

# Information wanted on African Otters

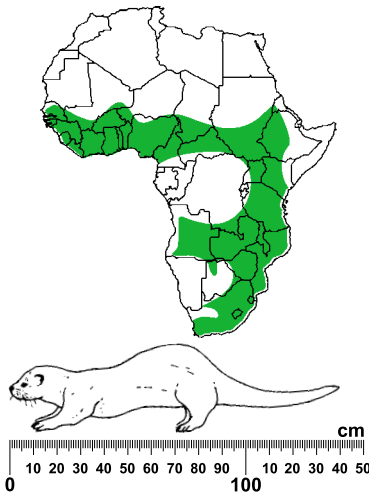
There are 13 species of otters world-wide. Most of them are threatened. Otters are excellent ambassadors or indicators for wetlands, because they are top predators in various semi-aquatic habitats. In Africa four species of otters occur, but we know very little about them.

## Cape Clawless Otter

Occurring in most parts of western, eastern and southern Africa south of the Sahara.



Photo: Caterina Carugati



## Congo Clawless Otter

Limited to the Congo Basin.

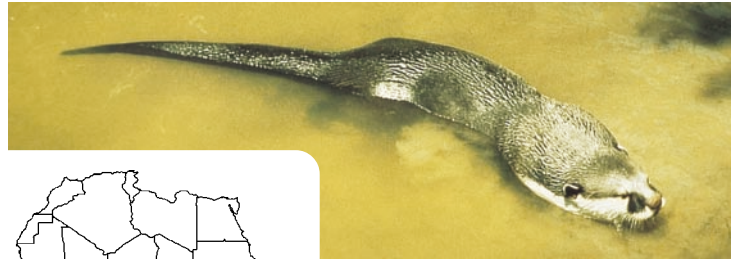
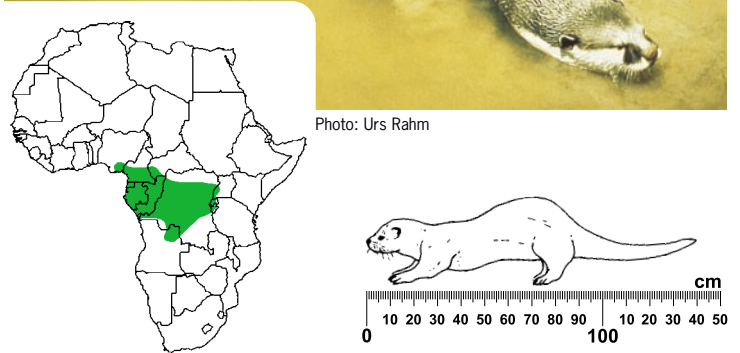


Photo: Urs Rahm

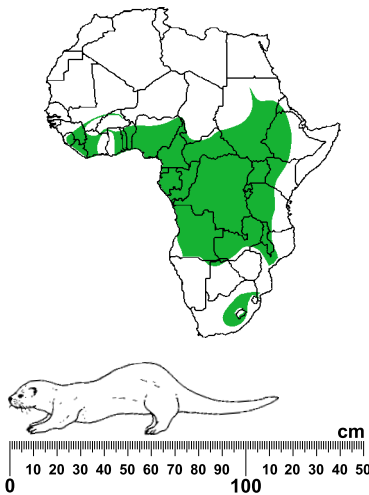


## Spotted-necked Otter

Occurring in most parts of western, central and south-eastern Africa south of the Sahara.



Photo: Claus Reuther

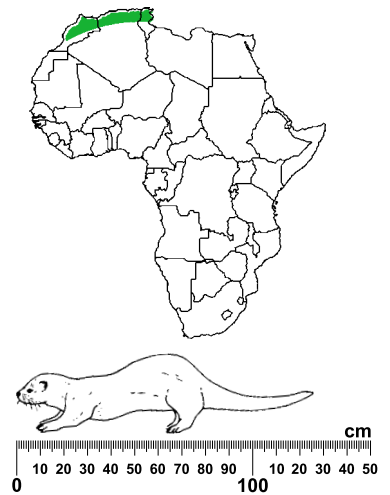


## Eurasian Otter

Africa range limited to Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, northwest of the Sahara.



