

THE RIVER OTTER JOURNAL

Volume VI, Number 2, Fall 1997



Photo by Nathan Verly

Nature Program Features the River Otter

By Carol Peterson

A PBS nature program on the river otter by photographer Bob Landis is to be aired on January 18, 1998. It will tell the story of a mother otter and her two pups through their first year together. It begins with birth in spring and continues through the four seasons in Yellowstone National Park.

Bob Landis began studying and filming the river otter in 1984. Using patience and perseverance, he has photographed the elusive otter in lakes, streams, rivers, and over a variety of terrain. The program includes 55 minutes of outstanding footage filmed entirely in the wild. Bob is up at 4:00 a.m. to begin filming at dawn and works until dusk. This makes for long days, carrying heavy camera equipment and waiting for the otters to appear.

Several scenes show the otters encountering coyotes. The mother otter continually demonstrates her ability to catch fish for herself and the pups. Even on the frozen lake in winter, she hauls fish up onto the ice through the thermal holes, only to have them snatched away by a persistent coyote. She doesn't give up easily and puts up a valiant fight for her prize!



Wildlife Photographer Bob Landis

Photo by William Campbell

Bob also has captured the otters' playfulness and agility in numerous scenes. One spectacular sequence follows the otters' snow slide from the steep snow bank at the brink of the upper Yellowstone Falls, down through the powder snow to the bottom of the falls. One youngster descends slowly "with the brakes on." In summer, Bob watched the otters repeatedly swim through one end of a hollow log and out the other side. He rigged his camera under water to record their game and rolled the film for an hour. He was rewarded with priceless footage of their antics.

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THE RIVER OTTER JOURNAL is a semi-annual publication of the River Otter Alliance. Look for the next edition of THE RIVER OTTER JOURNAL in Spring 1998!

River Otter Alliance Mission

The River Otter Alliance promotes the survival of the North American River Otter (*Lutra Canadensis*) through education, research and habitat protection. We support current research and reintroduction programs, monitor abundance and distribution in the United States, and educate the general public through our newsletter, THE RIVER OTTER JOURNAL, on the need to restore and sustain River Otter populations.

Our goal is to be a center of communications among wildlife biologists, environmental organizations, fishermen, and all interested otter lovers on a national and international basis, in order to ensure the healthy future of the North American River Otter.

CORRECTION

Photos of the Asian Small-Clawed Otters shown in the Spring 1997 ROA Newsletter were taken at the Santa Barbara Zoo, not the San Diego Zoo.



Otters at Anapaho Creek
Photo by Judy Berg

President's Message

A Time of Change

Mother Nature has opened her curtain to display what to me is the most beautiful time of year - Fall. While she has been busy painting the leaves of deciduous trees, her moose, elk, and mule deer have been busily engaged in rut, their annual social ritual of male challenges and mating of females. Other animals, too, are busy stockpiling food for their families to survive the long winter ahead. Oh yes, the otter. Because otters are active during all seasons of the year, mama is continuing to teach her latest offspring important survival techniques. Yes, this is my favorite time of year.



Judy Berg

In addition to the natural seasonal change, this season brings changes for *The River Otter Alliance*. We are extremely pleased to welcome Dr. Paul Polechla to our Board of Directors in the position of Scientific Advisor. Paul is with the Museum of Southwestern Biology at the University of New Mexico and brings to the Alliance many years of scientific experience and interest in the river otter. He has been a university professor, educator of native Alaskan youth, and extensive researcher of the Nearctic river otter. Paul has been awarded a grant to conduct a study of river otters and other furbearers

of the riparian habitat in the upper Rio Grande drainage. We are fortunate to have Paul join our Board, and wish him success in his position at the University and in his research project on the Rio Grande.

Another change is David and I are relocating to Salt Lake City, however this will not diminish our involvement and activity with the Alliance. A call from the otters can still be heard by your president. Founding board members John Mulvihill and Carol Peterson will remain actively involved from their Denver base; Carol will continue to enlarge upon her many personal contacts with those who support the Alliance and will continue to write articles of interest. John will continue on as legal counsel and treasurer, as well as to inspire us with his limericks. We are grateful to John and Carol for their ongoing interest and contributions to the Alliance.

