



African clawless otter (*Aonyx capensis*) – Near Threatened (IUCN Red List)



The Cape clawless otter is large: head and body about 1 m long, tail 50 cm, and typically weighs 10 - 20 kg. Upper parts of the body are dark brown, and the chin, cheeks, throat, and chest off-white. Whiskers are very long, numerous, and white. They assist in detecting its main prey (crabs) which are captured with the dexterous clawless forefeet. In freshwater habitats, it feeds mostly on crabs, and lesser amounts of frogs, fish, and seasonally on dragonfly larvae.

Otters dry and groom themselves by rolling in grass, or on sandbanks or rocks. At most rolling places latrines are established, which like the rolling places, are regularly used. While defecating a clawless otter often rotates on the spot, so the scats are dropped all around it, broken into short pieces, not tapered at both ends. When fresh scats are dark brown, changing to a cream colour as they dry out; typically, about 25 mm diameter, range 22 - 30 mm.

Track is 60 – 90mm wide.

Male's larger than female's





Fresh scat – 20 - 32mm diameter, typically full of crab, maybe some fish. No seeds, hair.



Otter scat – fresh (left); aged (below)



Otter scat can be confused with marsh mongoose scat (right). Mongoose scat is smaller 15 – 22mm diameter and consists of crab, small mammal (hair), insect, bird feathers

Marsh mongoose scat



The African Otter Network is looking for information on current distribution: if seen please report to:

africanotternetwork@gmail.com

Where, when, how many, and any other observation information. Photos are most welcome!

