European Otter Conference

MARCH 12 & 13, 2026

ANTWERP, BELGIUM

Interreg Vlaanderen-Nederland
Gefinancierd door de Europese Unie

Otter over de grens

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DETAILS OF PLENARY SESSIONS

Title	Speaker(s)	Content
Distribution of the European otter	Anna Loy (IUCN Otter Specialist Group)	Otter population dynamics in Europe; overview of the past decade(s)
Rewilding: landscapes made by beavers, crowned by otters	Ellen van Norren (Dutch Mammal Society)	Rewilding is both a philosophy and a practical framework. Learn how the return of the beaver and the otter help to restore natural processes. An inspiring story about apex predators and architect animals, for the benefit of nature and people.
Co-existence: lessons learned from Austria	Christina Wolf Petre (WWF-Austria)	What could have been different if we would have intervened earlier, in Austria? What can we learn for regions where otter presence is new? Is the otter affecting fish densities? Or do other parameters play a role?
Ecotoxicology, the European otter as indicator of environmental health	Anna Roos (Greenland Institute of Natural Resources, Sweden)	How do contaminants such as PCBs, PFAS, heavy metals and pharmaceuticals affect the health of otters? Why are otters indicators for environmental health? What is the link to human health?
Camera trapping for insights in otter ecology	Mel Findlay and Patrick White (Edinburgh Napier University)	15 years' experience sharing in camera trapping to study otter behavior, with a focus on resting places Insights on male/female behavior, spraints and scent marking and latrines.
Reintroductions: experiences from The Netherlands. **Debate: Is reintroduction a solution for the nearly "empty" otter regions in Western Europe?**	Arjen de Groot & Hugh Jansman (Wageningen University, The Netherlands)	The otter got extinct in The Netherlands in 1988. In 2002, they started a reintroduction program following the IUCN guidelines. What are the lessons learned? **Debate**: Is reintroduction a solution for the nearly "empty" otter regions in Western Europe?

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DETAILS OF BREAK-OUT SESSIONS

Title	Speaker(s)	Content
Otters in Belgium	Vinciane Schockert (Walloon Research Department on environment and agriculture, DEMNA), Joris Everaert (Flemish Research Institute for Nature and Forest), Quentin Dubois (National Parc Semois Valley)	• Distribution and monitoring in Wallonia and Flanders, including the well-known one-eyed otter • Nature restoration actions for the otter in Belgium (habitat and defragmentation)
Modelling distribution and densities	Simon Lacombe (University of Montpellier, University of Lyon) Olivier Gimenez (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France, CNRS)	• This technical session offers insights on processing heterogeneuous data. Methods to model otter density and connectivity estimation such as integrated species distribution models and spatial capture-recapture are discussed.
Education and outreach	Ben Yoxon (International Otter Survival Fund)	• Exchange on how different organizations reach out to the larger public (adults and children) about the otter and its habitat. • From summer camps to otter expositions to interactive guided walks...bring along your experience and your questions.
Otters in cities	Paddy Sleeman (University College Cork, Ireland)	• Otters are common in Irish cities. The cities are all on rivers, mostly estuaries, which are good habitats rich with fish. • How can cities become passages for otters instead of barriers? • Discover insights from the Dutch city of Breda and new projects in Western Europe
Connectivity	Irene Weinberger (ProLutra) and Michiel Stas (Interreg Project Otter across borders)	• How to use citizen science to assess bottlenecks for the otter: a Swiss example • Partners of the Interreg project made a standardization for materials and models to be used for infrastructural solutions for otters.

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Otters in France	Cecile Kaufman (Société Française pour l'étude et la protection des mammifères, SFEPM)	• Presentation of the French National Action Plan and experience sharing on working with fish farmers and on defragmentation measures.
Otter collaboration in Europe	Michiel Stas (Flemish Agency for Nature and Forest, coordinator Interreg Otter across borders)	• Come and brainstorm on potential collaborations, projects and research topics about the otter in Europe • Several initiatives will be presented
Monitoring with dogs and eDNA	Ellen Van Krunkelsven (Federal police), Brenda Fabra (Province of Antwerp), Rein Brys (Flemish Research Institute for Nature and Forest)	• Experiences in monitoring otter with Ecological Detection Dogs, in Belgium • How is eDNA used to monitor the presence of prey fish and otter.
Otter-friendly fish fykes and fishponds	Sarah Layendecker (WWF-Austria)	• Technical insights in how to work with fish farmers, how to make fishponds otter proof with adapted fencing • Fish fykes: how to adapt them for otters to escape instead of getting drowned?

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