Aksel and Christoph!

In addition I really want to thank Kevin Roche (Czech Republic) for correcting all those contributions that have not been reviewed by at least one native English speaker. Unfortunately we were not able to provide translations into Spanish and French. I will try to include the missing summaries in the next issue. I also have to thank Hans van den Berg (Ede), who has assisted me over many years with the transport of the boxes (“thanks for all the kilometres you have driven at your own cost”), and Els Hoogsteede-Veens and Erwin Hellegering of GRAFISCH SERVICE CENTRUM VAN GILS (Wageningen) who are always open to suggestions, deciding on colours of title pages by themselves (“I like your choice”), and for having spotted several layout mistakes that I overlooked.

Finally, many thanks go to Giuseppe Carpaneto, Paul Chanin, Josef Lanszki, Aksel Bo Madsen, and Dénes Nagy, all of who provided information on recent publications.

IUCN/SSC OSG GROUP

**FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK- December 2003**

My final report for the second half of 2003 will focus mainly on South America, as I received no updated information from the other continents. The 'Giant otter people' were quite busy in 2003 and, from my point of view; there has been remarkable progress in improving the foundations for conservation of this species. The final draft of the Standardised Giant Otter Field Methodology is now under revision by Jessica Groenendijk and should be published in 2004. Due to the efforts of Jessica, Frank Hajek and Miriam Marmontel, and with the support of the Fundacao Brasileira para o Desenvolvimento Sustentavel, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Sociedade Civil Mimiraua, a workshop on the Standard Range-Wide Distribution Survey Strategy for the Giant Otter was held in the Brazilian Pantanal. More than a dozen Giant otter specialists from five South American countries joined this workshop and I had the pleasure of presenting the experience from ISOS, the Information System for Otter Surveys. A standardised range-wide distribution survey methodology is a vital tool for the documentation of the past, present and future distribution of the Giant otter, for the understanding of its conservation status (degree of reduction in its range), for priority setting, and for planning conservation programmes. It will also improve cross-border cooperation and coordination of research and conservation activities. It is planned to publish these guidelines in 2004 and to use them as a basis for fundraising activities to establish systematic distribution surveys.

The Frankfurt Zoological Society has just announced another concrete contribution to Giant otter conservation. Their children's colouring book on Giant otters 'Pepe, el lobo de rio' has now been printed and distributed in Brazil. Six years after it was first produced it has now been re-printed several times in five countries, always being adapted to local needs. More than 15,000 colouring books have been distributed so far. This really is a success story and it is hoped that many more children will be stimulated to share in the fascination on the Giant otters and the tropical rainforest of South America.

An import step forward has also been taken for the captive Giant otter population. In July 2003, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) officially approved the International Studbook for *Pteronura brasiliensis*. Dortmund Zoo (Germany) and Brasilia Zoo (Brazil) jointly hold the studbook and Sheila Sykes-Gatz (Dortmund Zoo) and Marcelo Lima Reis (Brasilia Zoo) have been appointed as the international studbook keepers. Improvements in management of the captive Giant otter population will contribute greatly to the conservation of the wild population of this species, through reduction of the threat caused by the taking of wild animals for exhibition purposes. By early 2004, the second edition of the husbandry and management recommendations for Giant otters, and the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the Giant otter studbook SPARKS data set, will be available to everyone interested.

The increased interest in South American otters is also reflected in a report from Helen Waldemarin. On June 26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> 2003, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brazilian Congress of Mastozoology took place in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais State. During this congress 13 posters on the Neotropical otter and four posters on the Giant otter were presented. These numbers document the increase in the number of research projects on these species in Brazil, considering that, at the last Mastozoology Congress, there was only one poster on *P. brasiliensis* and two on *L. longicaudis*.

