



Riversearch Survey 2019-20

Catchment (s)
Sheet no. _____ of _____
Surveyor's name
Address
Tel
Email

Reporting injured otters:
 RSPCA national emergency number: 0300 1234 999
Reporting dead otters:
 Environment Agency: 03708 506 506
 Essex Wildlife Trust: 01621 862960
Reporting an environmental incident:
 Environment Agency incident hotline: 0800 80 70 60

Essex Otter Survey 2019-20						Water vole survey 2019-20			
Date	Site code	Site name	OS grid ref	(P)ositive (N)egative	No of spraints	Latrines or droppings	Feeding signs	Water vole burrows	Additional notes or actual sightings

Return to:-
Natalie Singleton, River Catchment Assistant, Essex Wildlife Trust, Abbots Hall Farm, Gt Wigborough, Colchester, CO5 7RZ, Tel 01621 862974 Email riverw@essexwt.org.uk

Health & Safety

Safety in fieldwork is largely a matter of commonsense, care and prudence. **All work close to rivers should be regarded as potentially hazardous, please do not take risks.**

- Do not visit sites alone, take a mobile phone and inform people where you will be visiting and approximate return time.
- Wear suitable outdoor clothing and footwear, Wellington boots or walking shoes should be adequate.
- River banks will be slippery with trip hazards, please be cautious.
- Otter signs will be on the banks, there should be no reason to wade or enter the water even small waterways can be deeper than they appear. **Please do not take risks.**
- Check weather forecasts and Environment agency flood warnings. Prolonged rain and raised river levels will wash away field signs and prevent surveying.
- It is important that everybody has an up to date anti tetanus vaccination. Anyone who has not received tetanus protection within the last five years should discuss this with his or her doctor.
- Be aware of barbed wire, thorns and electric fencing.
- Do not handle dead animals or birds.

Weils disease

The number of reported incidents of leptospirosis (Weils disease) is increasing annually although it is still extremely rare. The leptospire organism is a parasite and infects wild animals particularly rats and farm animals. The organism is most usually found in rivers, ditches and other water courses and enters the body through cuts, abrasions in the skin or through the mouth, nose or eyes. People working regularly in wet environments, anglers and water sport enthusiasts are most at risk.

- Wash hands and forearms thoroughly with soap and clean water before eating, drinking or smoking. Avoid touching the face with dirty/wet hands.
- Cover cuts and abrasions with watertight adhesive dressings.

If flu-like symptoms develop report to a doctor quickly and inform them of potential exposure.

Dead or injured otters

Make sure you call the RSPCA, Environment Agency or the Wildlife Trust for advice before handling any dead animal and under no circumstances attempt to retrieve one from a busy road or deep water as you could put your own life at risk. Make a note of the location and time you found the otter as well as any other useful notes. Dead otters are retrieved by the Environment Agency and sent away for post mortem even where the cause of death is obvious e.g. road traffic accident. The information gathered can provide useful clues to any contaminants or diseases present in the otter's environment.

As a general rule a conscious otter will retreat from human contact if able to do so. An animal that is unable to, for whatever reason, is likely to be in distress but it is also an unfortunate fact that animals in this state rarely survive even with veterinary assistance. Observe the animal from a distance to see whether it really is in distress then call one of the agencies giving an exact location. Do not attempt to move otter cubs as they are sometimes left alone for long periods while their mother hunts and may not need assistance. If they are still alone after 24 hours then call out one of the agencies. Otters will bite so never try to handle them directly if not trained to do so.

Crayfish traps

Crayfish traps and fyke nets **MUST** be licenced and should be fitted with a suitable guard to prevent access by otters. If you see these nets in a river **DO NOT** interfere with them but contact Darren Tansley, River Catchment Coordinator, 07889 088453, stating where and when you saw the trap. If you have a camera with you, take a photograph. We will investigate and take the relevant action.