New Digs for Monterey’s Otters

Last April, central California’s Monterey Bay Aquarium reopened their otter exhibit, Sea Otters Along the Rocky Coast. The new exhibit is home to Hailey, Goldie and Roscoe, three Southern sea otters rescued off California’s coast and raised by staffmembers from the Aquarium.

The otters’ new home is a two-story, 55,000 gallon tank, a close copy of the coastal waters where these three otters were found abandoned as pups. It has realistic rock formations, underwater feeding areas that force the otters to dive for food much like they would do in the wild, and a wider variety of food choices like rockfishes, perch, sea stars and anemones to better imitate natural food likes and dislikes.

Most importantly, the tank has a new and improved water purifying system. The water in which the otters swim has to be kept clean, just like in a home aquarium. Before the new exhibit was built, the otters had to be removed from the tank for it to be cleaned. The new filter keeps the tank clean without having to disturb the otters.

Also, because of the better filter, new marine plant life has been added.

Sea World is the New Home For Alaska sea otters

Rocky Point Reserve opened this past summer at Sea World in San Diego, California. It is home to Alaska sea otters flown to Sea World for treatment and study following the 1989 Prince William Sound oil spill off the coast of Alaska.

That oil spill happened when the ship Exxon Valdez ran aground and dumped about 11 million gallons of oil into the water. The oil polluted the water so badly that millions of animals, birds and plants were killed. The estimate of otters killed was about 5,500.

The Alaska otters living at Otter Outlook, part of Rocky Point Reserve, came there from rehabilitation centers in Alaska that were set up after the spill. The otters are part of a long-term study of the toxic effects of crude oil. Sea World was the first to establish the

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Oil: The Number 1 Threat to Sea Otters

The most serious problem facing the well-being of sea otters is the threat of an oil spill.

The reason this threat is so serious is because of how otters exist. Unlike other marine mammals, otters do not have a thick layer of blubber for insulation; instead they depend on their thick fur to protect themselves from the cold water. They spend a large portion of each day grooming, or rubbing their bodies, which forces air bubbles into the fur closest to their skin, acting as insulation to keep them warm.

When otters come into contact with an oil spill, the oil coats and mats their fur, making grooming extremely difficult. Some otters can survive a light encounter with oil, but a heavy dose can cause hypothermia and death because they are unable to clean their fur.

Additionally, if oil is in their fur as they groom they will swallow it. Since oil is toxic, or poisonous, it can cause liver and kidney failure, and severe damage to their lungs and eyes all of which can result in death.

The threat of an oil spill can come from a number of sources including offshore tanker traffic, offshore drilling, onshore pipelines and oil transfer facilities. Since the Monterey Bay in California is a National Marine Sanctuary, offshore drilling is banned.

Oil pollution comes from other sources, too. The sea otter environment along California’s coast is still at risk from oil tanker transportation close to shore because not only do tankers leak oil but many times seawater is used to wash out the ships, then the waste is dumped into the ocean causing damage to the otters’ habitat.

Friends of the Sea Otter is part of an oil spill response plan that uses pre-trained volunteers who can come and help wildlife in the event of an oil spill.

The best response, however, is to prevent an oil spill from ever taking place and the simplest method to accomplish that is through conservation. Something you can do, and get your parents, friends, and neighbors to do, is to not use as much oil or buy as many oil based products.

Make a pledge to:

- Recycle everything that can be recycled at home and school
- Stop using plastic bags — take reusable bags to the store or request paper bags
- Use waxed paper, aluminium foil, or cellulose bags instead of plastic at home and school
- Choose paper and glass packaging over plastic when shopping
- Avoid styrofoam and plastic containers at fast food restaurants
- Refill and reuse containers when appropriate

Conserve electricity at home by:

- Turning off lights and appliances when not in use
- Keeping the thermostat turned down to minimize the use of heat
- Using energy-efficient light bulbs
- Walking, biking, carpooling, or taking public transportation instead of getting in the car at least one day a week

With everyone’s help, the horrible devastation caused by an oil spill, similar to what happened in Alaska as a result of the Exxon Valdez spill when thousands of otters were killed, can be prevented. Most importantly we will all benefit from a cleaner environment — especially the otters.

