

SEA OTTER

NOT JUST CUTE

ENHYDRA LUTRIS

HABITAT

NEAR SHORE ESTUARIES

SEA OTTERS FIND THEIR HOME IN NEARSHORE ESTUARIES. THESE COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS ARE WITHIN A FEW KMS FROM THE SHORE AND HOST AN ABUNDANCE OF KELP. THEY ARE ALSO FOUND IN COASTAL WETLAND SYSTEMS LIKE ELKHORN SLOUGH, CALIFORNIA.



BODY WEIGHT

APPROXIMATELY 30 KGS



LIFE EXPECTANCY

UPTO 23 YEARS

ROUNDED MOLAR TEETH & SENSITIVE WHISKERS

WITH A DIET CONSISTING OF HARD SHELLED MOLLUSKS, SEA URCHIN & SHELLFISH AMONGST OTHERS, THEIR TEETH COME IN PRETTY HANDY.

THEIR SENSITIVE WHISKERS HELP DETECT PREY IN SMALL CREVICES WHEN THEY DIVE.

WEBBED FEET

HELPS IN PROPULSION. AN OTTER ALWAYS SWIMS WITH ITS LIMBS OUT OF THE WATER, TURNING ITSELF OVER AND OVER TO AVOID FLOATING AWAY.

RETRACTABLE CLAWS

RETRACTILE CLAWS ON THE FRONT FEET, A LOOSE FLAP OR POUCH OF SKIN UNDER EACH FORE LIMB ACTS AS A POCKET FOR FOOD OTTERS GATHER WHEN THEY DIVE TO THE BOTTOM.

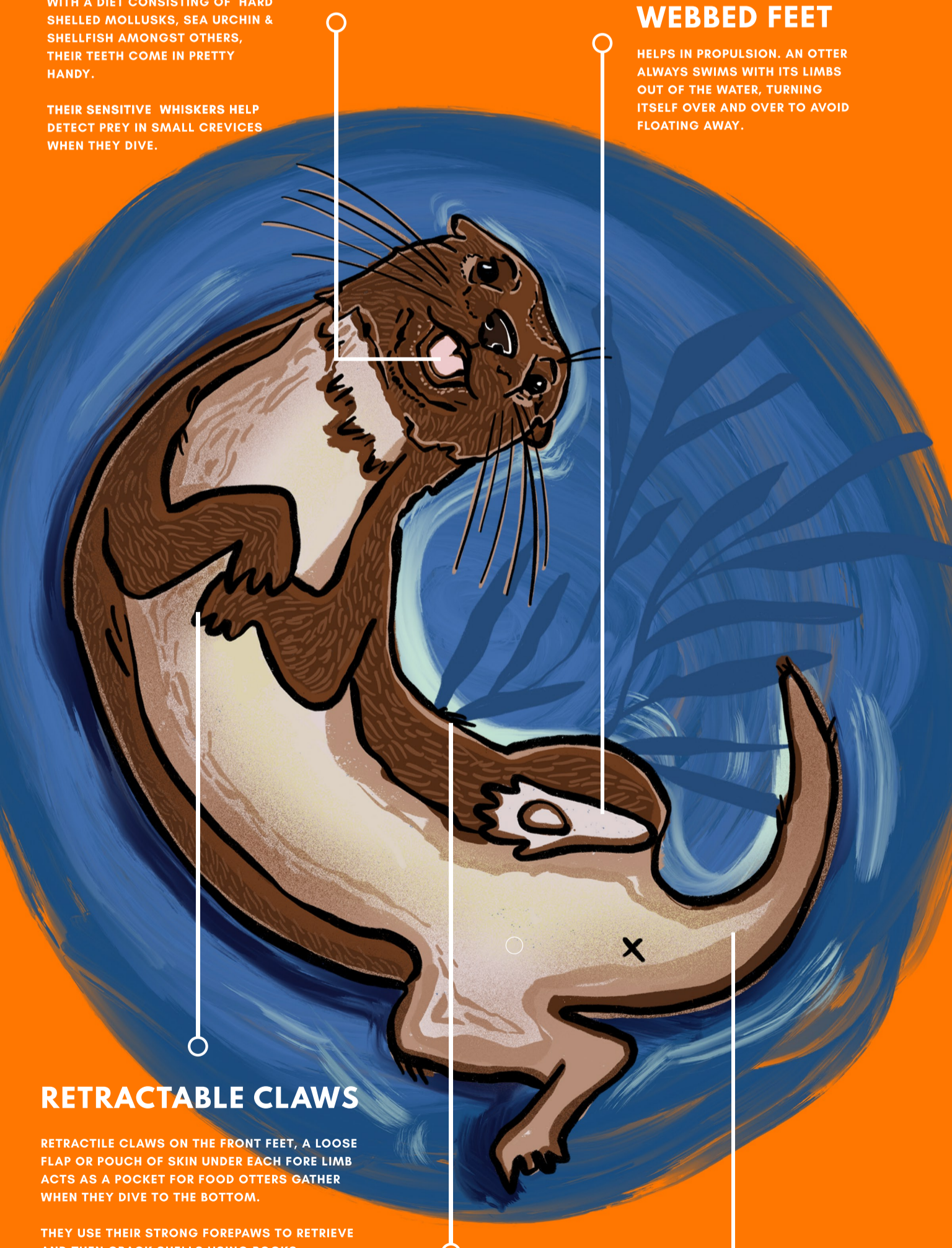
THEY USE THEIR STRONG FOREPAWS TO RETRIEVE AND THEN CRACK SHELLS USING ROCKS.

