

# SEA OTTERS





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- Sea otters are marine mammals belonging to order Carnivora
- They are only found in the Pacific Northwest and inhabit nearshore environments





Sea Otter Distribution

# SEA OTTERS

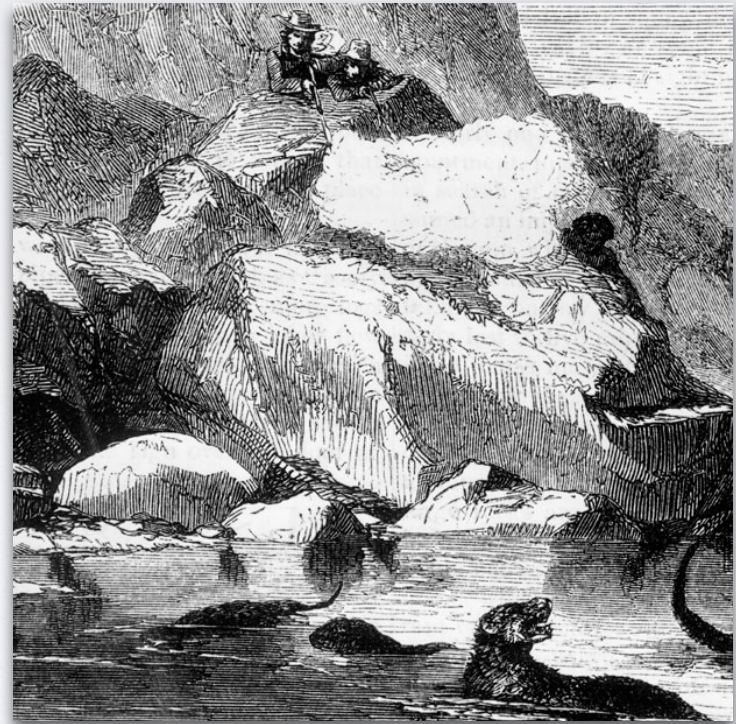
- Characteristic:
  - The sea otter is the smallest marine mammal without a layer of blubber
  - It has extremely dense fur that traps air against the body for insulation





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- Unfortunately, sea otters were hunted extensively for their fur and nearly became extinct



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- Keystone Species - species on which other species depend upon, such that if they were removed the ecosystem would change drastically
- Sea otters control sea urchin populations which tend to eat up the habitat's kelp





# SEA OTTERS

- Feeding
  - Dive to the sea floor to forage on crustaceans, mollusks and echinoderms (sea stars and urchins)





Sea Otter Eating



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- Feeding: (continued)
  - Must eat approx. 25-30% of their body weight per day
  - Sometimes use a tool to help them open hard shells





Sea Otter Using Tools



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- Communication:
  - Communicate through body contact like nosing one another and head-jerking



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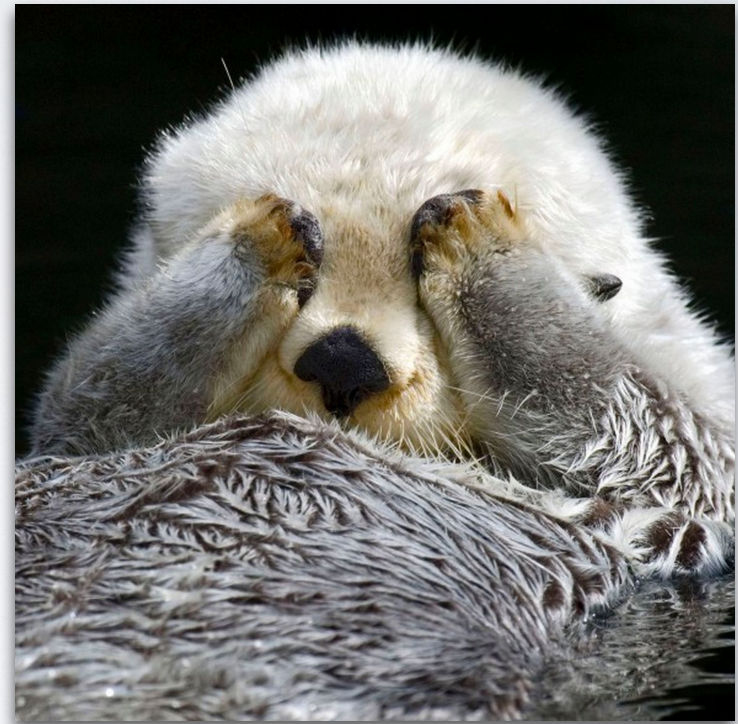
- Communication: (continued)
  - Adults use vocalizations like low cooing sound and grunts
  - Pups use a high-pitch squeal to communicate with their mom





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- Reproduction:
  - Males show up in the areas where females have territory
  - However, the males need approval for mating and if they don't get it will move on to find another female



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- Reproduction: (continued)
  - After conception, females are pregnant from 60 days to nine months [species dependent]
  - Can birth one pup at a time on land, in the water and occasionally on ice floes





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- Maternal Care:
  - Females a very good caregivers to their offspring and spend up to 8 hours nursing each day
  - Young otters consume a great deal of milk each day in order to grow rapidly



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- Maternal Care: (continued)
  - Females also play with their offspring, teaching them valuable skills







Sea Otter Maternal Behavior