



Pteronura brasiliensis

Taxonomy

Kingdom	ANIMALIA
Phylum	CHORDATA
Class	MAMMALIA
Order	CARNIVORA
Family	MUSTELIDAE
Common Name/s	GIANT BRAZILIAN OTTER (E) GIANT OTTER (E) LOUTRE GÉANTE DU BRÉSIL (F) ARIRAI (S) LOBITO DE COLA ANCHA (S) LOBO DE RÍO GRANDE (S) LOBO DEL RÍO (S) LOBO GARGANTILLA (S) PERRO DE AGUA (S)
Species Authority	(Gmelin, 1788)

Assessment Information

Red List Category & Criteria	EN A3ce ver 3.1 (2001)
Year Assessed	2004
Assessor/s	Groenendijk, J., Hajek, F. & Schenck, C.
Evaluator/s	Hussain, S.A. & Reuther, C. (Otter Red List Authority)
Justification	Three giant otter generation lengths approximately represent a 20–year period. Accelerating habitat destruction and degradation throughout the giant otter's range is the greatest threat to the species, and is estimated to potentially lead to a future reduction in population size of around 50% over the next 20 years.

History	<p>1965 - "Status inadequately known-survey required or data sought" (Scott 1965)</p> <p>1982 - Vulnerable (Thornback and Jenkins 1982)</p> <p>1986 - Vulnerable (IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre 1986)</p> <p>1988 - Vulnerable (IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre 1988)</p> <p>1990 - Vulnerable (IUCN 1990)</p> <p>1994 - Vulnerable (Groombridge 1994)</p> <p>1996 - Vulnerable (Baillie and Groombridge 1996)</p> <p>1999 - Endangered (Hilton-Taylor 2000)</p>
Distribution	
Country Names	<p>Argentina?</p> <p>Bolivia</p> <p>Brazil</p> <p>Colombia</p> <p>Ecuador</p> <p>French Guiana</p> <p>Guyana</p> <p>Paraguay</p> <p>Peru</p> <p>Suriname</p> <p>Uruguay?</p> <p>Venezuela</p>
Summary Documentation	
Biome	Terrestrial; Freshwater
Major Habitat/s (terms)	<p>1.7 Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Mangrove</p> <p>5.1 Wetland - Permanent Rivers/Streams/Creeks</p> <p>5.2 Wetland - Seasonal/Intermittent Rivers/Streams/Creeks</p> <p>5.3 Wetland - Shrub Dominated Wetlands</p> <p>5.4 Wetland - Bogs, Marshes, Swamps, Fens, Peatlands</p> <p>5.5 Wetland - Permanent Freshwater Lakes (over 8ha)</p> <p>5.6 Wetland - Seasonal/Intermittent Freshwater Lakes (over 8ha)</p> <p>5.7 Wetland - Permanent Freshwater Marshes/Pools (under 8ha)</p> <p>5.8 Wetland - Seasonal/intermittent Freshwater Marshes/Pools (under 8ha)</p> <p>5.9 Wetland - Fresh Water Springs and Oases</p> <p>10.3 Coastline - Estuarine Waters</p> <p>10.7 Coastline - Coastal Freshwater Lagoons</p> <p>12.2 Artificial/Aquatic - Ponds (below 8 ha)</p> <p>12.3 Artificial/Aquatic - Aquaculture Ponds</p> <p>12.9 Artificial/Aquatic - Canals and Drainage Channels, Ditches</p>

Major Threat/s (terms)

- 1.1.1.2 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Agriculture - Crops - Small-holder farming (present, future)
- 1.1.1.3 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Agriculture - Crops - Agro-industry farming (ongoing)
- 1.1.2.2 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Agriculture - Wood plantations - Large-scale (future)
- 1.1.3.2 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Agriculture - Non-timber plantations - Large-scale (future)
- 1.1.4.2 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Agriculture - Livestock - Small-holder (present, future)
- 1.1.4.3 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Agriculture - Livestock - Agro-industry (ongoing)
- 1.1.7 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Agriculture - Freshwater aquaculture (future)
- 1.3.1 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Extraction - Mining (ongoing)
- 1.3.2 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Extraction - Fisheries (present, future)
- 1.3.3.2 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Extraction - Wood - Selective logging (present, future)
- 1.3.3.3 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Extraction - Wood - Clear-cutting (present, future)
- 1.4.2 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Infrastructure development - Human settlement (ongoing)
- 1.4.3 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Infrastructure development - Tourism/recreation (present, future)
- 1.4.5 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Infrastructure development - Transport (water) (ongoing)
- 1.6 Habitat Loss/Degradation - Change in native species dynamics (future)
- 3.4.2 Harvesting (hunting/gathering) - Materials - Sub-national/national trade (past)
- 3.4.3 Harvesting (hunting/gathering) - Materials - Regional/international trade (past)
- 3.5.1 Harvesting (hunting/gathering) - Cultural/scientific/leisure activities - Subsistence use/local trade (present, future)
- 3.5.3 Harvesting (hunting/gathering) - Cultural/scientific/leisure activities - Regional/international trade (future)
- 4.1.1.2 Accidental mortality - Bycatch - Fisheries-related - Netting (present, future)
- 4.1.2.2 Accidental mortality - Bycatch - Terrestrial - Shooting (ongoing)
- 5.1 Persecution - Pest control (future)
- 6.3.3 Pollution (affecting habitat and/or species) - Water pollution - Commercial/Industrial (ongoing)
- 6.3.6 Pollution (affecting habitat and/or species) - Water pollution - Oil slicks (ongoing)
- 6.3.7 Pollution (affecting habitat and/or species) - Water pollution - Sediment (ongoing)
- 8.3 Changes in native species dynamics - Prey/food base (future)

- 9.2 Intrinsic factors - Poor recruitment/reproduction/regeneration (ongoing)
- 9.3 Intrinsic factors - High juvenile mortality (ongoing)
- 9.5 Intrinsic factors - Low densities (present, future)
- 10 Human disturbance (ongoing)

Population Trend

?

