



RIVER OTTER

Kingdom: Animalia **Phylum:** Chordata **Class:** Mammalia **Order:** Carnivora **Family:** Mustelidae
Lutra canadensis

Description: This playful animal is the only fresh-water otter in North America

Length: 3-4 feet with a 1-1.5 foot tail

Weight: 17 pounds

Habitat: Rivers and lakes

Distribution: North America

Diet: Fish, frogs, insects and small mammals

Life Span: 16 years

Status: Not listed

Special Characteristics:

- Their feet are webbed for swimming and clawed and padded for digging a holt (den).
- The slender body allows the Otter to move quickly through the water using the powerful tail as a rudder.
- On land it has a loping gait. On snow and ice it will toboggan or slide on its belly up to 19 mph.
- River otters have a thick layer of fat and more dense fur than any other land mammal.
- The Otter can see equally well above and below water.
- Able to dive up to 60 feet, they can stay underwater for 5 minutes.
- Ear and nostrils close when submerged.
- Mainly solitary, they can be highly social.
- It often eats its fish while swimming on its back, resting the food on its chest.
- Mainly nocturnal.
- Otters can discharge a foul scent from a pair of anal glands when threatened or disturbed.

Reproduction:

- Sexual maturity at 2-3 years
- Gestation 8-12 months.
- Average litter size is 2 kits.
- They are induced ovulators - meaning that they must mate repeatedly and for a long period of time to ensure the release of an egg from the ovary.
- A baby otter often enjoys riding its mother or sleeping soundly on her belly as she moves through the water.

