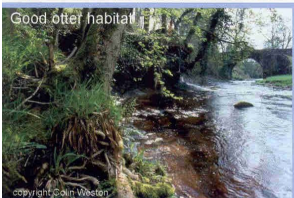


Know Your Otter



A recording card and guide to the identification of otter and mink.

www.cheshire-biodiversity.org.uk

OTTER AND MINK RECORDING CARD

To help us with our conservation work for the Otter we need your help. If you think you have seen an otter or mink, or signs of these animals, such as footprints or droppings, please fill out the card below and send back to the address overleaf. The data will be sent to the local biological records centre, rECOrd. Don't worry if you can't complete the questions fully. All information is useful!

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Tel no: _____ Email: _____

1) Location, eg name of river or road where animal was seen with 6 figure grid reference if possible

2) Was the animal bigger or smaller than the average domestic cat?

Did you see the creature in or out of water? _____

4) Was the face flat or pointed? _____

5) What colour was the coat? Did it have a paler chin and belly? _____

6) Did you see any droppings? Can you describe the colour, appearance and smell and where you found them, eg on a rock

7) Did you spot any footprints? If yes, were they approximately 3 inches across or 1 inch across?

IF YOU FIND A DEAD OTTER, PLEASE CONTACT CHESHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST IMMEDIATELY.

Thank you for your help to save the Otter in the Cheshire region.

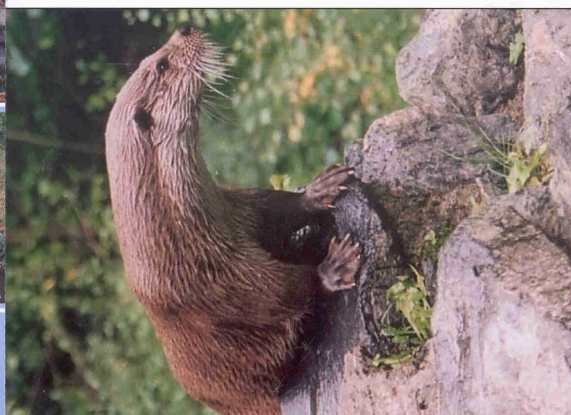
For more information about otters contact the Otter LBAP Coordinator at Cheshire Wildlife Trust on 01270 610180.

Please affix stamp here

Know Your Otter
Cheshire Wildlife Trust
Grebe House
Reaseheath
Nantwich
Cheshire
CW5 6DG



ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY



Otters are fully protected under Schedules 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and are European Protected Species. It is an offence to kill, injure or disturb an otter, or damage or obstruct an otter holt.

The Fourth National Otter Survey for England showed that otters are more widespread across the Country than at the time of the previous survey, but still only occupy one third of suitable areas.

In Cheshire, the Otter is rare but slowly recolonising our waterways, such as the Rivers Dee and Weaver.

The Otter is the subject of a National and Local Biodiversity Action Plan for its conservation.

Main threats to recovering otter populations are habitat loss, lack of lying up sites (holts), development pressures, disturbance and accidental death, particularly from road traffic accidents.

We still have much to do to help otters back to our rivers. Help us by sending in any records of otter signs or mink sightings.

The Otter is one of Britain's rarest native mammals. It is shy and generally nocturnal making it difficult to see. In lowland England otters live in wetland habitats which may include rivers, streams, ponds, canals and reservoirs. They also use the surrounding land to travel between feeding and breeding sites and have large home ranges of up to 40km.

Otters lie up in resting places, known as holts, in the hollows between tree roots and amongst dense vegetation. An individual otter requires up to 30 of these sites. They will sometimes make use of artificial holts, for example made from log piles, if these are suitably located and left undisturbed.

An adult otter eats about 1kg of food per day made up mainly of fish but will also consume small mammals, frogs and crabs. Its favourite food is eel.

Otters are often confused with the non-native American Mink which is smaller, darker in colour and more inquisitive. Unlike the Otter they are diurnal and are, therefore, often seen during the day. You can use the following guide to aid correct identification.

OTTER	AMERICAN MINK
Size: Up to 1.2 metres	Size: Up to 0.5 metres
Weight: 10kg (25 lbs)	Weight: 1kg (2.5 lbs)
Tail: Tapering and smooth	Tail: Rounded and furry
Muzzle: Broad and flat	Muzzle: Pointed
Footprint: 75mm (3 inches) across	Footprint: 25mm (1 inch) across
Droppings: Black, tarry musty hay-like smell	Droppings: Very unpleasant, acid smelling.