



MEET THE Eurasian Otter



SPNI

HEBREW NAME: לוטרה אירופית *LUTRA EUROPIA*

The scientific name for the Eurasian Otter is *lutra lutra*, which in Hebrew just means "otter otter."

SEA OR RIVER?

There are two main types of otters: Sea Otters, who live in the ocean, and River Otters, who hang out in rivers, lakes, and wetlands. The Eurasian Otter is a River Otter.

FROM EVERYWHERE TO ALMOST NOWHERE

A hundred years ago, otters were everywhere—from the Lebanon border down to the Dead Sea. They swam in the Hula Valley, the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee), and through the Jordan River and valleys like Beit She'an and Jezreel. All of these wet places were connected, giving otters room to spread out and thrive.

POOP TRACKING

Otters are tricky to find, so scientists track them by their scat (yes, poop!). It has a unique smell that lets researchers know they're in an active otter area. In 2020, a survey found signs of otters in the Hula Valley, Kinneret, and even the Harod Valley for the first time since 2012! But in some places, the poop is disappearing, which usually means the otters are too.

AQUATIC ATHLETES

Otters have big eyes, a strong nose, and sharp claws to detect and catch crabs, frogs, fish, and small animals, and sharp teeth to finish the job. Their long, powerful tails help them glide through the water.

STEALTH MODE ON

Otters are most active at night and stay far from people, which makes them really hard to spot.

STATUS:

**CRITICALLY
ENDANGERED**

There are only a few Eurasian otters left in the wild in Israel, mostly in the Hula Valley and near the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee).



THE HULA VALLEY, YOAV PERLMAN



Eurasian Otter

WHAT'S KILLING ISRAEL'S OTTERS?



NUTRIA (OR COYPU), YOAV PERLMAN

THE INVASIVE NUTRIA

In the 1950s, a big rodent called the nutria (or coypu) was brought to Israel to be used for its fur. But when they escaped or were let loose, they took over Israel's freshwater habitats, competing with otters for space and resources.

DISAPPEARING FISHPONDS

Fishponds used to act as safe pathways or "stepping stones" for otters to travel. But now, many fishponds are being drained for economic reasons, which makes it harder for otters to move between habitats.

THE SOUTHERN JORDAN RIVER'S DECLINE

The southern Jordan River is an important connection for otters between the Kinneret Basin and other wetland areas. But now, with the river's water quality decreasing, otters are struggling to travel and connect different populations from the north to the south.

HUMAN IMPACT

Pollution, changing how people manage water, and building more cities have all hurt the rivers and wetlands otters need to survive. These changes have made it harder for otters to find food, shelter, and places to live, pushing them dangerously close to extinction in Israel.



AYAL BARTOV

SO, HOW DO WE BRING OTTERS BACK TO ISRAEL'S RIVERS?

