TOPIC: Otters & their diet

SOURCES:

**Source 1**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Author’s full name (if no name is listed, use the organisation name) | BBC Wildlife Magazine |
| Date published | 2021 |
| Title of article or page | Otter Guide: how to identify and species facts |
| Name of website | Discover Wildlife |
| Date viewed | 10 July 2022 |
| URL | <https://www.discoverwildlife.com/animal-facts/mammals/otters-of-the-world/> |

**Evaluation of source 1** (why is this a good source? How can you tell it’s reliable? Use the ABCDE checklist):

information is from a publication called BBC Wildlife Magazine. The BBC is a reputable organisation that is known as a news provider and their purpose is to provide information to the public. This website looked professional and had links to sources which worked. It had useful information for my topic and the information said the same kinds of things as the other sources I found. It was published in 2021 so it’s recent and up to date information.

**Source 2**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Author’s full name | Sea World Parks & Entertainment |
| Date published | 2021 |
| Title of article or page | All About Otters: Diet & Eating Habits |
| Name of website | Sea World Parks & Entertainment |
| Date viewed | 4 August 2022 |
| URL | <https://seaworld.org/animals/all-about/otters/diet/> |

**Evaluation of source 2:**

Sea World is a well-known multi-national company so to protect their reputation as wildlife experts they would have a good reason to ensure their information is correct. They are a for-profit company who want to make money, and have a motive for providing information – i.e. selling tickets to their wildlife parks – so that diminishes their credibility. However the information on their website is recent and it also confers with information on other sites I checked.

**Source 3**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Author’s full name | BioExplorer |
| Date published | 2021 |
| Title of article or page | What do Otters eat? |
| Name of website | BioExplorer |
| Date viewed | 5 August 2022 |
| URL | <https://www.bioexplorer.net/what-do-otters-eat.html/> |

**Evaluation of source 3:**

This is a credible source because it is an educational resource website, aimed at providing information for schools. They listed all their sources, the website looked professional and easy to read, and the links worked. The information also conferred with other sources I checked, although they also had some information about the African Clawless Otter which the others didn’t have so it was useful for my research.

NOTES:

**In this section, copy & paste useful information from your 3 sources. Use the highlighter tool to highlight relevant points that you might quote or put into your own words.**

Otters are well adapted to life on both land and in water, and have webbed feet for swimming, dense fur for warmth, and can close their ears and nose underwater. An agile hunter of fish, live in a wide variety of watery locations, from the mighty Amazon to the heart of Singapore. But the sea otter’s habitat is unique, as they only live in shallow coastal waters in the North Pacific ocean.

As predators that are near the top of the food chain, otters are hugely important for keeping their environments balanced.

Many otters eat tough food, particularly sea otters that inhabit the shallow coastal waters of the northern Pacific. They’re renowned for preying on hard-shelled marine invertebrates, including abalones, sea urchins, clams, mussels and crabs, usually fracturing the shells with their teeth.

A sea otter can consume up to 11kg of food every day to support its high metabolism – that’s about a quarter of its own body weight! The energy demands of a sea otter mother increases by 17 per cent after giving birth.

River otters' diets consist largely of crayfishes, crabs, and other aquatic invertebrates; fishes; and frogs. Despite concern that otters compete with game fishers, the fishes that otters consume are mainly non-game species. Otters may also occasionally prey on birds, rabbits, and rodents.

Giant otters eat mainly fishes and crabs.

Cape clawless and Asian small-clawed otters feed mainly on crabs and other crustaceans, molluscs, and frogs. Fish are relatively insignificant in their diets. Congo clawless otters probably feed on fairly soft prey items such as small land vertebrates, frogs, and eggs.

A sea otter's diet consists mainly of slow-moving fishes and marine invertebrates including crabs, sea urchins, abalones, clams, mussels, and snails. Food preferences vary among individuals.

Two or more otter species occupying the same geographical area usually have different food habits.

**Food Intake**

An otter's high metabolic rate - important for generating body heat - requires a substantial amount food.

River otters eat 15% to 20% of their total body weight each day.

Sea otters eat about 25% to 30% of their weight. A large male may consume as much as 11 kg (25 lb.) of food daily.

**Methods of Collecting Food**

River otters and giant otters hunt by using their vibrissae to detect movements of prey in the water. They catch prey with their teeth.

Giant otters often hold their prey in their paws while eating it. They normally eat small fishes in the water, and bring larger prey to shore.

Shellfish-eating clawless otters catch prey with their paws. Cape clawless otters have been observed using rocks and other hard objects to break open mussel shells.

Sea otters dive to the ocean floor to retrieve food. They catch prey in their forepaws then bring it to the surface.

A sea otter eats in the water, lying on its back, with its food on its chest. Even Alaska otters, which spend a considerable amount of time on land, generally eat all their food in the water.

A sea otter may remove an abalone by repeatedly hitting it with a rock. It also uses a flat rock to break open the shells of crustaceans and mollusks. Holding the rock on its chest, the otter pounds the animal on the rock until it breaks or opens.

