

Teaching Material on Biodiversity Conservation (TMBC)

Topic: European Otter

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Class: elementary school

Quality assurance: Prof. Carsten Hobohm (UF)

Kind of material: worksheets

Purpose: getting to know the European otter in its natural environment

Material: see attachment

Procedure

The material can be regarded as a suggestion as to how to integrate the topic "European Otter" into school lessons. The worksheets can be used for work with different stations.

The European otter (teacher information)

The European otter (*Lutra lutra*) is a predator and a member of the marten family. The otter is adapted to both aquatic and terrestrial life. It is an excellent and agile swimmer. The ears of the otters are small and round. Their ears and nostrils are closed under water. A special feature of otters is their dense brown fur that protects them from the cold and damp. Their fur consists of about 50,000 hairs per square centimeter. As a comparison – human beings have only 120 hairs per square centimeter.

European otters are found on three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. They live in both brackish- and in salt- and freshwater habits. They colonize waters and wetlands. Otters demand high standards of their habits, they require clean and unspoiled waters, sufficient food and hiding places on the water's edge.

In the past, otters were hunted for their warm fur. Nowadays, road traffic is the greatest danger they face. The streets fragment their trails. Otters are afraid to swim under bridges, so if there is no bridge they have no other choice but to use the street.

Information for the teacher (sources)

Janzen, S 2009. Spuren entdecken, 200 S., Neumünster.

Kappeler, M (1987). Fischotter: Lutra lutra –
(<http://www.markuskappeler.ch/tex/texs/fischotter.html>, 09.01.2014)

O.A. (2008): WWF- Artenporträt- Fischotter – (<http://www.wwf.de/themen-projekte/artenlexikon/fischotter/>, 09.01.2014)

O.A. (2013): European otter- (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_otter, 07.01.2014)

Radow, B (2009): Fischotter-Schutz: Biosphärenreservat Schaalsee –
(<http://www.deutschewildtierstiftung.de/de/datenschutz/impressum/>, 09.01.2014)

Werneke, A (2008): Der Fischotter –
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www.gratismalvorlagen.com

Who am I?

Tasks

1

Read the text

From my head to the tip of my tail I am about 1,20 meters long. This is about the height of four stacked crates of water.

I have four legs.

I have very short fur that keeps me dry and warm..

My fur is brown.

I live by the water and in the water. I love swimming.

My favourite food is fish, crayfish, frogs, rats and mice.

But I have to hide from wolves and eagles because they would like to eat me.

I wake up when most animals go to sleep. I am nocturnal. **Nocturnal** means that I am awake at night

2

Do you know who I am? Answer the questions

I am _____.