Photo: Aktion Fischotterschutz



The Otter Specialist Group of the *Species Survival Commission (SSC)* of IUCN (*The World Conservation Union*) in cooperation with the German Association for Otter Conservation (*Aktion Fischotterschutz*), WWF (*World Wide Fund for Nature*) South Africa, and The Mazda Wildlife Fund has started an initiative to increase the knowledge of the distribution of otters in Africa. We kindly ask you to support these efforts by providing information on observations on otters.

## The Clawless Otters

Because the differentiation of the two big clawless otters (approximately 15 to 25kg) require much experience and some identification marks are not quite clear yet, these two species are introduced here together. The two species can be described as follows:

### Left forefoot (Full size)

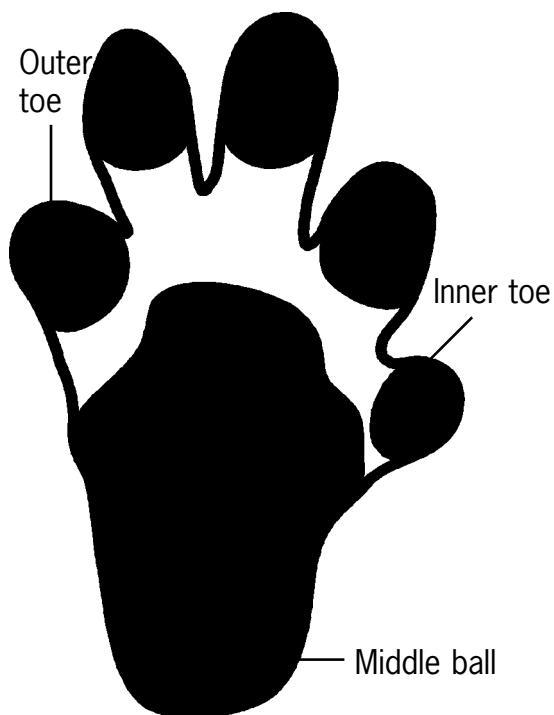


Photo: David Rowe-Rowe



Photo: Caterina Carugati



Photo: David Rowe-Rowe



Photo: Claus Reuther

**Cape Clawless Otter** (*Aonyx capensis*): Fur on upperparts dark chocolate brown, greyish brown or pale tan. Belly surface lighter. Chin, throat, upper chest, sides of neck, and cheeks to just below the eyes and ears are white or off-white. Vibrissae (whiskers) long and numerous. Forefeet unwebbed, without claws; hindfeet webbed till 2nd phalange with rudiments of nails on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th toe. Upper border of the rhinarium (nose) rounded or V-shaped.

**Congo Clawless Otter** (*Aonyx congicus*): Body colour a rich sepia. Chest, throat, chin, side of the head and nose white; ears white-rimmed; a prominent black patch (surrounded by white) occurs between eyes and nostrils. Head and neck extensively frosted. Vibrissae (whiskers) shorter and fewer than those of the Cape Clawless Otter. Feet identical with those of the Cape Clawless Otter. Upper border of the rhinarium (nose) straight.

### Left hindfoot (Full size)



Photo: Christian R. Schmidt



Photo: Urs Rahm



Photo: Christian R. Schmidt

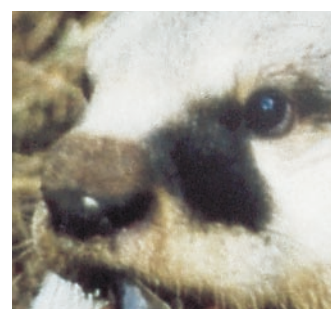
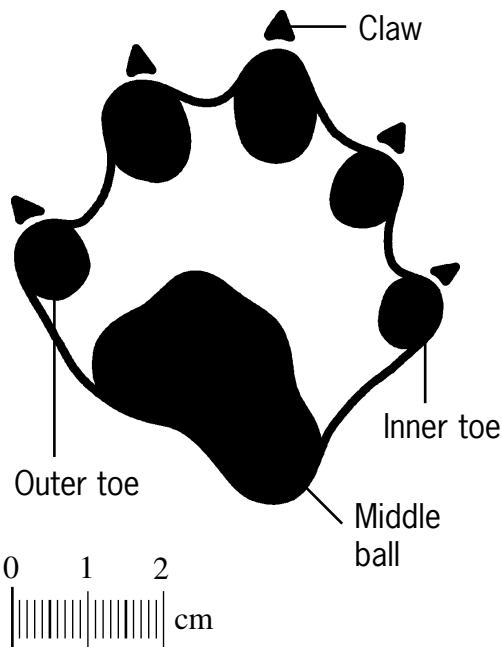
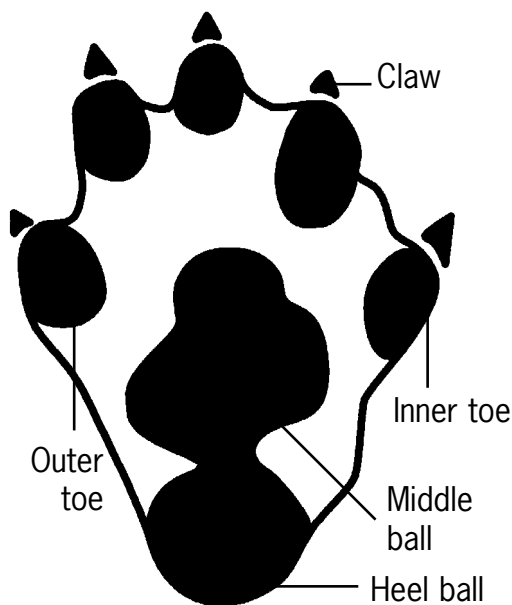