A special thanks goes to Tracy Johnston who took the reins as editor of the Journal last fall. She has done an outstanding job producing subsequent editions of our publication. Tracy has had a love of otters since childhood, and has been a valuable contributor to the Alliance and the Journal; as demonstrated in her excellent article in this issue, "The History of Otters and Man." Tracy maintains our membership database and is also compiling a database of facilities around the world where otters may be seen. Thanks, Tracy, for a great job.

In March, 1998, the Seventh International Otter Colloquium, sponsored by the IUCN Otter Specialist Group, will be held in Trebon, Czech Republic. Paul Polechla will chair one of the plenary sessions and present a paper at another. I will present a poster session on the diet of

otters in the upper Colorado River drainage, and David will present a poster session on the activities of *The River Otter Alliance*. This will be a very special event; we will meet specialists involved with and doing research on otters from a broad spectrum of the international community. We will prepare a report on the conference for our spring Journal.

The River Otter Alliance extends a special thanks to Trustee J. Wade Kennedy of the JWK Family Trust for his generous contribution this summer. We are also grateful for all of you who have become members or renewed your membership of the Alliance. We look forward to more of you joining the ranks of membership and contributing to the river otter cause.

We appreciate and encourage your participation in the publication of *The River Otter Journal*. As members, it is your vehicle to share your experiences, news items and scientific studies on a national and international basis. We thank wildlife photographer Bob Landis for his support and his offer to share his photos for publication in the Journal. We welcome all your written and photographic contributions, as well as your financial support.

...

Otters on Skye

by David Berg

*I'd heard 'bout an otter on Skye
who became lost and started to cry.*

Swam along a maiden fair:

*"Come with me to my lair!",
she said with a wink of her eye.*

*An otter of fame on Grand Lake
liked to ride the ridge of a bow wake.*

*He'd frolic and splash,
and swim the hundred yard dash.
To him it was all a piece of cake.*

...

International Otter Colloquium

By Dr. Paul Polechla

The Vllth International Otter Colloquium will be held in Trebon, Czech Republic on March 14-19, 1998. This meeting follows the Vllth meeting in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa in September 1993. The theme of this year's colloquium is "Otter Conservation — An Example for a Sustainable Use of Wetlands by Man." The conference is being organized by the Otter Specialist Group (OSG) of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the Czech environmental organization ENVI, and the German Aktion Fischotterschutz. The agenda includes plenary sessions of International Importance, informal workshops and discussions, poster sessions of regional importance, updated status reports, and a meeting of the OSG, IUCN. The program includes taxonomy, genetics, anatomy,

veterinary management, radio telemetry, behavior, social structure, reproduction, captive-breeding, diet, predator-prey relationships, habitat use, population ecology, survey methods, co-existence of fisherman and otters, mortality factors and their control, conservation methods, education, and Geographic Information Systems. An added innovative spontaneous workshop driven by the participants is planned. Outdoor pre- and post-conference tours include viewing nature while cross-country skiing and various cultural activities, such as folk dancing and sight-seeing at castles. These activities promise to add an extra dimension to the Colloquium.

Conference Location: There is a strong Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) population, thriving in a broad river plain situated in Trebon Biosphere Reserve and coexisting with aqua-culture operations. Trebon is a quaint health spa situated in mountainous southern Bohemia with origins to the 11th century.

Registration: Register by October 31, 1997. (Registrations sent after October 31, 1997 will be accepted with a late fee of \$50 US.) Registration Fee: \$150 US (stu-

dents \$100 US). Transportation from Prague to Trebon: \$20 US. Official Banquet: \$20 US. Accommodations: Room rates vary from \$27.50 to \$47.50 per night depending on amenities requested. For registration details contact:

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If you have an idea for a contribution as a plenary session or poster presentation concerning otter behavior, social structure, reproduction or captive breeding, contact:

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Otter Biologists Meet At Large Carnivore Meeting In Japan

By Dr. Paul Polechla

The 2nd International Symposium on "Coexistence of Large Carnivores with Man" was held in Saltama, Japan (near Tokyo) on November 19-23, 1996. The first symposium was held in 1994 in Poland. The most recent symposium focused on large carnivores in the ursid (bear), canid (wolf/fox/dog), felid (cat), and mustelid (otter and allies) families. When compared to the polar bear and the Siberian tiger, the thirteen species of otters are small. However, in many developed

countries in Europe and Southeastern Asia, otters are or were one of the largest carnivore species of the local fauna. Furthermore, otters, like other carnivores are predators at the top of the food chain. When wildlife managers and the general public focus on protecting the habitat for otters and other charismatic carnivores, we are also conserving the habitat for a myriad of other animals and plants.