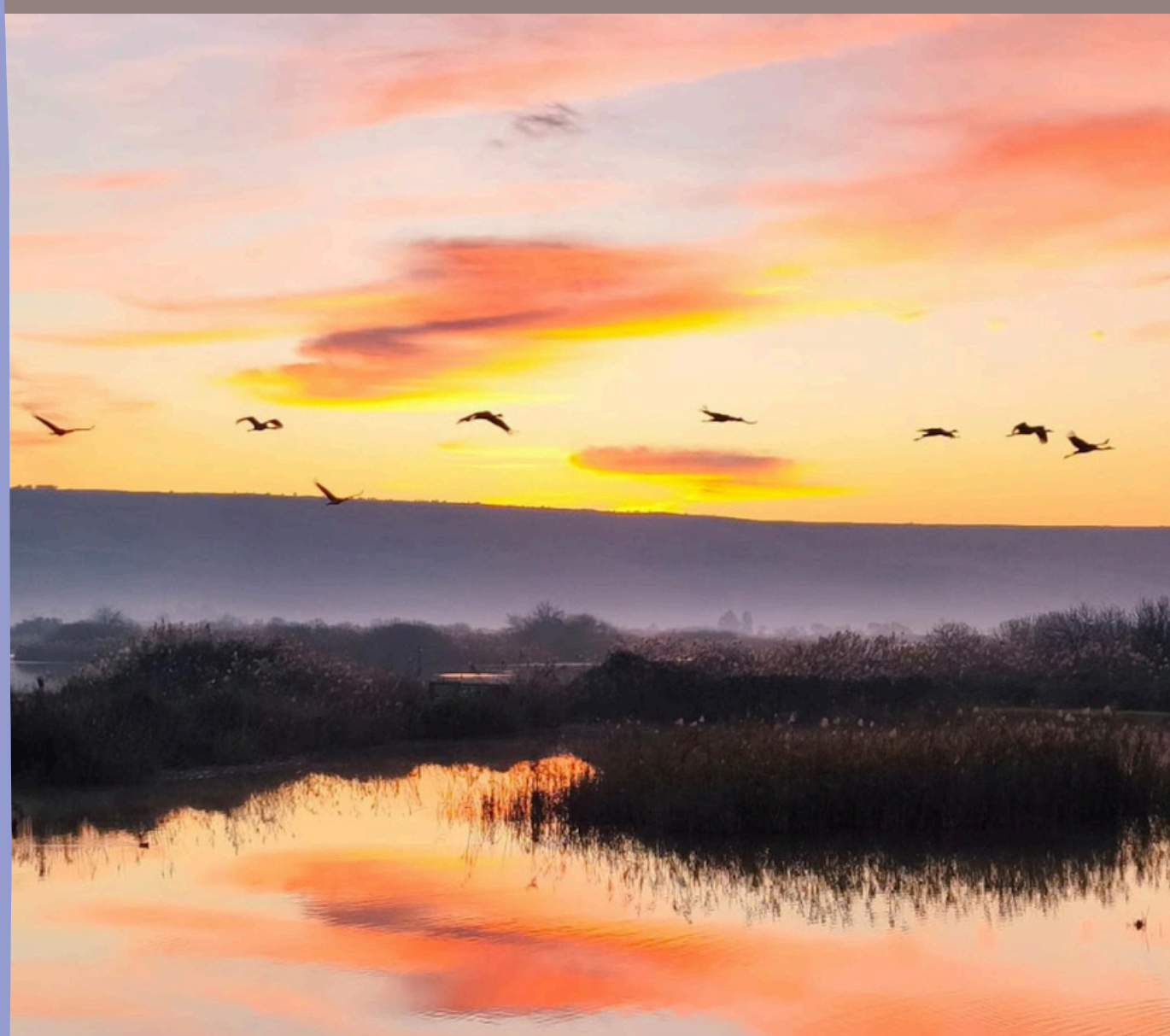


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HOW SPNI IS HELPING BRING THEM BACK

REWILDING THE HULA VALLEY

The Hula Valley is super important for otters in Israel because it has streams and tributaries that give them food, shelter, and safe travel. SPNI launched a rewilding project at Kibbutz Dan, where they've leased 125 acres of old fish ponds and removed a dam to let the Dan river flow again to turn this land back into the wetlands these otters need to live and thrive. These rewilded wetlands also provide a safe nursery for otter mothers and their cubs, so they can raise another generation of otters.



AGAMON HULA, NADAV ISRAELI

CONNECTING HABITATS

SPNI connects otter habitats by creating wildlife corridors, safe paths that help otters travel between areas without facing dangers like roads or buildings. These corridors link wetlands, rivers, and other natural spaces so otters can find food, shelter, and mates. This is crucial for keeping otter populations healthy and strong.



EURASIAN OTTER AT NIGHT, DROR GALILI

TEACHING PEOPLE TO DRIVE WITH WILDLIFE IN MIND

SPNI helps protect otters by teaching drivers to slow down in areas where wildlife might be nearby, especially when otters are on the move. They raise awareness and put up signs to help keep animals safe.

You can do this too! Talk to adults about driving carefully in nature areas and share what you've learned to help protect wildlife.



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AN ACTIVITY TO TEACH OTHERS

Let's see what you remember about one of Israel's coolest (and stealthiest) animals, the Eurasian Otter! Answer on your own or ask others. Check your answers at the bottom.

WHAT DOES THE EURASIAN OTTER NEED TO SURVIVE IN A STREAM?

- A. Clean water and dense vegetation for shelter
- B. Warm water and smooth rocks
- C. Deep caves and tall trees

WHAT FEATURE HELPS DISTINGUISH AN OTTER FROM A NUTRIA (COYPU)?

- A. Fur color
- B. Tail thickness
- C. Ear size

WHICH ANIMAL LEAVES DROPPINGS ON ROCKS TO MARK ITS TERRITORY?

- A. Nutria
- B. Common duck
- C. Otter

WHAT DOES THE EURASIAN OTTER MAINLY LIKE TO EAT?

- A. Fruits and vegetables
- B. Fish
- C. Insects and small birds

WHY IS THE EURASIAN OTTER CONSIDERED AN ENDANGERED SPECIES?

- A. It's hunted for its fur
- B. It faces water pollution and loss of food
- C. It can't survive cold weather

Answers: a b c b b

Nice work! Whether you aced it or learned something new, you just helped bring more attention to a critically endangered species. By supporting SPNI projects that restore clean water, protect habitats, and raise awareness, you're helping give Eurasian Otters a real chance at survival.

Thank you so much for choosing the Eurasian Otter as your endangered animal!

Your interest and support can make a real difference in helping protect these incredible creatures and their future. Stay curious like an otter!