Researchers have observed a feeding hierarchy among sea otters. Larger, dominant animals take food from smaller ones. Smaller animals often eat less desirable food than larger animals, including discarded bits of food.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The Eurasian Otter | Lutra lutra | Fish, frogs, aquatic insects, small mammals, birds, reptiles, and crabs. |
| The African Clawless Otter | Aonyx capensis | Crabs, [**lobsters**](https://www.bioexplorer.net/do-lobsters-die.html/), insects, [**frogs**](https://www.bioexplorer.net/what-do-frogs-eat.html/), and a wide array of fish species (including [**starfish**](https://www.bioexplorer.net/what-do-starfish-eat.html/)). |
| Giant River Otter | Pteronura brasiliensis | Fish, crustaceans, small anacondas, and caimans. |

* The Eurasian otter’s main diet is made up of fish (fish accounts for 80% of its food).
* They prey on amphibians like frogs, aquatic insects, small mammals, birds, reptiles, and crabs.
* Hunting for the Eurasian otter is a specialized task that calls for the use of their highly sensitive whiskers.
* The Eurasian otters use their sensitive whiskers in murky waters to detect their prey.
* Interestingly, these great hunters can also dive into the water to find and ambush their prey.
* The Eurasian otters have mastered the skill of holding their breath for a few seconds while underwater. Once prey is detected, they proceed to capture and consume it.
* The African clawless otter is carnivorous. Its diet consists of crabs, lobsters, insects, frogs, and a wide array of fish species.
* This mammal has also been known to dine on ducks, [**small birds**](https://www.bioexplorer.net/animals/birds/) (ducks), shrews, reptiles, swans, geese, mollusks, and coots.
* A good portion of African clawless otter’s hunting is done under the water, particularly shallow water.
* The hunting strategy this otter uses is by submerging their heads in water to search for prey.
* Once this otter identifies its potential victim, it captures it using its front feet and then brings it to the surface.

INFORMATIVE TEXT:

Title: **Otters & Their Diet**

Paragraph 1

**P – point. One piece of interesting information about your topic.**

Sea otters are carnivorous mammals whose diet consists mostly of slow-moving fish, but they also eat shellfish or other sea creatures.

**E – evidence. Use a quote, statistic or fact. Don’t forget to use in-text referencing.**

“They’re renowned for preying on hard-shelled marine invertebrates, including abalones, sea urchins, clams, mussels and crabs” (BBC Wildlife Magazine 2021). “Holding the rock on its chest, the otter pounds the animal on the rock until it breaks or opens.” (Sea World Parks & Entertainment 2021).

**E – explain. Say what this quote means or give a bit more detail about the information you listed.**

Otters are skilled hunters who can catch and eat fish, but they are also uniquely adapted to eat shellfish as they can use their sharp teeth to crunch through the shells and get to the meat. They sometimes also use rocks as tools to crack through the shells.

**L – link. Connect this back to your overall point or topic, OR say how this relates to your next point.**

An otter’s diet is based on what food is available in their habitat.

Paragraph 2

**P –** Sea otters have huge appetites.

**E –** “A sea otter can consume up to 11kg of food every day to support its high metabolism” (BBC Wildlife Magazine 2021).

**E –** Because they are busy swimming around and hunting a lot, they burn lots of energy so they need lots of food to keep warm, especially in the cold sea water. As predators at the top of the food chain, they are very important in balancing the environment.

**L –** Their big appetites are necessary to keep the populations of fish and crustaceans balanced.

Paragraph 3

**P –** Different types of otters have slightly different diets due to their different habitats.

**E –** Asian small-clawed otters, who live in rivers rather than in the ocean, also mainly eat fish, but they can sometimes prey on “birds, rabbits, or small rodents” (Sea World Parks & Entertainment 2021). The African clawless otter’s diet consists of “crabs, lobsters, insects, and frogs and a wide array of fish species” (BioExplorer 2021).

**E –** Like most carnivores, otters are opportunistic hunters who will find food based on what they can catch. This isn’t limited to fish, but as they don’t spend much time on land, their prey are usually other water-dwelling creatures. African clawless otters are even known to eat some unusual things such as small starfish!

**L –** Otters can eat a variety of different things depending on where they live, but all otters are an important part of the ecosystems of the Earth.

BIBLIOGRAPHY/REFERENCE LIST:

**Look at the table you made in the first section and list the information in this order: Author’s last name (comma) Author’s first initial (no comma) Year (comma) *Title of article or page in italics* (comma) Title of website (comma) viewed date (comma) <URL in pointy brackets>**

**Source 1:**

BBC Wildlife Magazine 2021 *Otter guide: how to identify and species facts,* Discover Wildlife, viewed 10 July 2021 <<https://www.discoverwildlife.com/animal-facts/mammals/otters-of-the-world/>>.

**Source 2:**

BioExplorer 2021, *What do Otters Eat?* BioExplorer, viewed 4 August 2021, <<https://www.bioexplorer.net/what-do-otters-eat.html/>>.

**Source 3:**

Sea World Parks & Entertainment 2021 *All About Otters: Diet & Eating Habits,* Sea World Parks & Entertainment, viewed 4 August 2021, <<https://seaworld.org/animals/all-about/otters/diet/>>