

# Otter Predation Workshop

Roger Handford- Senior Advisor (Fisheries Partnerships)

Graham Scholey- Conservation Technical Specialist  
Thames Area

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Barston Lakes

# Why is it an important issue for us?

- ➔ 1 million anglers/fishing licence holders
- ➔ 'Hot issue'
- ➔ Our fisheries duty
  - ➔ *'to maintain, improve and develop fisheries'*
  - ➔ and consider *'socio/economic benefits'*

# Social media examples



**Environment Agency**

22 April 2016 · 🌐

Otters, which were nearly extinct in the 1970s, have recovered thanks to a ban on harmful pesticides. They are now present in every English county.

They have also been helped by a significant improvement in water quality over the past 20 years, bringing fish back to rivers that were once grossly polluted.

Otters are at the top of the food chain, and are therefore an important indicator of the health of rivers.

#20for20 #EAat20



405 Likes · 1.1K Comments · 459 Shares

3



**Environment Agency** We know this post has created strong feeling, we welcome constructive thoughts and views. We continue to work with a range of partners, investing millions to protect and improve our environment for people and wildlife and improving fisheries. Improveme... [See more](#)

2y

↳ 193 Replies



So Otters are now the EA's prime indicator of river water quality...not the fish... and ignoring that there are less or no natural resident fish or eels present. What a farce. The EA are having to re-stock rivers (regarded as EA good quality) virtually e... [See more](#)

2y · Edited

↳ 2 Replies





Environment Agency added 2 new photos.

22 May at 04:25 · 🌐

The @EnvAgency National Coarse Fish Farm near Calverton, Nottinghamshire produced 9 tonnes of healthy fish for re-stocking in 2017. These fish play an important role in the work of the Environment Agency and its partners to restore, improve and develop sustainable fisheries in England. The fish farm is funded using money from fishing licences. <http://bit.ly/2s10aLr> #gofishing #IntlBiodiversityDay @AnglingTrust @BiodiversityEA



Environment Agency

20 February · 🌐

Tune in tomorrow as we go live to discuss why young people need to be #floodaware. Hosts Katie Henry from Birmingham University and David Young, Area Risk Manager, will lead the Q&A but you can join in by posting your flood related questions today in the comments section below using the hashtag #prepareactsurvive. We'll do our best to answer as many as possible. We'll be live on Facebook at 13:00pm and then over to Instagram at 13:30pm #floodaware



👍 Like

💬 Comment



Brilliant more otter fodder.

1w

↪️ 14 Replies

View 8 more comments



seems all our rod licence money is being used for flood defences what about the otter situation

# We regularly receive requests for information

- ➔ Parliamentary questions
- ➔ MP letters (usually forwarding the views of concerned constituents)
- ➔ Media enquiries
- ➔ Angler's letters, emails, FOIs

# The two most common questions we are asked

- ➔ Why does the Environment Agency reintroduce otters?
- ➔ What is the Environment Agency doing to stop otters decimating fish stocks?

# Our response to why we have reintroduced otters

- ➔ We didn't!
- ➔ There have been no legal introductions of otters since 1999 and prior to that only 117 animals were released across the country (mainly in the East and North)
- ➔ Their subsequent recovery and spread of their progeny is a result of improvements in water quality and habitat

# Our response to what we are doing to stop the decimation of fish stocks

- ➔ We will provide advice to clubs and fisheries affected (inc. otters and stillwater fisheries guide)
- ➔ We fund the Angling Trust to play a supporting role
- ➔ We reinvest rod licence income to fund fencing for stillwaters (more than £0.5M and 100 fisheries benefitted)
- ➔ We are funding Keele University to conduct research on angler's perceptions