For the latter species, Helen Waldemarin reports on several ongoing or new research projects. For example, the Projeto Mustelideos do Brasil worked on an evaluation of the attitudes of local people in the region of Ouro Preto in the Minas Gerais State toward the Neotropical otter, and also started awareness and education activities with the publication of a leaflet explaining the importance of aquatic habitats and of otters. A cooperation project was started between the Projeto Ecolontras (coordinated by Helen in Rio de Janeiro State); Projeto Mustelideos do Brasil (Minas Gerais State) and the researcher Carlos Benhur Kasper (Rio Grande do Sul state), to test possible methodologies for a standardisation of the distribution survey methodology for the Neotropical otter. They are undertaking surveys on rivers in these three Brazilian states and are trying to find the minimum distance that has to be surveyed to find evidence of otters, and if checking of one bank side is sufficient. In Colombia, Diego Andrés Arcila is carrying out a study on habitat use by the Neotropical otter and, in Mexico, Juan Pablo Gallo is studying the diet and distribution of this species in the Reserva de la Biosfera Montañas de Álamos and on the Cuchujaqui River.

I am especially happy about the efforts to standardise the survey methods for more otter species, as the German Association for Otter Conservation (Aktion Fischotterschutz) is also working on improvements to the Information System for Otter Surveys (ISOS). This now includes a digital worldwide UTM grid of 50x50km and 100x100km squares as a basis for homogenous and comparable

distribution maps. We are also preparing GIS layers with topographic information that can be combined with these grids. The next step will be the development of a specific software tool to enable the transfer of distribution data via the Internet and to present the maps on the worldwide web. A first test version will probably be presented at the International Otter Colloquium in 2004.

This event will be the highlight of our activities in 2004. I really would be pleased to meet as many otter people as possible in Frostburg USA. Tom Serfass and his team are working hard to arrange a successful meeting. Those who have not yet registered should hurry up and visit the website <http://otter.frostburg.edu> for further information. There are several important topics to be discussed at the Otter Colloquium and the attendant meeting of the Otter Specialist Group. The preliminary agenda for the latter covers aspects such as the evaluation of the outcome of the 2001 recommendations, the revision of the OSG Manifesto, the Otter Action Plan, the OSG Bulletin, standards for survey methods, research priorities, guidelines for otter reintroductions, studbooks, and breeding programmes and husbandry guidelines. We will also have to look for a venue for (or more importantly, a person/organisation able to organise it) the X. International Otter Colloquium. Following from the colloqui in Göttingen, DE (1979), Norwich, GB (1981), Strasbourg, FR (1983), Santa Cruz, US (1985), Hankensbüttel, DE (1989), Pietermaritzburg, ZA (1993), Trebon, CZ (1999), Valdivia, CL (2001), and Frostburg, US (2004), we are still missing a colloquium in Asia. Interest from this direction would be very welcome. At the OSG meeting in Frostburg, we have also to discuss the membership structure of the Otter Specialist Group and, in particular, the nomination of the Continental Coordinators for the next IUCN triennium, which will be inaugurated at the World Conservation Congress to be held from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2004 in Bangkok, Thailand. I would be pleased if the national members and representatives of the OSG could agree on their recommendations for the nomination of their Continental Coordinators before Frostburg and let me know their suggestions as soon as possible. The keyword IUCN reminds me that we will have to face another important task in 2004. Recently, the Species Survival Commission (SSC) released the Data Entry Module for the new Species Information System (SIS). The SIS aims to become a worldwide species information resource containing interlinked databases of species-related information managed by the SSC's network of Specialist Groups. For further information, please visit the website <http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/programs/sisindex.htm>. It will be our task to revise and complete the comprehensive data collection for all otter species. As a first important step, we will have to evaluate the Red List status for all otter species by March 2004.

As should now be clear, we are facing some great challenges in 2004 – and a lot of work for all OSG members. It is my hope that as many members (or more) of the OSG will assist in this, as was the case in 2003. At the end of this year I want to express my gratitude to all those who contributed to the work of the OSG and to the conservation of otters. For 2004 I wish all of you health, success and satisfaction.

