IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group

Conservation Success Stories

Empowering Communities for Giant Otter Conservation

IUCN SSC
Species Survival Commission

Empowering Communities for Giant Otter Conservation

IMPLEMENTED BY

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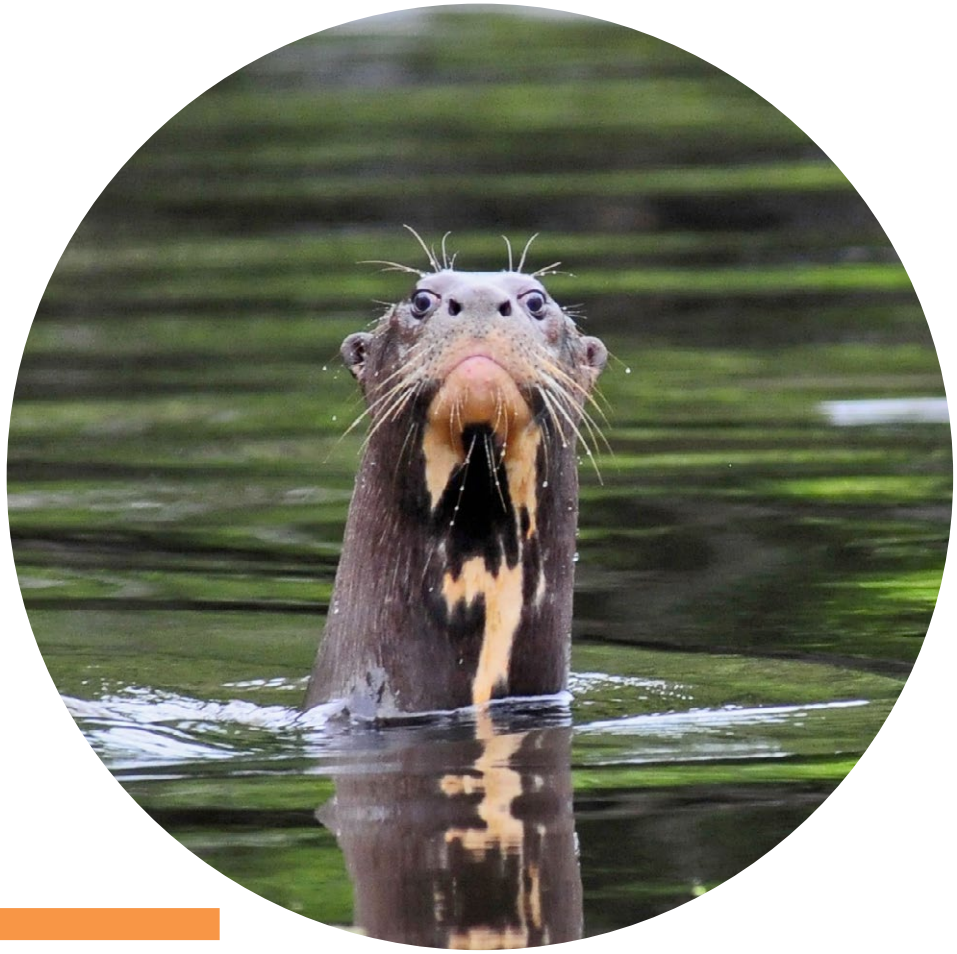
IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group



THREAT ADDRESSED

Human-otter conflict and poorly managed tourism contribute to retaliation and have a negative impact on otter survival.

TARGET

Sustain Giant Otter conservation. (T-074)

More than 400 trained tourism professionals in Brazil

SUCCESS LEVEL

Successful

Success category:
Local people involvement

Success story:

The Giant Otter Project was created in 2019 to strengthen conservation of the species and its ecosystem, aiming to improve coexistence with giant otters and engage stakeholders in conservation actions. The project adopts an integrated approach, combining science and community engagement to reduce threats to the species, especially those linked to human conflict and poorly managed tourism. Its actions include long-term population monitoring, environmental education, scientific outreach, and developing sustainable tourism.

In population monitoring, the project encourages community engagement through a Giant Otter Identification Guide, which each year receives growing collaboration from citizens, especially tourists and tour guides, providing information about resident groups. Environmental education programs aim to raise awareness among local communities, the public, and the tourism sector about the importance of giant otter conservation and the negative impacts of harmful practices. The goal is to promote behavioural changes toward the species. Through workshops, lectures, educational materials, and awareness campaigns, the project shares information about the species and highlights the need to preserve its habitat.

Scientific outreach also plays a central role, involving the production and dissemination of informative content on social media and other communication channels. One of the project's main strategies to mitigate the impact of poorly managed tourism is developing and implementing best practice guidelines for giant otter observation. These guidelines instruct tourists and operators on interacting with the species, including the minimum distance to maintain, appropriate behaviour during sightings, and respect for the natural habitat and biodiversity.

