

# SCOPES and PURPOSE of the OSG

## WHAT IS THE OTTER SPECIALIST GROUP?

The IUCN-SSC Otter Specialist Group is the world wide network of specialists on otters and their conservation needs.

The Otter Specialist Group (OSG) is one of the more than 120 Specialist Groups and Tasks Forces of the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

## THE OSG's MISSION:

According to the by-laws of the IUCN-SSC, the Otter Specialist Group:

- provides leadership for the conservation of all otter species (Lutrinae),
- determines and reviews on a continuing basis the status and needs of all otter species,
- promotes the implementation of necessary research, conservation and management programmes by appropriate organizations and governments,
- makes known the status and conservation needs of otters
- promotes the wise management of otter species.

The OSG is not an independent group or organisation. It is part of the IUCN and SSC networks and therefore integrated into the regulations and organisational structures of this global conservation union.

## WHAT DOES THE OSG DO?

Besides the general assistance provided by the IUCN and the SSC, the main tools of the OSG to fulfil these tasks are:

- the organisation of meetings and conferences
- the organisation of workshops and training courses
- the preparation of Action Plans on a global, regional or national level
- the initiation of research or model projects
- the evaluation of methodologies and the collection of best practice examples
- the preparation of guidelines or protocols

At the VIII International Otter Colloquium, held in 2001 in Valdivia, Chile, OSG members agreed on the Terms of Reference (see page 3 of this document) describing the vision, goals, objectives, and targets of the work of the OSG.

## FUNDING

The OSG does not have its own funds nor it is regularly funded by the IUCN or SSC. All the coordinators, representatives and members are responsible for their own expenses and/or receive support from the institutions they are connected with.

The OSG is able to support fundraising activities, but it is not able to undertake the fundraising itself for any project of a member or non-member planning to do a project related to otters.

Some funding organisations require a statement from the OSG as part of their decision-making process when they receive applications for the funding of otter research or conservation projects. The decision, if such an application is supported by the OSG, is based on the quality of the project design and of the priorities defined by the members of the OSG.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The IUCN-SSCOSG is as a worldwide network of specialists volunteering to support information exchange, to initiate activities and to improve and to standardise methods related to research and conservation of otters and their habitats.

All members of the OSG contribute to its work on a voluntary basis and no one within the OSG network receives any salary.

OSG was established in 1974 and was chaired by:

- Dr. Nicole Duplaix 1974 - 1985
- Dr. Pat Foster-Turley 1985 – 1993
- Prof. Padma de Silva 1993 – 1998
- Claus Reuther 1998 – 2005
- Dr Jim Conroy 2006 – 2011
- Dr. Nicole Duplaix 2011 - present

# IUCN Otter Specialist Group Terms of Reference

*The following was agreed by the membership of the OSG at the VIII International Otter Colloquium, held in 2001 in Valdivia, Chile.*

## VISION

The conservation of all otter species will make a fundamental contribution to the preservation of earth's biodiversity and the conservation of vital wetland networks.

## GOALS

- Securing the survival of all otter species in their natural habitats
- Securing the natural genetic diversity within the world's otter species as a contribution to the conservation of biodiversity
- Promoting the wise and sustainable use of wetland habitats for both otters and humans

## OBJECTIVES

- Surveys of the status and distribution of all otter species using standardised and reliable methods.
- Studies on the biology and ecology of all otter species, focusing on their role in wetland ecosystems.
- Research on the impact of human activities on otters and their habitats.
- Development and testing of conservation and management techniques to ensure coexistence of otters and humans
- Development of public awareness activities utilising otters as ambassadors or indicator species for habitat and biodiversity conservation

## TARGETS

- Development and evaluation of standardised survey methods for all otter species.
- Training of surveyors and development of a network of surveyors covering all countries.
- Clarifying the current species range/area of distribution for all 13 otter species.
- Surveying the status and distribution of otters in all countries.
- Development of standardised data-banks for the documentation of survey results.
- Development of a library for micro-satellite DNA and mitochondrial DNA primers for all 13 otter species.
- Development of models using existing software on populations dynamics (e.g., VORTEX, RAMAS, ALEX, etc.) that will assist in identification of population trends that may be indicative of potential threats, directions for future research and Red List updating.

- Identification of 'hot spots' or critical areas for otter conservation.
- Basic research according to a 'List of basic biological data' to be prepared by OSG.
- Development of standardised data-banks for the documentation of basic biological data for all otter species.
- Research and definition of the habitat requirements for all otter species in relation to different biotope types.
- Development of standards for habitat assessments for all otter species.
- Development and evaluation of conservation and management techniques for the conservation and restoration of otter habitats and for solutions of conflict situations (collection of 'best practice examples').
- Development of a data-bank documenting all ongoing research and monitoring projects on otters as a basis for communication between projects and to support identification of common goals that may be accomplished more economically through collaboration.
- Development of a data-bank containing scientific publications about otters which can be shared via Internet and other information technology media.
- Development and evaluation of basic/standard preconditions/requirements for projects aiming at the reintroduction, translocation or supplementation of otters.
- Development and evaluation of standards for each otter species for keeping otters in captivity.
- Development of studbooks and of guidelines for the management of captive populations for all otter species.
- Development of cost effective survey protocols that can be rapidly obtained for evaluating human attitudes toward otters.
- Preparation of a collection of 'best-practice examples' for public awareness activities.
- Establishment of a collection of material usable free of charge for public awareness and education activities (slides, digitized photographs, movies, videos, etc.).
- Preparation and maintenance of an Internet website (offering access to databanks, public awareness material collections, etc.).
- Preparation of a databank for fundraising resources.