Hankensbüttel, December 2003

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**R E P O R T**

**NATURAL DEATHS OF GIANT OTTERS  
(*Pteronura brasiliensis*) IN BALBINA HYDROELECTRIC LAKE,  
AMAZONAS, BRAZIL**

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(received 29<sup>th</sup> September 2003, accepted 17<sup>th</sup> November 2003)

In 1987 the Brazilian Northern Electric Company (ELETRONORTE) finished damming the Uatumã River that formed the 3,246 km<sup>2</sup> lake (containing 3,299 islands) of the Balbina hydroelectric power station. In 2001, through a project entitled “Social organization, behavior and diet of the giant otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) in the influenced area of Balbina hydroelectric power station, Amazonas, Brazil”, the authors started to study giant otters in the reservoir (de MATTOS et al., 2002; ZUANON et al., 2002). Despite being an enormous area, we managed to record two dead otters in the lake. One of them was found in February 2002 at the entrance of one of the giant otters’ dens (01°35’21.3”S; 59°40’15.6”W). Judging from the general condition of the carcass, the animal, a 150 cm long female weighing 11 kg, had died about 2 days before it was found. This individual didn’t have any visible injury on its body and the fur, which was intact, fell off when handled. The internal organs were emaciated and most of them in an advanced stage of decomposition due to the high temperature, characteristic of this tropical region. Based on the total length, it seemed to be a young adult female, which probably died a natural death. The low weight of this otter (only 11 kg) seems to corroborate this hypothesis. According to our data of captive giant otters in Amazonia, a 150 cm animal should weigh on average  $19.0 \pm 2.9$  kg (n = 4) (F. Rosas, pers. obs.).

The second dead giant otter was recorded in July 2003. This animal was found and reported to us by the rangers of the Uatumã Biological Reserve (ReBio Uatumã/IBAMA). According to the rangers, a moribund otter was found in the water at 9:50 a.m., surrounded by a group of 6-8 other giant otters. The animal was still breathing when it was found. The rangers removed it from the water and pulled it to the margin. At that moment, they could observe that it had been seriously wounded (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Moribund giant otter in the water (a), and the wounds of the animal observed after its death (b, c and d). Balbina Lake, Amazonas, Brazil. Photos: H. M. de Magalhães.

The otter died at 10:25 a.m. and the rangers threw the body back into the water. Three weeks later, during our next field trip to Balbina Lake, we tried to recover the carcass but it wasn't found. It is interesting to note that this otter had been severely bitten on its snout and genital areas (Fig. 1c and 1d). Our data on captive giant otters have already revealed that the genital area is one of the regions of the body where animals tend to concentrate their attacks while fighting. Other severe wounds were observed near the forelimbs. According to the rangers, even though the animal was bleeding, there were no "piranhas" around it. A careful examination of the wounds shown in the pictures suggests that other giant otters had attacked the animal. This is supported by the presence of other otters around it, which, despite not fighting at the moment the rangers arrived, could be the ones responsible for the deadly wounds caused to the animal. This opinion is also shared by Dr. Duplaix, who has reported terrible fights among giant otters both in captivity and in the wild in Guyana (N. Duplaix, pers. comm.). The area where the moribund giant otter was found is very interesting since it seems to represent an overlap in the territory of at least two giant otter groups. During our observations, we managed to see different groups passing or fishing in that specific area, however, we never recorded the encounter of any groups. Although we cannot confirm that the giant otter died due to a fight with other otters,

all the evidence points in this direction. Antagonistic behavior among giant otters has already been documented in the literature. According to SCHWEIZER (1992) an encounter of two different groups resulted in serious injuries to one adult otter and the death of a giant otter calf. MOURÃO and CARVALHO (2001) recorded an adult male giant otter killing and eating (cannibalism) a young cub from a different group in the Brazilian Pantanal.

The apparently "natural deaths" of giant otters reported here may have a significant role in the dynamics of the species. Even though Balbina is an artificial lake, it doesn't seem to have any spatial or feeding limitation (F. Rosas, pers. obs.), factors that usually lead to a high rate of natural mortality in a species. Despite the lake's huge size, which makes it harder to find carcasses, we have recorded in a two-year period two dead animals that seemed to have died natural deaths. These data suggest that natural mortality may have an important role in the biology of giant otters in Balbina Lake and should be taken into account in future management plans for the species.



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**Acknowledgements** - We thank Centro de Preservação e Pesquisa de Mamíferos Aquáticos (CPPMA)/ Manaus Energia S.A. and ReBio Uatumã/IBAMA, who provided logistical support in the field. We also thank Kesä K. Lehti and two anonymous reviewers for valuable comments and the English review made on earlier drafts of this manuscript. We are grateful to Fundação O Boticário de Proteção à Natureza (project nº 053220021) for the financial support given to our study.