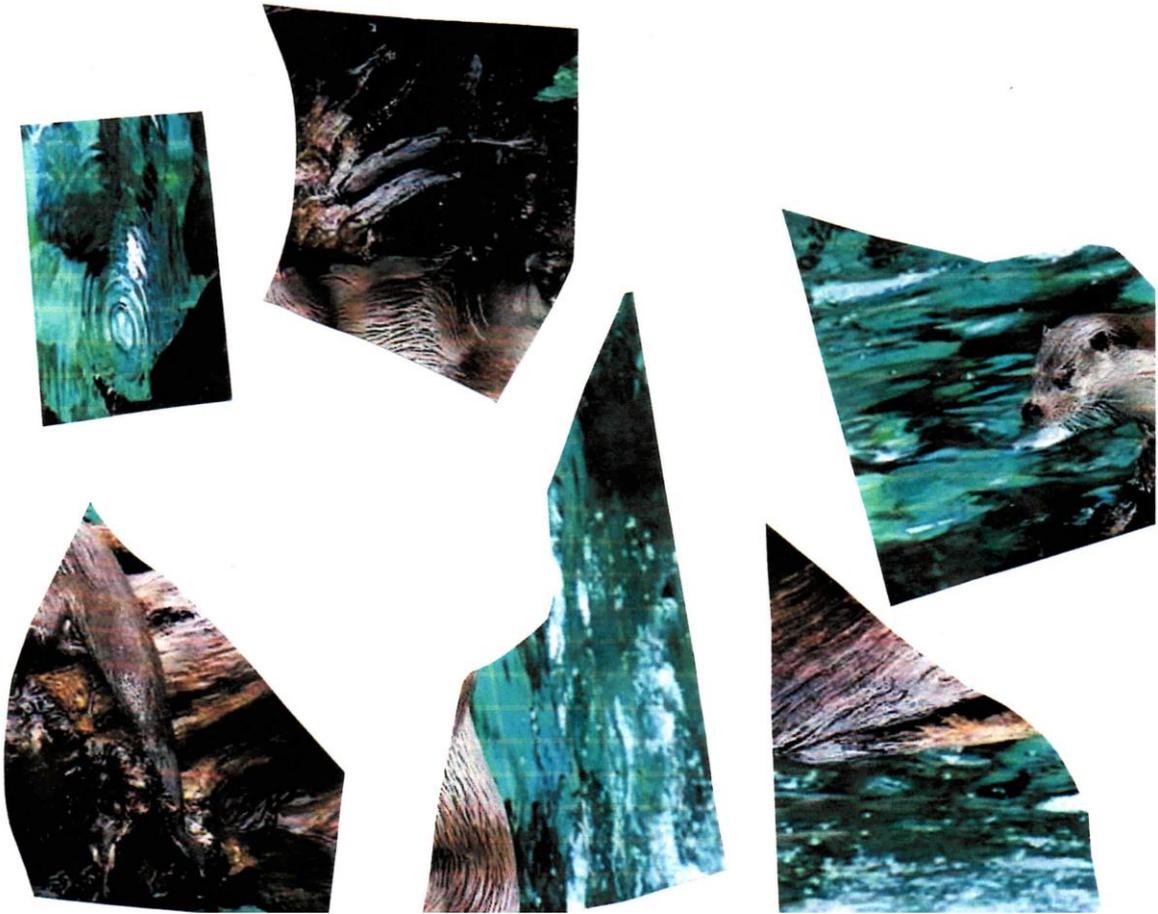
- a. a bear
- b. a dog
- c. an otter
- d. a snake

Puzzle

Tasks

1

Cut out the single pieces of the puzzle and put them in the right places. Glue the pieces of the puzzle onto a sheet of white paper in the right order.



2

What is the animal in the picture? Use the letters in the circles. Cross out the letters that you have already used.

