

River Otters

Notes

River otters can be found in or near water areas, including ponds, rivers, lakes, estuaries, or the sea shore. They have a very good sense of smell and can detect concentrations of fish in upstream ponds that drain into small, slow moving creeks. Otter kits are born March through May in our region, in a den on land, and do not leave the den to follow Mom into the water until they are ~ 12 weeks old

Issue - Eating fish in ponds.

Suggestions-

- ▶ Provide lots of good hiding places for fish e.g. cinder blocks, ceramic drain tile, wire baskets, or upside-down plastic crates held down with heavy rocks.
- ▶ Install a fence around the perimeter of the pond. Otters can climb, so an electric fence with wires set at 6 and 10 inches can be used alone or be added to an existing perimeter fence. A mesh fence should run an additional 8 inches into the ground then make a 90 degree turn to the outside of the fence for another 10-15 inches, to prevent otters digging/pushing under the bottom of the fence.

Issue – Denning under houses or outbuildings

Notes – it is best to take preventative measures in fall/winter to block up holes or gaps before an otter takes up residence, as they can damage insulation and leave a bad smell from droppings and food remains. Always check to make sure no animals are inside before blocking holes etc. If a mother has kits in a den (~ March- June) measures taken to prevent access could lead to starving kits being left behind or to extensive damage as she frantically tries to get back in. At ~ 12 weeks, kits are mobile enough to follow Mom and measures can be taken to block them out at this stage.

Suggestions-

- ▶ Close off potential entries under porches, houses, sheds, and structures, using ¼ inch hardware cloth, boards, or other sturdy material. Aluminum or stainless-steel is recommended in saltwater areas. The bottom edge should be sunk at least 8 inches into the ground then make a 90 degree turn to the outside for another 10-15 inches to prevent otters digging through loose soil under the barrier.
- ▶ Place a bright light under the deck or house.
- ▶ Put a radio, set on a talk radio station, in the area
- ▶ Put ammonia or vinegar soaked rags in a coffee can, with holes punched in the side and place the can under the deck or house, to allow the smell to slowly permeate. It may take a couple of days before they leave so checked the area often.
- ▶ Wadded-up newspaper lightly tucked into the exit point or flour sprinkled on the ground outside and inside that point can help to tell if an animal has come back and/or left.

▶ Once they have gone, sprinkling cayenne pepper inside the entrance/exit point can help keep them out for a short time until permanent measures are taken.

Issue – have left a noxious odor under a building

Suggestions-

- ▶ Remove debris
- ▶ Clean beams and other areas under the structure with a bleach solution.
- ▶ Use commercial odor-eliminators to remove the smell. These are available through hospital supply houses, drugstores, pet stores.

Issue - pooping on docks or boats

Notes – River Otters are found throughout the coastal NW so marina owners and boaters should plan preventive measures. River otters can climb but cannot leap upwards, so often access boats from low areas, close to the water's surface such as docks or swim steps. The key is to provide a tall, smooth surface that they cannot climb or reach past.

Suggestions –

- ▶ Cover boats with heavy duty material, securely attached, with no gaps.
- ▶ Fold in swim steps or block access above steps.
- ▶ Install a single wire electric line around docks and houseboats to prevent access.