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## REPORT

### RECENT RECORDS FOR THE NEOTROPICAL RIVER OTTER (*Lontra longicaudis*) IN GUERRERO, MEXICO

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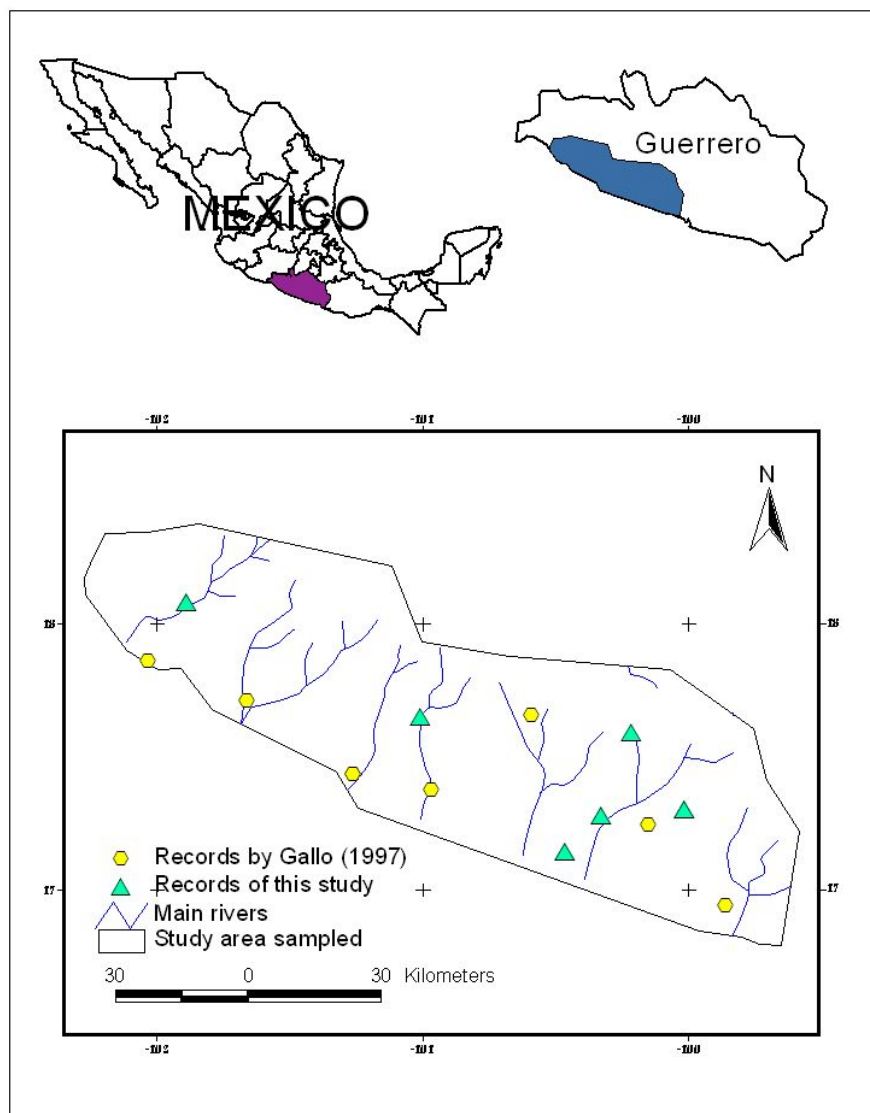
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Neotropical river otters (*Lontra longicaudis*) have an historical distribution from northern Mexico down to South America (LARIVIERE, 1999). This species has been recorded as associated with many vegetation types, and has been located at elevations between 300 to 1500 m (LARIVIERE, 1999). The quality of such habitats is characterized by sites with large amounts of riparian vegetation, which favors the abundance of den sites. The neotropical river otter has a low tolerance to environmental change, tending to occupy areas where water flow is constant and extensive, with low amounts of chemical and organic pollutants (LARIVIERE, 1999). The species is currently threatened along its distribution area, the main causes of population extinction being habitat fragmentation and poaching for fur (NOWAK, 1999). In Mexico, industrial waste spills into rivers have increased the amount of heavy metals, with a consequent increase in deaths of neotropical river otters (GALLO-REYNOSO, 1997).

