

# North American River Otter

*Lontra canadensis*

RED LIST STATUS

**LEAST  
CONCERN**

**North American river otter latrines attract many other animals, and they are the best spot to place a camera trap to check out what species live in the area!**

**ALIAS:** northern river otter, river otter

**PREDATORS:** alligators, bobcats, cougars, coyotes, dogs, wolves

**THREATS:** habitat loss, poaching, accidental trapping, pollution, roadkill

**SIZE:** 100-153 cm (body 66-107 cm tail 31-46 cm); 8-11 kg

The North American river otter occupies a variety of aquatic habitat types and associated riparian areas throughout the United States (USA) and Canada. In the USA, by the 1950s its numbers were greatly reduced due to fur trapping and pollution but the status of the species has improved substantially through enactment and enforcement of federal clean-water legislation and reintroductions in 22 states, and represents a substantial conservation success story! In fact, the species now thrives throughout the USA and continues to do well in much of Canada, where historical declines were much less severe. Renowned for their playfulness, river otters are active year-round - in the winter, they are often seen sliding in the snow, both as a form of efficient, overland locomotion and as play. These otters are most active during crepuscular and nocturnal periods but can be spotted during daylight hours, which delights those fortunate enough to glimpse their antics. They eat mostly fish, but other aquatic species are also preyed on, particularly crayfish, which may be a predominant food item in some areas and seasons. More social than other species, they are commonly seen in small family groups of mothers and their offspring. In some areas, social groups may include year-old individuals known as “helpers” that stay with the family and provide for the new pups. North American river otters do not build their own dens and resting spots, instead modifying undercut banks and lodges or bank dens constructed by the beavers as places of refuge and breeding.