

**REPORT OF THE “AFRICAN OTTER POSTER PRESENTATION” DURING  
WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION CONFERENCE HELD ON  
18TH-21ST OF OCTOBER, 2023 AT THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF  
TECHNOLOGY, AKURE, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA.**

BY

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**Introduction**

The 6<sup>th</sup> World Environmental Conservation Conference (WECC) organized by Netlink Environmental Conservation Organization (NECOR) in conjunction with the West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL) held at the Federal University of Technology Akure between 18th and 21st October, 2023 was a huge success. The 4-day events brought professionals from diverse disciplines where issues on climate change and its impacts was discussed.

Ondo State's rich and highly diverse aquatic resources are declining due to impact of climate change and unsustainable exploitation. The two species of otters inhabiting the riverine communities of Ondo State are decreasing on a daily basis as a result of illegal hunting, water pollutions, habitat fragmentation/loss and faulty or bad perceptions. Thus, conservation of spotted-necked otter (*Hydrictis maculicollis*) and African clawless otter (*Aonyx capensis*) in their natural habitat is of high priority wherever they occur to ensure their survival. It is therefore vital to sensitize/educate individuals on the importance of otters and the protection of their habitat.

This was achieved through an African Otter Poster Presentation/display during the WEC Conference where participants and students were enlightened on African otters and freshwater conservation.

**Method**

An African Otter Poster which contains information on description, distribution, habitat, threats, and human perceptions of the three species of otters in African - spotted-necked otter (*Hydrictis maculicollis*), African clawless otter (*Aonyx capensis*), and Congo clawless otter (*Aonyx congicus*) was developed. The poster had a well-detailed pictures of the three species

of otters for easy identification. It also contains information on the African Otter Network and Salami's otter conservation efforts in Nigeria.

Salami and his team displayed the poster at a strategic location in the conference room where participants and students were able to read through for the 3-day events. We also responded to questions and comments raised by the participants on otters and freshwater conservation during the presentation.

Margherita Bandini (African Otter Network, IUCN SSC OSG) gave a very insightful speech on importance of otters and need for conservation via zoom invitation by the organizers of the WEC Conference.

### **Achievements**

- The most significant outcomes of the presentation is the contribution of the critical information and knowledge on otter populations. Prior to the project, very little is known about the importance/value of otters. The awareness programme increased Participants' awareness on the ecological importance of Otters.
- We were able to reach over 250 participants with more than 30 students shown interest in joining/volunteer for otter conservation projects in Nigeria.
- The events afforded us the opportunity reach major Stakeholders in Nigeria such as;
  - Representative of the Vice Chancellor, FUTA
  - Representative of the School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology, FUTA
  - Dr. Ibrahim Goni, The Conservator General, Nigerian National Park Service
  - Prof. Rabiul Babatunde, Director General, African Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education
  - Dr. Oladeji S.O, Convener and Executive Director, NECOR
  - Prof. Debo Adeyewa, Director WASCAL
  - Representative of Ondo State Ministry of Environment
  - Representative of Ondo State Ministry of Agriculture

### **Future plan**

I will like to continue working on otter's distribution, threat/conflict mitigation and conservation along the coastal communities in Ondo State, Ogun State, and Lagos State of Nigeria. The status of otter is at a precarious level such that if no conservation intervention is undertaken within the next few year, it is likely that the population of this top predator and keystone species in Southwestern Nigeria may not recover.

### **Conclusion**

I sincerely appreciate and acknowledge the African Otter Network and the Otter Education Advisory Group for sponsoring, supporting and believing in this event, that represents a significant start to any future project on otter in Nigeria.

### **Photo Gallery**



Cross-section of Participants



The Poster



Speech delivered by Margherita





Team with Dr. Ibrahim Goni- Conservator General, National Park Service

















