

WCC-2020-Res-098-EN
Saving the world's otters

NOTING that otters are unique animals that help increase public attention on the importance of wetland, coastal and freshwater ecosystems;

ALARMED that the majority of the world's otter populations are declining worldwide due to environmental threats including pollution, deforestation, degradation of wetland habitats, illegal or unsustainable exploitation for pelts and for use as pets, limited legal protections in some places, and climate change;

FURTHER NOTING that eight of the world's 13 otter species have been categorised on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as facing a high risk of extinction (Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable), including the giant otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*), marine otter (*Lontra felina*), southern river otter (*L. provocax*), sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*), Asian small-clawed otter (*Aonyx cinereus*), smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) and hairy-nosed otter (*Lutra sumatrana*), that four other species could become threatened with extinction in the absence of concerted global conservation efforts, and that only the North American river otter (*Lontra canadensis*) has been categorised as Least Concern;

ALSO NOTING that six otter species (and populations of others) are on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) where international trade is regulated and monitored for sustainability, and that seven otter species are on CITES Appendix I, where all international commercial trade is banned, with the latter including smooth-coated otter and the Asian small-clawed otter, which were transferred to CITES Appendix I in August 2019;

ACKNOWLEDGING the Species Survival Commission (SSC) Otter Specialist Group's leadership in otter conservation, including its 2019 Global Otter Conservation Strategy, which highlights the need for governments, the private sector, conservation funders, scientists, and local and indigenous communities to work together to reduce threats to otters and to recover their populations;

CONCERNED that existing global and domestic conservation measures are inadequate to reverse the decline of most otter populations and that habitat loss, and the emerging Asian online trade in live otters for use as pets and attractions, could drive several otter species to extinction without urgent decisive action;

NOTING the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) 2019 Global Assessment's dire warning that about one million species could go extinct in the next few decades in the absence of transformative changes in global biodiversity policy; and

INSPIRED by the resiliency of otters which, when provided with protection from illegal and unsustainable exploitation, and given effective conservation management, and suitable habitats, can flourish in a wide range of natural, near-natural and human-altered habitats;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

1. URGES Members, otter range states and other stakeholders to support the goals and objectives of the IUCN/SSC *Global Otter Conservation Strategy* and other efforts to address threats to otters by:

a. maintaining and enhancing otter habitats and eliminating illegal and unsustainable capture or killing of live otters;

b. developing and applying national wildlife protection legislation and international law to protect otters, including by monitoring, regulating or prohibiting their capture and sale for local and international trade;

c. eliminating the illegal trade in otters by increasing law-enforcement effectiveness in range and consumer countries, ensuring compliance with obligations and national regulatory frameworks, and reducing market demand for illegally collected otters or their parts and products;

d. engaging in scientific research and otter population surveys, as well as educational and awareness activities;

e. increasing societal support for otters and their environment and facilitating peaceful co-existence between otters and people;

f. ensuring that the management of all captive-bred otters is integrated with conservation interventions for wild populations; and

g. providing funding for activities outlined in the SSC Otter Specialist Group's Global Otter Conservation Strategy;

2. URGES SSC and Members to work with otter range states to prepare and submit a proposal to the CITES Conference of the Parties to transfer the hairy-nosed otter (*Lutra sumatrana*) from CITES Appendix II to CITES Appendix I as soon as possible, along with future proposals to transfer other otter species that meet the criteria to Appendix I, if necessary;

3. URGES governments to prohibit the import, breeding and use of live otters as pets and attractions, and to work with online platforms to stop the demand for live juvenile otters; and

4. FURTHER URGES governments to ensure that any trade (domestic or global) is legal, sustainable, and takes into account local livelihoods and is consistent with conservation principles.

