

# Giant River Otter

*Pteronura brasiliensis*



**Range:** northern South America

**Size:** ♂ 1.5-1.7 m (4.9 - 5.6 ft)

♀ 1 and 1.5 m (3.3 and 4.9 ft)

**Tail:** 45-65 cm (17 -26 in)

**Weight:** ♂ 26 -45.3 kg (57 - 100 lb)

♀ 22 - 26 kg (49 - 57 lb)

**Habitat:** rivers and lakes

**Diet:** catfish and perch

**Breeding:** monogamous

**Activity:** Diurnal

**Lifestyle:** Aquatic

**Social:** 2- 20

**Estrus:** 3-10 days

**Estrus Cycle:** 21 days

**Gestation :** 65-72 days

**Weaning:** 12-16 weeks

**Sexual maturity:** 2-3 years

**IUCN:** Endangered

**Longevity: Captivity- 14 years**

**Wild- 8 years**

Order: Carnivora    Family: Mustelidae

The largest of the thirteen species of otters the Giant river otter is easily recognizable. No other freshwater mammal approaches the size and shape of the giant river otter. It possesses a chocolate coat with a pail underside of the neck. Unique spots are present on the neck which may be used to identify individuals. Like all members of the otter subfamily, Lutrinae, the giant river otter possess webbing on all four paws. However their tail is unique from other otters being dorso-ventrally flattened like a beaver. The webbed feet and flattened tail are just two adaptations to an aquatic lifestyle. Others include both nostrils and ears which can be closed underwater and a short dense pelt which is practically waterproof.

The two subspecies are very similar with *P. b. brasiliensis* being slightly larger. There is still some controversy over the systematics of this species.