The Otter Pup

The Otter Pup is published by Friends of the Sea Otter (FSO) — a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the Southern sea otter and its environment. Please direct your correspondence to:

The Otter Pup
% Friends of the Sea Otter
2150 Garden Road, Suite B4
Monterey, CA 93940.

Executive Editor — Susan Brown
Design & Production — Julie Payne
What Are They Doing ... The Otter Ballet?

Otters are masters at motion whether it's rolling, diving, swimming or just playing. Each motion comes before a specific behavior — searching for food, trying to stay warm or the many movements involved in grooming. These drawings show the most common sea otter moves.

Hang, Somersault  Periscope  Ride  Tumble  Submerged  Porpoise  Logroll
What's for Dinner?

Adult otters are under water a lot. They're voracious eaters, consuming about 25 percent of their body weight per day to keep warm. They search for food close to shore in the kelp beds. Dives of about 60 feet last from one to two minutes.
You Can Be A Sea Otter Too — Details Below

Materials:
- Scissors
- Crayons
- Hole punch
- String

To Make this Otter Mask:

1. Make a copy of the otter's face on this page.
2. Color with crayons before cutting it out. Sea Otters are generally a light brown.
3. Cut out the face and the eyes.
4. Punch one hole below each ear.
5. Measure a piece of string to fit around your head. Tie each end of the string through one of the holes. Now you are a sea otter!

Special thanks to Barry Brown for his artwork.
Sea World San Diego Hosts Sea Otters

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treatment and cleaning techniques used to save hundreds of otters following the oil spill in Alaska.

The otters' new home has natural rock formations and underwater viewing windows. There are hands-on displays, video presentations and pictures showing otter natural history. Visitors can see the park's staff of animal care specialists and veterinarians working in the nearby nursery and food preparation area.

Southern sea otters, different from Alaska and Russian, and the focus of Friends of the Sea Otter's work along California's coast, can still be seen in the park's World of the Sea aquarium.

Through this new otter exhibit, Sea World continues to provide visitors a complete marine zoological experience that balances family entertainment, research, education and conservation.

Also, the otters are featured as part of Sea World's education program through “Shamu TV: Sea World's Video Classroom.” Sea World broadcasts, via satellite, live marine life programs into classrooms across the nation. Programs are used to inform students on animal behaviors and habitats and the research happening at the park.

Sea World is open daily; opening and closing times change throughout the year. Daily hours are longer during summer and holiday periods. For information call 619/226-3901.

Members of Friends of the Sea Otter receive a $3.50 discount off the ticket price. Contact the FSO office to receive a discount coupon.

Send An Extra Special Valentine This Year

We received a card from Miss Gillooly's class at Toro Park School in Salinas, Calif. that we thought was really special. The class got together and made their own card — and you can too! It's as easy as 1 - 2 - 3.

1. Take a plain piece of paper and fold it in half to form the card. If you want to use an envelope, then pick an envelope that will be big enough, or cut the folded card to fit. A grown-up can help you with this.

2. Draw your picture on the front of the card. It could be about anything you like — how about a sea otter holding a valentine?

3. Write your message on the inside and send it to someone you care about. This is a great place to remind them to help save the environment.

A great big thanks to Miss Gillooly's class for the neat idea!

Favorite Joke Contest Winner: Cole Kinnear

Why do fish have scales? to weigh themselves

Cole Kinnear

Cole wins a FSO T-shirt and sea otter poster for this funny joke.

Age: 7 1/2
Monterey Bay Aquarium's New Exhibit

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which better imitates the offshore kelp beds in which wild otters thrive.

The otter tank is one of the most popular exhibits at the Aquarium. Visitors can once again watch the daily feeding shows and with two viewing levels can see otter antics both topside and below the surface of the water. You can touch otter fur at one of the hands-on exhibits or read about otter life on one of the many illustrated wall panels.

