

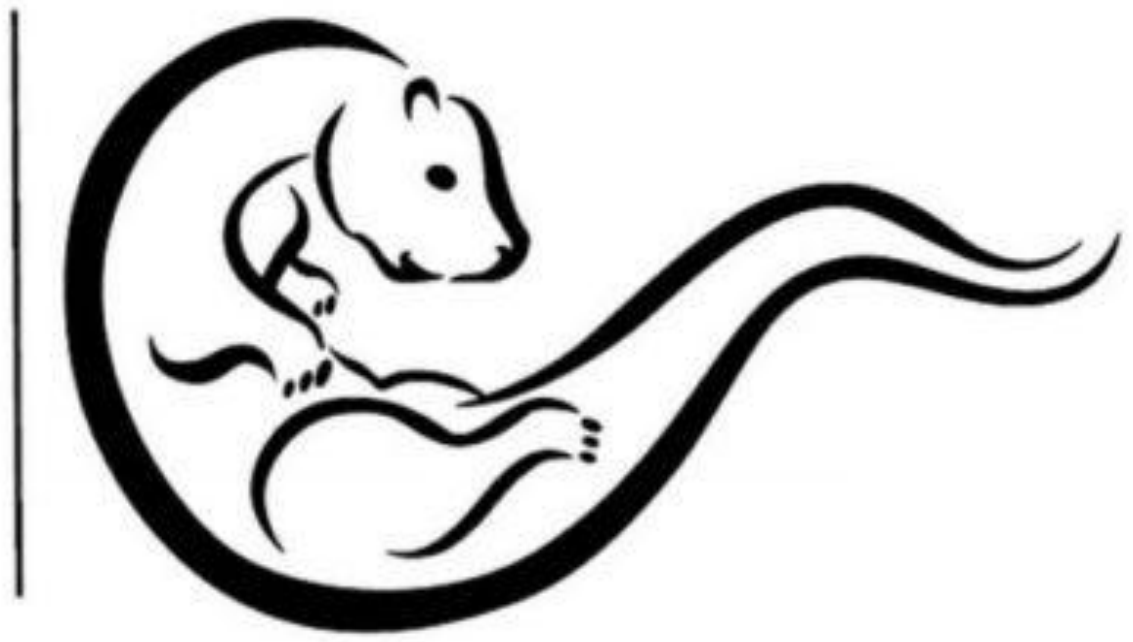
Current distribution of Eurasian otter in Montenegro



Stefan Ralević¹

¹ Wildlife Montenegro; Vidikovac bb, 85330 Kotor; Montenegro
E-mail: ralevicstefan92@gmail.com

EURASIAN
OTTER
WORKSHOP
26-28 February 2021



Introduction

Distribution, trend and population size of Eurasian otter are unknown in Montenegro. According to the data, 25 years old, Paunović & Milenković (1996) showed that otter presence was in almost all territory of the country, except the central and western parts, where the research was not conducted at the time. The otter is recognized by national legislation as a strictly protected species (Official Gazette No. 76/06). Taking these facts into consideration, the one question raised: *How you know what conservation measures to apply to conserve species, when you do not have the status of that species in the country?*

Materials and methods

The data collection was made between 2018 and 2020. To obtain the otter presence data, I used an integral approach:

- A systematic questionnaire was developed inspired by methodology of Melovski et al. (2012) and conducted through the online Google platform. In data classification the SCALP criteria was used, described by Molinari-Jobin et al. (2012).
- Additionally, I was opportunistically collected data during fieldwork surveys based on finding signs of presence by the transect method near bridges (Macdonald, S. M. 1984; Macdonald S. M. & Mason, C.F. 1988; Chanin, P. 2003, Pavanello et al. 2015) and implementing photo traps sessions as well.
- Data were visually presented by using QGIS tools by the UTM squares 10x10 km².



Figure 1. Otter footprints in Ulcinj saline Nature Park; July 2019.

Results and Discussion

The poster presents the up-to-date distribution of Eurasian otter in Montenegro, after 25 years. During a period of three years (2018-2020), more than 150 indisputable evidences of Eurasian otter presence were collected. According to obtained results, the species is widespread and it could be described as common species in Montenegro

