

Southern River Otter

Lontra provocax

RED LIST STATUS

ENDANGERED

The Southern river otter has most restricted range in the world, and most of its distribution remains unknown.

ALIAS: huillín, little Patagonian wolf, Chilean otter

PREDATORS: birds of prey, dogs

THREATS: habitat loss, poaching, invasive fish species, disease (from feral dogs)

SIZE: 100-116 cm (body 57-70 cm, tail 35-46 cm); 5-10 kg

The rare southern river otter is an endemic carnivore from Patagonia (Argentina and Chile). This species lives in freshwater systems in the northern of its distribution and marine rocky coast in the southern fjords and channels, but never far from a source of freshwater. It prefers vegetated habitats and it hunts mainly crabs and fish, but also forages for molluscs, sea urchins and occasionally birds. Being extremely shy, it avoids any human activity and has been wiped out of 60-80% of its historical distribution because of poaching and habitat loss. Introduced salmonids, in both marine and freshwater systems, generate a problem for this otter by competing for native prey, being too fast for otters to catch, and driving conflict with the farms.