

2021 Report

IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group



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NUMBER OF MEMBERS

290

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

Facebook: @OtterSpecialistGroup

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Websites: <https://www.otterspecialistgroup.org>;

<https://www.himalayanotternetwork.org>

Mission statement

The Otter Specialist Group (OSG), founded in 1974: (1) provides leadership for the conservation of all 13 otter species; (2) determines and reviews on a continuing basis the status and needs of otters, and promotes the implementation of necessary research, conservation and management programmes by appropriate organisations and governments; (3) communicates the status and conservation needs of otters and promotes the wise management of otter species.

Projected impact 2021–2025

Not stated.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-014 Ensure affiliation to OSG is mentioned in peer-reviewed papers.

T-015 Conduct Red List assessment for the Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*) in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Cambodia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Lebanon, Borneo, Indonesia, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Syria, Mongolia, Jordan, Iran and Japan.

T-016 Conduct Red List assessment for the Eurasian Otter in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.



Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*)
Photo: Carol Bennetto



Congo Clawless Otter (*Aonyx congicus*)
Photo: Glen & Rita Chapman



African Clawless Otter (*Aonyx capensis*)
Photo: Rowan Jordaan

T-017 Conduct Red List assessment for the Eurasian Otter in non-EU European countries.

T-018 Assess impact of hunting on North American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*) in the USA.

T-019 Assess impact of hunting on Smooth-coated Otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) in Iraq.

T-020 Assess impact of hunting on Smooth-coated Otter in the Russian Federation.

T-021 Circulate a questionnaire to members on climate change impacts.

T-022 Complete Red List assessment of all 13 otter species.

T-023 Make Red List training mandatory for assessors and the management team.

T-024 Assess threats to otter species in Sikkim, India and other key areas in the Himalayan region.

T-039 Complete Green Status assessment for all species.

PLAN

T-027 Expand Sea Otter (*Enhydra lutris*) plan.

T-028 Develop the Himalayan Otter Conservation Strategy.

T-029 Develop an action plan for endangered and/or isolated populations of Eurasian Otter.

T-030 Develop an action plan for endangered and/or isolated populations of Eurasian Otter in Africa.

T-031 Survey conservation plans already planned.

T-032 Ensure every threatened species has a plan.

T-033 Include plans with the Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG) in the SSC library.

T-034 Conduct a funding search for the Otters of Nepal book for community conservation.

T-035 Plan a Sea Otter and River Otter conservation meeting.

T-037 Develop a conservation strategy for the Eurasian Otter in the Alps.

T-038 Use GSP guidelines on IUCN engagement in global policies (Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), CITES, Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)) to help OSG members to be engaged in national policies.

T-040 Develop conservation plans for critical areas: Borneo as species hotspot.

T-041 Develop conservation plans for critical areas: sub-Saharan Africa.

T-057 Develop a Nepal Otter Action Plan.

T-064 Produce a mini-version of the World Otter Conservation Strategy for broader distribution.

T-065 Write and distribute How to Save an Otter conservation planning methodology book.

ACT

T-025 Enact Citizen Science initiatives in Asia.

T-026 Enact Citizen Science initiatives in Africa.

T-042 Reschedule meeting in Singapore to 2021 to set up a wildlife trade monitoring plan: Local actions to enhance otter conservation in key otter trade source and consumer countries.

T-043 Launch two OSG research projects in South Africa, Uganda and Benin.

T-044 Develop eDNA probes for freshwater otter species.

T-045 Develop a standard survey protocol and guidelines for Asian species.

T-046 Develop a standard survey protocol and guidelines for African species.

T-047 Test and implement eDNA monitoring of Eurasian Otter (Himalaya, India, Nepal, Italy).

T-048 Prepare background materials for proposal to list Hairy-nosed Otter (*Lutra sumatrana*) on CITES Appendix I.

T-049 Develop Google Map of OSG research and conservation actions worldwide.

T-050 Sustain and expand the Himalayan Otter Network.

T-051 Expand the Lighthouse project experience to hotspot critical areas.

T-052 Promote an African Otter Network.

T-053 Promote an Alpine Otter Network.

T-054 Prepare updated version of the 1983 CITES otter identification manual.

T-055 Control pet trade for Asian Small-clawed Otter (*Aonyx cinereus*) and Smooth-coated Otter.

T-056 Promote research on emerging threats in freshwater habitats.

T-071 Prepare new guidelines for otters in captivity.

NETWORK

T-001 Promote funding of projects in Africa.

T-002 Promote funding of projects on pet trade in Asia (Indonesia, China, India, Nepal).

T-003 Trace distribution of partnerships across assess, plan, act, network and communicate.

T-004 OSG Otter Partners: extend participation in OSG activities to otter supporters and NGOs. Create guidelines for this new form of OSG membership.

T-005 Establish in kind partnerships with local governments and NGOs.

T-006 Carry out members survey.



Smooth-coated Otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*)
Photo: Atul Sinai Borker

T-007 Identify gaps in OSG skills.

