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BALLINCOLLIG OTTER TRAIL



Introduction

Welcome to the Ballincollig Otter Trail.

The species of otter that is found in Ireland is called the Eurasian otter.

This is a widely distributed species, found all across Europe and Asia.

Here in Ballincollig they can be seen in the River Lee.

Common name: Eurasian Otter.

Scientific name: Lutra lutra.

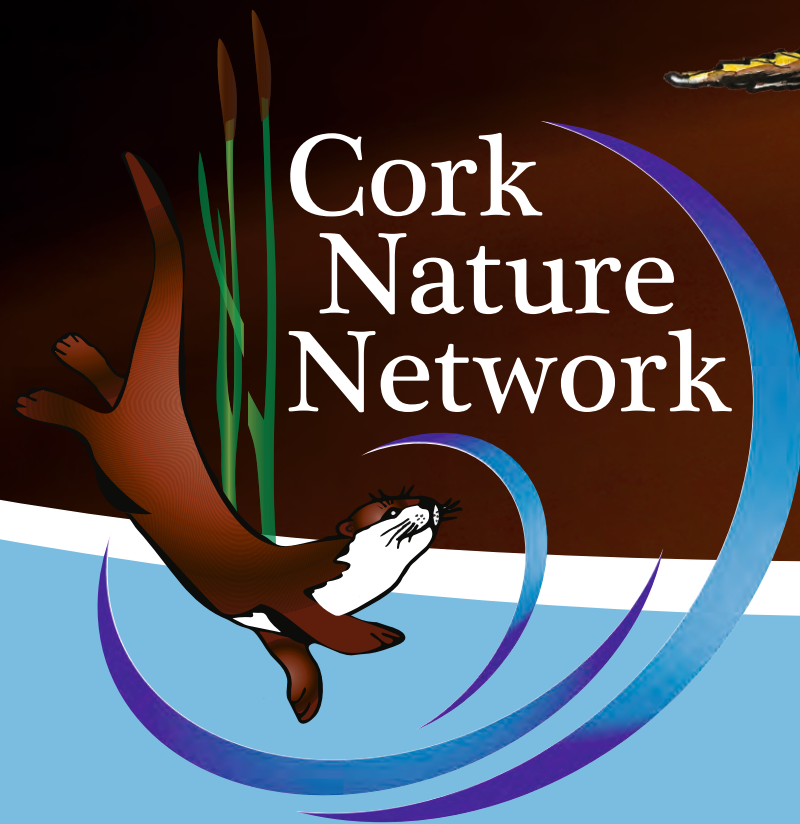
Irish name: Dobharchú / Madra Uisce.

Family: Mustelidae (along with badgers, weasels, stoats, and mink)

Physical description: Brown thick fur, muscular tails and five webbed toes.

Conservation status: Near threatened.

Look for sign number two in this park and learn more about otters!



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Otter Signs and Habitat

Otters are semi-aquatic, meaning they can be found on both water and land. They live in aquatic habitats such as rivers, lakes, streams, and coastal areas.

They sleep on land in holts or couches and can have many resting sites like this within their territory. The territory of the otter can be up to 10km².

Otters are elusive and can be difficult to see up close, especially as they are nocturnal. So if they are difficult to spot, how do we know where they are?

They leave signs such as footprints and spraint (otter poop) so we know that there are otters present in the area.

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Diet

Otters are nocturnal carnivores, and commonly seen at dusk and dawn.

Although fish make up the majority of their diet, (like salmon and trout) otters can hunt for both terrestrial and aquatic prey.

They may also eat animals like shellfish, frogs, and even small birds.

Otters forage at night, using their very sensitive whiskers to help them detect prey. As otters use freshwater systems, it is so important that we keep our waterways clean and unpolluted.

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Conservation

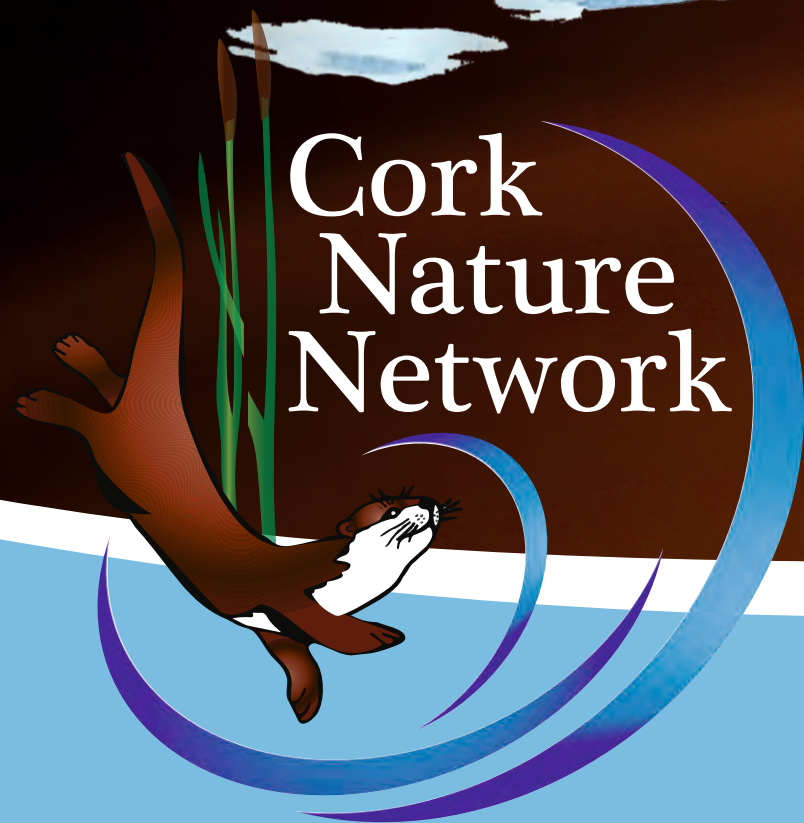
Otter populations have been in decline across Europe since the 1960s and have been classified as "Near threatened" by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

The otter population in Ireland however has not seen the same decline as the rest of Europe, and so Ireland has become known as a stronghold for otters.

Otters are a protected species in Ireland, meaning that they cannot be hunted or intentionally harmed.

However, they still face threats such as road traffic accidents, habitat loss and water pollution. Because of the importance of this species, we must do our best to protect the otters and raise awareness about their conservation.

Thank you for following along our otter trail! If you would like to learn more, please take a look at our website and social media pages for updates on our otter project.



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