

Asian Small-Clawed Otter

Scientific Name: *Aonyx cinerea*

Class: Mammalia

Order: Carnivora

Family: Mustelidae



The Asian Small-Clawed Otter has a head and body length of 18 to 22 inches and a tail length of 10 to 14 inches. Their weight is 6.6 to 13 pounds. They have relatively large, broad cheek teeth which are used to crush the shells of crabs and mollusks. They have dark, greyish-brown fur over most of their body, and a lighter cream coloration on their face and neck. Their claws are extremely reduced, and rarely extend past the digit. The paws are only partially webbed, which allows for more dexterity than otters with full webbing.

Range

Their range is northwest India to southeastern China, Malay Peninsula, southern India, Sumatra, Java, and Borneo.

Habitat

They inhabit rivers, creeks, estuaries and coastal waters.

Gestation

60 to 64 days

Litter

1-6

Behavior

While solitary individuals may be observed, they usually live in loose family groups of about 12 individuals. They have vocabularies of 12 or more calls in addition to basic instinctive cries. These diurnal animals will only occupy areas with a permanent body of water and some tree cover. They live in large, underground burrows with a ventilation shaft leading to the surface and an exit tunnel opening about 3 feet under water. Using their sensitive fingers to find clams in shallow water, they bring them to shore and pile them up, and after a few hours in the sun the clams open and the otters eat them. They spend much of their time playing in the water and will fall to water when danger approaches. When they hunt in rice fields they aid farmers by ridding the fields of crayfish that damage crops. Like raccoons, they sometimes "wash" their food before eating it.

Reproduction

Females have an estrous cycle of 24 to 30 days with an estrus of 3 days. They may produce two litters in a year. The young do not open their eyes until about 40 days, and they first swim at 9 weeks. Solid food is first taken after about 80 days. The male brings food for both the mother and the young, and helps in raising the pups. Males and females appear to mate permanently.

Wild Diet

Crabs, crustaceans, mollusks, frogs, occasional fish