



River Otter

(Lutra canadensis)



A water-loving member of the weasel family, the river otter is perfectly adapted for aquatic life. Its webbed paws and broad tail help to propel it through the water with incredible speed and accuracy. The otter is equipped with a thick, waterproof coat to protect it from the cold and with one-way valves to keep water out of its nose and ears. This mammal remains active through all four seasons.

Habitat & Diet

The river otter rarely travels more than 300 feet from the water's edge. It digs dens into the riverbank, with entrances both below the water line and on the shore. Though the river otter's main diet consists of crayfish, it also feeds on frogs, mice, slow-moving fish, and terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates.



Length: 35-52 inches
Weight: 11- 30 pounds
Habitat: Rivers, streams, and coves
Range: Throughout North America
Life Expectancy: up to 23 years
Baby: Pup

Fascinating Facts

The river otter is able to remain underwater for up to eight minutes, and can swim almost a quarter of a mile in this time. It can dive as deep as 55 feet. Playful and social creatures, this animal is often seen sliding on the ice of a frozen river or down a stream bank. The female river otter lives with its young in social groups, associating with males only during the breeding season. The mother bears one litter of 1-5 cubs after a one-year gestation period.

Status

Though poor water quality and excessive trapping have, in the past, diminished the river otter's numbers considerably, the population is slowly increasing over the years. Many organizations are establishing reintroduction programs across the country, and play a vital role in the river otter's comeback.

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