

EURASIAN OTTER CONSERVATION IN LEBANON

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

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INTRODUCTION

The Global Otter Conservation Strategy report developed by the IUCN otter specialist group (2018) has listed this species as Critically Endangered in Lebanon. To this day, there are no applied research specifically on the conservation of Eurasian otters. However, early efforts are being made on the rehabilitation of their natural habitats. LRI is seeking on broadening its research on thoroughly studying the remaining otter populations for conservation, as they are great environmental indicators, reflecting the health of the riparian ecosystem.

OBJECTIVES

The project aims to revive the population and dispersal of critically endangered Eurasian otters in riparian habitats in Lebanon, through developing long-term effective, on-the-ground conservation strategies for the species. LRI will be using cost-effective and advanced techniques to study remaining otter populations in the country, that will aid in identifying and prioritizing restoration and conservation areas.

References

- Duplaix, N. and Savage, M. 2018. The Global Otter Conservation Strategy. IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group, Salem, Oregon, USA
- Loy, A., Al-Jawhary, D., Tumberian, B., De Castro, G., Lerone, L. 2016. "An action plan for the Eurasian otter in the Hima Kfar Zabad (Anjar, Beqaa Valley, Lebanon)."

METHODOLOGY



Assess impact of land use change and possible suitable habitats for otters in areas where spotted, not only limited to the two locations identified (Naher El Kebir & Anjar-Kfar Zabad Wetland).

- Surveys based on Loy A., et al (2016) and LRI methodology with local communities to assess historical data on otter distribution, current land use and threats facing their population survival within the 2 study areas.



Assess the genetic impact of loss of habitat on otter population and determine population organization trends and habits.

- Analysis from non-invasively collected otter spraint to determine diet, and to estimate population density, population genetic structure, genetic variability and spatial organization.
- Footprint Identification Technology (FIT) methodology to identify individuals, as another non-invasive tool method to compliment e-DNA results.



Improve riparian habitat rehabilitation and conservation measures.

- Developing of a framework for prioritizing areas for conservation in one study area and improve connectivity of fragmented and degraded riparian forests.



Community engagement plans and awareness strategies developed within the study areas through the citizen science concept, targeting diverse groups and stakeholders.



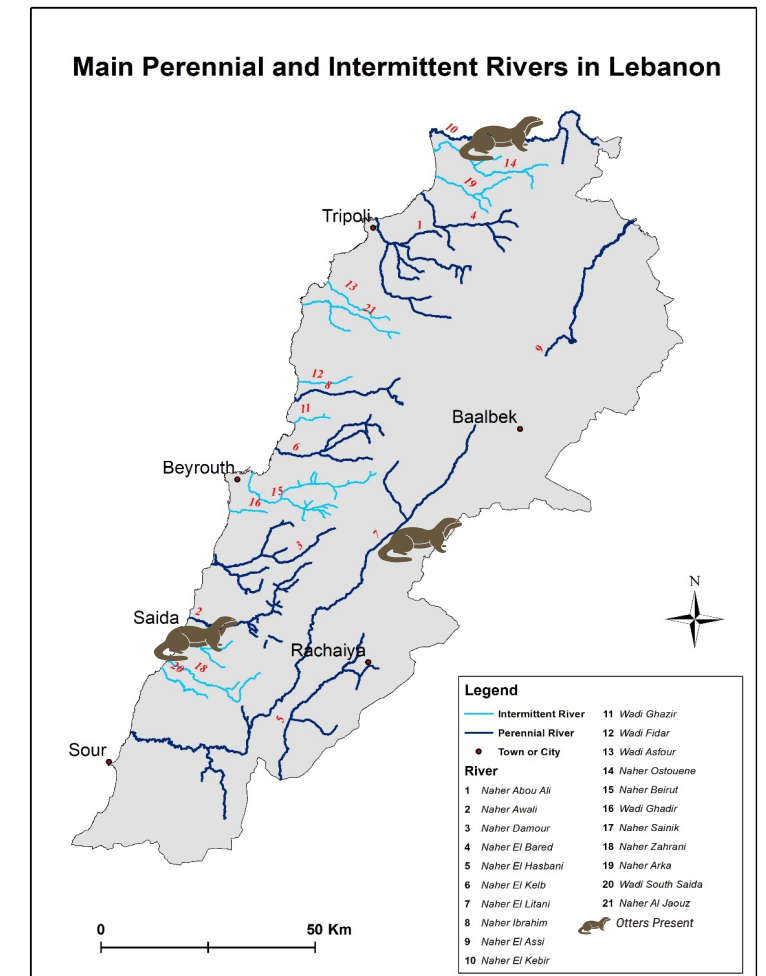
Disseminate information and generated results to the general public and concerned parties through different dissemination means.



Draft Law for conservation of otters in Lebanon to be developed and disseminated.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- Innovative techniques implemented to advance otter conservation in Lebanon.
- A community of citizen scientists trained in otter conservation techniques.
- Raised awareness about Eurasian otters and their role in preserving ecosystem functioning.
- Improved policies related to Eurasian otter conservation in Lebanon and their habitats.



Data Source: SDATL,2004. Classification of rivers modified based on consultation with Dr. Jean Stephan

Partners

WildTrack
Zoe Jewell, Sky Alibhai and Frederick Kistner.

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International Otter Survival Fund
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Cardiff University Otter Project
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