# Conservation Status

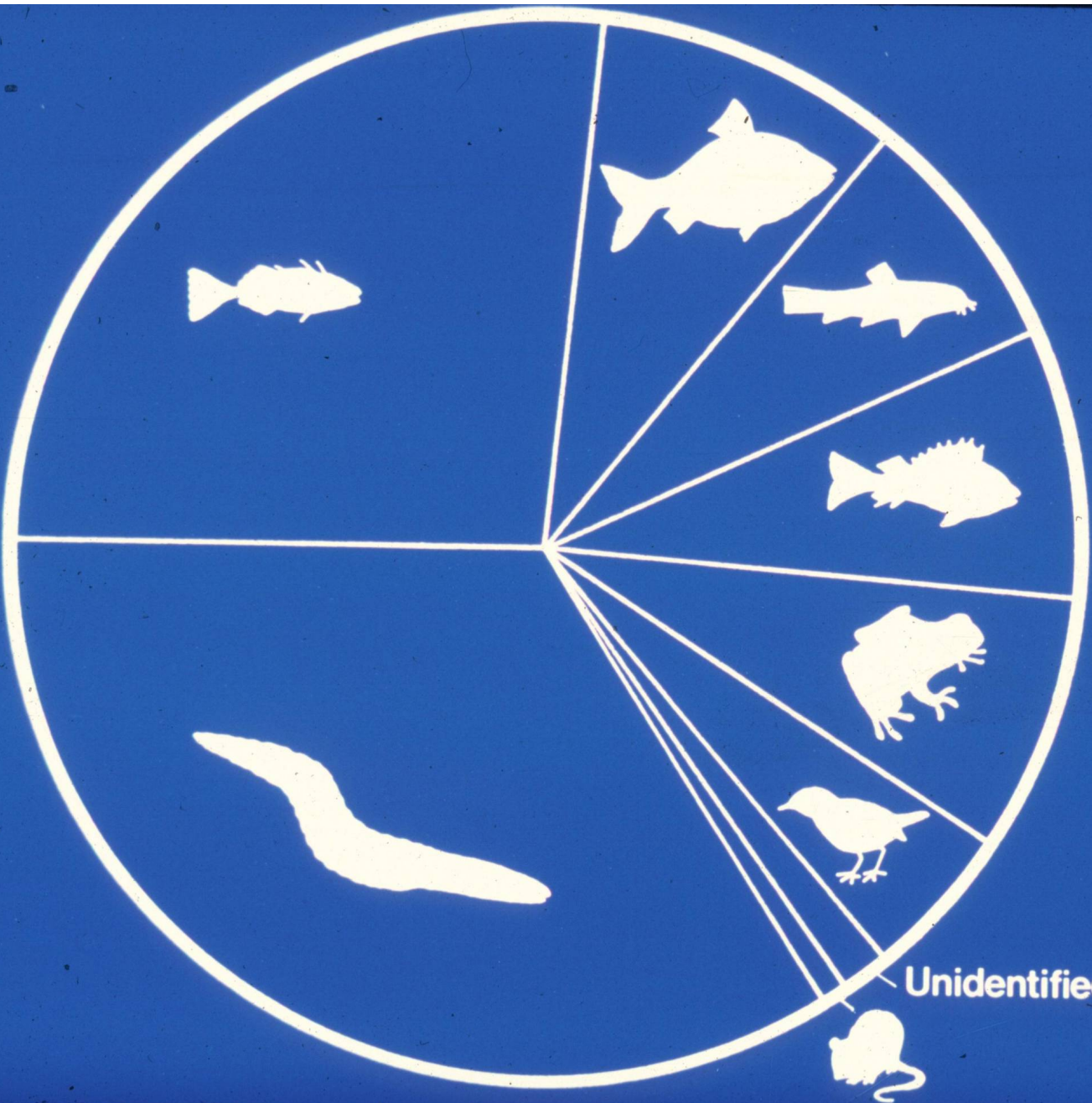
- ➔ First protected in England and Wales in 1978, then consolidated under W&C Act 1981
- ➔ Now fully protected under European 'Habitats' Directive (transposed into UK law 1994, updated 2010 and 2017)
- ➔ Globally listed as 'Near Threatened' by the IUCN ('World Conservation Union')
- ➔ England Biodiversity Strategy Priority Species (EA is national lead body)

