

Name _____



All About Otters

Otters are playful and intelligent animals that belong to the weasel family. These sleek mammals are known for their love of water and their clever problem-solving skills. Otters can be found on every continent except Australia and Antarctica, and they live in a variety of habitats such as rivers, lakes, oceans, and marshes.

There are 13 species of otters, and they come in various sizes. The smallest otter, the Asian small-clawed otter, is about the size of a house cat. The largest, the giant otter of South America, can grow up to six feet long! Otters have thick fur that keeps them warm in cold water. Their fur is so dense that water can't touch their skin, which is important because they spend so much time swimming.

Otters are excellent swimmers. They use their long, flexible bodies and webbed feet to glide through the water. Some species, like sea otters, can even float on their backs. While floating, they use their stomachs like a table to crack open shellfish with rocks. This is one example of how otters use tools, a behavior that shows how smart they are.

Otters are social animals and often live in groups. A group of otters is called a raft, and it's not unusual to see them holding hands while they sleep to stay together. This adorable behavior helps them stay safe and avoid drifting apart.

Otters are also important to the ecosystems they live in. For example, sea otters help keep kelp forests healthy by eating sea urchins, which can destroy the kelp if they aren't controlled. Without otters, many aquatic environments would suffer.

With their playful personalities and important roles in nature, otters are fascinating creatures that remind us how amazing the animal world can be.