

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?

While compiling the list of and collecting behavior-related publications for *Lontra canadensis* this author will do the same compilation for the other 12 otter species. It would be of great value to have additional individuals compile comprehensive, up-to-date bibliographies on the Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*), Spotted-necked otter (*Lutra maculicollis*), Hairy-nosed otter (*Lutra sumatrana*), Smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*), Marine otter (*Lontra felina*), Southern River otter (*Lontra provocax*), African clawless otter (*Aonyx capensis*), Asian small-clawed otter (*Aonyx cinerea*), Congo clawless otter (*Aonyx congicus*), and the Sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*). 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 the 7th Edition of the North American river otter (*Lontra canadensis*) bibliography (2020) ; the 3rd Edition of the Neotropical river

otter (*Lontra longicaudis*) bibliography (2020), and the 1st Edition of the Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) bibliography is “in press”. IUCN Otter Specialist Group Bulletin (2020 or 2021)

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.

13 March 2022