

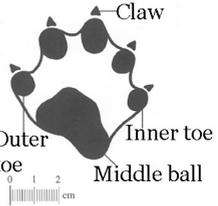


African (Cape) Clawless Otter (*Aonyx capensis*)

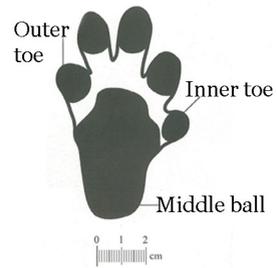


Spotted-necked Otter (*Lutra maculicollis*)

Left forefoot



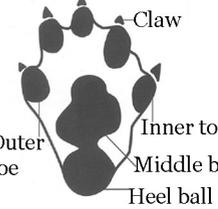
Left forefront



Spotted-necked Otter



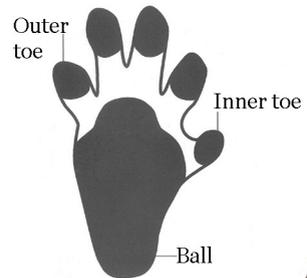
Left hindfoot



For both Clawless Otters



Left hindfoot



Congo Clawless Otter (*Aonyx congicus*)



Marsh Mongoose (*Atilax paludinosus*)

African Otters

Three species can be found in sub-Saharan Africa – spotted-necked otter (*Hydrictis maculicollis*), African clawless otter (*Aonyx capensis*) and Congo clawless otter (*Aonyx congicus*). (Latin names from IUCN Red List 2015 - <http://www.iucnredlist.org>)

All otters have short limbs, strong tail and sensitive whiskers around the snout to help detect prey. They need plenty of bankside vegetation for escape and cover and those living in the coastal environment need freshwater to wash salt from the fur.

OTTER SPECIES	CONSERVATION STATUS	DESCRIPTION	DIET	HABITAT
Spotted-necked Otter	<i>Status</i> – Near Threatened <i>Population trend</i> – Decreasing	<i>Length</i> 0.95-1.1m <i>Weight</i> 3-6.5kg Sleek body. Dark brown fur with prominent light spots on neck, chest & lips	Mainly small fish, crustaceans & snails in rivers & lakes. In some areas also known to take large insects.	Large lakes & rivers up to an altitude of 2,500m. Fairly widely distributed in sub-Saharan countries, Senegal to Ethiopia & down to South Africa.
African Clawless Otter	<i>Status</i> – Near Threatened <i>Population trend</i> – Decreasing	<i>Length</i> 1.2-1.5m <i>Weight</i> 10-21kg Neck, face, belly & throat are creamy-white, rest of the coat is brown. Front feet have no webbing or claws.	Mainly crabs in summer, in the winter mainly fish. Will also eat frogs, small mammals, birds & beetles.	Rivers, lakes, estuaries, mangroves, lowland forests, savannahs & even desert areas. Been seen at altitudes of 3000m. Wide distribution but absent from Congo Basin. Been seen in sea around Cape Town.
Congo Clawless Otter	<i>Status</i> – Near Threatened <i>Population trend</i> – Decreasing	<i>Length</i> 1.5m <i>Weight</i> 20kg Very large. Similar in appearance to African Clawless. Fur is dark brown above & pale of the chest, neck & lower head. Distinctive black patch between eyes & nostrils.	Mainly worms. Prefer fish in some areas. Also known to eat crabs, frogs, tadpoles & snails.	Particularly like lowland swamp forest. Also found in rivers & streams in rainforests. Very patchy distribution in Congo Basin

THREATS: All three species of otter are threatened by:

- **Habitat destruction** as a result of increased human population – Riverside vegetations is cut down for firewood and cleared for farming, as well as large scale logging. This causes rivers to be more turbulent and decrease amount of prey in the rivers.
- **Pollution** – From agricultural and industrial chemicals interfering with both otter physiology and food sources. Sewage and oil spills also pollute waterways.
- **Attacks** from fish farmers and fishermen who see them as pests and damaging nets.
- **Accidental deaths** in eel and crab traps and on the road.
- **Traditions** Local medicines may use body parts and fur of otters.
- **Eaten** Although some tribes regard it as taboo to otter, they are still often eaten as bush meat.