



***IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group: Ex-Situ Network
Supporting husbandry, health and welfare, and management of
otters under human care worldwide***

OSG *Ex-Situ* Network (OSG ESN) Mission Statement

The IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group Ex-Situ Otter Network (OSG ESN) promotes worldwide communication between individuals working with otters in ex-situ facilities and promotes networking with in-situ conservation projects

For *ex-situ* otter specialists:

All institutions maintaining otters should support *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation efforts for these charismatic species. Providing financial and/or technical support for these efforts is crucial as is the proper care of these species. To this end, the OSG ESN is promoting the following recommendations:

Support *ex-situ* and *in-situ* in-country conservation efforts

- **Create partnerships** with range-country zoos/aquariums housing the otter species you exhibit.
- **Work together** to further improve care and best practice management of the world's *ex-situ* otter populations.
- Support all on-going efforts by national, regional and international zoo and aquarium organizations to create "best practices" in otter care guidelines by **sharing their expertise with these organizations and adopting the standards set out in this Mission Statement**. Various documents are available on the OSG ESN webpages.
- **Abide by breeding recommendations** from regional/national/international zoo and aquarium organizations. This is particularly true for commonly held species whose populations require

sound genetic management or whose populations may need to be lowered making room for species less well represented.

- **Abide by breeding recommendations** from regional/national/international zoo and aquarium organizations for small population otter species. Inter-zoo/aquarium cooperation in genetic management of these species is supported by the ESN and deemed to be of great importance.
- **Assist in-country institutions** holding otter species 'of concern' in vet and husbandry matters, keeper training, etc. This is particularly true for species currently receiving little attention from zoos and aquaria such as the hairy-nosed and smooth-coated otters of Asia, as well as the Neotropical otter in Latin America (two endangered species of Latin American otters – the Southern river otter and the marine otter – are not found under managed care).
- **Promote and raise awareness for funding opportunities** for conservation, research, education, and/or outreach programs in return for receiving animals on loan from range countries.
- **Create awareness campaigns** highlighting core otter projects and conservation organizations that will encourage visitors and donors to contribute to *in-situ* or *ex-situ* management and research in otter range countries.
- Provide expertise, and logistical/technical support to **assist on-going research projects**.
- Provide expertise, logistical/technical support to help **improve the husbandry and management of otters** in all zoos, particularly in range countries.
- Provide expertise to **facilitate translation of husbandry materials** into range country languages.
- **Donate** tools, instruments, building materials, educational materials etc. to range country zoos.
- **Host and attend conferences** to build relationships with range country professionals.

Support *in-situ* (field-based) conservation efforts

- The OSG website, many national/regional zoo/aquarium organizations, and other conservation organizations offer lists of on-going research projects focused on otters. Zoos and aquariums can support these efforts by **donating funds, materials, and/or technical support**.
- In your graphics, **include information on field research and conservation efforts** being conducted on the species you exhibit. Provide a method for visitors to contribute to these efforts and a way to find out more about these efforts.
- Where appropriate and possible, **contribute information and/or samples for these research efforts**.

Support world-wide efforts to secure and maintain viable otter populations

- Stimulate and maintain worldwide **communications and networking** between institutions holding otters, researchers, educators, and conservationists.
- Provide the OSG ESN with **contact information** for all organizations and individuals working on otter conservation, research, and *ex-situ* care issues. This information will be made available on the OSG website.
- Provide the OSG ESN with **publication information on work done** on all aspects of otter biology, behavior, health issues, conservation, research, education strategies etc. for addition to our web-based reference sources.
- **Publish information** learned from research, observations, and experiences at individual institutions to contribute to overall knowledge that can benefit all.
- **Add creative otter pages** to your institution's website.
- **Link** your website to the OSG and national zoo organization's web pages.
- **Collect, record, and share information** gathered from zoo animals via observations, medical procedures, and *ex-situ*-based studies, so it can be used by researchers, field conservationists, and other zoos as a reference source for wild and/or *ex-situ* populations. This will contribute to conservation/management strategies for these species in the wild and increase overall

knowledge about these animals. Contribute fecal, tissue, and/or blood samples for hormonal or genetic studies.

- **Carry out and participate in research** conducted within zoo facilities and contribute to external research projects that aid *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation.
- **Work closely together with conservation groups**/NGOs and government/law enforcement, e.g., IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group, CITES, IBAMA, WAZA, and other regional zoo associations etc. to promote awareness.
- Create and distribute factually correct and attractive **educational materials** in multiple languages.

For *in-situ* otter specialists:

The OSG ESN encourages all *in-situ* researchers to become involved in some capacity with the zoos and aquariums working with otters in their range countries. This can take many forms, including offering technical advice regarding behavior or habitat requirements, offering to do informative talks for employees or zoo/aquarium members, or providing informative materials for use in fund raising.

Conclusion

Cooperation between all zoos and aquariums world-wide to create healthy self-sustaining *ex-situ* otter populations is essential to supporting conservation efforts of these increasingly threatened species. Currently, many *ex-situ* otter populations are not self-sustaining requiring intensified efforts to manage these species cooperatively while offering the highest quality of care. The OSG ESN supports continued cooperation between all zoos with their active participation in studbooks and the sharing of best *ex-situ* management practices through the creation of updated husbandry guidelines. Guidelines, once updated, should be adopted by all facilities with regional differences taken into account.

The OSG ESN encourages increased support of *in-situ* otter research and conservation efforts by the world's zoos and aquariums as well as increased support of in-country *ex-situ* facilities' efforts to improve the care and welfare of all otter species.