

ALL ABOUT SEA OTTERS



DID YOU KNOW THAT A GROUP OF SEA OTTERS RESTING TOGETHER IS CALLED A "RAFT"?!

These charismatic aquatic mammals can often be spotted grooming, resting & **FORAGING** in a variety of coastal marine habitats including rocky shores, kelp beds, and wetlands. Since they must sleep at the surface, they are commonly observed floating on their backs and wrapped in **GIANT KELP** to keep from drifting out to sea.

Sea otters exhibit numerous **ADAPTATIONS** to help them survive & thrive in their ever-changing **ENVIRONMENT** such as excellent eyesight & sensitive whiskers to locate their food, webbed-feet & long tails to help propel them as they swim, and a dense layer of fur to keep them warm & dry in chilly waters.

IN FACT, AT ONE MILLION HAIRS PER SQUARE INCH, THEY HAVE THE THICKEST FUR OF ANY MAMMAL ON THE PLANET!

Plus, their teeth are especially unique for a marine mammal as they are blunt and designed for crushing & consuming a wide variety of shellfish and **BENTHIC INVERTEBRATES** including sea urchins, abalone, marine snails, sea stars, squid & octopus.

Amazingly, sea otters are one of the very few aquatic animals observed using tools (**ROCKS, SHELLS & STONES**) to pry open a meal — especially if it is dining on a tasty crab, clam, or mussel.

FUN FACT: AN ADULT SEA OTTER CAN EAT UP TO 30% OF ITS BODY WEIGHT IN ONE DAY!

Although considered a **KEYSTONE SPECIES** that plays a critical role in maintaining the balance of **NEARSHORE ECOSYSTEMS (SUCH AS KELP FORESTS, BAYS & ESTUARIES)**, sea otters are still vulnerable to many environmental challenges concerning food scarcity, disease and **NATURAL PREDATION**.

Moreover, sea otter survival has been significantly impacted by several human factors over recent decades — fishing gear **ENTANGLEMENTS** & boat strikes, **POLLUTANTS** & oil spills — factors that cause **CONTAMINANT** exposure & **HABITAT DEGRADATION**.

The southern sea otter (*ENHYDRA LUTRIS NEREIS*) also known as the California sea otter, historically inhabited coastal marine habitats from northern California to Baja, Mexico, but their range and population decreased significantly during the 18th & 19th centuries because of excessive hunting (**FOR THEIR PRIZED PELTS**) to the point of near **EXTINCTION**.

Although all marine mammals (**CETACEANS, PINNIPEDS, OTTERS, MANATEES & POLAR BEARS**) in the U.S. are protected under the **MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTION ACT**, and the southern sea otter has full protection status under California state law, according to the **IUCN**, sea otter populations world-wide are estimated to have undergone a 50 percent decline in the past 45 years. The southern sea otter population, which once numbered over 16,000 has dwindled to nearly 3,000 individuals.

SO LET'S RAISE AWARENESS AND LEARN ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF SEA OTTERS AROUND THE WORLD.

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Here's what you'll need to do to get started. It's super easy!

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Browse, checkout and borrow these illustrative books highlighting the captivating sea otter.

IT'S UP TO ALL OF US TO PROTECT THIS SENTINEL SPECIES AND SAFEGUARD ITS SURVIVAL!

ALL ABOUT SEA OTTERS BOOK LIST BY GRADE

PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN

Oscar: A Sea Otter Pup by Carol L. Harrison

Heal the Earth by Julian Lennon

FIRST & SECOND

National Geographic Readers: Sea Otters by Laura Marsh

If You Take Away the Otter by Susannah Buhrman-Deever

THIRD & FOURTH

The Great Book of Animal Knowledge: Sea Otters by M. Martin

What If There Were No Sea Otters: A Book about the Ocean Ecosystem by Suzanne Slade

FIFTH & SIXTH

Sea Otters: A Survival Story by Isabelle Groc

A Raft of Sea Otters by Jean-Michel Cousteau

SEVENTH & EIGHTH

Otters of the World by Paul Yoxon & Grace M. Yoxon

Marine Mammals of the World: A Comprehensive Guide by Thomas A. Jefferson

NINTH & UP

Sea Otter Conservation by Shawn E. Larson & James L. Bodkin

Return of the Sea Otter by Todd McLeish

*“Even if you never have the chance to see
or touch the ocean,
the ocean touches you”*

~ Sylvia Earle

American oceanographer, sea explorer & author