

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Super Swimming Otters

By Guy Belleranti



Otters are the super swimmers of the weasel family. Most have webbed feet, and all can see as well underwater as above. They can also close their noses and ears to keep water out.

Otters have a thick undercoat of fur

(kilograms). As you might guess, sea otters live in salt water, not fresh water, and are found along ocean coastlines.

Sea otters are mostly water dwellers. They do not swim as fast as river otters,

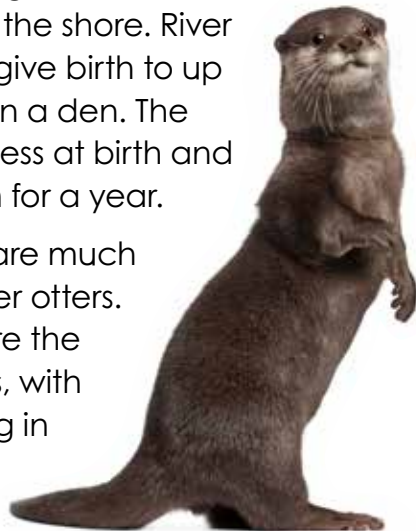


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River otters spend time both in water and on land. They swim belly down and must swim to stay afloat. At night they rest in dens, vegetation, or rock cavities along the shore. River otter mothers give birth to up to three pups in a den. The pups are helpless at birth and stay with mom for a year.

Sea otters are much larger than river otters. In fact, they are the heaviest otters, with some weighing in at nearly 90 pounds (41



Seeing a river otter sliding down a mudbank or a sea otter floating on its back is a cute sight. However, neither are pet material! They're expert hunters with strong teeth and powerful bites. Common prey include fish, frogs, crayfish, crabs, mollusks, and small birds. Sea otters also feast on sea urchins, squid, and clams.

Today, many otter species are in danger. Water pollution, habitat loss, illegal hunting, and conflicts with fishermen are all problems otters face. Conservation efforts and laws can help. We can help, too, by doing our best to protect rivers, oceans, and other waterways.

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1. Are otters carnivores, herbivores, or omnivores? Explain.

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are all problems otters face. Conservation efforts and laws can help.

The underlined word means...

- a. the protection of plants, animals, or other natural resources
  - b. the hunting of other animals
  - c. the act of removing natural resources from an area
  - d. the act of taking in endangered animals as pets
4. True or false: Sea otter mothers typically give birth to more pups at a time than river otter mothers. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Based on the article, which of the following statements is *not* true about otters?
- a. They can see well underwater.
  - b. They can close their ears to keep water out while swimming.
  - c. They get cold easily.
  - d. Pollution has put some species in danger.

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ conservation                      a. the place where an animal naturally lives



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6. \_\_\_\_\_ conflict                      f. the act of making something, such as water or air, dirty and not usable
7. \_\_\_\_\_ densest                      g. the parts that are the closest together
8. \_\_\_\_\_ pollution                      h. animals hunted and killed by other animals for food
9. \_\_\_\_\_ mollusk                      i. holes or spaces in something
10. \_\_\_\_\_ prey                      j. a type of animal that has a soft body, no backbone, and usually lives in a shell

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In the article, "Super Swimming Otters," you learned that river otters and sea otters have similarities and differences.

On the lines below, compare and contrast river otters and sea otters. Discuss characteristics or behaviors they have in common with each other, as well as characteristics or behaviors that are different between these two types of otters.



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## ANSWER KEY

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9. j. mollusk

i. holes or spaces in something

10. h. prey

j. a type of animal that has a soft body, no backbone, and usually lives in a shell