The new exhibit helps the Aquarium accomplish its mission which is to encourage interest and increase knowledge about the Monterey Bay and the world's ocean environments through interesting exhibits, public education and scientific research.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium is home to the only otter rescue and rehabilitation program in the world. The goal of their Sea Otter Rescue and Care Program is to save abandoned pups and return them to the wild. Although the three exhibit otters were raised at the Aquarium, all new pups are taught survival skills and then released.

You can visit the Aquarium daily (closed Christmas Day) from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and from 9:30 a.m. during major holiday periods. For more information call 408/648-4888.

Book Review

Sea Otters — by Marianne Riedman

- 80 pages
- More than 100 color photographs
- Produced by the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Education Division.

An in-depth overview of the sea otter; what makes it one of the most engaging marine mammals found in coastal waters. A detailed look at otter eating likes and dislikes, use of tools social behaviors, their coastal home, and how this unique mammal survives in the cold, uninviting ocean.

Also includes information on the Monterey Bay Aquarium's otters and their sea otter research program.

Available through the Monterey Bay Aquarium at 408/648-4888 or the FSO Sea Otter Retail Center at 408/625-3290.

A good general reference book.

Sea Otter, River Otter — by Sandra Chisholm Robinson

- The Wonder Series, Denver Museum of Natural History
- 64 pages
- Games, illustrations, projects. 3rd grade and up

A fun and educational publication. The scientific information is easy to understand and is presented through stories, games and projects. The beautiful illustrations show otters in their ocean or river homes, eating, and playing. Build a model and learn how an otter swims; make an origami otter; learn about otters from all over the world. A great interactive publication for kids, parents and teachers.

Available from the Denver Museum of Natural History; or the FSO Sea Otter Retail Center at 408/625-3290.

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Otters Across North America

Several cities in North America have marine institutions that have sea otter exhibits. Following are locations and visiting hours (admission fees vary):

Monterey Bay Aquarium
Southern sea otters
Monterey, California
(408) 648-4888
10 a.m. - 6 p.m. (daily)
9:30 a.m. - 6 p.m. (major holidays)

Aquarium for Wildlife Conservation
Southern sea otters
Brooklyn, New York
(718) 265-3474
10 a.m. - 5 p.m. (daily)

Oregon Coast Aquarium
Alaska sea otters
Newport, Oregon
(503) 867-3123
10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (daily)

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium
Alaska sea otters
Tacoma, Washington
(206) 591-5333
10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (weekdays)
10 a.m. - 6 p.m. (weekends)

Seattle Aquarium
Alaska sea otters
Seattle, Washington
(206) 386-4320
10 a.m. - 8 p.m. (5/31 - 9/7)
10 a.m. - 5 p.m. (9/8 - 5/30)

John G. Shedd Aquarium
Alaska sea otters
Chicago, IL
(312) 939-2438
9 a.m. - 6 p.m. (daily)

Sea World, San Diego
Alaska and Southern sea otters
San Diego, California
(619) 222-6363
10 a.m. - 6 p.m. (winter)
9 a.m. - 10 p.m. (summer)

Vancouver Public Aquarium
Alaska sea otters
Vancouver, British Columbia
(604) 685-3364
9:30 a.m. - 8 p.m. (6/28 - 9/6)
10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. (9/7 - 6/27)

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Our Mission

Friends of the Sea Otter is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1968 and dedicated to the protection of a rare and threatened species, the Southern sea otter.

In our ongoing efforts to help inform the public about the plight of the sea otter, we have developed The Otter Pup, a magazine specifically geared toward children.

Our goal with this publication is to provide a science and education product that parents and teachers can use to help educate students about the marine environment, and specifically the otter and its habitat.

Youth Membership

$20 gets you a subscription to The Otter Pup, our semi-annual kids publication, and membership in Friends of the Sea Otter. With membership in FSO you'll receive The Otter Trove, our mail-order gift catalog, a sticker, and special notices about the work we, at FSO, are doing on behalf of sea otters and how you can help.

Join now and receive 8 sea otter postcards.

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Monterey, CA 93940

Total enclosed: ________