Presenters spoke about the genetics, ecology, natural history, distribution, conservation, and management of carnivores. Presenters emphasized the interaction (both positive and negative) between carnivores and humans. Wildlife managers proposed methods to reduce or mitigate conflicts between carnivores and humans. State of the art research tools such as DNA fingerprinting were described. Wildlife biologists from Asia and around the globe attended. Our hosts provided all participants with concurrent simultaneous bilateral Japanese-English translations for

every presentation. In addition a Chinese-Japanese-English translation was provided for a paper on the Giant Panda and a Russian-English-Japanese translation was provided for a paper on the Siberian Tiger.

Papers regarding the 13 species of otters included:

"History of river otters in Japan" by H. Sasaki and M. Ando, "Threats to the conservation of otters in Cambodia" by C. Santiapillai, "Conservation and status of *Lutra procyonax* in Chile" by G. Medina, "Lessons from foraging behavior: otters (*Lutra lutra*) and habitat conservation" by H. Kruuk, "Conservation and economic considerations in man-otter coexistence" by N. Vangala, D. Satyanarayana and V. Rao, "Distribution and pollution of Eurasian river otters in Korea" by S. W. Son, B. Y. Min, M. H. Yoon, and S. Y. Han, "Ecology of otter in Thung Yai Narasuan Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Thailand" by B. Kanchanasaka, "The impact of human

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History of Otters and Man

by Tracy Johnston

Otters and man have had a long and sometimes difficult relationship. In certain societies, otters have influenced the culture to a large degree. Some say the United States would not own Alaska today if it were not for the virtual elimination of sea otters from the territory. Otters have been both highly and lowly regarded, depending on their use. Otters have been domesticated for hunting and as pets, they have been hunted for sport and commercial gain, and they have suffered from destruction of their habitats.

Man has domesticated otters for his purposes. One of the earliest records of otters domesticated and trained to fish occurred during the Tang dynasty in China (608-916 A.D.). Records also exist of the practice in medieval Europe. Court records of 1618 indicate James I of England kept otters, cormorants, and ospreys for fishing, and paid a keeper to care for them. Other reports of otters used as hunting animals or kept as pets have come from France, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Sweden, South America, India, and Malaysia. The Indian smooth-coated otter (*Lutra perspicillata*) is still used today in Bangladesh to capture fish under direction and training of human fishermen. Somewhat more recently, librarian Dorothy Wisbeski told the story of her pet otter in her 1967 book, *The True Story of Okee the Otter*. Gavin Maxwell, author of *Ring of Bright Water*, kept pet otters; one otter even appeared as "Mij" in the 1969 movie version.

While man has domesticated otters in some instances, he has also hunted them to near extinction in other instances. Otters have long been hunted both as a sport and for their valuable pelt. Records of otter hunting for sport date back to 1199, however the sport was not organized until the 1880s when the 'otter hound,' a new breed of dog — noted for its endurance and remarkable tracking abilities — was introduced. English royalty kept and bred otter hounds for the purpose of sport hunting. American Kennel Club records indicate the most famous pack of otter hounds in English history was Geoffrey Hill's Hawkstone Pack, cred-

ited with killing 704 otters between 1870 and 1890. It is not known how many total otters were killed in England each year by these hunts (which are now illegal), but it is thought that less than 10 were killed each year in the 1970s, compared with over 200 killed each year during the mid-1950s. (With the ban on otter hunting in England, ironically the otter hound is now also threatened.) While reintroduction programs continue in several U.S. states, controlled hunting and trapping of river otters is still permitted in parts of the United States and Canada.

One of the greatest impacts man has had on otters has been hunting for commercial purposes. The commercial exploitation of river otters, marine otters, giant otters, and sea otters has nearly driven them all to extinction. Commercial hunting of river otters for their fur was once wide spread, and has contributed significantly to the extinction of them from much of their original habitat. North American river otter pelts sold for \$100 during World War I, for \$30 in 1963, and sell for \$15 today. The high quality of the fur is the reason for its desirability. Rated by durability, river otter pelts were considered 100% versus a prime beaver pelt being 85%, a mink pelt being 75%, and a rabbit pelt being 5%.

River otters are not the only species of otter man has exploited for its valuable fur. Marine otters have also been heavily hunted for their fur, and are now endangered. The fur trade industry is also primarily responsible for giant otters being one of the most highly endangered species of any animal in the world today. More than 20,000 giant otter furs were exported from Peru between 1950 and 1970, and were sold mainly in Germany, Italy, and other European countries. Although trade of any kind related to giant otters is now prohibited by law, habitat destruction (of the tropical rain forest), over-fishing, water pollution, and clandestine, unregulated trapping are making recovery of this species of otter extremely difficult.

Man drove sea otters to near extinction for their pelts as well. Sea otter fur — being as soft as the finest velvet — can contain up to 1 million hairs per square inch, more than that of any other animal on earth. (Dogs have 1,000-60,000 hairs per square inch. Humans have an average of 100,000 hairs on their heads.) For centuries, sea otter fur was the badge of Chinese and Russian royalty. Although

aboriginal people hunted sea otters for many thousand of years, and in some areas the Aleuts (of the Aleutian Island chain) overexploited and diminished the population, widespread commercial hunting did not take place until the mid-1700s. This began after a ship wrecked Russian expedition led by Vitus Bering discovered the soft, thick fur of the sea otter on one of the Commander Islands in 1741. Sea otters were then hunted without mercy for their pelts — a commodity the Russians called "soft gold" — leading to commercial extinction of the species by the early 1900s. (In fact, Russia lost interest in Alaska as the sea otters disappeared, allowing U.S. Secretary of State William Henry Seward to purchase it in 1867.) The International Fur Seal Treaty of 1911 established protection for seals and sea otters. Once numbering up to 20,000 in California and 300,000 worldwide, only thirteen small sea otter colonies persisted from the Kamchatka Peninsula south to Mexico when the treaty was signed. The public thought California sea otters had become biologically extinct until the sole remaining group was discovered along the Big Sur coast in 1938. (Biologists discovered the sole colony in 1915, but kept their existence a secret.) Today it is thought there are 150,000 sea otters alive. Sea otters occupy most of their historical range from the Kuril Islands northeast to Prince William Sound, Alaska. Populations also exist in central California, and transplanted populations exist in southeastern Alaska, British Columbia and Washington.

Man has also impacted otters through destruction of their habitats. As the cultivation of resources and development of their habitats continue, the various species continue to disappear. Otters also remain vulnerable to disasters, such as oil spills. The sea otter has become the poster child for the infamous Exxon Valdez oil spill, when over 11 million gallons of crude oil spilled after the tanker ran aground on Bligh Reef in Prince William Sound on March 24, 1989. The oil slick spread 435 miles, affecting coastal areas along the Kani Peninsula, Kodiak Archipelago and Alaska Peninsula. Over 1,000 sea otter carcasses were collected, which was only 30%-50% of the estimated number killed. In addition to the sea otters, seals, sea lions, whales, fishes, and over 100,000 marine birds killed, river otters, bears, foxes, eagles, and black-tailed deer were also contaminated when they came down to the shore to feed. The Exxon Valdez oil

spill has been cited as one of the worst wildlife disasters in this lifetime.

Man has typically treated otters as vermin throughout time. Although otters have sometimes been recognized as useful for fishing or as delightful pets, most of man's relationship with otters has been to use them as objects for sport hunting or for commercial gain until it is no longer profitable. Even those species of otter which are not presently endangered, remain vulnerable through habitat destruction. Many members of today's generation have not learned to coexist with otters, since many species have been extinct from much of their native habitat for so many years. For this reason, reintroduction programs sometimes face opposition from fisherman who feel otters compete for their livelihood. While much of the relationship between otters and man has been difficult, some positive steps have been taken to ensure the species' future survival. These steps include protection of the various species and their habitats, research projects, and educational programs to provide an understanding and appreciation of the animals. The success of future co-existence between man and the various otter species is based on the willingness of man to see value in the otter for reasons other than strictly commercial gain.

