

## Sea Otter Awareness

By Colin G.

### What are Sea otters?

- Sea otters are marine mammals that weigh 25kg on average. They feed on small marine invertebrates and live in Kelp forests.

### Where do Sea otters live?

- Sea otters live in the ocean. Locally, we find them on the Northwest coast of the Pacific Ocean where Kelp forests are located.

### Why are Kelp forests & Sea otters important?

- Kelp forests are important because they modify the wave motion and keep the sea creatures from being swept away. A lot of the world's oxygen comes from Kelp and other macro algae.
- Without Sea otters eating the Urchins, Urchins would eat all the Kelp beds and would destroy Kelp forests.

### Why are Sea otters a threatened species?

- Worldwide, they were hunted to near extinction in the mid 1700's for their furs. Their populations are still reduced due to environmental contaminations such as oil spills and chemical products.

### Why is oil bad for Sea otters?

- Even a small amount of oil is very dangerous to Sea otters; the oil opens up the hairs, which releases their heat. The Sea otters will then freeze and drown.
- Sea otters might also lick the oil off their fur, which poisons them.

### What can we do to help?

- The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) helps protect Sea otters and Kelp forests. ([www.cosewic.gc.ca](http://www.cosewic.gc.ca))
- Conserving your oil and gas will reduce explorations of it, which means less chance of oil spills.
- Be aware of what goes down your drains inside and outside. Some products, such as cooking oil and drain cleaners, are very harmful. Motor vehicles tend to leak oil that goes down through the sewers.
- Education about Sea otters is being done on the Oceanlink web page, at [www.oceanlink.island.net/seaotterstewardship](http://www.oceanlink.island.net/seaotterstewardship)