T-008 Strengthen collaboration with other IUCN components (IUCN National Committees, Freshwater Conservation Committee, Climate Change Specialist Group, Conservation Planning Specialist Group).

T-009 Survey and map OSG projects.

T-010 Support European Union-funded projects for otters.

T-011 Involve research institutions, associations, zoos, NGOs, national parks and Veterinarian Health Service in roadkill collection and necropsies.

T-012 Train in conservation planning.

T-013 Document on threats to freshwater species.

T-036 Expand involvement with Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) and One Plan approach.

T-068 Build capacity of people involved in projects in Africa.

COMMUNICATE

T-058 Expand World Otter Day community celebrations on multimedia.

T-059 Expand World Otter Day community celebrations in Asia.

T-060 Expand World Otter Day community celebrations in North America and Canada.

T-061 Expand World Otter Day community celebrations in Central and South America.

T-062 Expand World Otter Day community celebrations in Europe.

T-063 Giant Otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) day village celebrations in Peru and Brazil.

T-066 Expand available OSG otter educational materials to new countries and languages.

T-067 Strengthen the collaboration with IUCN One Programme and work more closely with the Commission on Education and Communication.

T-069 Hold the XVth International Otter Congress.

T-070 Establish an OSG Newsletter.

T-072 Publish OSG Bulletin regularly.

Activities and results 2021

ASSESS

Green Status

T-039 (KSR 6)

Number of new Green Status of Species assessments completed: 5

Result description: The Green Status assessment of the Eurasian Otter has been published. The assessment for Hairy-nosed Otter is under revision. Assessments have been drafted for Neotropical Otter (*Lontra longicaudis*), Congo Clawless Otter (*Aonyx congicus*) and Marine Otter (*Lontra felina*).

Red List

T-016 (KSR 6)

Number of new national Red List assessments published: 0

Result description: We are collecting information and appointing a new member for Morocco.

T-017 (KSR 6)

Number of new national Red List assessments published: 0

Result description: The first Eurasian Otter Workshop was held online 26–28 February 2021. The workshop was attended by 476 participants from 52 countries, including the non-EU countries Norway, Switzerland, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

Research activities

T-014 (KSR 5)

Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 1

Result description: Membership acknowledged in Lerone, L., et al. (2022). 'A Noninvasive Genetic Insight into the Spatial and Social Organization of an Endangered Population of the Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*, Mustelidae, Carnivora)'. *Sustainability* 14(4):1943. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14041943>.

T-021 (KSR 6)

Number of new climate change vulnerability assessments completed: Ongoing.



Marine Otter (*Lontra felina*)
Photo: Kevin Schaffer

Result description: Contacts established with Climate Change Task Force for support to design the questionnaire.

T-022 (KSR 6)

Number of species that have been assessed through the different tools: 13

Result description: Thirteen species were assessed through the global Red List.

T-023 (KSR 6)

Number of species that have been assessed through the different tools: 0

Result description: A session on Red List assessment is planned at the XVth International Otter Congress, to be held in Sospel, France, 19–23 September 2022.

PLAN

Planning

T-027 (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 1

Result description: In 2021, OSG joined the Sea Otter Reintroduction Study Group (SORSG) to discuss outreach aspects of the potential reintroduction of Sea Otters to habitats of the Pacific coast where they remain absent from their historical range. An OSG meeting on Sea Otter was planned in 2019 and then postponed due to the pandemic.

T-028 (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 0

Result description: An action plan for Nepal is on the way.

T-035 (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 1

Result description: An ‘hybrid’ joint Sea Otter/North American River Otter conference is planned for spring 2022.



North American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*)
Photo: M. L. Haring

T-041 (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 1

Result description: OSG projects were funded in Benin and Uganda.

Policy

T-037 (KSR 9)

Number of policies where SSC members provided technical input: 0

Result description: OSG supported Gran Paradiso National Park in the organisation of an international meeting in 2018, setting the base for an Alpine otter network. The meeting ended with IUCN OSG ‘Otters in the Alps Manifesto’. A next meeting is planned for 2022, involving all national parks in the Alpine range. WWF Italia is funding an otter survey in Italian Alpine regions, guided by OSG.

T-038 (KSR 9)

Number of policies in which OSG has been engaged: 1

Result description: IUCN World Conservation Congress resolution WCC-2020-Res-098 mentions Hairy-nosed Otter (*Lutra sumatrana*) needs to be uplisted to CITES Appendix I.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-049 (KSR 10)

Number of areas under management for the species or group of species: 1

Result description: A meeting was held on 24 March to set a collaboration with a GIS expert team to initiate the mapping of conservation projects. An inventory of projects has been set through the OSG Bulletin archives.

T-055 (KSR 10)

Number of threatened species benefiting from in situ conservation action: 0

Result description: A draft of the proposal for CITES upgrading of Hairy-nosed Otter (*Lutra sumatrana*) was written. We are in contact with trade countries (Thailand, Cambodia).

