

## **GEHR Watershed Minute #18**

### **River Otter: (215 words)**

The North American River Otter is an aquatic mammal that lives in the Great Egg Harbor Watershed. This otter has a streamlined, muscular body with short powerful legs, a round, small head, large whiskers, webbed toes and a long muscular tail. Its fur is glossy and dark brown, the throat is often silver gray, and its body can be up to 42 inches long with a tail up to 18 inches long.

Although commonly called “river otters”, they inhabit marine as well as freshwater environments, including standing bodies of water such as lakes and bays. Some populations permanently reside in marine shoreline habitats, and are often mistaken for sea otters.

River otters can be distinguished from sea otters as they have narrower faces and bring their prey ashore to eat. Their eating places often have worn paths up the banks scattered with otter scat and fish scales.

Otters are generally nocturnal, and eat fish, insects, frogs, crustaceans, snakes, and many other small animals. Otters are often playful with other otters, and they can swim in circles to create whirlpools that bring fish from the bottom of the water up to the top.

Local otter trapping is currently permitted every year. River Otter are known to be sensitive to pollution and will disappear from polluted areas.