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One more chance for the Otter in Denmark

The Wildlife Administration of the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Forest and Nature Agencies have promised to support the Otter Project economically for a period of three years to come, and consequently the Danish Otter is given another chance. From the 1st January, 1989 the above institutions continue the work which was started by the World Wildlife Fund-Denmark and the Danish Animal Welfare Society in 1984.

In 1980 the number of otters in Denmark was estimated to about 100 to 200 animals, and the surveys made in 1984-1986 (Madsen & Nielsen, 1986) confirm this dimension. However, the area of distribution has been reduced considerably. The best otter population is to be found in streams, lakes and inlets in the north-western part of Jutland (fig. 1) which is the most sparse populated part of the country, and at the same time there are considerably many waters (fresh and brackish water) and preserved areas. In four selected

means that we have good possibilities of using this material in many different connections. The localities of the delivered otters confirm completely the surveying of the otter population in Denmark 1984-1986.

In contrast to the Swedish and British otters the Danish otters generally prove healthy and contain only small quantities of the PCB, DDT (Naturvardsverkets Specialanalytiska Laboratorium, Sweden, pers. comm.) and mercury, cadmium and lead (Madsen & Mason, 1987).

The particular circumstances about drownings in eel traps as well as road deaths can now be illustrated — a knowledge which is of vital interest to eliminate the causes of death. In two water systems it is already compulsory to use stopgrids in the eel traps. About fourty fishermen have used the stopgrids for a period of two years, and their experiences have been very positive (Madsen, in press).

The central authorities also realise that there must be made passages (shelves) under new bridges so that otters as well as other animals can pass the bridge safely.

In 1988 investigations were started to show whether 'wildmirrors' mounted at bridges across rivers have any positive effect. Headlights from cars are reflected to keep away otters from roads as cars pass by.

Canoeing and angling have increased drastically within the last twenty years. Related to a rather high population density this has no doubt meant a great deal to the declining in number of otters in Denmark.

Before the end of 1992 more environmental plans of maintenance for all major Danish rivers must be made, and there are also plans about holding free 6-10 meter broad uncultivated zones along our rivers. Everything will benefit the remaining otters.

With the above initiatives from the central administration there might be very good chances in future for the Otter to be found as a part of the Danish mammal fauna.

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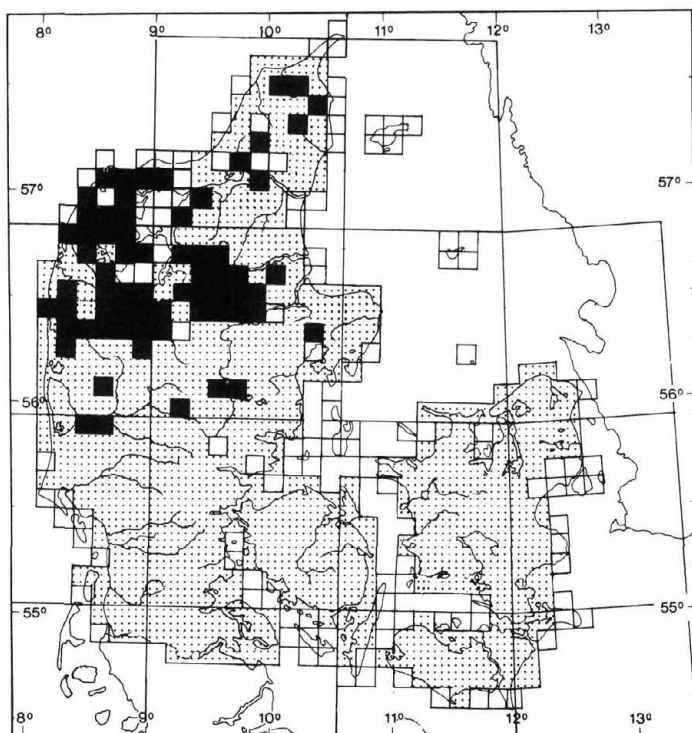


Fig. 1. The distribution of otter in Denmark in 1984-1986. The black 10×10 km squares were positive, those dotted were visited and were negative, and the white squares were not visited.

water systems in this part of the country a perpetual supervision of otters has now been established to follow the progress in the core of the otter population.

In Denmark it is a tradition to bring dead otters and other protected animals to the Natural History Museums. From 1980-1988 90 dead otters have been brought to the museums — each having brought very detailed data. This