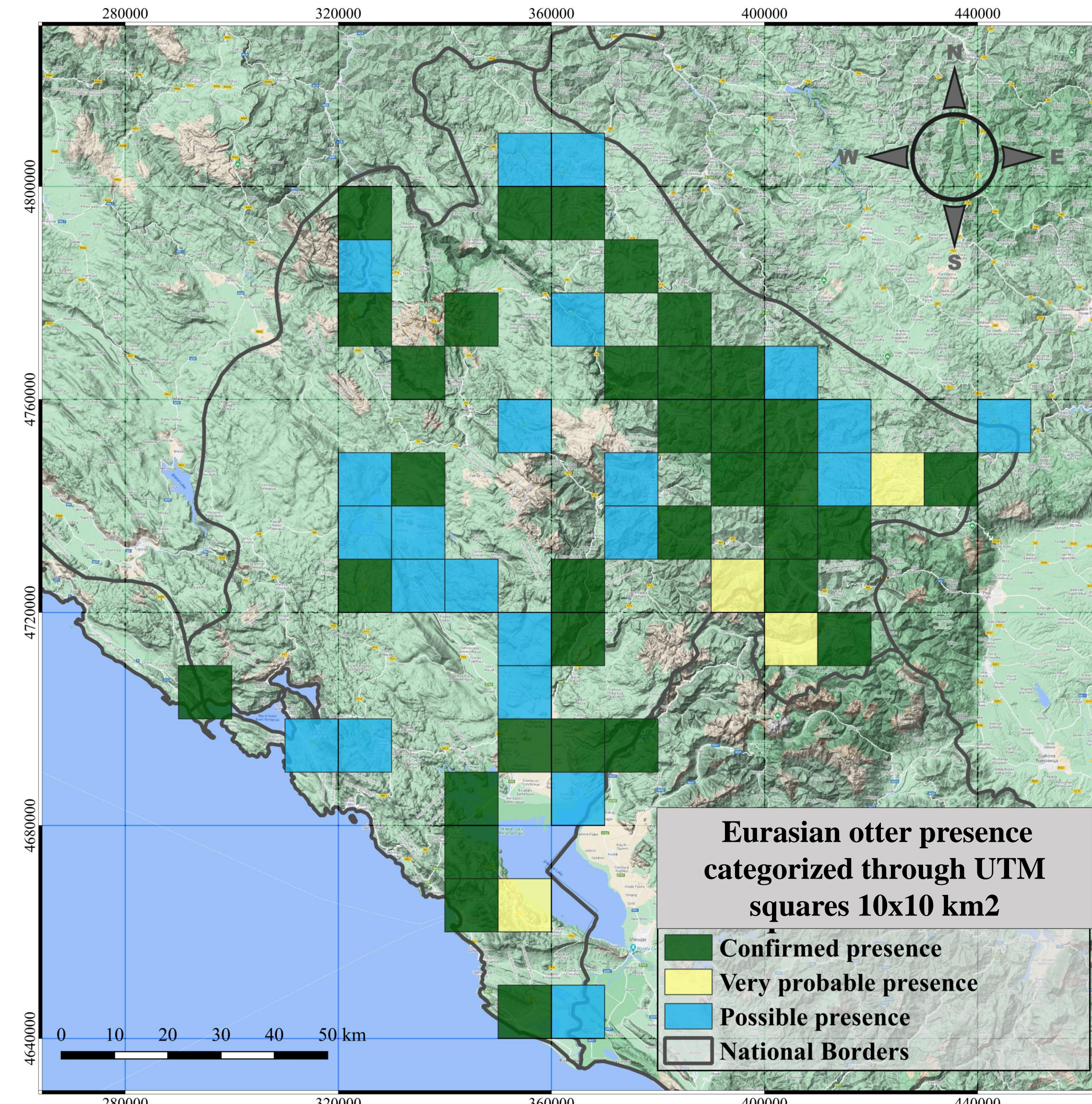


Figure 1. Up to date Eurasian Otter distribution in Montenegro

Due to the much better quality of the habitats in the central and northern parts of the country, seems to support higher population density. In the southern parts of the Montenegrin coastal area, due to the high pressure on natural habitats, the presence of the species was rare. During research the western part of the country was surveyed and it could be concluded that due to almost waterless conditions this part of karstic area is not suitable for this species.

Future research should be focused on an improvement of systematic research toward a better understanding of the status of this species, which can improve strategies and plans for applying proper conservation measures on a national level.

References

- Chanin, P. (2003). Monitoring the Otter *Lutra lutra*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No. 10. *English Nature, Peterborough*.
- Macdonald S. M., Mason, C.F. (1988). Observations of an otter population in decline. *Acta Theriologica* 33: 415-434.
- Macdonald, S. M. (1984). British National Survey Method. *IUCN Otter Specialist Group Bulletin* 1: 11-12.
- Melovski, D. (2012). Status and Distribution of the Balkan Lynx (*Lynx lynx martinoi* Mirić, 1978) and its Prey. *University of Montenegro, Podgorica*.
- Molinari-Jobin, A., Wolff, S., Marboutin, E., Molinari, P., Wolff, M., Kos, I., Fasel, M., Koren, I., Fuxjager, J., Breitenmoser, C., Huberk, T., Blažić, M., Breitenmoser U. (2012). Monitoring the Lynx in the Alps. *Hystrix, Italian Journal of Mammalogy* 23: 49-53.
- Paunović, M. and Milenković, M. (1996). The Current Status and Distribution of the Otter *Lutra lutra* L., 1758 in Serbia and Montenegro. *IUCN Otter Spec. Group Bull.* 13 (2): 58 - 70
- Pavanello, M., Lapini, L., Kranz, A and Iordan, F (2015). Rediscovering the Eurasian Otter (*Lutra Lutra* L.) in Friuli Venezia Giulia and Notes on its Possible Expansion in Northern Italy. *IUCN Otter Spec. Group Bull.* 32 (1): 12 - 20 Monitoring Series No. 10, English Nature, Peterborough.

