

Smooth-Coated Otter Population Discovered in Mettur Dam and Kaveri River

A recent survey revealed a population of over 1,000 smooth-coated otters in Mettur Dam and Kaveri river stretches in Salem district.

Semi-aquatic predatory mammals that regulate prey populations and serve as key bio-indicators of river ecosystem health.

KEY EXAM POINTS

- A recent survey recorded over **1,000** smooth-coated otters in the **Mettur Dam** and Kaveri river stretches of **Salem** district.
- **Smooth-coated otters** (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) feature webbed feet and sensitive whiskers that make them efficient aquatic predators.
- Out of **13** global otter species, India is home to **three**: Smooth-coated otter, Asian small-clawed otter, and Eurasian otter.
- The Asian small-clawed otter (*Aonyx cinereus*) is the world's smallest otter species and inhabits high-elevation streams of the **Western Ghats**.
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (**IUCN**) classifies the smooth-coated otter as **Vulnerable** due to habitat loss and hunting.

STATICS & SYLLABUS FOCUS

The **Wild Life (Protection) Act** of **1972** provides legal protection to otters under Indian environmental legislation.

Mettur Dam, officially known as the **Stanley Reservoir**, was constructed in **1934** across the **Kaveri River** in Salem district.

Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) is an elusive, solitary species found in the **Himalayas**, Western Ghats, and Central India.

Otters act as **bio-indicators** of freshwater aquatic ecosystems, reflecting the ecological health of rivers and wetlands.

The **IUCN Red List** categories range from Least Concern to Extinct, with 'Vulnerable' indicating a high risk of endangerment in the wild.

The Kaveri River originates at **Talakaveri** in the Brahmagiri range of the Western Ghats in Karnataka and drains into the Bay of Bengal at **Poompuhar**.

REVISION FLASHCARD

Mettur Dam and Kaveri River in Salem host over 1,000 smooth-coated otters, an IUCN Vulnerable species.

Syllabus Relevance: Important for TNPSC Group 1, 2 & 4 under Unit 3 (Geography/Environment) and Unit 8 (Tamil Nadu Fauna & Heritage).

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