

River Otters of South Florida

ROSF



Otter Information

ABOUT Behavior: “Ethograms”

by
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A detailed description of a species behavior is much like an encyclopedia of behavior for that species. This “encyclopedia” is referred to as an ethogram. Many investigators have undertaken studies that focus on the natural history of one or more of the 13 different species of otters living today while others have undertaken species-specific otter behavior studies.

These two types of studies have provided descriptions and names for the otter behaviors that were observed. Significant cross reference occurs in the publications of these studies. In general, the more detailed descriptions of the behaviors and the context in which these behaviors are demonstrated are to be found in the studies that focus on otter behavior. Many such studies, have been made on captive otters. A review of the literature indicates no attempts have been made to create a uniform set of definitions for the behaviors of any species of otter. This is in significant contrast to the work compiled by Stanton, et al. (2015) in which an extensive list of standard behavior definitions for the felidae has been created. What needs to occur is one or more individuals should undertake this task for the subfamily Lutrinae. This author will review the literature on the behavior of both captive and wild North American river otter and attempt to compile a list of standardized behavior definitions for this species. But, what about the remainder of the otter species?

This author has compiled a “North American River Otter Behavior Bibliography “, available within this “Otter Information” section of this website, under title previously stated.

While compiling the list of and collecting behavior-related publications for *Lontra canadensis* this author will do the same compilation for the remaining otter species. It would be of great value to have additional individuals compile comprehensive, up-to-date bibliographies on the following otter species: (1). Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*); (2). Spotted-necked otter (*Lutra maculicollis*); (2). Hairy-nosed otter (*Lutra sumatrana*); (3). Smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*), (4). Marine otter (*Lontra felina*); (5). African clawless otter (*Aonyx capensis*); (6). Asian small-clawed otter (*Aonyx cinerea*), (7). Congo clawless otter (*Aonyx congicus*), and (8). Giant river otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*). An ethogram for the Asian Small-clawed otter has been published (Ross, S.R. 2002. The effect of simple feeding enrichment strategy on the behavior of two Asian small-clawed otters (*Aonyx cinerea*). *Aquatic Mammals*, 28(2): 113-120.).

As to recent bibliography publications, this author has just published (1) the 11th Edition of the North American river otter (*Lontra canadensis*) bibliography (2024); (2) the 7th Edition of the Neotropical river otter (*Lontra longicaudis*) bibliography (2024); (3) the 3rd Edition of the Sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*)

bibliography (2024); and (4) the 2nd Edition of the Southern river otter (*Lontra provocax*) bibliography (2024). In addition, this author published the 2nd and last edition of the Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) bibliography in 2022. All these bibliographies were published in the IUCN Otter Specialist Group Bulletin.

Literature Cited

Stanton, L.A., M.S. Sullivan, and J.M. Fazio. (2015). A standardized ethogram for the felidae: A tool for behavioral researchers. *Applied Behavior Science*, 173: 1-16.

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