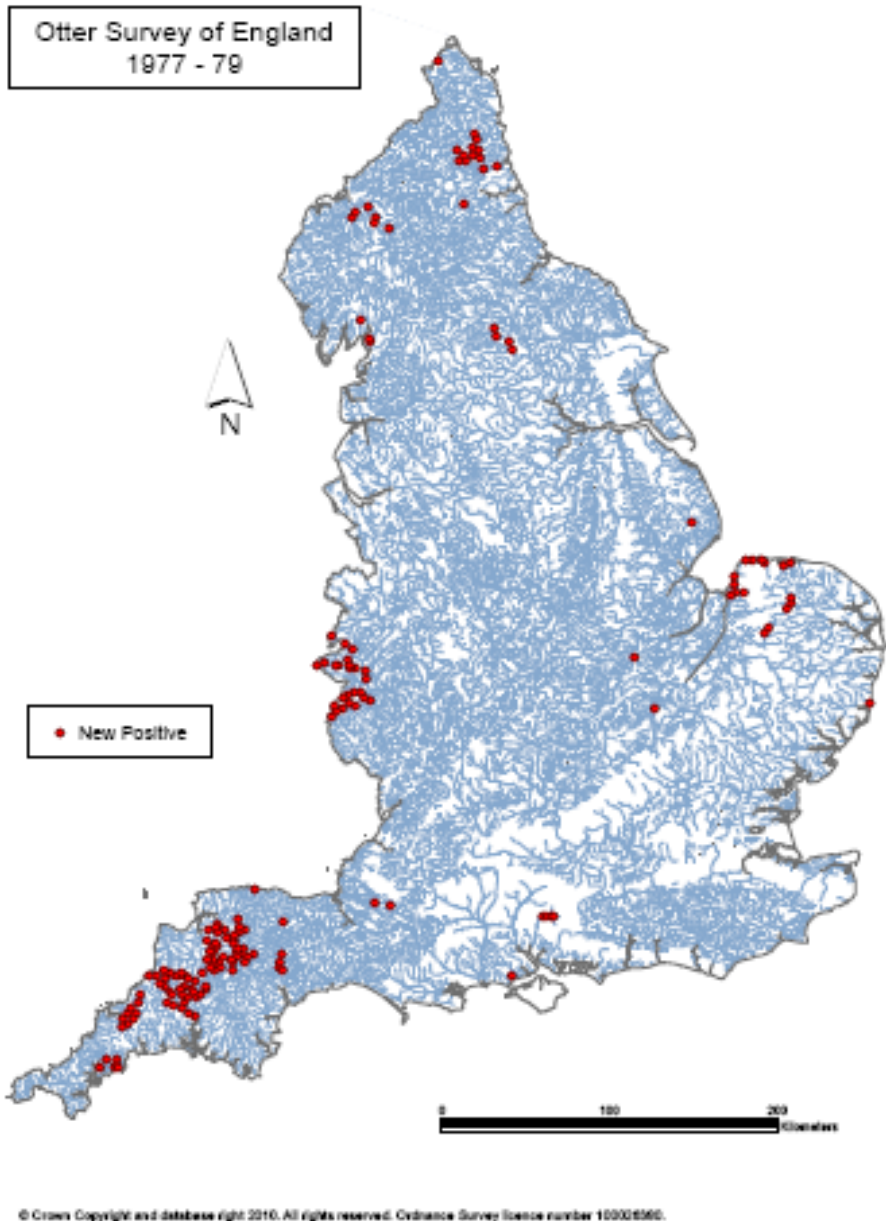
# Otter Social Behaviour

- ➔ Territorial – regulate own numbers
- ➔ Home range from as little as 2km to 80km (habitat dependent)
- ➔ Dimorphic: males up to 50% heavier than females – 5-14 kg
- ➔ Male ranges overlap two or more females
- ➔ Generally solitary outside family groups
- ➔ Holts/refuges: 10-20 or more per home range
- ➔ Mainly nocturnal/crepuscular – unless coastal

