



## The Stream at Changing Rivers

Sponsored by **CHASE** 

### Topic: Otter Interaction

Rivers are an essential part of the ecosystem. They provide new river ways in different areas and provide the surrounding wildlife with new resources. One animal species that takes advantage of these river systems is the Northern American River Otter. The River Otters live in or near any water habitat. Their homes or dens are built along the water in abandoned or empty burrows. The only way River Otters are able to access their den is underwater. River Otters are excellent swimmers with the capability to hold their breath for up to 8 minutes! Not only are River Otters excellent swimmers but they are also very sociable.

River Otters live in small social, family groups and help each other out. When otter pups are born, they are blind and can't fend for themselves. At two months, their eyes are open and they begin to learn how to swim. In River Otter groups, everyone is helping with the pups until they are old enough to fend for themselves. This also includes hunting and playing. River Otters are very playful animals that need a lot of space, water resource, and -here at the Aquarium - enrichment. Enrichment is a tool or puzzle given to them that allows them to use their natural instincts. For instance, they may be given a puzzle with their favorite treat inside. The otters will have to use their instinct to try and solve the puzzle to get the treat out. It is the same when you give your pet at home a puzzle treat box.

Enrichment is important to help stimulate their brains, but the Aquarium must also provide the four basic needs all animals need. The four basic needs all animals, including humans, need are food, water, shelter, and oxygen. In the wild, they may not be able to receive all four basic needs. Due to pollution and habitat destruction, River Otters find it difficult to get all four of those needs.



## *St. Louis Aquarium Foundation*



Here at the Aquarium, our Biologists provide our River Otters with all four basic needs in their enclosure.

When it comes to developing a habitat or enclosure for an animal, Biologists want to make sure it resembles the habitat they would live in. As you can see in our River Otter enclosure, they have a water resource to swim in, logs and dens to hide in, and plenty of space to run around. When providing enrichment items, our Biologists use items that won't hurt the animals as well. For instance, you don't want to give them an item that would cause any harm to them. Other times, our Biologists will be creative and come up with new items for our River Otters as well. We are going to look at our River Otter enclosure, both on land and in the water, and see what else we could add to it.



### River Otter Habitat Activity

As we have viewed our River Otter Habitat, they have plenty of space for food, water, shelter and enrichment items. Now it is your turn to develop a habitat for our River Otters.

1. There are two boxes below for our River Otter Habitat. The top box will be for our River Otter Habitat on land and the bottom box will be for our River Otter Habitat underwater. Your task will be to develop a habitat for both on land and underwater.  
**(Note: make sure to include a spot for food, water, shelter, and enrichment items.)**

#### Land Habitat

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for drawing the land habitat for the river otter.



**Underwater Habitat**

2. Now that you have developed a habitat for our River Otters, write below how you would create an enrichment item for them. (**Note: Enrichment is an item or puzzle that challenges an animal to think and solve.**)

**How would you create an enrichment item for our River Otters?**

---

---

---



**Draw below your enrichment item you have created.**

**How would the River Offers solve your enrichment?**

---

---

---