

River Otters of South Florida

ROSF



Otter Information

Update of Florida Otter Research

Other than for Victor L. Camp of the Water School and Department of Ecology & Environmental Studies at Florida Gulf Coast University it is not known, at this time, whether other college and university scientists are investigating the North American river otter (*Lontra canadensis*) in Florida. A survey will be conducted in the Spring 2022 to determine which colleges and universities, with a four degree program in the life sciences, are currently or have recently undertaken North American river otter research in Florida. The results of this survey will be available in the Fall of 2022 and will be presented as part of a revision to this document.

Current River Otter Research at Florida Gulf Coast University

Research Project Number 1

Principal Investigator: Victor L. Camp, Zoologist, Courtesy Faculty/River Otter Research, The Water School, Department of Ecology & Environmental, Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers Florida

Project Title: The Biological and Physical Characteristics of Gated and Non-Gated Residential Communities: How do Biological and Physical Characteristics Enhance the Presence of River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*) in these Residential Communities

Project Purpose: To define the biological and physical characteristics that can be used in the design and development of residential communities and to provide opportunities for people and otters to live in harmony.

Project Status: Ongoing

Research Project Number 2a (temporarily on hold)

Principal Investigator: Victor L. Camp

Project Title: A Diet Analysis of River Otters (*Lontra canadensis*) In Tropical Southwest Florida

Project Purposes: 1. To provide identification resources (voucher specimen) of known or potential invertebrate and non-mammal vertebrates found to be prey species in river otter scats (spraints) 2. To provide resources necessary to establish a health index of prey species based on the presence of toxins in river otter prey species and 3. To create a guide of known and potential otter prey species in south Florida

Project Status: Ongoing

Notes: (1). This investigation is supplemented by Research Project Number 4 and Research Project Number 5 and (2) This project may be replaced by Research Project 2b (below)

Research Project Number 2b

Principal Investigators: Victor L. Camp and others at Florida Gulf Coast University

Project Title: Using eDNA, extracted from scats(feces), to define the diet and identification of river otters in southwest Florida.

Project Purposes: 1. To provide identification resources (species specific eDNA voucher samples) of known or potential invertebrate and non-mammal vertebrates found to be prey species in river otter scats (spraints); 2. To create an eDNA guide of known and potential otter prey species in south Florida using known and field acquired and determined eDNA signatures from samples collected in southwest Florida; 3. To define the sex and specific identity of river otter specimens for use in future otter population studies; and 4. To maintain these prey and otter specimen specific eDNA voucher samples in a FGCU digital database for future use.

Research Project Number 3

Principal Investigator: Victor L. Camp

Project Title: The Presence and Activities of Coastal Marine Otters in Southwest Florida

Project Purpose: A feasibility study to evaluate the potential for a graduate student to undertake continuation of this scientific investigation for a Master of Science degree at Florida Gulf Coast University

Project Status: Field work began in February 2019, was postponed due to Covid 19, and will resume in the Spring of 2022

Research Project Number 4

Principal Investigator: Victor L. Camp

Project Title: Identification of Non-native Fishes as Prey of the River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*) in South Florida

Project Purpose: To determine the non-native fish species potentially consumed by the river otter and other piscivorous mammals and birds and to develop a supplemental guide for identification and population presence of Non-native fishes of Florida

Project Status: Ongoing

Note: This investigation is supplemental to Research Project Number and Project Number 5

Research Project Number 5

Principal Investigator: Victor L. Camp

Project Title: The River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*) as a Bio-indicator of the Health of Aquatic Environments in Southwest Florida.

Project Purpose: To provide data on river otter health collected from necropsy of road-killed and fur trapper carcasses

Project Status: Ongoing

Note: This investigation is supplemented by Project Number 2 and Project Number 4

(continued)

Research Project Number 6

Principal Investigator: Victor L. Camp

Project Title: Otter Spotters: The Use of Volunteers to Collect Information on the Presence and Activities of River Otters in Gated and Non-Gated Communities and Golf Courses in Southwest Florida

Project Purpose: To determine the population of river otters inhabiting residential communities in southwest Florida and to establish baseline otter population information for current and future analysis

Project Status: Ongoing. Intensive recruitment of volunteer Otter Spotters to begin in May 2022.

Note: This investigation is supplemented by river otter sighting reports directly solicited by Victor L. Camp and those sightings reported to this website

9 March 2022