

I U C N - O Z T A S K F O R C E



REPORT

NEOTROPICAL OTTER SUB-GROUP

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Neotropical Otter Sub-Group

Introduction

The Otter Specialist Group (OSG) is part of the IUCN/SSC (IUCN Species Survival Commission) that represents a network of more than 7,500 volunteer experts from different countries. The OZ Task Force (otters in zoos, aquariums, rehabilitation and wildlife sanctuaries) was created to address issues related to otters in ex-situ situations whose objective is to facilitate communication and assist in gathering information that can be documented, preserved and shared among professionals who work with otters.

There is little or no information regarding Neotropical Otters in comparison to other otter species that can be found in literature, even though many institutions have been working with this species over the years. Yet to this day, we are experiencing the same questions, difficulties, troubles and becoming frustrated that we can't obtain information that would help us to solve problems with managing this species in ex-situ situations. One of the reasons is the lack of experiences documented and loss of information through different generations.

The *OZ Task Force* wishing to foster the sharing of knowledge and expand information available to all professionals created the Neotropical Otter (*Lontra longicaudis*) subgroup. The goal for the subgroup is to create a database with the institutions holding this specie, compiling and generating information on protocols to be used to keep otters in captivity. The information will be documented, organized as a document guideline and will be posted on our website to be available for other professionals.

We started with a survey to learn the otters (males, females) that are in captivity and to know the institutions holding these animals. As we progress with the work more information will be documented on different topics such as husbandry management, diet, environment enrichment, medicine, hand raising and rehabilitation.

The work is done with the support of the Instituto Ekko Brasil/Projeto Lontra and its team (www.ekkobra-sil.org.br).

