

# North American River Otter

*Lontra canadensis*



**Range:** Canada through US  
**Size:** ♂ 66-107 cm (26-42 in)  
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**Tail:** 30-50 cm (12-20 in)  
**Weight:** ♂ 11.3 kg (25 lb)  
♀ 8.3 kg ( 18 lb)  
**Breeding:** polygynous  
**Estrus cycle:** seasonal -Dec  
April  
**Estrus:** 30 days  
**Group:** family group female  
& offspring  
**Gestation :** 61-63 days  
**Weaned:** 12 weeks  
**Sexual maturity:** 2-3 years  
**Lifespan:** Captivity-25 yrs  
Wild: 13 yrs  
**IUCN:** least concern

Order: Carnivora Family: Mustelidae

Known as the clown of the animal kingdom the North American river otter can be observed frolicking both in and out of the water throughout much of North America. Wrestling, chasing and tobogganing (sliding down snow or muddy embankments) are different forms of play observed in the species.

Although preferring to stay near the water the North American river otter is quite at home on land and will travel long distances over land. Most of the hunting this done in the water. The otters are active hunters with fish being the main pray item. Crayfish are also an important source of food were available.

The North American river otters population is stable. From the 1800s to the 1970s the population decline in the species was extirpated and part of its range due to hunting, pollution and loss of habitat. However starting in the late 1970s conservation measures has led to an increase in the population. The fur of the river otter is in demand by the garment industry. Managed hunting has provided the needed pelts without endangering the population.