

Fascinating Facts about Sea Otters

from Defenders of Wildlife website



photo © Marc Mantione

Where do Sea Otters live?

Sea otters live in shallow coastal waters off the northern Pacific. Sea otters can be found in Canada, Russia, Japan, California and Washington, but the majority of all wild sea otters are found in Alaskan waters. Recent reports of sea otter sightings have also occurred in Mexico. Sea otters spend much of their lives in the water and can dive up to 330 feet when foraging for food.

What do Sea Otters eat?

Sea otters eat urchins, abalone, mussels, clams, crabs, snails and about 40 other marine species. Sea otters eat approximately 25% of their weight in food each day to support their high metabolism.



Sea otters are also one of the few mammals other than primates known to use tools. They use small rocks or other objects to pry shellfish from rocks and to hammer them open. They sometimes rest in coastal kelp forests, often draping the kelp over their bodies to keep from drifting away.

How do Sea Otters stay warm?

Unlike other marine mammals, they do not have a layer of blubber to help them keep warm. Instead, sea otters have the densest fur in the animal kingdom, ranging from 250,000 to a million hairs per square inch, which insulates them from the cold ocean water.

What do Sea Otters do to help other creatures in the ocean and on land?

As predators, sea otters are critical to maintaining the balance of the kelp forest ecosystem. Without sea otters, the undersea animals they prey on would devour the kelp forests off the coast that provide cover and food for many other marine animals. Sea otters also help to reduce levels of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, because kelp forests capture carbon dioxide.

How do Sea Otters take care of their young?

Females can give birth throughout the year after being pregnant for 6-8 months. Usually, just one pup is born, but they can also have twins. Mothers carry the newborn pups wherever they swim, either on their backs or stomachs, for the first 4 weeks until they can swim on their own.