New neotropical otter records were obtained opportunistically whilst carrying out a field survey between August 2002 and April 2003. The study area was located in the southwestern portion of the Mexican State of Guerrero, encompasses an area of 11,594 km<sup>2</sup>, and includes the municipalities (local government entities) of Coyuca de Benítez, Atoyac de Álvarez, San Jerónimo de Juárez, Tecpan, Petatlán, Zihuatanejo and La Unión. These municipalities constitute the region known as Costa Grande, located between 17°00'-17°58' N latitude and 100°00'-101°45' W longitude (Fig. 1). The presence of neotropical otters was confirmed through interviews with ranchers, hunters and tanneries (LÓPEZ-

GONZÁLEZ and BROWN, 2002; McNAB and POLISAR, 2002). Physical records (skins, skulls, and captive individuals) were documented through photographs. The records were plotted on a 1:250,000 map using ArcView 3.2a (ESRI 1999), creating a geographic information system that included vegetation (PALACIO-PRIETO et al., 2000), elevation and human settlement layers (CONABIO, 2003).



**Figure 1.** Geographic location of Mexico, the study area (shaded) within the State of Guerrero and sites of Neotropical river otter records for this study and those of GALLO (1997).

We obtained a total of 12 new records for neotropical river otters in the study area. These records represent the period from 2001-2003 (Table 1). Although neotropical river otters have been protected by the Mexican government since at least 1965 (SAG, 1965) the capture of five individuals for sale reflects an extant poaching problem within the region. Tanneries obtain a \$40 dollar profit per skin processed, which usually means a 10-fold profit for the merchant (pers. obs.). Of the records, four were female, three male, and the rest were classified as unknown given that we were not able to verify either sex due to the poor condition of the specimen or lack of sufficient data provided by the informant. The records represented otters from four of the six municipalities surveyed, six for Atoyac, three for Zihuatanejo, two for San Jerónimo and one for Tecpan (Table 1). All records presented here are new localities when compared to the results of GALLO-REYNOSO (1997), reflecting possible range extension. Neotropical river otters were associated with six different vegetation types, from

wetlands (popal-tular) to pine forest (Table 1), two records were detected in human influenced grasslands, probably reflecting transient individuals. Using GIS, we determined that otters were present in areas with  $50.48 \pm 116.62$  humans/km<sup>2</sup>, and a settlement density of  $0.14 \pm 0.03$  towns/km<sup>2</sup>. The average distance between records is  $52.17 \pm 39.87$  km, the average distance from our records to Gallo-Reynoso is  $22.09 \pm 7.02$  km. These measurements probably reflect the presence of several distinct populations within the study area. The sites around the town of Atoyac and La Zuzuca (San Jeronimo), however, probably represent a single subpopulation as they are 14.1 km apart, a linear distance that is easy to travel for otters.

**Table 1.** Neotropical river otters records from the Costa Grande region, Guerrero, between 2001-2003. a. Male (M), female (f), unknown (U). b. Vegetation type taken from PALACIO-PRIETO et al. (2000)

Year	Record	Sex <sup>a</sup>	Locality/Municipality	Elevation	Vegetation type <sup>b</sup>	Although neotropical river otters remain a protected species in Mexico, their poaching and commercial use continuous to be detrimental for the extant
2003	Skin	M	Atoyac	100	Grasslands	
2003	Skin	F	Atoyac	100	Grasslands	
2002	Skin	F	El paraíso/Atoyac	1000	Cloud forest	
2001	Skin	M	Sto. Domingo/Atoyac	1500	Cloud forest	
2003	Observed	U	El paraíso/Atoyac	1000	Pine forest	
2002	Observed	U	El paraíso/Atoyac	1000	Pine forest	
2001	Skin	F	La sombra/Tecpan	500	Oak forest	
2003	Observed/ fisherman	M	La zuzuca/San Jerónimo	0	Wetland	
2003	Observed/ fisherman	U	La zuzuca/San Jerónimo	0	Wetland	
2003	Observed/ fisherman	U	El Higo/Zihuatanejo	400	Tropical dry forest	
2003	Observed/ rancher	U	El Higo/Zihuatanejo	400	Tropical dry forest	
2003	Observed/ rancher	F	El Higo/Zihuatanejo	400	Tropical dry forest	

populations. A special effort should be carried out to create a protected area in the Atoyac-San Jeronimo area that would shelter otters from further prosecution.