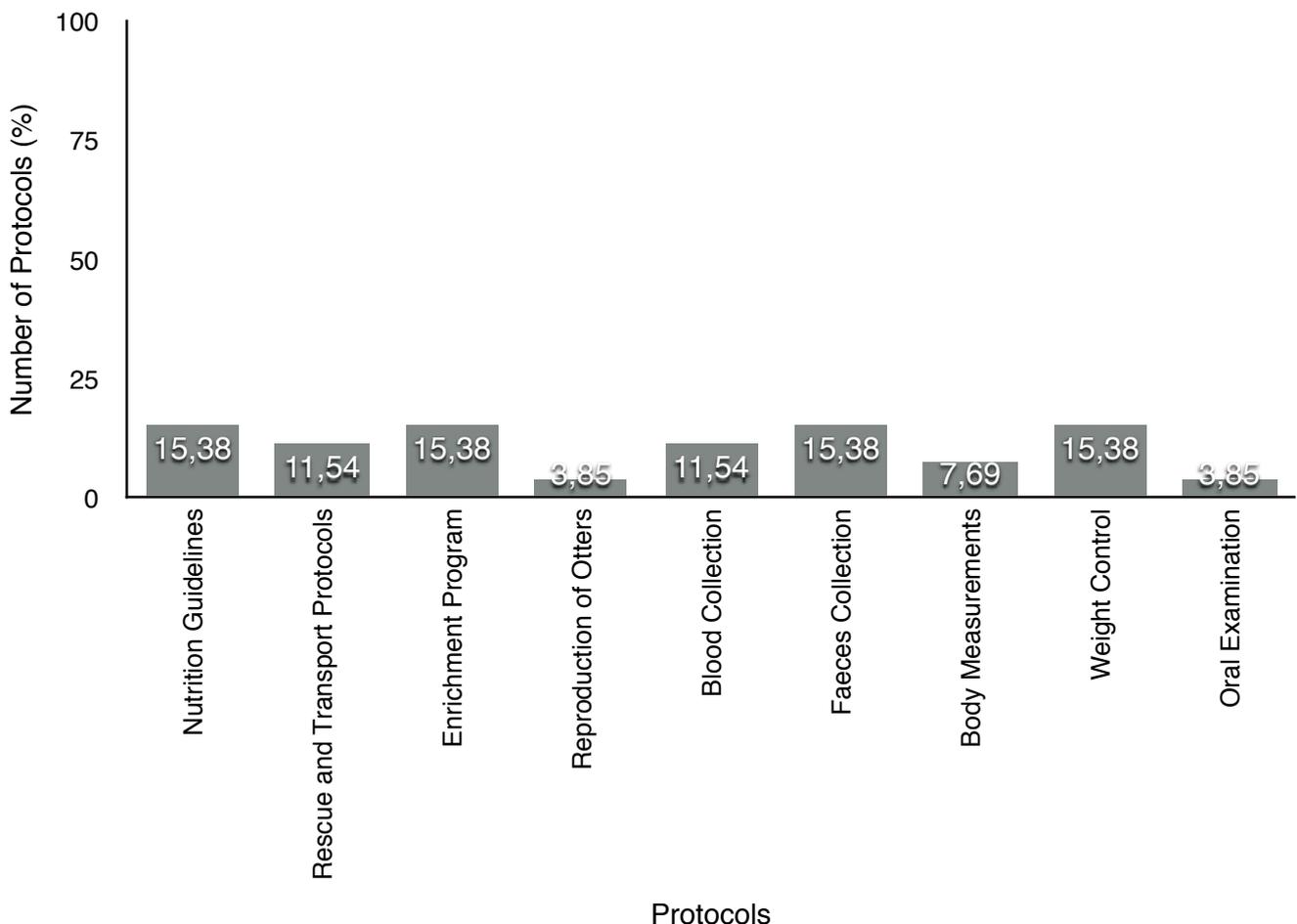
Strategic Planning and Results Obtained

The first action was to create a data set with all Zoos and scientific breedings with neotropical otters in Latin America. Second was to create a questionnaire and send it to the listed institutions. We got feedback from 11 institutions from Brazil, Guatemala, Colombia and El Salvador. These institutions keep 28 neotropical otters in captivity, being 14 males and 14 females. Only one institution, in Guatemala, once, had a successful breeding, with 2 pups. The distribution of otters, total, males and females results can be seen at the Table below.

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Institution	Number of otters	Male	Female
Instituto Mamíferos Acuáticos	4	2	2
Zoologico Nacional La Aurora	2	1	1
Barranquilla Zoo	5	2	3
Fundacion Zoologica de Cali	2	1	1
Fundacion Zoologico Santacruz	1	0	1
Fundacao Parque Zoologico de Sao Paulo	1	1	0
Club Auto safari Chapin	5	3	2
La Jungla, IRTRA	2	1	1
Zoologico Nacional	1	0	1
Parque Recreativo y Zoologico Piscilago	3	2	1
Parque Ecológico de São Carlos	2	1	1
Total	28	14	14

We were also interested in to know if these organizations have protocols related to: nutrition guidelines, rescue and transport, enrichment program, reproduction, blood collection, faeces collection, body measurements, weight control and oral examination. The results are in the graph below.



Few protocols can be found at the institutions. Protocols of enrichment, faeces collection and weight control were the most common, used by 4 institutions. These were follow by rescue and transport (3), blood collec-

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tion (3), reproduction and oral examination (2). Therefore, most of the protocols are concerned with enrichment, faeces collection and weight control. The protocols used for each institution can be seen at the Table below.

Institution Protocols	Nutrition	Rescue and Transport	Enrichment	Reproduction	Blood Analysis	Faeces Analysis	Body Measurements	Weight Control	Oral Examination
Instituto Mamíferos Aquáticos	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0
Zoologico Nacional La Aurora	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Barranquilla Zoo	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fundacion Zoologica de Cali	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
Fundacion Zoologico Santacruz	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fundacao Parque Zoologico de Sao Paulo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Club Auto safari Chapin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
La Jungla, IRTRA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Zoologico Nacional	0	0	0			0	0	0	
Parque Recreativo y Zoologico Piscilago	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Parque Ecológico de São Carlos	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	4	3	4	1	3	4	2	4	1

Due to the lack of information available we decided to create new protocols and make them available at the web site of the Instituto Ekko Brasil (http://www.ekkobrasil.org.br/pt_BR/site/index/index/page/69). At the moment, the protocols are available only in Portuguese but they are being translated to english. The protocols are:

1. PROTOCOL TO COLLECT BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL OF MAMMALS OF THE ORDER CARNIVORA (ICMBio/Cenap);
2. PROTOCOL TO COLLECT FRAGMENTS OF BRAIN AND SERUM;
3. PROTOCOL FOR NUTRITION OF NEWBORN NEOTROPICAL OTTERS;
4. PROTOCOL FOR NECROPSY OF NEOTROPICAL OTTER.

We also decided to begin specific veterinarian research to neotropical otter. Projects going on at the moment are:

1. Definition of a clinical reference for neotropical otter based on biochemical parameters;
2. Analysis and definition of measurements of neotropical otter bones;
3. Study of the helminthofauna of neotropical otter (*Lontra longicaudis*) in the region of Santa Catarina Island, Santa Catarina, Brazil;
4. Behaviour of neotropical otter in captivity;

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5. Enrichment of enclosures for captive otters with living fishes in their pool;
6. Associative learning and conditioning in the captive neotropical otters' feeding procedure to reduce negative effects of captivity.

What is next?

- strengthen the contact between institutions that have otter in captivity
- create new protocols
- publish the results of research in progress
- expand research
- organize an event in partnership with the IUCN/OZ TASK FORCE focusing on otters in captivity