DENSE FUR

THE FIRST LAYER OF FUR IS DENSE, KEEPING THE ANIMAL WARM IN COLDER TEMPERATURES. THE TOP LAYER IS LONG AND WATERPROOF, ENSURING THE COLD WATER DOES NOT AFFECT IT'S BODY TEMPERATURE. A SPECIALIZED GLAND SECRETS OIL TO ENHANCETHE FUR'S WATER REPELLANT QUALITY. THEY HAVE NO INSULATING BLUBBER.

FLATTENED TAIL

THE FLAT TAIL AND WEBBED FEET WORK IN HELPING THE OTTER DIVE. SEA OTTERS ARE KNOWN TO DIVE UPTO 300 FEET.





THE 1ST LAYER OF FUR HAS AS MANY AS 1 MILLION HAIRS PER SQ./INCH MAKING IT THE DENSEST OF ANY MAMMAL'S. OIL SPILLS CAN SOIL A SEA OTTER'S FUR AND CAUSE HYPOTHERMIA, PNEUMONIA AND EVENTUALLY DEATH.

SEA OTTERS ARE ONE OF THE FEW MAMMALS KNOWN TO USE TOOLS. THEY FORAGE FOR THEIR PREY IN CREVICES BELOW. THEY HOLD ROCKS ON THEIR CHESTS AND SMASH THE SHELLS IN ORDER TO GET AT THEIR TASTY MEAT. THEY EAT 25% OF THEIR BODY WEIGHT EVERY DAY!

CONSERVATION

ENDANGERED



THE WORLDWIDE POPULATION OF SEA OTTERS IS ESTIMATED TO NUMBER APPROXIMATELY 125,800. THEY ARE FOUND ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST, RANGING FROM THE CENTRAL PACIFIC COAST OF CALIFORNIA AND EVEN AS FAR AS NORTH JAPAN.

REPRODUCTION

SEA OTTER MALES ARE AGRESSIVE AND SCAR THE FEMALES DURING THEIR PROLONGED COPULATION. FEMALES HAVE LIFELONG SCARS THAT MARK THEIR NOSES.

SEA OTTERS CAN HAVE A PUP ANYTIME THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, BUT GIVE BIRTH ONLY TO 1 PUP AT A TIME, EVERY TWO YEARS. FEMALES WEAN THEM FOR 6 - 12 MONTHS BEFORE THE PUPS GO OF TO LIVE ON THEIR OWN.

POPULATION



THE POPULATION OF SEA OTTERS STANDS AT AN ESTIMATED 3,000 IN THE MONTEREY BAY.

THREATS: FISHERIES, OIL SPILLS, BOAT STRIKES.



