

IUCN Otter Spec. Group Bull. 3 1988
IUCN OTTER SPECIALIST GROUP BULLETIN
VOLUME 3 PAGES 42 – 44

Citation: Reuther, C. (1988) The New Otter Centre in West Germany. IUCN Otter Spec. Group Bull. 3: 42 - 44

THE NEW OTTER CENTRE IN WEST GERMANY

Claus Reuther

Aktion Fischotterschutz e.V., OTTER-ZENTRUM, Postbox 1216, D-3122 Hankensbüttel, West Germany

The decision of the forest department of Lower Saxony to close the Oderhaus Otter Research Enclosure in December 31st, 1987 made it necessary to find a new organisational base for the German AKTION FISCHOTTERSCHUTZ.

Since July 1987 the organisation has built a new otter centre in Hankensbüttel (50 km north of Braunschweig, 15 km west of the border to the GDR). The otter centre will be opened at the end of April 1986. It has four main departments:

1. Research

In this field the scientific work of the Oderhaus Otter Research Enclosure will be continued. It has three objectives:

- A new research enclosure for otters and other Mustelidae of 15,000 square metres, where mainly ethological work will be done.
- A laboratory for water analysis and morphological or physiological research.
- Field research on otters and other Mustelidae in the neighbourhood of the otter centre.

2. Conservation

Beside the different conservation projects in Northern Germany (e.g. the Lower Saxony otter habitat protection programme) the main aim of the otter centre is the reconstruction of the river system of the River Ise. This river (40 km; inclusive its tributary rivers more than 100 km) was canalised between 1950-1970. Since then the otter disappeared from the area.

The AKTION FISCHOTTERSCHUTZ will try to reconstruct this river system and to close the distribution gap between the otter populations in the north-western parts of the GDR and the eastern parts of Lower Saxony (FRG).

3. Education

On a 55,000 square metre education area the otter centre will realise a new didactic conception. By using different species of Mustelids (badgers, otters, stonemartens, pinemartens, polecats) the problems of different habitats will be explained (hedges, rivers, urban areas, forests, swamps). Therefore, in very large and specially constructed enclosures these Mustelids will be shown. Additional special problems and information will be explained by games and experiments. Following the motto of the otter centre "Play and learn", the visitors will get no information without doing something ("See, feel, taste, smell, hear nature and understand the problems of nature conservation").

4. Fundraising

The otter centre will get no governmental support. It has to finance its work on its own. So fundraising is the basis for the points 1-3. At this time the otter centre employs a staff of more than 50 people. The yearly budget amounts to more than one million DM. It is covered by membership dues, sponsors (business enterprises), donations and the income from the entrance-fee, the restaurant and the gift-shop of the otter centre.

An information prospectus in German can be ordered from:

Aktion Fischotterschutz e.V.,
OTTER-ZENTRUM,
Postbox 1216,
D-3122 Hankensbüttel,
West Germany

Art auction for the benefit of the German otter centre

Forty-three artists from W. Germany, the Netherlands, Hungary and Rumania have donated 61 works of art to the otter centre, Hankensbüttel (W. Germany). This collection includes sculptures (cast iron and bronze), drawings, lithographs, water-colour paintings and oil-paintings of different styles and techniques. Most of them show otters.

Everybody can bid for the works of art until May 29th, 1988. The profit of this auction will be used to 100% for the work of the otter centre Hankensbüttel.

A 112-pages catalogue showing all works of art in colour and including a bid list can be ordered from the above address.

Please enclose a cheque for DM 15 for the catalogue plus DM 3 for forwarding expenses.

5. INTERNATIONAL OTTER COLLOQUIUM

Ten years after the 1st International Otter Colloquium in Gottingen the fifth meeting will be held in Germany again. The German "Aktion Fischotterschutz" invites all members of the IUCN Otter Specialist Group and all scientists or conservationists working with or on otters to the new OTTER CENTRE In Hankensbüttel.

It is planned to have a 4-5 days working meeting in the second half of September 1989. There will be plenary sessions and working groups on different problems of research, conservation and education (Proposals for topics are welcome). A first invitation paper will be mailed in March/April 1988. Interested otter people should contact:

Aktion Fischotterschutz e.V.,
OTTER-ZENTRUM,
Postbox 1216,
D-3122 Hankensbüttel,
West Germany