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## REPORT

### **CAMERA TRAP USE FOR STUDYING GIANT OTTERS (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) IN THE YASUNÍ BIOSPHERE RESERVE, ECUADORIAN AMAZON**

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Since January 2003, during field surveys of giant otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) carried out in the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve (north-eastern Ecuadorian Amazon), we have been testing the use of camera traps as a supplementary technique for studying this species. Camera traps are used for population monitoring of several medium to large size wildlife species. This technique can also provide information about home range size, habitat use, and behavioural activities such as daily and seasonal movements and activity periods. In addition, it is possible to identify many individuals through distinctive features using camera traps activated by the individuals themselves.

We have tested the CamTrakker equipment, which combines a fully automatic 35 mm camera with a passive infrared heat-in-motion detector. When something that moves and gives off heat passes by, a silent electronic switch engages the camera that takes the photograph. Time selector switches allow the field researcher to select one of six time-delays and three modes of operation. These features allow day and night operation and reduce the chance of too many photos of the same individual. During fieldwork, four camera traps were located near dens and latrines (marking areas) of three giant otter groups in the study area. We recommend setting the time selector switch to a range of 20-90 seconds, as visit times are usually very short, and to use ISO 200 36 frame colour print film. When installing the camera in the field, we also advise setting it up 50 cm above the ground, taking into account potential changes in water level that might damage the equipment.

A preliminary analysis of the utilisation of this technique with giant otters shows that camera traps provide useful information about movement patterns in the activity area of each group, frequency of visits to specific locations, such as campsites, daily activity periods in dens and latrines, identification and monitoring of specific individuals based on distinctive features such as spot patterns, presence of offspring, sex determination (especially adult females), and pregnancy (Figures 1, 2, 3).

**Acknowledgements** – The research on giant otters in the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve is part of the Living Landscape Program of the Wildlife Conservation Society – Ecuador Program, with the support of USAID.



**Figure 1.** Giant otter at a latrine located on the shore of an oxbow lake by the Tiputini River.



**Figure 2.** Giant otters from the Añangucocha region of the Napo River. The individual above is an adult female, and the individual below is marking in the latrine.



**Figure 3.** Giant otter at Añangucocha on the Napo River. The adult female is carrying a cub in her mouth.

**SHORT NOTICE**

**EURASIAN OTTERS (*Lutra lutra*) IN CRETE?!**

Koen de SMET, Petros LYMBERAKIS

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In July 2003 I explored the south coast of Crete and visited the Natura 2000 site of Kourtaliotiko Farangi and Preveli Beach. Water runs down from the central Cretan mountains on a permanent base and very deep-water ponds have been eroded in the canyon. There is a well-developed riverine forest (*Platanus*) and thickets and scrubs (*Nerium*) are present all along the riverbank. In the lower part, near the endemic Cretan *Phoenix theopastica* palms, there are reed beds and *Potamogeton* in the water. There are many amphibians and reptiles and fish are very abundant. In other words, this is prime Mediterranean otter habitat.

I found otter spraints in the higher part of the canyon and deposited on larger rocks near the sea and palm forest. Though amphibian bones and a jelly like substance were found, no fish spines were observed. One of the spraints was fresh enough to confirm the typical otter perfume.

I had not realised that the otter had never been reported as living in Crete and, therefore, did not collect or photograph the spraints. Mr. Lymberakis ([lyberis@hhmc.uoc.gr](mailto:lyberis@hhmc.uoc.gr)) from the Cretan Natural History Museum later confirmed that the otter was not known from this locality, or from elsewhere on Crete. Other Palaearctic mammal species, such as badger and stone marten, however, do occur on the island and others have become extinct in historical times.

