

Study on the Home Range of the Resident Female Otter (*Lutra lutra*), (Mammalia: Carnivora) in South-East Bulgaria

Dilian G. Georgiev

Department of Ecology and Environmental conservation, Faculty of Biology, University of Plovdiv, 24 Tsar Asen St., BG-4000 Plovdiv, Bulgaria; e-mail: diliangeorgiev@abv.bg

Abstract: The home range of the otter (*Lutra lutra*) was studied for the first time in Bulgaria. The approximate home range of one resident female otter in the region under study was 2.2 km bank side of an artificial lake, 6.0 km river length, and 2.5 km canal length. The home range parts mostly preferred for placing the marking sites were the ones with vegetation cover, soil banks and no pollution. Different combinations of a complex of negative factors were essential for avoidance of scat marking by otters in the study area. Most of the sprainting sites in the study area were situated up to 1 m height above water surface and in the stripe of 1 m towards the bank line in and out of the water. In the otter home range studied, sprainting sites with occasional use were most abundant, followed by those of frequent and intense use. The highest association was computed between the intensively marked sites and the presence of dens. Most dominant sprainting site type was the marking throughout the home range without any specific stimulus considered just “marking the home range”. Ten different substrates used for marking over were defined in the region. In the study area the dens registered were always placed in the root systems of tree species. During the study period 2 active dens always occurred.

Key words: Mustelidae, habitats, marking sites