

ADVISORY INFORMATION – OTTERS



Otters may use quarries located close to watercourses. Water-filled gravel pits in river valleys can provide excellent feeding opportunities and secluded locations for lying-up, especially where islands are present. Otter numbers have increased throughout Britain following successful reintroduction and breeding, following a major decline in numbers by the 1970's caused by pesticides.

Key Points

Otters are protected principally under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010), with additional protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), as amended. The combined effect of these is that a person is guilty of an offence if he:

- deliberately captures, injures or kills any wild otter;
- deliberately disturbs wild otters including, in particular, disturbance which is likely to:
 - impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or rear or nurture their young; or
 - affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species;
- damages or destroys a breeding site or resting place of such an animal, or obstructs an otter's access to such a resting place.

A licence is required from the relevant statutory nature conservation organisation (e.g. Natural England) when any activity you are proposing could kill, injure or disturb otters or obstruct, damage or destroy their resting or breeding sites.

Ecology

An otter will occupy a 'home range', which may include a stretch of river, or shoreline in coastal areas, as well as associated tributary streams, ditches, ponds, lakes and woodland. Most of the otter's diet is fish but amphibians, crayfish, waterfowl and small mammals are also taken. Otters may breed at any time of year. Most otters live for three to four years in the wild.

The Mammal Society works to protect, halt the decline of threatened species, and give advice on all issues affecting British mammals www.mammal.org.uk.