

Name:**European otter***Lutra lutra***UK status:**[UK BAP Priority](#). Formerly Endangered in England, now recovering**London status:**

Unknown; possibly under-recorded

Protected status:

- W&CA, Schedule 5 (full protection)
 - Habitats Regulations, Schedule 2
 - Habitats Directive, Annex II, IV (European protected species of animals)
 - Bern Convention, Appendix II
 - Wild Mammals (Protection) Act
- 'Species of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity in England' (CRoW Act, 2000)

Relevant London HAPs:

Rivers & Streams; Tidal Thames; Ponds, lakes & reservoirs; Canals

Citation:

Formerly widespread throughout the UK, the otter underwent a disastrous decline in the period 1950-70 which left it extinct over much of lowland England. The reasons for this are still unclear but are most likely related to the dramatic rise in industrial and agricultural production during this time, with associated changes in river and floodplain management and impacts on water quality in particular. The decline has now apparently halted and otters are slowly returning to catchments from which they had been lost. This process has been assisted by re-introduction



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projects in various parts of the country. In Greater London the otter is something of an enigma. In the Lea Valley evidence of their occasional presence has been detected for over a decade, as far into the capital as Walthamstow Reservoirs. Whether these animals have arrived from higher up the River Lee system or via the Thames estuary is not known. A young male otter was recently found dead in inner east London, presumably hit by a vehicle. Otters are also entering London from the northwest. Again, evidence only (no definite sightings) has been noted from various sites in the Colne Valley in LB Hillingdon, and there is a reintroduced population in neighbouring Berkshire higher up the River Thames. Given the high level of disturbance in London it may be some time before the otter takes up permanent residence here, although sightings could become an increasingly regular event along the way to achieving this. Managing agencies; Environment Agency, British Waterways, Thames Water, Three Valleys Water, Hillingdon Borough Council, Port of London Authority, LVRPA, Lee Rivers Trust

Conservation priorities:

- Sensitive river margin management, including appropriate habitat creation and enhancements, particularly on the Colne/Frays, Lee and Roding catchments [addresses UK SAP target T2]
- Use incidental river corridor surveys to detect further evidence of presence/colonisation

- Incorporate wildlife underpasses beneath roads in the vicinity of important watercourses
- Use this flagship species to communicate the importance of water quality and riparian habitats to biodiversity

References:

JNCC, 1994. *A Framework for Otter Conservation in the UK 1995-2000*