



European otter

(*Lutra lutra*)

GB IUCN status Least concern

General information

Otters are a semi-aquatic mammal found in rivers, lakes and along the coast of the UK. Once widespread across Britain, chemical pollution of water ways affecting their habitat and food sources reduced their numbers. Since organo-chlorine pesticides have been banned, otters are beginning to regain their territories across the UK, however river pollution still remains a large threat.

Otters have a chestnut brown coat with a pale underside and measure from 1-1.5m in length. They have a long thick tail, small ears on a broad head, a long slender body and webbed feet.

Otters have large ranges, with some using 20km or more of river habitat. They use their droppings, or "spraints", to mark their territory.

Conservation Actions 'Potential Measures'

Increase riparian planting along rivers and waterways to provide richer habitat for otters. Reduce river pollution along catchments, by reducing pesticide, herbicide and insecticide usage, planting a buffer strip of vegetation alongside agricultural waterways and limiting sewage discharge into rivers. Create "otter havens" along river banks with increased vegetation and no human disturbance.

Habitat Requirements

Otters are semi-aquatic species that live on riverways, wetlands, marshland and coastal areas. They raise their young in dens called holts which they make in tree root systems, burrows in the river bank or under rocks.

Species Pressures

Threats to otters include pollution of water ways from chemicals, agricultural run off and sewage which affect their food supply and health. Loss of habitat is another pressure on otter populations, as riparian vegetation is degraded or removed, limiting shelter and foraging for otters.

Distribution

Otters are found in every county in the UK, and are most prevalent in the West and North of England. However their populations are very fragmented.



 @ptes.org  @ptes_org  @ptes

www.ptes.org

Registered charity no. 274206

© Andrew Swinbank | Shutterstock.com, Erni | Shutterstock.com

people's
trust for
endangered
species