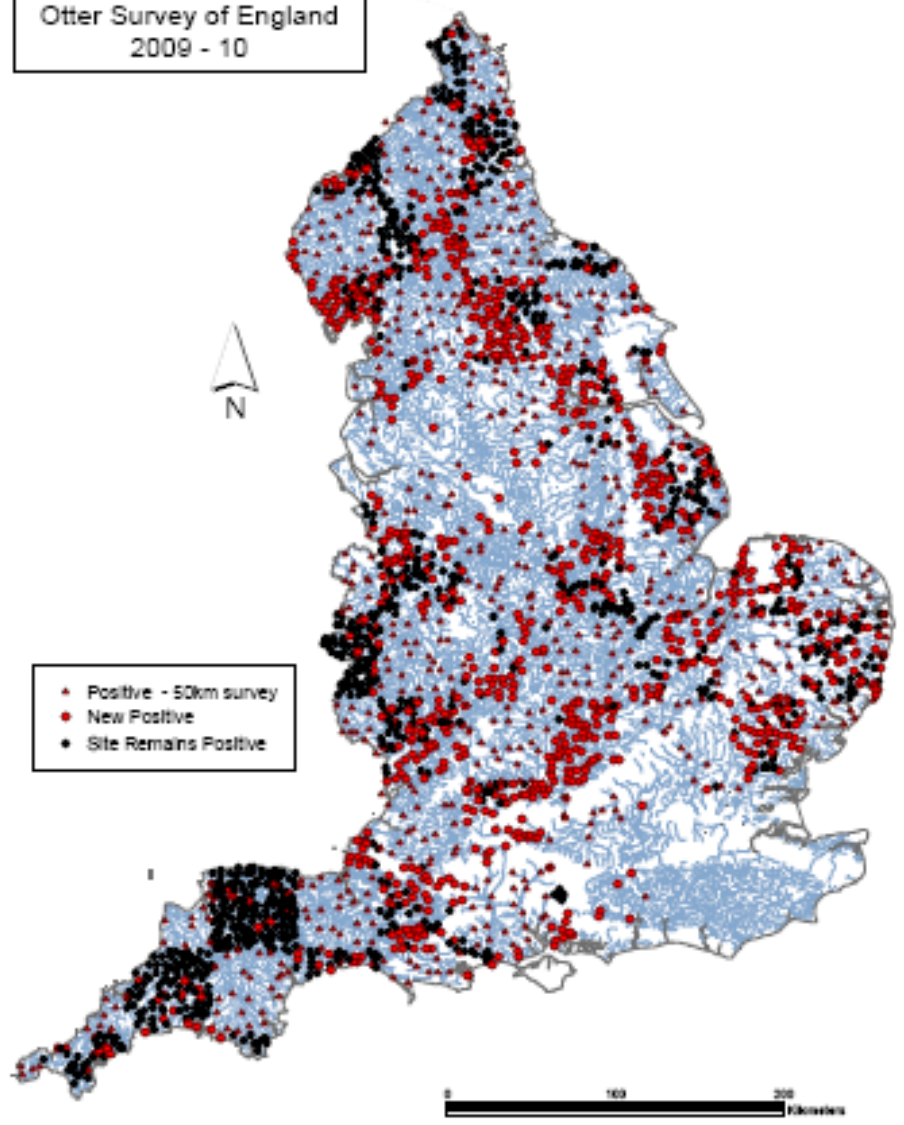


**Diet**





Otter Survey of England  
2009 - 10



# Brief summary of previous initiatives on otter predation issues

- ➔ Otter Predation Group set up with Angling Trust, NE and EA representation – worked to ‘Chatham House Rules’. Met a number of times in 2009 and 2010.
- ➔ EA and Wildlife Trusts produced ‘Otters – The Facts’ in 2010 to provide some background information and as a bit of a myth-buster
- ➔ EA-funded trials on otter fencing designs with captive otters, leading to production of ‘Otters and Stillwater Fisheries’ guidance
- ➔ Most recently – a class licence has been issued by Natural England (in 2016) to trained operatives to remove otters caught inside fenced Fisheries to the outside of the fence

# 'Otters – The Facts' produced by EA, NE and The Angling Trust in 2010

## OTTERS - THE FACTS

### The purpose of this fact sheet

The recovery of otters in the UK is impacting inland fisheries through predation. The situation is complex, and it is not clear why some waters have not been affected, even though otters are present.

The Angling Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England and others are working together to improve understanding about the interactions between otters and fish. This document summarises our current knowledge and is intended as a starting point for further work. It does not present solutions; these can only be found by working together and will be explored in further publications.



water for wildlife



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## *otters and stillwater fisheries*



Protecting Wildlife for the Future



# Otter predation on stillwaters – some considerations

- ➔ Significant growth in number of specimen stillwater fisheries since the otters' decline
- ➔ Large carp (highly vulnerable in winter) now dominate stillwater angling
- ➔ Some financial support from EA for otter fencing from 2008, now via Angling Trust advisors, to support fencing costs on some stillwaters
- ➔ Fencing guidance produced, and now a class licence in England for trained operatives to remove otters trapped inside fenced Fisheries to the outside of the fence

# Otter Predation on Rivers – Issues and Considerations

- ➔ Concerns are mainly expressed on rivers which lost their otters – this does not appear to be a universal concern
- ➔ Increase in number/size of specimen fish in absence of otters – are these related phenomena? Is this healthy for a fishery?
- ➔ Poor recruitment and lack of good spawning/juvenile habitat etc have a number of causes
- ➔ What do/can Fishery surveys and angler returns tell us?
- ➔ How has the return of the otter affected fish behaviour and distribution?
- ➔ Otters may kick-start a return to more healthy fish population structure on ‘damaged’ rivers with poor age-class distribution?