Photo: Urs Rahm

**Left forefoot (Full size)**



**Left hindfoot (Full size)**



**The Spotted-necked Otter (*Lutra maculicollis*)**

A small, sleek otter (3 to 8kg). Body overall a dark brown colour. Throat and chest may have cream or white mottling (amount varies) or may be dark brown. Sometimes white lips. On all four feet webs occur between all five toes, which have claws.



Photo: Claus Reuther



Photo: Claus Reuther

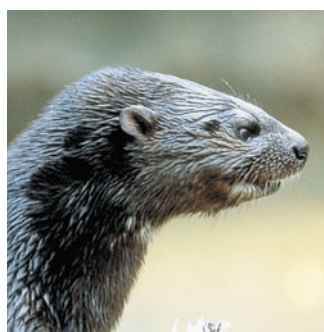


Photo: Claus Reuther

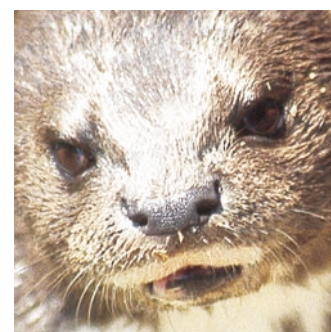


Photo: Claus Reuther

**Have you seen otters ?**

If you are interested to cooperate in the conservation of African otters please contact

Prof. Jan Nel  
Continental Coordinator for Africa  
IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group  
University of Stellenbosch  
Private Bag X1, Matieland  
7602 Stellenbosch  
SOUTH AFRICA  
Fax: +27-21-808 2405  
e-mail: jan@maties.sun.ac.za

Dr. Hélène Jacques  
Regional Representative for the  
African French speaking countries  
IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group  
13, place de Verdun  
38320 Eybens  
FRANCE  
Fax: +33-476-62 07 17  
e-mail: h.jacques.otter@wanadoo.fr

Claus Reuther, Chairman  
IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group  
Aktion Fischotterschutz e.V.  
OTTER-ZENTRUM  
29386 Hankensbüttel  
GERMANY  
Fax: +49-5832-980851  
e-mail: c.reuther@otterzentrum.de

**Where were the otter(s) seen?**

Give location by geographic coordinates (please add the geographic datum your map/GPS is referring to) or in relation to a large town/village/mountain (a feature that can be found on a map) e.g. river Achwa 10km north of Omoro/Uganda

**When were the otter(s) seen?**

Date (day/month/year); Time of the day (daytime, night, sunset, sunrise)

**In which kind of habitat were the otter(s) seen?**  river  marsh  lake  sea shore (please mark with X)

**How many otters were seen together?** ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ○ (please mark with X or give number)

**What are the common names for otters in your region?**

Eurasian otter: \_\_\_\_\_ Spotted-necked otter: \_\_\_\_\_

Clawless otter: \_\_\_\_\_ Otters in general: \_\_\_\_\_

Language/dialect: \_\_\_\_\_ Country/region: \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you have problems with otters or are there problems with otters in your area?**

Do they eat the fish you are trying to catch?  Yes  No (please mark with X)

Do they destroy your fish traps/fish nets?  Yes  No (please mark with X)

Please give additional information \_\_\_\_\_

**Are any otter products (skins/meat) sold on your local markets?**  Yes  No (please mark with X)

If yes, please give details \_\_\_\_\_

**The Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*)**

A medium sized otter (5 to 12kg). Fur uniform dark brown. Throat area and/or lower lip area grey to white. Throat marks of grey, white or yellow, of distinctive shape, are common. Webs between all five toes on each foot, which all have claws. Strong vibrissae (whiskers). Upper line of the (black and hairless) rhinarium (nose) forms a 'W'.



