

## FIELD SIGNS OF OTTERS AND THE WATER MONGOOSE

DT Rowe-Rowe

2017

### The animals

Cape clawless otter



Spotted-necked otter



Water mongoose

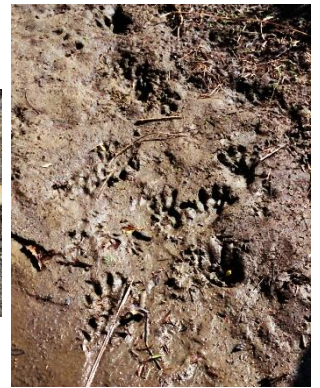
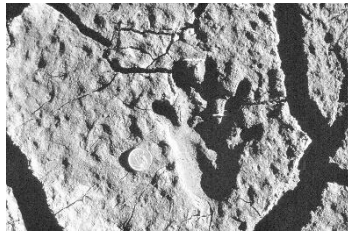




## Tracks

### Clawless otter

Large, 60 – 90 mm wide. No claw marks. Hind foot larger than fore foot.



### Spotted-necked otter

Tracks 40 – 45 mm wide. Distinct claw marks. In soft sand or mud impressions of web visible.



### Water mongoose

Narrow, about 30 mm wide. Long narrow toe impressions with distinct claw marks.





## Spraint

### Clawless otter

Diameter 20 – 32 mm. The last two pictures show latrines. Clawless otters often rotate while defecating causing the spraints to break off into short pieces.



### Spotted-necked otter

Diameter 11 – 21 mm. When fresh the spraints are dark, fading to almost white with age.



### Water mongoose

Diameter 15 – 22 mm. The fourth picture shows a latrine: note the presence of the small-mammal hair in the scats pulled apart by beetles. Otters do not eat mammals.





### Rolling places

Where otters groom and dry themselves by rolling to remove water from their fur.



### Runs

Regularly used paths, usually connecting two aquatic habitats.



### Slides

Points at which otters regularly slide into the water. The fourth photo shows how the bank has worn smooth by the sliding bodies of otters.



### Ledges

Also known as shelves. Conveniently placed ledges in steep banks where otters rest or lie-up.





### Holts or dens

These photos show dens which have been excavated by otters in soft alluvial soil. In the second photo note the accumulation of old spraints (top left of the picture). The third photo shows an opening in a steep bank; there was another opening in the grass above it. In the fourth photo a path to the den is visible.



Many holts are in dense vegetation such as among bushes and trees.



**See also:** "Otter surveys: a simple and quick method." Available from [dtr.rowe@gmail.com](mailto:dtr.rowe@gmail.com)