You are submitting this motion on behalf of::

Natural Resources Defense Council [United States of America]

Co-sponsors:

Center for Environmental Legal Studies [United States of America]

Instituto de Desenvolvimento Sustentável Mamirauá [Brazil]

Malaysian Nature Society [Malaysia]

Singapore Zoological Gardens [Singapore]

Sociedade Civil Mamiraua [Brazil]

The Born Free Foundation [United Kingdom]

Wildlife Protection Society of India [India]

Wildlife Trust of India [India]

Zoologische Gesellschaft Frankfurt von 1858 - Hilfe für die bedrohte Tierwelt [Germany]

Explanatory memorandum

Explanatory memorandum (optional):

There are thirteen otter species spread around the world. Some species are more aquatic than others but all otters are strong swimmers, well adapted to both marine and freshwater habitats.

Otters are incredibly resilient animals. Give them protection and healthy rivers with fish, and they will recover. We have seen this happen in huge cities like Singapore where otter family groups move from one fishing hole to another in parks surrounded by people; in the United Kingdom, where once-scarce otters now live in every county; and on the West Coast of the United States, where sea otters have returned from the brink of extinction.

Yet otter populations everywhere remain fragile and at risk. Pollution, deforestation, overpopulation, illegal trade, limited protections, conflicts between fishermen and otters, and the escalating effects of climate change all threaten otter populations.

The growing trade in live otters for pets in Southeast Asia, and otter furs and parts for curios, is a new problem. However, it is growing quickly due to social media, which creates demand for pet otters, as well as serving as a conduit for otter sales. Thankfully, the smooth-coated otter and small-clawed otter were listed on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in August 2019. However, much work remains to be done to ensure this harmful trade does not further imperil already-suffering otter species.

Information required for the implementation of the motion

1. Provide:

a) An overview of the activities and estimated resources needed to implement the motion (these can be human or other resources, but expressed in USD). Also include an estimation of the resources pledged (in USD), including by the proponent, co-sponsors, or third parties.:

Activity	Estimated financial resources required (USD)	Estimated financial resources pledged (USD)
Field activities	200000	0
Scientific activities	100000	0

Activity	Estimated financial resources required (USD)	Estimated financial resources pledged (USD)
Education/ communication/ raising awareness	50000	20000
Fundraising	150000	0
Policy influencing	50000	50000
Convening stakeholders/ networking	50000	0
Capacity building	60000	10000
Other		
Total	660000	80000

Rate here to which degree the resources required for the implementation of the motion have been estimated and committed. During the online discussion of motions, proponents of motions will be able to update this information and rating, while IUCN Members will be able to pledge or commit their contribution to the implementation of a motion.:

B: Motion submitted with realistic pledge(s) or commitment(s) of funds or other resources to implement the motion in part. Commitments should be recorded in section b) below.

b) Description of the contributions which proponent and co-sponsors intend to make towards the implementation of the motion: (Rule 54 (b) viii.)

Proponent

IUCN Member:
Natural Resources Defense Council [United States of America]

Proposed actions:
Capacity building
Convene stakeholders/networking
Policy influencing/advocacy

Description:
NRDC plans to spend at least \$80,000 over the next 3 years to meet the following goals of the operative paragraph:

- Develop national and international legislation to protect otters;
- Educate the public on the importance of otter protections;
- Work with range states to uplist the hairy-nosed otter to CITES Appendix I, as well as other otter species if necessary;
- Assist range states in complying with CITES obligations, enhancing law enforcement, and reducing demand for otters, and their parts;
- Pressure governments to prohibit the import, breeding, or use of live otters as pets and as attractions in coffee shops, cafes, and other unsuitable locations; and
- Work with online and social media platforms to ensure that they are not increasing demand for live juvenile otters.

2. Provide here the name of a focal point who would be in charge of reporting annually on the follow-up and implementation of the motion if adopted:

Name: Paul **Surname:** Todd **Institution:** Natural Resources Defense Council
3. If the operative paragraph(s) of this motion is/are directly related to the mandate and work of one or more IUCN Commission(s), has the Steering Committee of the relevant Commission(s) committed to oversee implementation and assist in the gathering of data on the implementation of the Resolutions involved?:
 No

4. As required by WCC-2016-Res-001, please indicate when the motion automatically ceases to be effective and will be moved to the Resolutions and Recommendations Archive. This can be either when a stated period has elapsed or when an objective has been achieved.:

The motion will cease to be effective when the operative goals are achieved.