

SMOOTH COATED OTTER SURVEY

Conducted during November to December 2024 - A Report

Smooth coated Otter survey was organised by Aranya Parva creations (<https://zcszg.zooreach.org/sugandhi-gadadhar>) in collaboration with National Geographic Society, Royal Zoological Society, Scotland and Zooreach Conservation Seed Grant in river Cauvery and Kabini in the months of November-December 2024. The main objective of the survey was to record the number of Otters, their behaviour and threats in their habitats.

Smooth Coated Otter belongs to group of mammals that lives in water. It is known for its smooth, sleek dark brownish-grey coloured body with characteristic flat tail, short limbs, webbed paw, small ears, eyes and long moustaches. Otters are carnivores but relish fishes. Males are polygamous, females dig their own breeding dens and raise young ones (upto four offspring) with mated pair. Otters are commonly called as “Water dogs” or “Niru Nayi” in Kannada and are adept swimmers too.

Smooth Coated Otters are distributed throughout India and are found in abundant fresh water. They can also be seen in aquatic lands such as wetlands, swamps, rivers, lakes and paddy fields. Otter population in an ecosystem (Wetland and forest) indicates a healthy and balanced environment. They keep a check on population of other aquatic animals and are markers of pollution free water. Hence their presence is very significant.

Smooth Coated Otters are classified as vulnerable by the IUCN Red List. The population of Smooth Coated Otters is dwindling due to loss of habitats and anthropogenic interference with their habitats for agriculture and fishing activities. Other reasons for their loss include, pollution of water bodies by pesticides and other wastes, reduction in prey biomass, poaching, exotic pet trade etc. Therefore conservation of Smooth Coated Otters is of prime importance as it protects rivers and wetlands also.

Smooth coated Otter survey gave a wonderful learning exposure to the volunteers about the animal, its behaviour and conservation. Data created by the volunteers was used in the conservation of this vulnerable animal. The experience shared by the volunteers will be featured in Zooreach Blog and later will be published in international journal, thus adding value to the contribution by the volunteers. Students and teacher are thankful to the Yuvaraja's college (Autonomous), university of Mysore, Mysuru for providing great opportunity.

Yuvaraja's College One faculty member, three students were selected from Yuvaraja's College. Selected members were one teaching faculty - Mrs Renu Priyadarshini M., , three students - Abhay Baadkar, Darshini M B, Shri Karthik D. They were trained and sent for survey by the organizers. Four teams were made and each team included - two volunteers and a boatman. During the survey each team covered 40 km (10 km per day) along the river in a coracle, collected the data in an Epicollect App along with photos and videos. Otters were also searched based on pug marks, tail markings, dens and spraints as they are shy by nature. During the survey volunteers were provided with food, medicine, life jackets and tent materials.

Renu Priyadarshini M
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Participants getting ready to go to survey during Otter's survey Nov-Dec 2024



Participants sailing in a coracle surveying the Smooth Coated Otter in river Cauvery during Otter's survey Nov-Dec 2024

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A view of Smooth coated otter on sand



Participants installing the tent for during Otter's survey Nov-Dec 2024



Pug Marks of Otters on the sand observed during Otter's survey Nov-Dec 2024

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Participants measuring the pug marks during Otter's survey Nov-Dec 2024



Scenic Beauty of River Cauvery caught during Otter's survey Nov-Dec 2024

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RAGHUNATH BELUR
SUGANDHI GADADHAR

February 3, 2025
Bangalore

To Whom It May Concern:

Yuvaraja's College faculty Mrs Renu Priyadarshini and students Ms Darshini M B, Mr Abhay Mahesh Baadkar and Mr Shri Karthik D were selected as volunteers and have participated in the survey of smooth-coated otters conducted in the rivers Cauvery and Kabini during November and December 2024 by Aranya Parva Creations in collaboration with National Geographic Society, Washington DC, USA, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and Zooreach Conservation Seed Grant.

Yours truly,



Copy of the selection letter issued to Yuvaraja's College by the organisers
