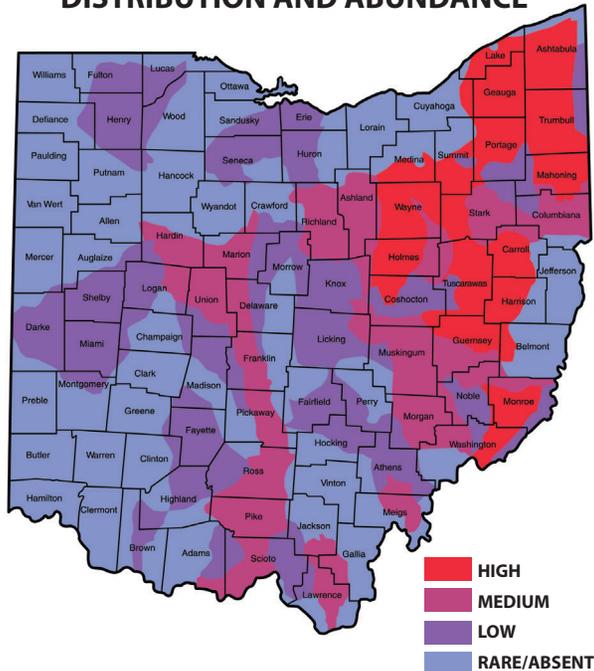


OHIO'S RIVER OTTER

River otters are becoming more abundant in Ohio following their reintroduction by the Division of Wildlife from 1986-93. This native furbearer continues to increase in many of Ohio's rivers, streams and lakes, where their distribution includes at least 67 counties encompassing 69 watersheds. Increases in otter numbers are likely the result of improved aquatic habitats, an expanding beaver population, and similar restoration efforts in neighboring states.

Through reintroduction efforts by the Division of Wildlife, river otters are becoming more common in Ohio's rivers and streams. From 1986 to 1993, 123 river otters were obtained from cooperating trappers in Louisiana and released in the Grand River, Killbuck Creek, Stillwater Creek and Little Muskingum River. Since the reintroduction program ended in 1993, river otters have been reported in over half of Ohio's 88 counties. Other signs of an increasing otter population include many reports of family groups in the release areas and elsewhere in Ohio.

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE



THE MONITORING PROGRAM

The Division of Wildlife monitors the river otter population primarily using the bridge crossing survey that began in 1999 in eastern Ohio. With continuing river otter expansion, we are extending the bridge survey efforts into central, northwestern, and southwestern Ohio in 2016 and thereafter.

The bridge survey will be conducted in selected watersheds in these areas by Ohio by Division of Wildlife personnel (with permission from landowners). Specific bridge sites will be surveyed once in January or February by walking a distance of 300 meters upstream and downstream from the bridge, while looking for tracks and other otter signs. This survey will provide a consistent method for determining otter presence, especially in areas not frequently visited by the general public.

Other surveys include necropsies of recovered animals that were accidentally struck by vehicles, or incidentally trapped. This provides the Division with important information on age, sex ratio and signs of reproduction to determine a population estimate.

Bridge surveys are important tools for monitoring the relative abundance and distribution of river otters in Ohio. Equally important, however, is information obtained on river otters in Ohio through observation reports received from the public. Outdoor enthusiasts, sportspersons, and the general public have reported otter sightings in over half of Ohio's counties.

IF YOU SEE A RIVER OTTER

People who see river otters are encouraged to report the sightings to the Division of Wildlife. Important information about the sighting, such as date, river or stream where the otters were observed and number of animals are all useful in tracking the relative abundance and distribution of otters statewide. With luck, you may be fortunate enough to witness one of Ohio's native furbearers on your next outing along your favorite river or stream.

We sincerely thank you for assisting us in properly managing and preserving Ohio's wildlife heritage.



PHOTO BY ERIC ISSELEE