

# Giant Otter

*Pteronura brasiliensis*

RED LIST STATUS

**ENDANGERED**

The markings on giant otter necks are used to identify individuals, much like the dorsal fins of whales or human fingerprints!

**ALIAS:** ariranha, river wolf, water dog

**PREDATORS:** puma, caiman, jaguar

**THREATS:** habitat loss and degradation, human conflict, pollution, poorly-managed tourism

**SIZE:** 145-180 cm (body 96-123 cm tail 45-65 cm); 20-34 kg

The giant otter is endemic to South America and was nearly hunted to extinction. It is the largest extant otter species in the world, reaching up to 180 cm in length and lives in large, social family groups that sleep, play and hunt together. Typically, a monogamous pair that mates for life is at the centre of a group composed of their offspring. They are vocal and territorial and although they will actively defend their home from intruders, some instances of acceptance of new, unrelated individuals to the group have been recorded. Being active during the day, noisy, and living in groups, the giant otter is relatively easy to observe in protected areas and is very popular with ecotourists. Its latin name, *Pteronura*, refers to its flat, winglike (ptero) tail (nura), which is one of the giant otter's distinctive features.