As these findings are very important from a zoogeographical point of view, as well as for nature protection on Crete, I would like to make an appeal to other European otter specialists to check the locality again for otter whenever they visit the island, either professionally or on holiday. Of course spraints should be collected on that occasion.



## SHORT NOTICE

### **MORE ON PREDATION OF FISH EATING BIRDS BY EURASIAN OTTERS (*LUTRA LUTRA*) IN CAPTIVITY**

Jordi RUIZ-OLMO, Rosa MARSOL and Victoria ASENSIO

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In a previous issue of the IUCN OSG Bulletin (no.19/1 2002), we presented a report on evidence of predation on fish eating birds by the Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) in northeast Spain. However, whilst this work was still in press we collected new interesting data. A further four adult grey herons (*Ardea cinerea*) were captured and killed by the captive otters living in the enclosures of the Pont de Suert Otter Centre (Pyrenean mountains, Spain). A female otter (6 kg and 5 years old) killed two of the herons on April 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of 2003; and a second female (7 kg and 7 years old), with one sub-adult cub (14 to 21 months old), killed one heron on April 16<sup>th</sup> 2003 and another on January 20<sup>th</sup> 2004. First three episodes occurred during a six-day period, coinciding with a cold week when minimum air temperatures ranged between -0.6 to 7.2 °C and minimum water temperatures between 5 and 8 °C. The fourth episode also occurred during a cold week: minimum air temperature at -5.2 °C, and water temperature at 4 °C.

There is a trout (*Salmo trutta*) fish farm close to the otter enclosures, where herons and other birds regularly go to scavenge fish (as they also do at the otter centre); however, since the existence of the centre (1995), there have been no reports of these captive otters catching herons at this facility. The practically simultaneous capture of first three herons could be due to a special situation, such as low temperatures (as happened again in 2004) or food shortages in the River Noguera Ribagorçana and the Escales reservoir; though the heron's body condition was not bad, the cold weather may have forced them to take greater risks than normal in an effort to gain food. Only in 2004 the heron was consumed by otters. Herons have shown wounds to the skull and the neck (between wings), the later being fractured in three of the four cases.

All these cases at the Pont de Suert Otter Centre involved captive otters with wild herons, as we have found in the wild for 1990 (see the previous report). However, as regards wild otters, heron and otter "concentrations" can occur, particularly when environmental conditions are bad (e.g. at reservoir tails, fish farms, holes in ice cover, ponds during droughts, etc.) and such interactions could occur more frequently than presently recognised.

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## Proceedings VIIth Otter Colloquium

Dear Colleagues!

The Proceedings of the VIIth Otter Colloquium (1998 - Trebon) are published. The book contains 400 pages and is sold for the price of 20 Euro plus postage (Europe 5 € Overseas 8 €). Those of you who prefer to receive a CD with pdf files instead may order it for 10 Euro plus postage (Europe 2 € Overseas 2.25 €).

Sincerely yours,

Arno Gutleb - on behalf of the editors

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## CONGRESS ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL FOR PAPERS

**IX International Otter Colloquium**

Otters: Ambassadors for Aquatic Conservation



4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> June 2004, USA

We recently have been receiving numerous requests for extensions in submitting abstracts for the IX International Otter Colloquium. Please be aware that the December 15, 2003 date was intended as a suggestion for participants to submit abstracts early and not the final deadline. The final deadline was February 2, 2004. However, our web page (<http://otter.frostburg.edu>) soon will be reflecting March 1, 2004 as the deadline. This extension is being made to accommodate requests from the international community. We thank the numerous researchers that made early submissions of abstracts for papers and posters. To help make our planning more efficient, we encourage others to make early submissions and not wait until the final deadline. Please monitor the web page for conference costs (to be posted by mid-January) and on-line registration information (we will begin accepting registrations at the end of January). We're looking forward to seeing you in June.

Sincerely,

Tom Serfass, Lisa Serfass, and Sadie Steven  
Colloquium Organizers

for further information please contact:

Thomas L. Serfass, Department of Biology, Frostburg State University, Frostburg, MD 21532, 301-687-4171

[TSERFASS@mail.frostburg.edu](mailto:TSERFASS@mail.frostburg.edu)

#### **4<sup>th</sup> International Martes Symposium**

Martes in Carnivore Communities

20.-24. July 2004,

University of Lisboa, Portugal

The symposium will cover aspects of the biology, management and conservation of members of the genus *Martes*.