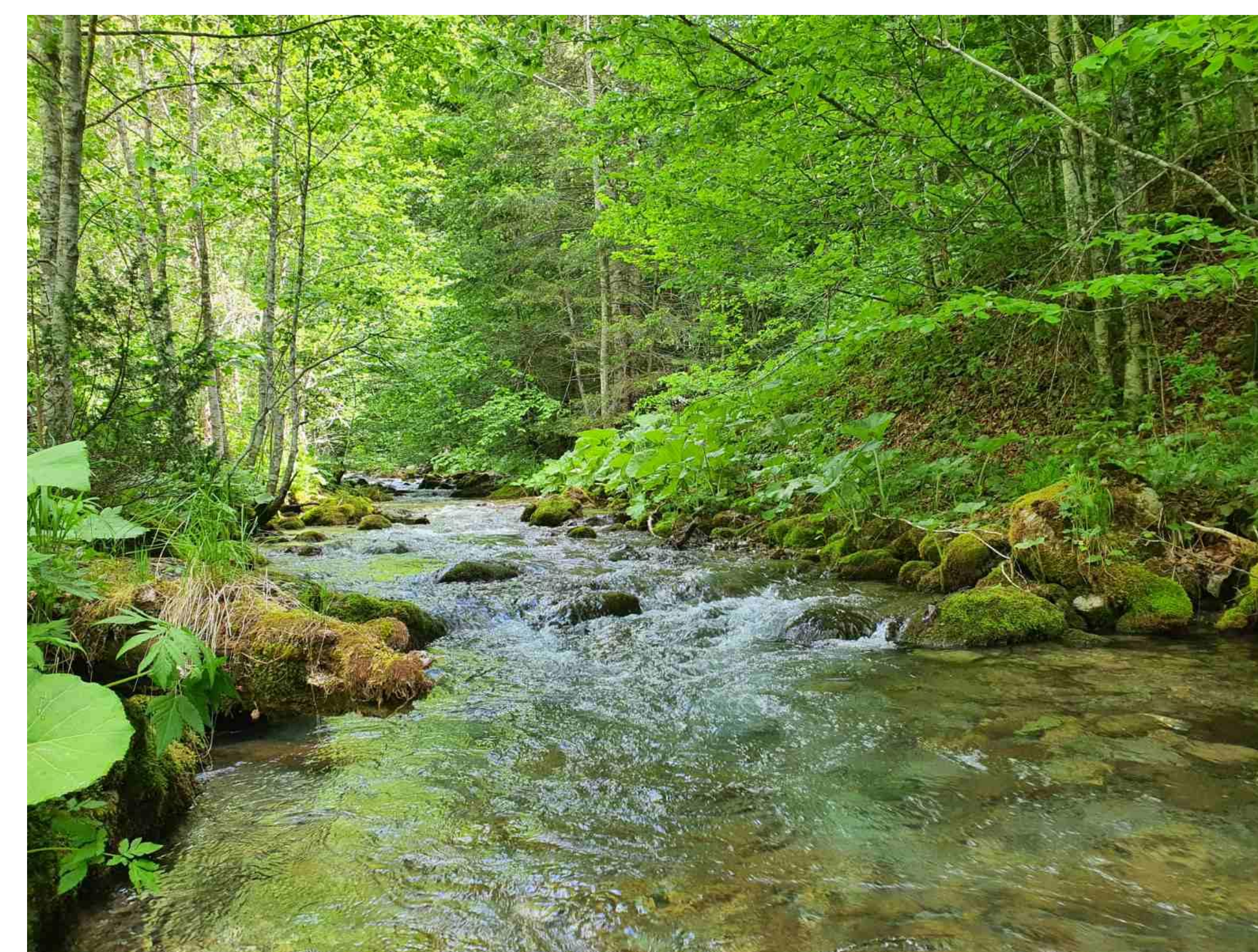


Figure 3. Drcka river. Important Otter habitat in north-east of Montenegro; August 2020. ©Wildlife Montenegro