

Otter



Scientific Name:
Lutra lutra

Current factors causing loss or decline

There are several factors which have been attributed to the decline in Otter numbers:

- Pollution of watercourses: toxic chemicals, oil spills and acidification etc
- Insufficient food availability, associated with poor water quality
- Barriers to dispersal, such as culverts
- Reduction in breeding success through disturbance at breeding sites
- Impoverished bankside habitat features needed for breeding and resting
- Direct loss of habitat due to inappropriate development/engineering
- Incidental mortality such as road deaths

Current action

The Otter receives national and international protection. This protection means that it is an offence to:

- Kill or injure Otters
- Capture or keep Otters
- Destroy, damage or obstruct a breeding site or resting place
- Disturb an Otter
- Sell or advertise for sale, Otters or anything derived from them
- Import or export Otters, whether dead or alive.

Current status

Formerly widespread throughout the UK, the **Otter** underwent a rapid decline in numbers from the 1950's to the 1970's. Since the 1970's many organisations have been involved with conservation work including surveys, changes to legislation, improved water quality and practical habitat management schemes. Recent surveys indicate Otters are returning to former sites throughout Britain and within Glasgow.

Otters favour rocky coasts, rivers and lakes that support adequate levels of prey. Fish dominates the diet, although this is supplemented with amphibians, birds and small mammals. They are generally solitary (except during courtship) and the size of their home range is very variable, being dependent on the availability of food and shelter, but can be as large as 50km. Both males and females have territories, which they mark with droppings (known as spraints). The ranges of females may overlap with those of males, but males are unlikely to overlap with each other.

Otters often breed in river bank burrows (known as holts) and use lying up sites in vegetation, small caves and rocky crevices for rest and shelter. Within their home range there can be as many as 30 such sites. They have been recorded breeding throughout the year although some studies suggest that there are peaks in productivity. Female Otters can breed annually

producing on average 2-3 cubs, which establish their own territory at about one year old.

Otters are very elusive and are more active in the early morning and late evening. They are undoubtedly more common than current records suggest. Within Glasgow they have been recently recorded on all the major watercourses; the River Clyde, River Kelvin, White Cart Water, North Calder and Forth and Clyde Canal.

Otter locations in Glasgow



Objectives and targets

The UK Action Plan has the following objectives:

- Maintain and expand existing Otter populations.
- By 2010, restore breeding Otters to all catchments and coastal areas where they have been recorded since 1960.

Object 1: Establish and protect current distribution and status of all populations in Glasgow.

Target 1: Collate all current data to assess distribution.

Target 2: Survey all known sites, which includes all major watercourses, by 2008.

Object 2: Expand existing distribution of Otters in Glasgow.

Target 1: Enhance or restore the fringing vegetation of watercourses.

Target 2: Survey 5 potential sites by 2010.

Object 3: Raise public awareness of Otters.

Target 1: Promote the importance/significance of Otters.

Object 4: Raise awareness of Otters and habitat requirements with landowners, angling clubs and other interested organisations.

Target 1: Promote sensitive management of river banks and awareness of Otters.

Proposed Action with Lead Authorities

Action	Lead	Delivery	Objective
Policy and Legislation			
Ensure known Otter localities are protected during planning procedures and developments.	GCC-LS	GCC-DRS, SEPA, SNH	1
Recommend that all wetland areas and watercourses are surveyed before any development or maintenance works to ensure minimisation of damage to habitats.	GCC-LS	GCC-DRS, SEPA, SNH	1
Site Safeguard and Management			
Ensure all areas involved in flood alleviation works are surveyed before work starts and management guidelines are followed.	GCC-LS	GCC-DRS, SEPA, SNH	1, 2, 4
Ensure canal operations are sensitive to the habitat requirements of Otters.	GCC-LS	BW, GCC-LS	1
Advise owners and seek to secure management agreements at known Otter sites e.g. through SEPA Habitat Enhancement Initiative, SNH grant scheme, agri-environment schemes.	GCC-LS	BW, FWAG, GCC-LS	1, 2, 4
Liaise with neighbouring Councils and landowners at nearby sites to encourage species movement and viable local populations.	GCC-LS	FWAG, GCC-LS	1, 2
Assess management of existing sites.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	1
Create new habitats at or adjacent to new sites where practical.	GCC-LS	FWAG, GfC, GCC-LS	2
De-culvert burns at appropriate sites to encourage recolonisation and reduce road kills.	GCC-LS	FWAG, GfC, GCC-LS	2
Attempt to limit accidental deaths, by providing road underpasses.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS, GCC-DRS	1, 2
Advisory			
Produce guidelines for contractors carrying out engineering works.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	4
Provide guidance for staff involved in maintenance works of water courses and associated vegetation.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	4
Future Research and Monitoring			
Seek to include data from Vincent Wildlife Trust survey with existing records of distribution in Glasgow.	GCC-LS	GCC-CLS, GCC-LS	1
Seek to include data from Environmental Consultants in the existing records of distribution in Glasgow.	GCC-LS	GCC-CLS, GCC-LS	1
Liaise with angling clubs to promote Otter conservation and generate more records.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	1, 4
Liaise with GCC- EPS to collate Otter records.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	1
Liaise with SSPCA to collate Otter records.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	1
Survey 5 potential new sites for the presence of Otters .	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	2
Survey and monitor all existing sites.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	1
Provide appropriate training to staff for Otter monitoring.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	1
Analyse the distribution of Otter road kills to determine black spots.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	1
Review historical data to assess past distribution or population sizes.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	1, 2
Co-ordinate records with adjacent local authorities.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	1, 2
Analyse levels of pollution in all watercourses and compare with respect to Otter whereabouts.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS, SEPA	1
Communication and Publicity			
Use this popular species to highlight the importance of water quality.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS, SWT	3
Publicise the availability of advice for Otter conservation.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS, SNH, SWT	3, 4
Links with Other Plans			
Co-ordinate with the Rivers and Streams Action Plan.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	1, 2, 4
Review progress of plan and actions by 2010.	GCC-LS	GCC-LS	1, 2, 3, 4
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Glasgow City Council: Development and Regeneration Services(GCC-DRS), Glasgow City Council: Land Services(Conservation Group) (GCC-LS(CG)),			
Glasgow City Council: Culture and Leisure Services (GCC-CLS), Glasgow City Council: Education Services (GCC-ES), Glasgow City Council: Land Services Countryside Ranger Service (GCC-LS(CRS)),			
Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC), Greenspace for Communities(GfC), British Waterways (BW), Forestry Commission (FC), Farming Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), The WISE Group (WISE),			
Glasgow Natural History Society (GNHS), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT),			
Clyde Amphibian and Reptile Group (CARG), Butterfly Conservation (BC).			