

Sea Otters

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About Sea Otters:

- It is an aquatic member of the **weasel family**, found along the coasts of the **Pacific Ocean in North America and Asia**.
- **Habitat:** It spends most of its time in the water but, in some locations, comes ashore to sleep or rest.
- **Appearance:** Sea otters have **webbed feet**, **water-repellent fur** to keep them dry and warm, and nostrils and ears that close in the water.
- They generally eat food equal to about a quarter of their body weight daily as they prowl kelp forests and seagrass beds.
- **Ecological significance**
 - It's a **keystone species**, which means that the health of sea otters is a good indication of the health of other species and ecosystems nearby.
 - It plays a crucial role in **maintaining the balance of marine ecosystems**. By preying on sea urchins, they help control the population of these spiny creatures.

- Without otters, sea urchins can overpopulate and decimate kelp forests. These kelp forests are vital habitats for a myriad of marine life, offering shelter and food for numerous species.
- The presence of sea otters **helps sustain the biodiversity** and health of these underwater forests.

- **Conservation status**

IUCN Red List: Endangered

Q1: What are keystone species?

It is an organism that helps define an entire ecosystem. Without its keystone species, the ecosystem would be dramatically different or cease to exist altogether. Keystone species have low functional redundancy.

Source: Sea otters get more prey and reduce tooth damage using tools

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/sea-otters/>

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