Policy

T-056 (KSR 10)

Number of position statements addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 1

Result description: We have been networking with the Freshwater Specialist Groups and Freshwater Conservation Coordinator Monika Bohm of the Global Center for Species Survival. The Hairy-nosed Otter (*Lutra sumatrana*) has been included in the Freshwater Conservation Committee publication, *Fantastic Freshwater: 50 landmark species for conservation*.

Technical advice

T-043 (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 2

Result description: Research funded by OSG in Benin is ongoing (total US\$ 3,000).

A project was funded in Lake Bunyonyi, Uganda (total US\$ 952), in partnership between Green Mountain Initiative led by Twinamasiko Luke and Wild Otters Research led by Katrina Fernandez.

T-044 (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 2

Result description: A probe for Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*) was tested in Italy and Himalayan rivers. A funded project on eDNA in Italian freshwater species was approved.

T-047 (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 1

Result description: An eDNA survey of Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*) was run in Italy and Himalayan rivers. Results are already published for Italy (Jamwal, P.S., et al. 2021. 'First assessment of eDNA-based detection approach to monitor the presence of Eurasian otter in Southern Italy'. *Hystrix, the Italian Journal of Mammalogy* 32(2):176–181. <https://doi.org/10.4404/hystrix-00401-2020>).

T-048 (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 1

Result description: The following documents were drafted and submitted: (1) Hairy-nosed Otter CITES Appendix I DRAFT Proposal; (2) Hairy-nosed Otter fact sheet for CITES; (3) IUCN OSG otter letter to request support from Malaysian Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources; (4) e-mail to Emma Vovk, Programme Officer – Sustainable Use and Trade in the IUCN Global Species Programme.

T-052 (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 0

Result description: We are developing projects in Benin and Uganda. A new continental representative was appointed.

T-053 (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 0

Result description: Two meetings were organised with Gran Paradiso National Park and regional surveyors to plan the Alpine otter survey and develop a standard protocol for field survey.

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-012 (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in conservation planning: 200

Result description: Jamie Copsey (CPSG) gave an invited lecture entitled 'Principles of planning species conservation projects' to the 1st Eurasian Otter Workshop on 26–28 February 2021, reaching 470 attendants. Co-Chair Anna Loy successfully completed the 'Facilitating Species Conservation Planning Workshops'.

Documents review

T-013 (KSR 3)

Number of resolutions accomplished with engagement of SSC groups: 0

Result description: The Asian Small-clawed Otter (*Aonyx cinereus*) was upgraded to CITES Appendix I.

Membership

T-006 (KSR 2)

Number of SSC members recruited: 34

Result description: Thirty-four (34) new members were recruited from Morocco, Italy, Russia, Brazil, UK, USA, Germany, Croatia, Uganda, India and Mexico. About 250 members were reappointed.

T-009 (KSR 2)

Number of SSC members recruited: 34

Result description: New members were recruited from Morocco, Italy, Russia, Brazil, UK, USA, Germany, Croatia, Uganda, India and Mexico.

Synergy

T-001 (KSR 1)

Number of funding partners established and maintained: 2

Result description: An SSC internal grant (n.5277-0189) was obtained in 2019 to study African Clawless Otter (*Aonyx capensis*) and Spotted-necked Otter (*Hydricteis maculicollis*) population densities along the lower Orange River in the Nama-Karoo, Namibia, using camera trapping surveys. OSG also funded US\$ 2,500 to an education project in Benin on the Spotted-necked Otter.

T-008 (KSR 3)

Proportion of SSC groups that advance their targets through collaborations with other IUCN components: 3

Result description: OSG promoted a discussion meeting at the Fourth SSC Leaders' Meeting in Abu Dhabi in 2019 focused on the need for networking among Specialist Groups involved with freshwater species. The meeting was attended, among others, by the Freshwater Fish Specialist Group and the Freshwater Plant Specialist Group. OSG also attended the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille in 2021 and established contacts with the Freshwater Conservation Coordinator of the Global Center for Species Survival.

T-011 (KSR 4)

Number of institutions and stakeholders involved: 2

Result description: In Italy, Cilento, Vallo di Diano and Alburni National Park (NP CVDA) and the National Veterinary Service (Istituti Zooprofilattici Sperimentali, IZS) have become involved.

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-070 (KSR 13)

Number of digital communication outputs developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 1

Result description: The first Newsletter was released in February 2022.

Scientific meetings

T-069 (KSR 12)

Number of scientific events organised: 0

Result description: The XVth International Otter Congress has been planned and announced. The Congress will be held in Sospel, France, on 19–23 September 2022. Fondation Prince Albert II de Monaco will sponsor the Congress and will cover accommodation expenses at the venue for about 70 participants.



Asian Small-clawed Otter (*Aonyx cinereus*)
Photo: Nicole Duplaix

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 72

Geographic regions: 35 Global, 8 Africa, 4 America, 18 Asia, 7 Europe

Actions during 2021:

Assess: 7 (KSR 5, 6)

Plan: 6 (KSR 8, 9)

Act: 9 (KSR 10)

Network: 7 (KSR 1, 2, 3, 4)

Communicate: 2 (KSR 12, 13)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:

