

Harbor Island, Naturally

OCTOBER 2009

A PERSONAL PROJECT OF JOHN ALBERT

VOL. 2, ISSUE 3



NORTHERN RIVER OTTERS

These Aquatic Clowns Can Put on Quite A Show in Our Lagoons

One of the best things you can see on the islands are the River Otters (*Lontra canadensis*). Most sightings are short glimpses of their heads.

Otters can live in freshwater or coastal marine habitats. They do not appear in areas where the water is polluted.

Otters build dens in river banks, the holes dug by other animals, or under logs. Dens have underwater entrances. A tunnel leads to a nest that is lined

with soft materials such as grass, and fur.

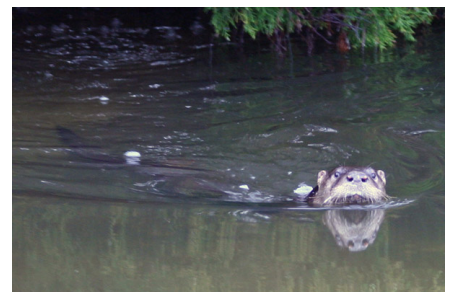
They eat frogs, fish, turtles, invertebrates such as shrimp, clams and crabs. Birds, eggs, and small mammals are eaten when available.

The biggest part of the diet is made up mainly slow, non-game fish species. Long whiskers are used to detect food in mud and in dark water.

Otters are solitary animals only coming together to mate, usually from February to April. Males mate with more than one female.

Gestation takes an average of two months. Otters have a delayed implantation of the embryo in the uterus. So The young may be born as much as a year after mating. Born in March litters average 2 or 3 young.

If you should sight some this winter consider yourself very fortunate.



PHOTOS BY JOHN ALBERT

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Sources: Dewey, T. and E. Ellis. 2003. "Lontra canadensis" (On-line), Animal Diversity Web. Accessed October 18, 2009 at http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Lontra_canadensis.htm