Conservation Action/s (terms)

- 1.1.1 Policy-based actions - Management plans - Development (in place, needed)
- 1.1.2 Policy-based actions - Management plans - Implementation (needed)
- 1.2.1.1 Policy-based actions - Legislation - Development - International level (in place)
- 1.2.1.2 Policy-based actions - Legislation - Development - National level (in place)
- 1.2.2.1 Policy-based actions - Legislation - Implementation - International level (in place)
- 1.2.2.2 Policy-based actions - Legislation - Implementation - National level (in place, needed)
- 1.2.2.3 Policy-based actions - Legislation - Implementation - Sub-national level (needed)
- 1.3 Policy-based actions - Community management (in place, needed)
- 2.1 Communication and Education - Formal education (in place)
- 2.2 Communication and Education - Awareness (in place)
- 2.3 Communication and Education - Capacity-building/Training (in place, needed)
- 3.1 Research actions - Taxonomy (in place)
- 3.2 Research actions - Population numbers and range (in place, needed)
- 3.3 Research actions - Biology and Ecology (in place, needed)
- 3.4 Research actions - Habitat status (in place, needed)
- 3.5 Research actions - Threats (in place, needed)
- 3.8 Research actions - Conservation measures (in place, needed)
- 3.9 Research actions - Trends/Monitoring (in place, needed)
- 4.1 Habitat and site-based actions - Maintenance/Conservation (in place, needed)
- 4.2 Habitat and site-based actions - Restoration (needed)
- 4.3 Habitat and site-based actions - Corridors (needed)
- 4.4.1 Habitat and site-based actions - Protected areas - Identification of new protected areas (needed)
- 4.4.2 Habitat and site-based actions - Protected areas - Establishment (needed)
- 4.4.3 Habitat and site-based actions - Protected areas - Management (needed)
- 4.4.4 Habitat and site-based actions - Protected areas - Expansion (needed)

- 4.5 Habitat and site-based actions - Community-based initiatives (needed)
- 5.5 Species-based actions - Disease, pathogen, parasite management (needed)
- 5.7.1 Species-based actions - Ex situ conservation actions - Captive breeding/Artificial propagation (needed)

Habitat and Ecology

The giant otter is the largest of all the 13 otter species and is endemic to the rainforests and wetlands of South America. It is known to inhabit large rivers, streams, lakes and swamps. In a long-term study in Peru giant otters were found in most of the river systems in the southeastern part of the country with the exception of those located close to the Andes where the flow gradient is steeper. The large rivers of the lowland areas with gentle flow and oxbow lakes with high fish densities represent the environment most favoured by this group living species. The giant otters tend to concentrate in their preferred habitats and territories can be very small (e.g., 105 ha for a group of 5–8 otters).

Threats

While in the past, hunting for pelts strongly affected giant otter populations, currently the species is threatened by multiple anthropogenic influences arising from increased colonisation of tropical lowland rainforests. Destruction of forests, leading to soil erosion and decrease of prey abundance as well as over-fishing and illegal hunting of otters are related to human colonisation along rivers. Canine diseases such as parvovirus and distemper transferred through the domestic stock are as yet, an incalculable threat. In areas of gold mining, fish are getting contaminated with mercury, which is used for gold separation. Migration of contaminated fish and long-range atmospheric transport of mercury could enlarge the area of miner's influence. Mining for oil and minerals expanding into virgin areas threatens otter habitats. Within protected areas increased tourism could change the normal behaviour resulting in abandoning of territories and decrease in cub survival.

Databases



View the entry for this species at [ARKive.Org](http://www.arkive.org).



Search NatureServe InfoNatura for this species (Central and South America, Caribbean Islands)



Search the Species 2000 site for further information about this species.



Search the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre site for further information about this species.

Images



Search Google for related images.



Search Picsearch for related images.

Data Sources

Data Sources

Baillie, J. and Groombridge, B. (compilers and editors) 1996. *1996 IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

Duplaix N. 1980. Observation on the ecology and behaviour of the giant river otter *Pteronura brasiliensis* in Suriname. *Revue d'Ecologie la Terre et la Vie* 34:496-620.

Groombridge, B. (ed.) 1994. *1994 IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

Hilton-Taylor, C. (compiler). 2000. *2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK.

IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre. 1986. *1986 IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK.

IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre. 1988. *1988 IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK.

IUCN. 1990. *1990 IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK.

Otter Specialist Group. For more information, see the [Specialist Group website](#)

Schenck C. 1996. Vorkommen, Habitatnutzung und Schutz des Riesenotters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) in Peru Berichte aus der Biologie, Dissertation, Shaker Verlag, Aachen.

Scott, P. (ed.) 1965. Section XIII. Preliminary List of Rare Mammals and Birds. In: *The Launching of a New Ark*, pp. 15-207. First Report of the President and Trustees of the World Wildlife Fund. An International Foundation for saving the world's wildlife and wild places 1961-1964. Collins, London.

Thornback, J. and Jenkins, M. 1982. *The IUCN Mammal Red Data Book. Part 1: Threatened mammalian taxa of the Americas and the Australasian zoogeographic region (excluding Cetacea)*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

Citation: Groenendijk, J., Hajek, F. & Schenck, C. 2004. *Pteronura brasiliensis*. In: IUCN 2004. *2004 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. <www.redlist.org>. Downloaded on **07 November 2005**.

[Home Page](#)

[Expert Database Search](#)

[Database Search](#)

© International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, [Contact Information](#)