
Status of Otter in the Asian Region

Padma K de Silva

IUCN/SSC Asian Coordinator

Otter Specialist Group

Asian Otter Secretariat

SRI LANKA

Species Composition & the IUCN/Red List Status of Otter in Asia

Species	Common name	Distribution	Red List status
<i>Aonyx cinereus</i>	Small-clawed otter	Not found in West Asia	Lower risk
<i>Enhydra lutris</i>	Sea otter	N. Pacific Ocean	Endangered
<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Eurasian otter	Widely distributed in Asia	Vulnerable
<i>Lutra perspicillata</i>	Smooth-coated otter	Not found in West Asia	Vulnerable
<i>Lutra sumatrana</i>	Hairy-nosed otter	Restricted to S.E. Asia	Data deficient

Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*)



Hairy-nosed Otter (*L. sumatrana*)



Smooth-coated Otter (*L. perspicillata*)



Small-clawed Otter



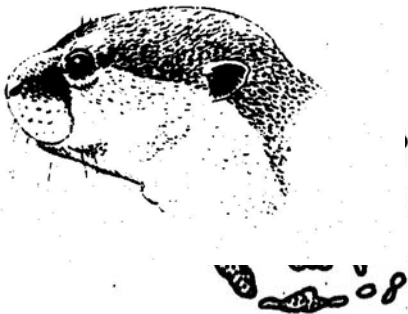
Distribution of Otters in Asia



Eurasian Otter



Hairy-nosed Otter



Small-clawed Otter



Smooth-coated Otter

The Otter Situation in General in Asian Countries

- **The status of otter is fairly well known in all four regions (South, Southeast, East & West Asia).**
 - **Priority areas for research and surveys have been identified by the IUCN/SSC Asian Otter Specialist Group.**
 - **Some research projects and surveys are being carried out in the identified areas at present in several countries.**
 - **The funds are from the following organizations:**
 - **Columbus Zoo – U.S.A**
 - **International Otter Survival Fund (IOSF) – U.K**
 - **Japanese Otter Research Group (JOG) – Japan**
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Threats to Otters in the Asian Region

- **Aquatic pollution (mainly due to industrialization)**
 - **Reclamation of wetlands**
 - **River diversion & impoundment**
 - **Deforestation**
 - **Hunting for pelts, meat & organs for native medicine**
 - **Extermination as a pest**
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SOUTH ASIA



SPECIES PRESENT

Lutra lutra – Eurasian otter

L. perspicillata – Smooth-coated otter

A. cinereus – Small-clawed otter

SOUTH ASIA

- Otter status and ecology is fairly well known except in Pakistan & Bhutan.
- Otter is legally protected in all countries except in Bhutan.

Country	Location	Researcher	Funds
Bangladesh	Sunderbans	M.M. Feeroz	Columbus Zoo
N. India	Periyar Tiger Reserve	S.A. Hussain	Columbus Zoo
S.India	Several river systems	V. Nagulu	Self-funded
Nepal	Several river systems	T. Thapa	IOSF-UK
Sri Lanka	Highland rivers	P. K. de Silva	Columbus Zoo

Training Workshop on Otter Survey Techniques Chitwan National Park, Nepal (March-2006)

OBJECTIVES:

- **To demonstrate the techniques used in identifying the river otters in the wild.**
 - **To train participants on the methods of surveying otters.**
 - **To demonstrate trapping of otters.**
 - **To identify the important wetlands for otter conservation in Nepal.**
 - **To initiate research projects on otters in Nepal.**
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Workshop on otter survey techniques Nepal-2006



SOUTHEAST ASIA



SPECIES PRESENT

Lutra lutra – Eurasian otter

L. perspicillata – Smooth-coated otter

A. cinereus – Small-clawed otter

L. sumatrana – Hairy-nosed otter

SOUTHEAST ASIA

- Research priority is on **Hairy-nosed otter** - IUCN/OSG
 - Recorded to be present: **Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand & Vietnam.**
 - **Rediscovery**
 - 1999 - Thailand - Phru Toa Daeng peat swamp forest
 - Nong Prag- Praya wetland
 - Khao Banthad wildlife reserve
 - 2000 - Vietnam - Vo Doi & U Minh Thuong NR
 - 2002 - Cambodia - Flooded areas near Tonle Sap lake
 - 2003 - Indonesia - A road-kill was found.
 - Thailand - Research on co-existence of hairy-nosed otter and small-clawed otter funded by Columbus Zoo.
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Otter Surveys in Cambodia & Vietnam - 2006

Cambodia Group Leader – Annette Olsson

- Mapping the distribution of 3 otter species: hairy-nosed otter, smooth coated otter & small-clawed otter in the flooded forests of Tonle Sap Lake.
- Successful in taking camera-trap photos of hairy-nosed otter.
- Training and awareness activities in Cambodia.