THE POPULATION IN ALL OF ALASKA IS NOW STABLE AT AN ESTIMATED 70,000.

THREATS: PREDATORS, DISEASE, FISHERIES, OIL SPILLS.



THE MOST STABLE POPULATIONS ARE FOUND IN RUSSIA AT AN ESTIMATED 15,000.

THREATS: PREDATORS, DISEASE, FISHERIES, OIL SPILLS.

UMBRELLA SPECIES

SEA OTTERS PROTECT A NUMBER OF OTHER NATURALLY CO-OCCURING SPECIES. THEY ARE BENEFICIAL TO OTHER SPECIES, ECOSYSTEMS, HABITATS AND OF COURSE HUMANS.

KEYSTONE SPECIES

SEA OTTERS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE BIODIVERSITY AND COMPLEXITY OF THEIR HABITATS. **REDUCED GREENHOUSE GASES ARE A KEY BENEFIT.**

INDICATOR SPECIES

SEA OTTERS ARE INACTIVE AND ARE SENSITIVE TO CONTAMINANTS. THEY ARE INDICATIVE OF THE HEALTH OF AN ECOSYSTEM BY WAY OF CONSUMING TOXIC PREY.

THREATS



OIL PILLS ARE A SIGNIFICANT THREAT AND THE MOST INFLECTIVE.



DISEASE BY WAY OF TOXIC ALGAE, PREY AND MICROBES.



FISHERIES AND SEA OTTER COMPETE FOR PREY. FISHING GEAR, BOAT STRIKES ARE A CONSTANT THREAT.

PROTECTION

THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT, 1973

STATUS: THREATENED

IUCN, THE RED LIST

STATUS: ENDANGERED

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES)

STATUS: THREATENED

INTERNATIONAL FUR SEAL TREATY

BANNED COMMERCIAL LARGE SCALE HUNTING OF SEA OTTERS TO STOP THE FUR TRADE.

MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTION ACT, 1972 (MMPA)

HELPS ENSURES SEA OTTERS HAVE A SUSTAINABLE POPULATION AND WORKS FOR HEALTH AND SUSTAINIBILITY OF THE SEA OTTERS.



THE FUTURE



MONITORING POPULATIONS

ENSURING THAT SEA OTTER POPULATIONS ARE MONITORED FOR ANY DECLINE ACROS GEO-POLITICAL LANDSCAPES.



REINTRODUCTION OF POPULATION

REINTRODUCE SEA OTER POPULATION AND ENSURE SUSTAINBLE ENVIRONMENTS THAT FAVOR REPRODUCTION AND HEALTH OF SEA OTTERS. NEARLY 4000 KMS OF PREVIOUSLY OCCUPIED HABITAT IS EMPTY, BUT FULL OF POSSIBILITY.



MITIGATE CONFLICT WITH FISHERIES & OIL SPILLS

FOCUS ATTENTION ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF OTTERS INCLUDING ECO-TOURISM, INCREASE IN FIN-FISH POPULATIONS (BECAUSE OF HEALTHY KELP/ COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS) AND REDUCED CO2 LEVELS WHICH WIL EVEN-TUALLY ADDRES SHORELINE EROSION PROBLEMS. OIL TANKERS SHOULD BE STRICTLY MONITORED.



SMOOTHEN CONFLICT WITH PREDATORS

SEA OTTERS FACE THREATS FROM PREDATORS SUCH AS THE GREAT WHITES IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY IN CALI-FORNIA. TRANSLOCATING SEA OTTER POPULATION AWAY FROM THE REACH OF THESE PREDATORS WILL HELP STRENGTHEN SEA OTTER POPULATIONS.

Q. 1

WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ON CONSERVATION EFFORTS WHICH INVOLVE CAPTIVE BREEDING OF SEA OTTERS IN ORDER TO STABLIZE POPULATION NUMBERS?

Q. 2

WHAT STEPS COULD WE TAKE TO COMBAT CLIMATE SCIENCE DENIAL AND SUBSEQUENTLY ENCOURAGE FISHERIES TO SUPPORT PROTECTED SEA OTTER HABITATS?