

# Congo Clawless

## Otter *Aonyx congicus*

RED LIST STATUS

**NEAR  
THREATENED**

In some countries, it is believed that they possess magic quality and when you catch an otter, skin it, and wear its fur, you are will become invisible to an enemy and will be able to escape.

**ALIAS:** Cameroon white-cheeked otter, Zaire clawless otter, Swamp otter, Loutre à joues blanches du Congo

**PREDATORS:** crocodiles, leopards, other large carnivores

**THREATS:** habitat loss, hunting, poaching, pollution

**SIZE:** 110-150 cm (body 79-95 cm, tail 50-56 cm); 12-30 kg

As large as the African clawless otter but definitely more slender, the Congo clawless otter was thought to be a subspecies of the former African clawless otter until recently. Little is known about this species, which is the least studied of all African otters. Its reduced whiskers, near-absent webbing, tiny claws and generalised dental morphology, together with sporadic observations and the few individuals raised in captivity prove that this species is mainly terrestrial, exploring marshes and forests. It uses its fingers to dig up molluscs, crabs, earthworms and frogs from the muddy banks. The Congo clawless otter's head and neck are frosted with a brilliant white, that make its characteristic black markings under the eyes even more evident. Solitary, enigmatic and elusive, the Congo clawless otter still has many mysteries to reveal!