For more information please contact:

Margarida Santos Reis, e-mail: [mmreis@fc.ul.pt](mailto:mmreis@fc.ul.pt)

#### **11<sup>th</sup> Workshop of Latin America Aquatic Mammals Specialists**

12.-17. September, 2004

Quito, Ecuador

From the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of September, 2004, in Quito, Ecuador, the 11<sup>th</sup> Workshop of Latin America Aquatic Mammals Specialists (11<sup>th</sup> RT) will be hosted. This event takes place every two years and for the first time will be hosted in Ecuador. The 11<sup>th</sup> RT is organized by the Latin American Society of Aquatic Mammals Specialists (SOLAMAC) and the Biology Department of Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE).

The 11<sup>th</sup> RT will be a time for professionals, researchers and students interested in the knowledge of aquatic mammals to share their work, perspectives and experiences to one another. We hope it will become a success and invite you to participate. For more information please contact: [RTEcuador@puce.edu.ec](mailto:RTEcuador@puce.edu.ec)

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#### **9<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Mammalogy**

2005, Sapporo/Japan

<http://cse.ffpri.affrc.go.jp/hiroh/ICOM9Japan.html>

Dear Mammalogists,

It is a great pleasure to inform you that the Congress Committee for MAMMAL 2005 (the 9th International Mammalogical Congress; formerly the International Theriological Congress: ITC) has been launched. The Congress Committee will periodically inform you about the preparation of MAMMAL 2005 through e-mail and the web page ([www.hokkaido-ies.go.jp/mammal2005/](http://www.hokkaido-ies.go.jp/mammal2005/)), which is now under construction. Though we are now managing e-mail addresses based on delegate lists of the 7th and 8th ITC, we would like to renew the list of addresses for MAMMAL 2005 with your permission. Are you interested in MAMMAL 2005? Please reply to us (MAMMAL2005@hokkaido-ies.go.jp) to get the periodical information about MAMMAL 2005.

Koichi Kaji and Takashi Saitoh (Secretary General)  
Tomoko Takahashi (Secretary)

## CALL FOR INFORMATION

Prof. Padma. K. Silva (Coordinator, Otter Specialist Group, Asian region) asked me to contact you. Please allow me to introduce my self. I am working on different aspect of wildlife of Bangladesh during the last one decade. In the last few years I am working on otters of Bangladesh with the fund from OSG and Colombo Zoo, USA. I surveyed the Sundarbans and other areas for otters. You might know that the fishermen in the Sundarbans use otters for fishing. In south Asia, this is the only area where the ethnic fishermen group uses otters for fishing. We studied socio-economic condition of these ethnic fishermen, the fishing techniques with otters and biology of otters in captivity. This century old traditional practice is now under severe threat because of poor economic condition of the fishermen, lack of education and awareness.

I am interested to do some joint research on different aspects of otter and otter fishing in the Sundarbans. I will be very glad if you would kindly be involved to save this century old traditional practice.

Look forward for hearing from you.

Thank you! Sincerely yours,

Dr. Mohammed Mostafa Feeroz  
Associate Professor, Department of Zoology  
Jahangirnagar University  
Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh  
Phone: 0172047115 or 88-011832965  
Fax: 88-02-7708069

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Dear all,

I am a vet and I prepare a thesis (PhD) on otters (relationship between pollution and survival of otter populations in the S.E of France). For that, we are writing a questionnaire intended for the fishermen to know what they know about and what they think of otters (predation, pollution, reintroduction...). Did you already carry out this type of survey in people (fishermen, inhabitants,...) of your own country? Would you have references to advise me?

Thank you in advance for your help! Best regards

Alexandra MAZET  
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ELKE Staib AND SHEILA Sykes-Gatz

**NOTE: This list of references is not meant to be exhaustive or complete but to be working tool for persons who are interested in Giant otters but who do not have access to a large university library. We welcome any additions or corrections: [NDParis@aol.com](mailto:NDParis@aol.com), [fzsgop@terra.com.pe](mailto:fzsgop@terra.com.pe)**

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