

THE FLORIDA RIVER OTTER by: Dan Pemble, 1798 LJD, Kissimmee, Florida

From my back-patio vantage point of the Kissimmee Bay Country Club's 11th fairway, on 2 separate occasions I have observed a Florida River Otter exiting the nearby pond, running across the fairway, and disappearing into the tree stand on the fairway's west side! This happens so quickly that to date it has not been possible to photograph this unique creature! Thus, the photo below is from a web site.



Interesting and Amazing Information About River Otters (from a web site)

- River otters can hold their breath for up to 8 minutes.
- River otters spend two-thirds of the time on land and can run at a speed of 29 km/hour.
- While on the water surface, a river otter can swim at a speed of about 6 miles per hour. Furthermore, below the water surface, it can swim at 3 to 4 miles per hour.
- River otters have ears and nose with a special skin that closes and keeps them watertight underwater.
- Male river otters are approximately 17 % larger than females.
- Old male river otters often have white body fur.
- Baby river otters are called pups and they are born toothless and blind.
- River otters have long strong guard hairs, which form the outer coat and protect the finer and denser under-fur of the body.
- Eyes of river otters have special lenses that aid in underwater vision.
- River otters are normally nearsighted above water.
- River otters often use the senses of sound, touch and smell to communicate with each other.
- River otters always clean themselves after having meals.
- A river otter marks its territory with feces and urine. Often, a river otter squirts its fecal matter with a musky-smelling liquid, from the scent glands, and uses it as a territory-marker.

(continued)

- River otters mainly hunt during the night, and never hoard food. They always kill only as much as they can eat.
- Generally, river otters mate underwater. However, terrestrial mating is also common.
- These carnivores prey on insects, fish, reptiles, amphibians and also young alligators. Diving into ponds, chasing reptiles and digging holes are their usual hunting behavior.
- Often mistaken for beavers, river otters are friendly creatures that have been in existence for almost 30 million years.
- Like some creatures, river otters can also create shelter using the tools available from the environment. These mammals build their dens with sticks, hollow logs, driftwood and branches.
- They live near ponds and have the ability to adapt on land and water as either environment provides their sources of food.
- Ascending and descending on hills and wrestling with their own kind, form part of their usual behavior.
- Of all the marine mammals on Earth, river otters are the smallest.
- Their short legs, webbed toes and streamlined bodies make them powerful swimmers.



It is my hope that you will feel “enlightened” with this information!