Photo: Claus Reuther



Photo: Claus Reuther



Photo: Claus Reuther

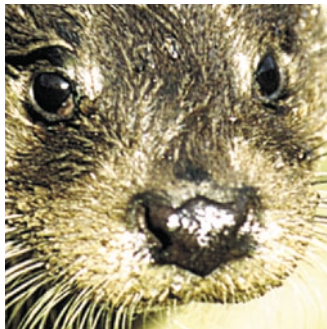
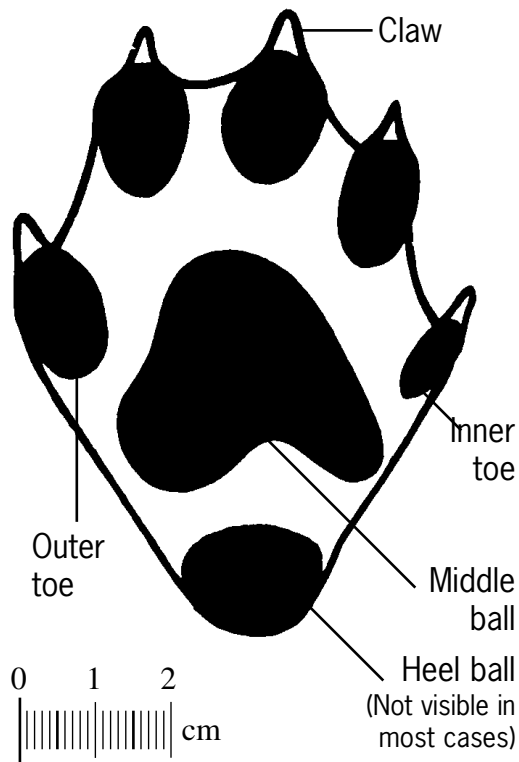
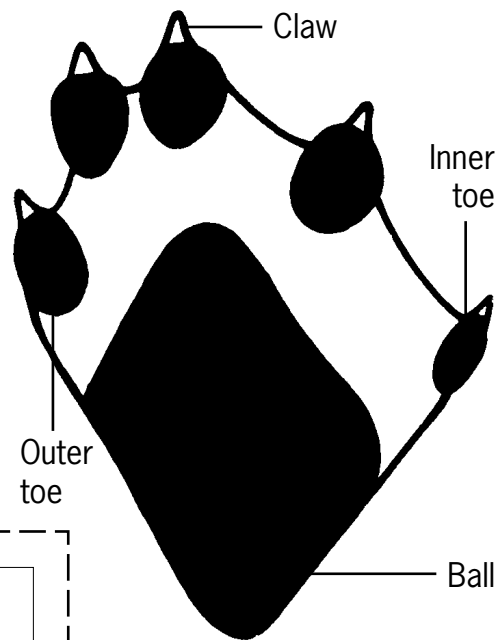


Photo: Claus Reuther

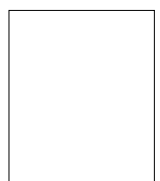
**Left forefoot (Full size)**



**Left hindfoot (Full size)**



**Sender:**  
 First name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Family name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Affiliation/position \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postal address \_\_\_\_\_  
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**IUCN/SSC  
 Otter Specialist Group  
 OTTER-ZENTRUM  
 29386 Hankensbüttel  
 GERMANY**

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 IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group  
 c/o Aktion Fischotterschutz e.V.  
 OTTER-ZENTRUM  
 29386 Hankensbüttel  
 GERMANY  
 e-mail: afs@otterzentrum.de

Editorial staff: Claus Reuther, Jan Nel, David Rowe-Rowe  
 French translation: Hélène Jacques  
 Portuguese translation: Anabela Trindade

The printed version of this leaflet is available in English, French and Portuguese. It also can be downloaded in other languages as a pdf file from the internet: (www.otterspecialistgroup.org/leaflets.html)

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