

Otter

Lutra lutra

Species Action Plan

1. Introduction

The European otter is classed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red Data List. It was listed as a priority UK BAP species and subsequently included in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Otter populations across Western Europe are showing a clear recovery trend but the species' global population status is less well understood and it still faces many threats.

2. Current Status

2.1 Ecology and habitat requirements

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important indicator of the chemical and biological health of our wetlands. It is found in both saline and freshwater habitats ranging from coastal areas and estuaries to ponds and lakes, canals, small streams and ditches, although natural fast flowing rivers are preferred. Territory sizes have most frequently been measured in terms of length of waterway, but this may not present an accurate picture in places where part or all of the range consists of lakes or ponds, or when comparing very large waterways with small ones. Male otters are frequently found to maintain territories of up to 50 km of riverbank but this may not reflect the total area of habitat occupied. Likewise, otters found to maintain territories along seemingly short sections of river may in fact be using extensive areas of habitat adjacent to the main body of the river: this will include wet woodland and scrub as well as more obvious wetland habitat.

resting holts with evidence suggesting that females are unsurprisingly much more careful to conceal the presence of both the holt itself and themselves when

relate to either road casualties or sightings in places where otters are forced from the watercourse they are using to negotiate a road bridge. Breeding undoubtedly occurs in Worcestershire as young otters have been found. All three canals are used by otters, with a concentration of records on the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal where it passes through Kidderminster.

Figure 1. Records of otter in Worcestershire. Data supplied and map prepared by Worcestershire Biological Records Centre.

2.3 Legislation

The otter is listed on Appendix 1 of CITES, Appendix II of the Bern Convention and Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive. It is protected under the Conservation of Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Act 1975, Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

The Otter Project was established at the University of Cardiff in 1992 with the aim of monitoring aquatic contamination using tissue from otters found dead. The project is now the main depository for otter carcasses in the UK and has become a long term environmental surveillance scheme investigating contaminants, disease, and population biology of otters across the UK. Research themes also include population structure and dispersal, age structure, reproduction, and diet. Numerous papers have been published from this work.

The Worcestershire Recorders, with Worcestershire Biological Records Centre, published the first Worcestershire Mammal Atlas in 2012. Records are currently being collected for a second edition.

5. Associated Plans

Wet Woodland, Reedbeds, Fen and Marsh, Wet Grassland, Urban, Canals, Ponds and Lakes, Rivers and Streams.

6. Conservation Aim

The species' increase in range and population is well understood and documented.

7. Conservation Objectives

Use of the Green Infrastructure approach to planning to prevent, or when necessary mitigate, cumulative impacts on otters of development adjacent

References and further information

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