Vietnam Group Leader – Scott Robertson

- A general otter survey included in the small carnivore programme.
 - Workshop on survey techniques planned for 2008 Vietnam or Cambodia.
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EAST ASIA



SPECIES PRESENT

Lutra lutra – Eurasian otter

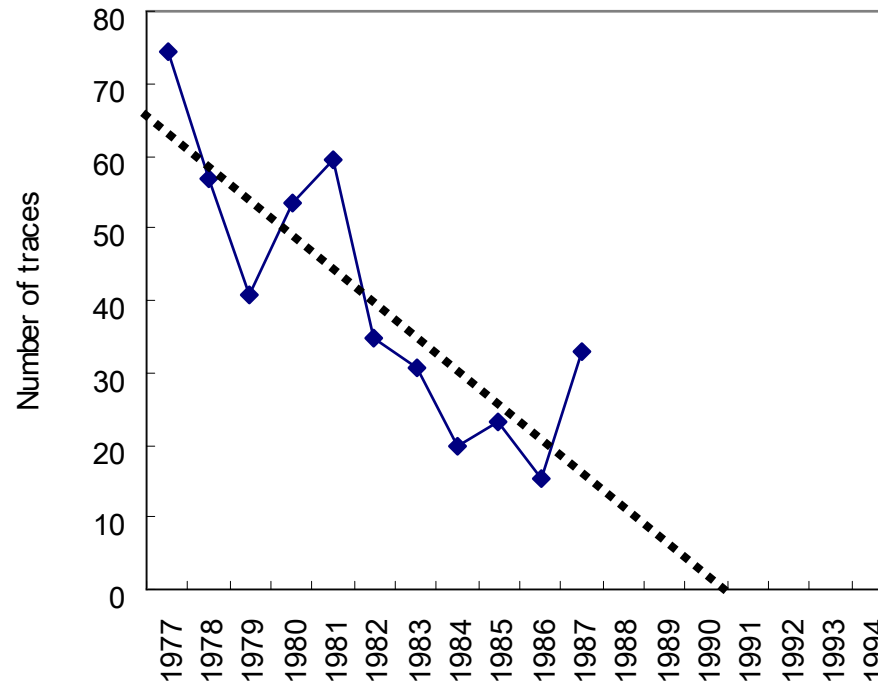
L. perspicillata – Smooth-coated otter

A. cinereus – Small-clawed otter

EAST ASIA

- Most of the countries are highly industrialised. Habitat destruction & pollution of waterways have affected the existence of otter.
 - No otters in **Japan, Hong Kong & Singapore.**
 - In China, Korea (N & S) and Mongolia healthy otter populations still exist.
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Extinction of otter in Japan



Otter seems to have gone extinct during the early half of 1990s. (Dr Ando, Pers.Comm.)

Hong Kong, Singapore & Taiwan

- Hong Kong: No recent information.
 - Singapore: A family of otters was sighted in a small Island close by in 1994. (N. Sivasothi, Pers. Comm.)
 - Taiwan: A family of otters was sighted in Kinmen & Little Kinmen islands (Lee, 1996).
 - Population genetic research carried out using molecular biological methods in Kinmen islands.
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Korea (N & S), Mongolia & China

- **N. Korea** – Otter is present in two Nature Protected areas Paekdu-san & Myohyang-san. The Government has promulgated 3 otter reserves-Sinyang, Daehung & Popdong.
 - **S. Korea** – Otter is present mainly in the coastline of South Sea connected to Tongyoung, Koje and small islands in Jinhae bay.

Dr Sung-yong Han is working very actively on conservation of otters in S. Korea.
 - **Mongolia** – The otter is present in Nomrog Strictly Protected Area.
 - **China** – Otter is present in several major river systems.
 - Government promulgated 766 nature reserves of which some include important otter habitats.
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WEST ASIA



SPECIES PRESENT

Lutra lutra – Eurasian otter

WEST ASIA

- No records of otters available, from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan etc.
 - Very little information from middle-east countries.
 - **Jordan** - the otter is found in the River Jordan & the River Yarmuk.
 - **Iran** - Eurasian otter inhabits the rivers and lakes in Zagros, Elburz and the Koppe-Dagh mountain range and in the Iranian Azarbaijan.
 - The Smooth-coated otter is found in the Hur-al-Azim wetlands of Iran.
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- In **Iraq**, the otters are present in the upper parts of the Euphrates river and possibly in all major rivers from the northern frontiers up to the Persian Gulf.
 - In **Israel** healthy populations existed in all coastal rivers until mid 20th century.
 - Now present only in one catchment area of Jordan river- An isolated population of only about 100 – 200 otters with low genetic variation!!
 - IOSF-UK funded a project in Israel – Amit Dolev
 - He suggests translocation of individuals to historic areas.
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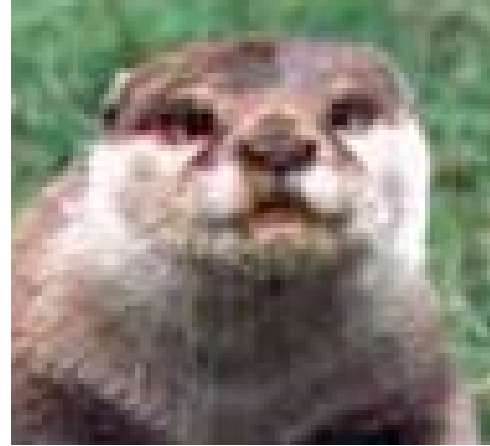
Importance of Otter Awareness in Asia

- Otter is a neglected mammal in Asia although it is an important top carnivore in the Asian wetlands, besides the crocodile.
 - Attention is more towards the large mammals and, in fact, many people are not even aware of the existence of otter.
 - Therefore, it is necessary to conduct otter awareness programmes and otter surveys throughout the region.
 - The otter awareness programmes should be incorporated into broad based wetland conservation programmes.
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- The 1st Asian Otter conservation meeting in Bangalore (1988) brought a significant change regarding the attitude towards otter in South and Southeast Asia.
 - After 20 years we gather here in S. Korea for the Xth Otter Colloquium.
 - We hope this may bring about further significant changes on otter conservation, especially in West & East Asia.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thank You