The project offers specialised training for guides and tourism professionals, ensuring they understand giant otter needs and can guide visitors responsibly. It also plays an active role in formulating public policies and supporting management plans for protected areas. Through participation in the National Giant Otter Conservation Plan, it ensures that conservation strategies for the species are integrated into Brazil's environmental policies, focusing on managing critical areas for otter survival. Management plans for protected areas aim to balance biodiversity protection with promoting responsible tourism activities.

By combining these approaches, the Giant Otter Project helps reduce tourism and human conflict impacts on the species, promoting coexistence between giant otters, local communities, and visitors. As of December 2024, the project has trained over 400 tourism professionals in Brazil and reached more than 100,000 people through educational and scientific outreach initiatives. ■ **ANNA LOY**

REASONS FOR SUCCESS

The Giant Otter Project's actions show that integrating science, environmental education, and community engagement is essential for conserving the species and its habitat. These strategies raise environmental awareness, strengthen collaboration, and improve human coexistence with the species while promoting responsible tourism that adds economic value and mitigates negative impacts on biodiversity.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

https://giantotterproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Giant-otters-ID-Guide-2021-Jofre.pdf; https://projetoariranhas.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/guia_boas_praticas.pdf; https://crbio01.gov.br/arquivos/revista_o_biologo_65.pdf; https://www.gov.br/icmbio/pt-br/assuntos/biodiversidade/pan/pan-ariranha

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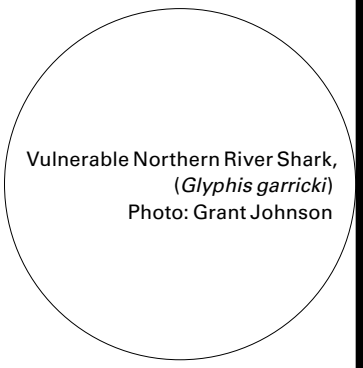


Vulnerable Northern River Shark, (*Glyphis garricki*)
Photo: Grant Johnson

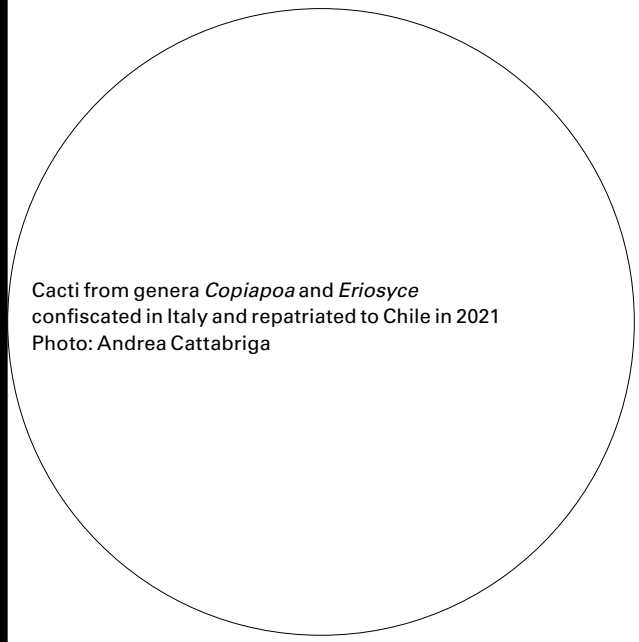
Interviews about human wildlife interactions with local inhabitants
Photo: Kiran Thapa Magar

Vicuña management by Cooperativa Agroganadera de Santa Catalina and Comunidad Aborigen Atu Shapi de Morritos. Santa Catalina, Jujuy Province, Argentina
Photo: Yanina Arzamendia

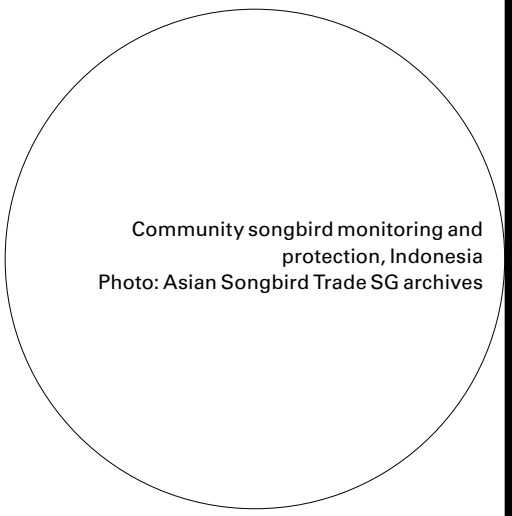
Story photo credits

Giant otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*)
Photo: Fernando Trujillo

Workshop held in 2023 for tourism guides at Sesc Pantanal, Pantanal, Brazil
Photo: Caroline Leuchtenberger



Cacti from genera *Copiapoa* and *Eriosyce* confiscated in Italy and repatriated to Chile in 2021
Photo: Andrea Cattabriga



Community songbird monitoring and protection, Indonesia
Photo: Asian Songbird Trade SG archives

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