Otter Updates

by Tracy Johnston

- Care and Rehabilitation Of Wildlife, Inc. (C.R.O.W.), an animal rehabilitation facility on Sanibel Island, Florida, has occasion to raise baby otters. Since these otters need to be released after they are weaned, Staff Veterinarian Dr. Christine Kreuder would like anyone with information on Florida otter release programs or facilities to contact her at 941-472-3644.

- Rocky Mountain National Park — located in Colorado — conducts a one day survey of its river otter population every two years. The survey will be conducted again in 1998. It usually takes place on a weekend in late February or early March, although a date will not be selected until the first of the year. If you are interested in participating as a volunteer, contact Jim

Bureau of Land Management Awards University of New Mexico \$20,000 Grant to Study Rare River Otter in Upper Rio Grande

By Dr. Paul Polechla

On October 3, 1997 the Bureau of Land Management awarded the University of New Mexico a \$20,000 Challenge Cost Share Agreement to study the "Ecology of the River Otter and Other Wetland Furbearers of the Upper Rio Grande." I will be the principal investigator for the study. The extensive study area will cover Rio Arriba and Taos counties in north-central New Mexico, and Costilla and Conejos Counties in adjacent south-central Colorado. The intensive study area will be centered to the west of Pilar, Taos, and Questa, New Mexico where the river cuts through a deep canyon. Additional cooperating governmental agencies include the U.S. Forest Service, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and the Taos Pueblo Environmental Office. Non-governmental organizations pledging their

support include Rio Grande Restoration and Amigos Bravos.

Sightings by reliable sources continue to surface, without the documentation of photos, track casts or actual specimens. A quick study in the 1980's turned up no evidence, but otter reports continue to surface. This makes it necessary to conduct a thorough search for this rare species in a beleaguered but still beautiful river cutting its way through the sage mesa of the cold desert.

On the study areas, scent post-stations, infra-red triggered cameras, and random track searches will be used to collect data. Information about habitat suitability will be gathered, analyzed and compared to the literature. Taos Pueblo Environmental Office will sample the water quality. Evidence of other furbearing mammals, such as mink, raccoon, ringtail, beaver, and muskrat will be gathered. These six mammal species are believed to be the major carnivores and herbivores along the riparian zone. The presence of these species is an indication of healthy wetlands. Conducting a plant analysis and examination of the fish and crayfish populations will assess potential food items. The study has been slated for 12 months of data collection and a maximum 3 month analysis and summary.

Thanks go to Donna Storch, Sam DesGeorges, Ron Gardiner, Greg Schmitt, and George Long for their contributions to the original conception of the project, and to Pamela Herrera, Sam DesGeorges, Ann Dabb, Marjorie Hudson, Don Case, and others who assisted in securing the funding. Frederick Lujan and Luis Zamora proposed the project to the Pueblo de Taos. Steve Henke, William Britton, Frederick Lujan, Leonard Lucero, and Greg Schmitt authoritatively signed the document freeing generous monetary and in-kind

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Richardson (ph: 971-627-3471) for information after January 1, 1998.



Otter at Denver Zoo

Photo by Liz Heaton

- In the Spring 1997 edition of *The River Otter Journal*, we reported the Denver Zoo was possibly expecting otter pups. It now appears female river otter Rosetta's behavior changes were probably a result of a false pregnancy. No otter pups have been born.

Nature Program

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Bob's passion for wildlife photography began as a boy when he learned to use a camera from his father. He taught math in the Billings, Montana school district for 30 years before his love for film and the making of wildlife films became a full-time way of life. He has developed a deep understanding of the animals he has documented and his films are informative and entertaining. This feature program on the river otter will help educate many viewers about the nature and habitat of this remarkable animal.

Editor's Note: Broadcast times of this program may vary by region; check your local television schedule on January 18, 1998.

