OBSERVATIONS BY
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Gestation Period

In the last issue of *The Otter Raft* I reported that I had determined the dependency period of a southern sea otter pup for the first time. By keeping track of the approximate days of birth and weaning of female #41 and her pup, the period of dependence was discovered to be eight months! I have observed that a mother with pup appears to come into estrus, attracting a male who joins with the mother in rejecting and driving away the eight month old pup. The newly liberated mother then mates with the male for three days.

In his 1971 paper, *Reproduction in the Female Sea Otter*, Karl B. Schneider estimated a gestation period of eight to nine months. Of this time, he believed four or 4½ months of active (implanted) development occurs.
In 1972, I reported February to be the peak month for the appearance of woolly pups. Because I have observed this peak to occur each year in February, I could not accept the notion that eight months of dependence could be followed by eight or nine months of gestation. I reasoned that the eight months of care must be followed by four months of development of the new pup without delayed implantation.

I was thus pleased to discover female #41 with a newborn pup on February 28, 1978, less than five months after she had weaned her last pup.

I will need to make additional observations of the length of the gestation period before I can say with certainty that the gestation time for the southern sea otter is four months.

**Tagged Travelers**

Tagging has enabled us to identify individual otters and to learn the extent of their movements. Tagged otters who remain within a home range of not more than several linear miles become most familiar to us. Kenyon (1969) wrote of home ranges that probably did not exceed ten miles. I was therefore surprised to discover that tagged male #51 was ranging on a regular basis from Headland Cove, Point Lobos to the Monterey Marina, a distance of about 18 miles each way. The record for travel is held by a female, who after being tagged in Monterey was seen by CDFG biologist Jack Ames more than 100 miles to the south. The record to date for a male is held by a 56-pounder who was tagged while in the Salmon Creek area in September 1977. In May 1978, Kirk Graebe and I discovered him (Chartreuse #1020) resting about 80 miles to the north in Carmel Bay. During the same week we found that a 52-pound male that had been tagged in December 1977 on the Santa Cruz side of Monterey Bay had swum about 45 miles south into Carmel Bay.