

African Clawless

Otter *Aonyx capensis*

RED LIST STATUS

**NEAR
THREATENED**

Like other species of otter, the African clawless otter can travel great distances by land and its tracks often confuse those that assume it can only be found near water.

ALIAS: white-cheeked otter, Cape clawless otter, groototter
PREDATORS: crocodiles, leopards, other large carnivores, dogs
THREATS: habitat loss, hunting, poaching, pollution
SIZE: 120-145 cm (body 76-88 cm, tail 44-57 cm); 12-21 kg

The third largest species in the world, the African clawless otter is highly versatile and can be found from towns and cities to natural freshwater and marine habitats, as long as there is freshwater close-by to wash off the salt. Although they are able to exploit and survive in anthropogenic environments, food availability is tied closely to water quality, which therefore has to be reasonable to support this species and the survival of their prey. The African clawless otter has crepuscular habits and can hunt in very murky water thanks to its long and sensitive whiskers. Its large molars are adapted to crushing crabs and lobsters, but it will also prey on frogs, fish and insects. The absence of claws and the reduced webbing on its paws gives this species incredible dexterity. They are often solitary animals, but can be found in groups that may number up to 6 individuals. Such groups could consist of adults and their offspring or as of yet undetermined social groupings.