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CHILEAN OTTER GROUP: 1991 ACTIVITIES

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Abstract: A major publicity campaign to encourage people to "Save the Southern River Otter and its Habitat" was carried out. Workshops were organised in schools. A survey for *Lutra provocax* was carried out and the results are being used to plan future conservation work. Two illegal otter furs were confiscated. A photographic library is being established.

Diffusion

One of the activities was to diffuse the slogan "Save the Southern river otter and its habitat" throughout all of the tenth region. Therefore, there were 60 otter posters, 900 stickers, 2000 triptyches with information related to ecological preservation, 108 otter designed T-shirts and 10 informative ecological panels. All this material was distributed to students and public in general. Newspaper articles provided complete information about the otter protection program and its progress. Radio conferences were made in relation to the otter conservation program developed in the Panguipulli province (see below).

A great part of the diffusion activities was concentrated in the provinces where otters live. That means that the conferences were made for school students, policemen and National park and forestry guards who have direct relation to the otter environment.

Environmental Education

The educational program began making people aware of the existence and importance of the otter's protection. The object was accomplished by monthly radio conferences, public posters and the otter T-shirts display by a Panguipulli city basketball team. An environmental educational practical workshop for 7 to 12 year old students was developed at the Choshuenco Public school. This workshop was centred mainly on ecology and otter habitat protection. During the present year (1992) similar workshops will be organised in other nguipulli schools. At the same time we are making a complete otter information centre in order to help other people in the development of otter protection work. The Group has a constant communication with students and scientists from other parts of Chile, and with Ecuador, Uruguay, Peru and Argentina.

Research Activities

A survey of the southern river otter *Lutra provocax* population was made between the 39° S and 44° S Latitude. With these results (Figure 1) the Group is working on the planning of future conservation activities.

In order to obtain information about the reasons that caused otter extinction in the past years, a study is being made of the habitat conditions and the human environment interference in places with and without southern river otters.

In two fresh water systems, Panguipulli lake and Todos los Santos lake with its respective rivers, the Chilean Otter Group is doing long term research. The objects are to know the spacing patterns, breeding and some information of the social organisation of the southern river otter population.

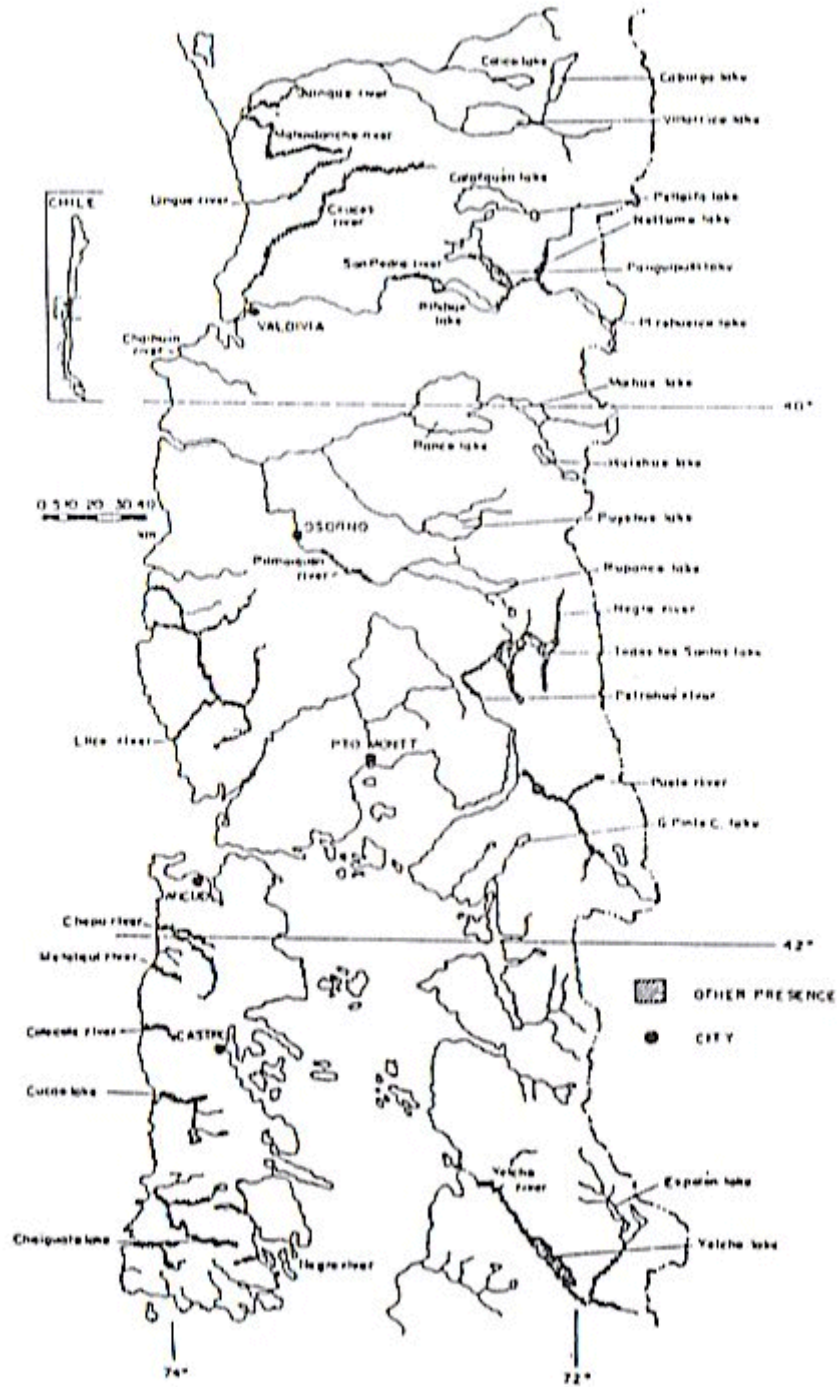


Figure 1. Results of survey for *Lutra provocax*

In relation to the marine otter *Lutra felina*, the Group was waiting for the summer weather before making a second count in the marine coast of the Valdivia province.

During 1991 the Group found two clandestine hunters and three traders with a total of 28 furs, two from river otters.

Photographs and videos are produced of all field activities to build up a photographic library.