



# Observing Otters

## Equipment required

- Copy of the 'Spotting Otters' worksheets (2 pages), one per pair
- Copy of the 'Welsh Otter Fact Sheet', one per pair
- Internet enabled devices and internet access
- Access to Hwb and suitable graphing tool (e.g., Excel, Google Sheets, J2E – JiT5)

## To complete the activity

1. Provide each pair of learners with copies of the "Otter Spotting" worksheet and 'Welsh Otter Fact Sheet'.
2. Support learners to use the information from the 'Welsh Otter Fact Sheet' to complete the table on their worksheet. Dates should be rounded to the nearest 10 years.

## Answers

|                               | 1 <sup>st</sup> - First | 2 <sup>nd</sup> - Second | 3 <sup>rd</sup> -Third | 4 <sup>th</sup> - Fourth | 5 <sup>th</sup> - Fifth | 6 <sup>th</sup> - Sixth |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Approximate Year              | 1970's                  | 1980's                   | 1990s                  | 2000s                    | 2010s                   | 2020s                   |
| Sites with signs of otter (%) | 20%                     | 38%                      | 53%                    | 72%                      | 90%                     | 71%                     |

3. Once learners have completed their tables, encourage them to create their own line graph or bar chart, using the information from their table. Discuss suitable graphing tools e.g., Excel, Google Sheets, J2E – JiT5.
4. Using the scatter map, support learners to identify areas with high concentrations of positive sites. Discuss patterns. What types of habitats do otters prefer (e.g., rivers, lakes, wetlands)?
5. Ask learners to discuss potential threats that might be impacting otter populations in certain areas? Learners may refer to habitat loss, water pollution, climate change, human disturbance and diseases.



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Using the information provided in the 'Welsh Otter Fact Sheet', complete the following table:

|                               |                            |                   |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|--|--|--|--|
|                               | 1 <sup>st</sup> –<br>First | 2 <sup>nd</sup> – |  |  |  |  |
| Approximate Year              | 1970's                     | 1980's            |  |  |  |  |
| Sites with signs of otter (%) | 20%                        |                   |  |  |  |  |

Round all dates to the nearest ten years.

## Task

Create a bar graph using your preferred graphing tool.  
Use your graph to answer the following questions:

1. Which decade had the lowest percentage of otter signs in Wales?

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2. In which decade did otter signs reach their peak in Wales?

.....

3. What is the overall trend in otter populations in Wales over the past few decades? Is it increasing, decreasing, or fluctuating?

.....



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Use the scatter map (Figure 1) to identify areas with high concentrations of positive sites.

- Discuss any patterns.
- What potential threats might be impacting otter populations in certain areas?
- Why do you think this?

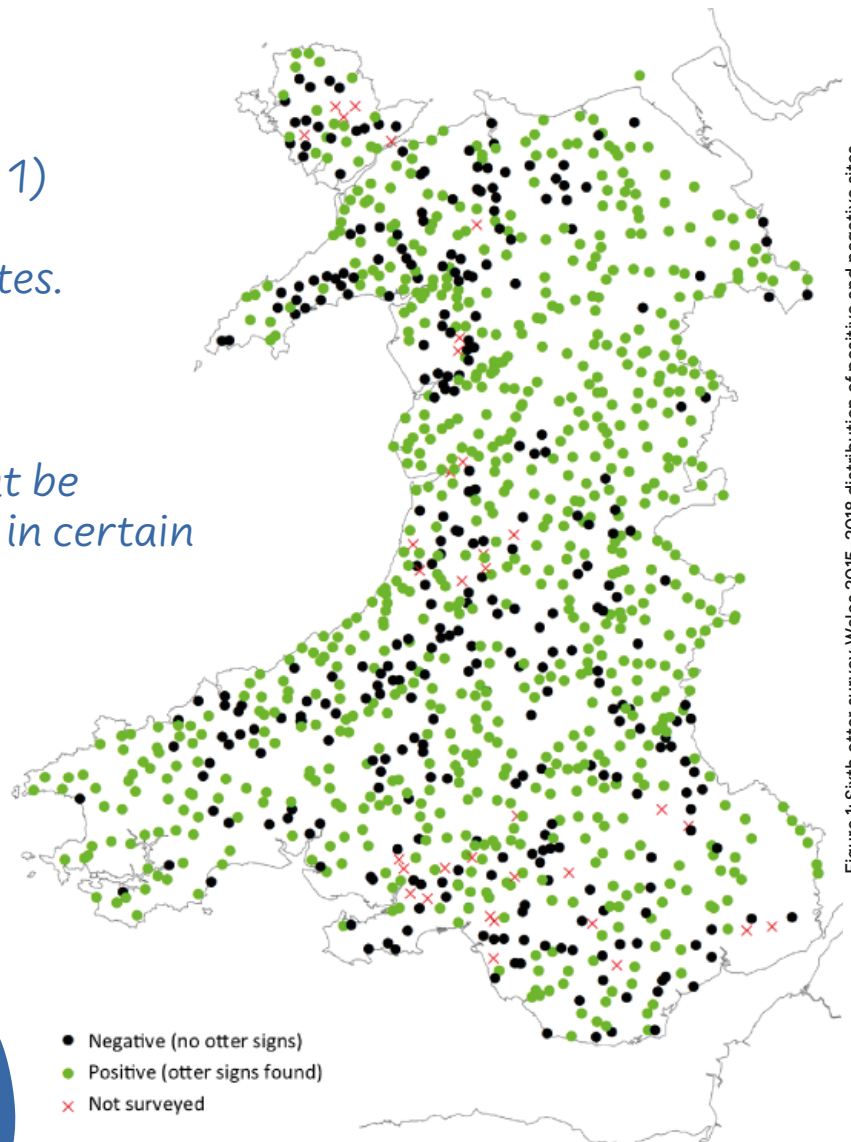


Figure 1: Sixth otter survey Wales 2015–2018 distribution of positive and negative sites

What might have caused the decline in otter populations in the 1970s?

What challenges do otters face in Wales today?  
**Why do you think this?**

What factors could have contributed to the recovery of otter populations in the 1990s and 2000s?  
**Why?**

How can we continue to protect and conserve otter populations?



Otters can typically hold their breath for up to 8 minutes.

# Welsh Otter

## FACT SHEET



The Welsh Otter Survey is a project that monitors the population of Otters in Wales.

Scientists and volunteers work together to gather information about where otters live and how their numbers are changing.

- In the 1970's, otters had disappeared from most British rivers.
- In Wales, over 1,000 sites were visited, with signs of otters found at **20%** of sites.
- The second survey in 1984 found signs of otters at **38%** of sites.
- The third survey in 1991 found signs of otters at **38%** of sites.
- In 2002, otters were found at **72%** of sites, with 90% of sites with signs of otters in 2009-10.
- Between 2015-2018, **71%** of sites showed signs of otters.

### Otter Homes

Otters build cosy homes called 'holts'.

They often choose riverbanks or tree holes, lining them with moss or leaves.

Holts provide otters with a safe and warm place to rest, sleep, and raise their young.

### Otter Signs

Otter pathways along the water's edge.

Leftover remains of their prey, like fish bones.

Otter droppings, called spraint, which have a distinctive sweet smell!

Otter footprints in the mud.



Male otters can be over a meter long and weigh about the same as a toddler.