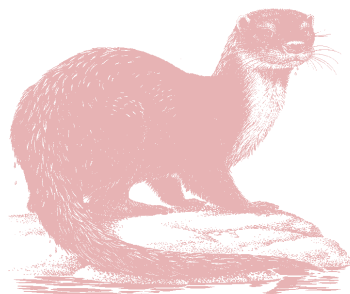


otter

Description of Species

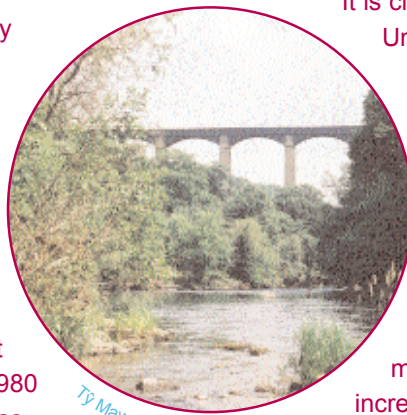
The European Otter (*Lutra lutra*) is a member of the Mustelid family. It has a slender body covered in dense fur, which is mostly brown, paler on the belly and cream coloured on the chin and throat. Adults are around a metre long weighing up to 10 kg. Otters live and forage alongside wetland habitats such as rivers, ponds, estuaries and coast. They are mainly nocturnal and feed mostly on fish, especially eels, but will also eat birds, amphibians, shellfish and small mammals. Otters live in underground dens called holts which are often situated amongst the roots of bankside trees, within caves, log piles or holes between rocks. Otters occupy home ranges up to 40 km long depending on food and habitat availability and mark prominent sites within their home range with small piles of their dung known as spraints.



Otter (picture courtesy of Mike Griffiths)

Current Status

Once common and widespread throughout the UK, otter numbers declined dramatically from the late 1950's onwards largely due to pesticide pollution and habitat loss. By 1980 the otter was almost extinct in most of England and parts of Wales and Scotland. With the phasing out of organo-chlorine pesticides in the UK and the cessation of hunting the otter has started to make a gradual recovery.



under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and requires special protection measures under the European Habitats Directive. It is classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as 'vulnerable'.

Distribution

Distribution in the UK

They are common in almost all of Scotland and most of Wales. Despite their increase in range otter numbers are still relatively low in many areas so they remain vulnerable throughout the UK.

Distribution in Wales

The latest evidence suggests that otters are common on rivers throughout most of Wales but are still relatively uncommon in Glamorgan, the North West and the extreme North East.

Legislation

The otter has full legal protection



<i>Proposed Action with Lead Agencies</i>			
Action	Objectives	Action	Target
Communication and Publicity Organise otter biodiversity events such as walks, talks, habitat creation, holt construction events etc.	7	WCBC, NWWT, BTCV	Articles in local press by end 2002. At least one event per year.
Use the popularity of the otter to promote the importance of biodiversity especially with regard to watercourses and riparian habitat.	7	WCBC, NWWT	Produce publicity material by 2005.
Encourage members of the public to report sightings of otters to the appropriate organisations.	1, 5, 7	WCBC, NWWT, EA, CCW	From 2002. Produce publicity material by 2003.
Distribute the Otter and River Project Guide to landowners.	7	NWWT, Welsh Water, EA.	From 2002.
Ensure otter corpse record sheets are publicised and easily available.	1, 7	WCBC, EA, CCW, NWWT	From 2002.
Practical Management and Policy Ensure otters and their habitats are fully protected by the planning system.	2, 3	WCBC, CCW, EA	From 2002.
Ensure all new roads incorporate otter underpasses and/or other devices at likely road death blackspots.	5	WCBC (Highways), EA, CCW	From 2002.
Install otter underpasses and/ or other devices at current road death blackspots.	5	WCBC (Highways), EA, CCW	From 2002.
Install otter ledges on all road bridges over rivers.	5	EA, CCW	By end 2007.
Install wildlife reflectors on roadside by all road death blackspots.	5	EA, WCBC, CCW	By end 2007.
Undertake habitat creation & restoration work to benefit otters.	2, 3, 4, 6	EA, CCW, NWWT, BTCV, NT, FC	Ten sites by end 2007.
Encourage landowners to manage riparian habitats to benefit otters.	2, 4, 6	CCW (Tir Gofal), EA, NWWT, FC	From 2002.
Ensure that all LEAPs within Wrexham County Borough include conservation for otter.	2	EA	Ongoing.
Provide advice to anglers and landowners on otters and their habitats.	7	EA, WCBC, NWWT, CCW, FC	Ongoing.
Consider stricter controls on the use and disposal of sheep dip.	6	EA	
Remove or adapt structures that act as barriers to otter dispersal.	2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.	EA, WCBC, CCW	From 2002.
Ensure eel fyke nets are not used without otter guards.	2	EA, WCBC, Anglers	From end 2001.
Improve & protect river water quality where necessary.	6	EA	From 2002.
Monitoring and Research Identify otter road kill blackspots.	1, 3	EA, CCW, NWWT	By end 2003.
Carry out catchment based and spot check surveys to determine distribution of otter in the area.	1	CCW, NWWT, VWT	By 2007.

Author: Adrian Lloyd Jones

Further information

Biodiversity Officer

Environment Section, Planning Department,
Wrexham County Borough Council,
Lambpit Street, PO Box 1290,
Wrexham, LL11 1WL

tel: 01978 292019

fax: 01978 292502

e-mail: planning@wrexham.gov.uk

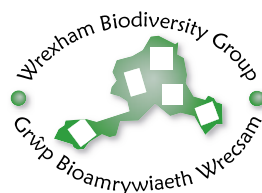
website: www.wrexham.gov.uk

Illustrations courtesy of English Nature.

Mae'r Cynllun hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. Ffoniwch 01978 292019 am eich copi.

A large print version of this Plan is available.

Please call 01978 292019.



Produced by the Planning Dept. Mar 2002