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Slide, The Otter

By John Mulvihill

*An otter named Slide thought he'd try out
Just how he could torment a coyote
There were four quite near-by
Calling out to the sky
Slide decided to visit the cry-out*

*He stopped on the way, caught a fish
Slide knew it would make a fine dish
A fish of great size
Quite a notable prize
It was all that an otter could wish*

*But the coyotes determined that they
Should have the great fish on this day
They could not persuade Slide
To agree, though they tried
Then one grabbed the fish, ran away*

*Another got Slide by the tail
Growling do not resist or you'll fail
Dragged him out of the water
Very hard on an otter
Slide struggled, to little avail*

*So he gave every coyote a bite
That drove all the bullies to flight
Slide went back to his mate
With no fish for their plate
But he knew he'd catch one by the night*

Meeting in Japan

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activities on the survival of the otter in South and Southeast Asia" by P. K. de Silva, "Status and distribution of river otter in two ecologically distinct habitats in South India" by N. Vangala, V. V. Rao, and D. Satyanarayana, and "Selection pressure of the otter (*Lutra lutra*) on the fish population in the Bieszczady Mountains" by L. Wisniewska and G. Harna.

Friends of the Japanese Otters (FJO) on November 19th hosted a joint meeting with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Otter Specialist Group. Dr. Padma K. De Silva, chairperson of the IUCN Otter Specialist Group, spoke to the assembly regarding the International Asian Otter Symposium held in Bangalore, India in 1987. She highlighted the small but important steps in educating the general public about the plight of Asian otters and the wetland habitat which they and humans depend upon. She mentioned the contributions made by Asian biologist and their foreign collaborators in the literature. At the same time she emphasized the dire need for more such baseline information.

The Friends of the Japanese Otter, a Tokyo-based non-governmental organization, formed in 1988 to search for remnant Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) populations, analyze their habitat, and raise funds for possible reintroduction. Extensive searches since 1979 by this organization located no otters. Intensive human construction projects are usurping the brackish and fresh-water wetlands sandwiched between the coast and the mountains. Although the once widespread otter and wolf have been extirpated by human activities, the Japanese black bear (*Ursus thibetanus japonica*) has persisted and thrived on the relatively undeveloped forested mountain tops inside the suburbs of Tokyo! Lately, fish populations have been making a comeback. There are plans to reintroduce otters from Korea into Japan. There is hope for the Eurasian otter in Japan!

Not only did the people of FJO host the meeting but they gave a generous donation to the IUCN Otter Specialist Group for much needed communications cost. In attendance at the meeting were the following people: Mr. J. Tanabe, Mr. K. Susuki, Ms K. Fukuda, Dr. Hiroshi Sasaki,

Dr. Motokazu Ando, Mr. I. Kishiji, Mr. Ganzalo Medina, Mr. Sung Yong Han, Mr. Nagulu Vangala, Dr. Aleem Ahmed Khan, Mr. M. Mascu, Mr. Claus Reuther, Mr. Hans Kruuk, Ms. Budsabong Kanchansaka, Dr. Charles Santapillai, Dr. Padma K. de Silva, and Mr. Burhaun, plus the author (my apologies for any misprints). The countries of Japan, Korea, Pakistan, India, Thailand, United Kingdom, Germany, United States, Chile, New Zealand were represented. Mr. Ganzalo Medina had wanted the next International Otter Meeting to be held in Chile in 1997, but his busy schedule in trying to finish his Ph.D. dissertation and the need for infrastructure among the Latin American otter biologists forced him to defer. Mr. Boguslaw Bobek of Jagiellonian University in Poland and Mr. Claus Reuther, of the Otter Zentrum in Germany, suggested an eastern European country like Poland should host the next IUCN Otter Specialist Group meeting in 1997 or early 1998. Since that time financial and logistical concerns moved the location to the Czech Republic in March 1998. (See related article for details.)

Many adventurous participants were treated to a full-day excursion to Misumine Shrine (to the fabled Japanese wolf), Chichibu-tama National Park (with the Nangatoro River winding through limestone bedrock clothed in beech, oak, and Japanese maple trees), and the Forestry Experimental Station of Saltama Prefecture (where they protect the watershed and grow great-tasting mushrooms). My high school friend took me to the Sunshine International Aquarium where Dr. Nobuyuki Nagatuka, D.V.M. manages the Eurasian otter, the sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*), the Asian small-clawed otter (*Aonyx cinerea*), the Commerson's dolphin, the freshwater Balkal Seal, and Pacific rim fishes of both temperate and tropical waters. If ever in Tokyo, please go to this unique aquarium perched on a sky scraper in Tokyo where sea water must be pumped up 10 floors! By the way, try sushi and seafood too.