In this picture you see an: _____

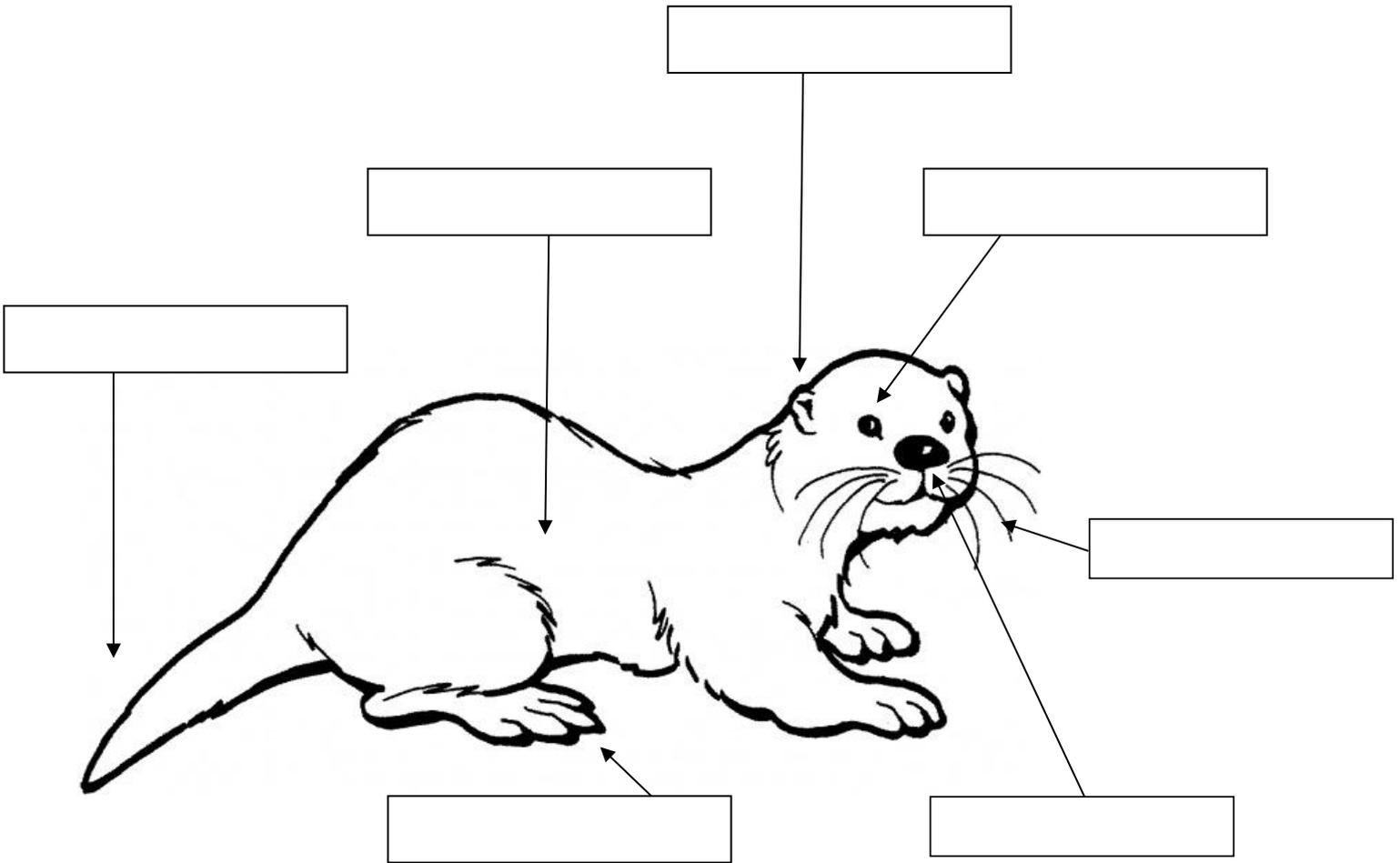
E T O T R

The European otter: body parts

Tasks

1 Name the body parts of the otter. Fill in the gaps. Use the box.

2 Colour in the fur (use the right colour).

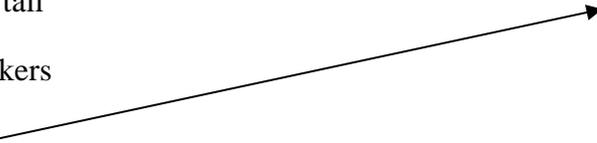


eyes, webbing, long tail, whiskers, ears, nose, dense fur

3

What functions do the different body parts of the otter have? Connect the body parts with the right function. Use a ruler!

Body part	Function
eyes	to protect it from cold and damp
webbing	to sense fish
long tail	to hear prey
whiskers	to see enemies
ears	to stay in the swimming lane
nose	to swim fast and silently
dense fur	to smell prey



Threats to the European otter

Tasks

1

Fill in the gaps. Use the words in the box below.

Gap text: threat to the otter

The _____ has not only the eagle and the wolf as an _____, but human beings as well. In the past the otter was hunted for its _____. Today the otter is not hunted any more but there are other _____.

_____ destroy important _____ where the European otter lives. A habitat for the otter is, for example, the _____ close to a _____ or a stream. When roads are built, forest is often destroyed where the otters seek _____. Many otters die because of the _____. Sometimes the otters have no choice but to cross a road in order to get to their river or stream.

_____ are another threat. They pollute and _____ the water by disposing of their sewage in the rivers.

Words

poison, cars, factories, shelter, forest, fur, enemy, otter, habitat, human beings, river, threats

2

Answer the questions.

Questions: Threats to the European otter

1. Who is the enemy of the otter?

a.

b.

c.

2. Why was the otter hunted in the past?

3. Are cars a danger for the otter? Give reasons for your answer.

4. In what way can factories be dangerous for the otters?

Answer (teacher): Gap text: threats to the otter

The **otter** has not only the eagle and the wolf as an **enemy**, but human beings as well. In the past the otter was hunted for its **fur**. Today the otter is not hunted any more but there are other **threats**.

Human beings destroy important **habits** where the European otter lives. A habit for the otter is, for example, the **forest** close to a **river** or a stream. When roads are built, forest is often destroyed where the otters seek **shelter**.

Many otters die because of the **cars**. Sometimes the otters have no choice but to cross a road in order to get to their river or stream.

Factories are another threat. They pollute and **poison** the water by disposing of their sewage in the rivers.



Lutra lutra pyrénées, Baronnies (Bernard-Boehne, wikipedia, aug 2004)