Thanks to the Ecosystem Conservation Society-Japan (ECS-J), Japanese Environmental Agency, Saltama Prefecture, Japan Environment Corporation's Japan Fund for Global Environment, and the Friends of the Japanese Otters for hosting the meetings. I would like to thank Aya Inoue of ECS-J and my dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. Yutaka and Naomi Takeuchi for their hospitality.



— "Hey, this is my fishing hole!" —
 Bob Maltby is surprised by otter in Rocky Mountain National Park.
 Photo by Bob Maltby

BLM Rio Grande Study

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contributions for the project. Tim Aydelott of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History loaned me his time, expertise and equipment for water analysis. Thanks go to William Gannon and Terry Yates for their counsel. A number of people have already volunteered on trips during the early part of the program. Members of *The River Otter Alliance* have volunteered a weekend in spring of 1998 to assist in the gathering of data. Also, many thanks go to my cousin, Kathy Agusti, who inspired me to go rafting on the Taos Box. I pledge that I will work to the best of my ability to gain the maximum amount of information about otters and the five other furbearers and their habitat.

The River Otter Alliance

ENROLL NOW FOR 1998!

As a member you will be supporting research and education to help ensure the survival of *Lutra Canadensis*, the North American River Otter. You will receive a semi-annual newsletter, *THE RIVER OTTER JOURNAL*, with updates on otter-related:



*Educational Programs
 Environmental Issues
 Research Information
 River System and
 Population Surveys*

and much more!

Please Provide Mailing Address Below:

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Annual Membership Dues:

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- \$35 Family
- \$35 Organization
- \$50 Sustaining
- \$100 Sponsoring

Complete and return this form with your 1998 membership check to:

**THE RIVER OTTER ALLIANCE
 6733 S. Locust Court
 Englewood, CO 80112**

Excerpt from C.R.O.W.'s Clinic Corner

by Christine Kreuler, VMD,
Staff Veterinarian

(Reprinted from the Care and Rehabilitation of Wildlife's newsletter by permission of author)

"A juvenile female River Otter was finally admitted to our clinic when a dedicated Fort Myers resident successfully trapped her after four weeks of unsuccessful attempts. Early in her development, he had noticed a band around her thorax constricting her growth and creating an ever enlarging deep wound. With growing concern, he had been trying to catch her by every means possible but instead caught every other otter in the neighborhood many times over. He watched in our clinic while we performed a lengthy procedure to first remove the

band (which turned out to be tied shoelace) and then clean and close the dangerously deep wound that encircled her thorax by 360 degrees. Thick unhealthy scar tissue indicated that the nearly full-sized otter had had this constriction since an infant. Fifty sutures later, the otter recuperated in an outdoor enclosure for fifteen days. The wound had healed wonderfully and she was back catching crayfish with her family within hours of her release."

Editor's Note: Unfortunately this is not a unique story; the International Otter Survival Fund had articles in its Summer 1997 and Winter 1997 newsletters about otters they assisted, Kyle and Mij respectively, who were suffering potentially life-threatening injuries from carelessly discarded trash. Kyle had a plastic cable tie around his neck, constricting his breathing. Mij had fishing line wrapped around his waist, which was cutting into his body.



The River Otter Alliance

6733 South Locust Court
Englewood, Colorado 80112

INSIDE:

*The latest in river otter sightings,
research news, and interest stories!*

River Otter Alliance Board of Directors

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Carol Peterson, Public Relations/Membership

Paul Polechla, Ph.D., Scientific Advisor

The River Otter Alliance is a non-profit, tax-exempt group which is organized to promote the survival of the North American River Otter (*Lutra Canadensis*) through education, research, reintroduction, and habitat protection.

All work and efforts for this organization and newsletter are on a volunteer basis by those who share a common concern for the welfare of the river otter and its habitat. We invite all interested persons to contribute their time at any level of the organization.



