

## North American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*) Proposed for Delisting in Nebraska



### **Status:**

The North American River Otter is currently listed as Threatened in the state of Nebraska. The species is not federally listed. Based on new data, expert input, and a successful recovery program, the Commission proposes to remove the river otter from the state threatened species list. The population of river otters has been growing in Nebraska's waterways since their release back into the ecosystem in 1986. Data clearly demonstrate a healthy, reproductively viable, and expanding population of river otters in Nebraska.

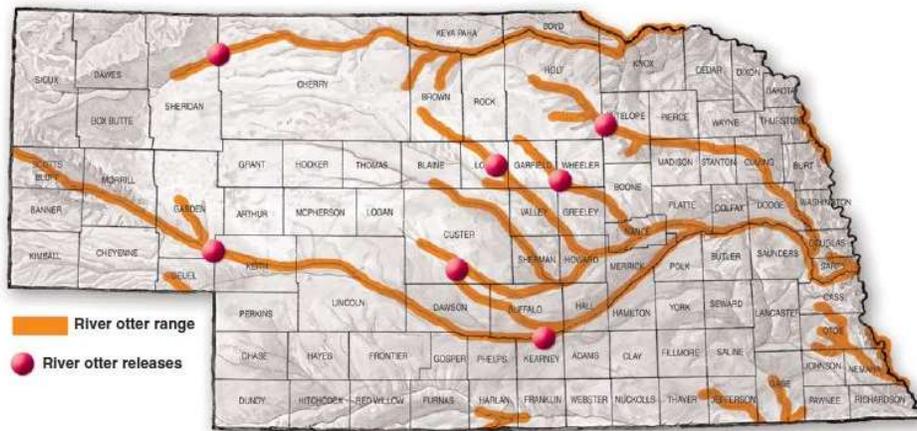
### **Reintroduction to Nebraska:**

- From 1986–1991, 159 river otters were live-trapped in other states with viable populations (primarily AK & LA) and transported to Neb. for release.
- Otters were reintroduced at a total of seven sites: on the Platte (2 release sites), Niobrara, South Loup, Elkhorn, Calamus, and Cedar rivers (Andelt 1988, Bischoff 2006). Biologists have since been monitoring the establishment of the river otters, expansion of their distribution, and progress toward their recovery.

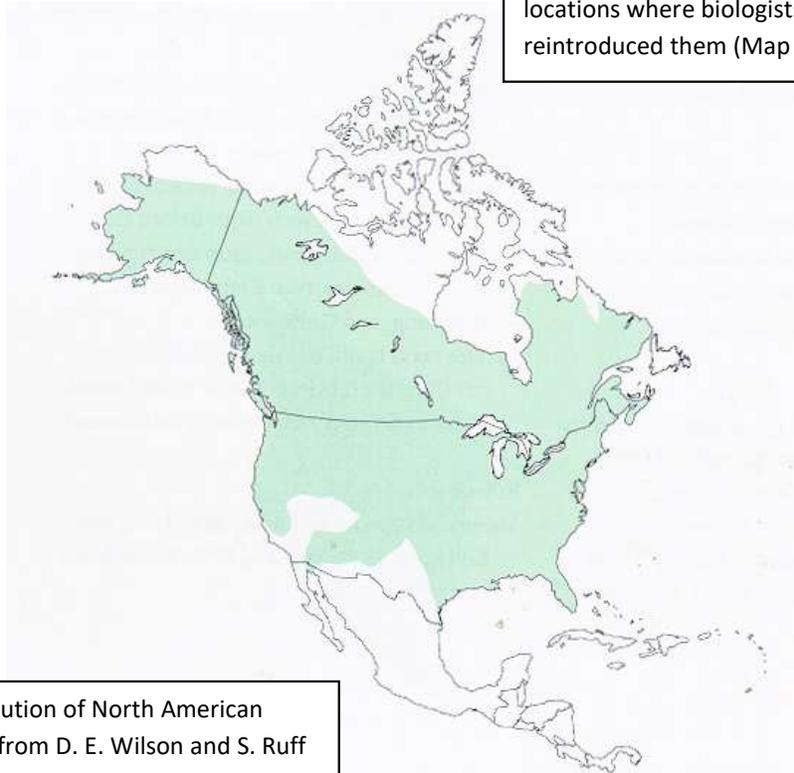
### **Recovery:**

- Researchers found that river otters' range has been expanding beyond reintroduction rivers and their survival is high
- Regularly receives reports of river otters from hunters, anglers, landowners, boaters, birders, and field personnel for NGPC, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resource Districts, the Nebraska Public Power District, Central Nebraska Public Power District, The Nature Conservancy, the Crane Trust, and Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary
- Data on river otters have also come from accidentally trapped specimens, often of very good physical condition. These specimens provide data on areas of occurrence, age, sex, and reproduction.
- Observational reports include pairs, adults with young, and groups of animals
- Recovered after reintroduction efforts in the bordering states of IA, MO, and KS
- Survey and monitoring data indicate that river otter populations have grown and expanded out from reintroduction sites

- It is likely that the otters are also recolonizing areas of Neb. because of immigration from neighboring states, such as MO and IA
- Evidence supports growth to a nearly statewide distribution of river otters, in major river systems in Neb.
- Data and distribution modeling results indicate a current otter distribution in the state that is quite similar to historical records
- Nebraska's river otter population is largely connected and has been stable or growing
- It is likely that population growth will continue at some level given that there are currently no known threats of significance or exceptional mortality factors facing river otters
- River otters are widely distributed in North America
- They are identified as a species of least concern by the International Union for Conservation of Nature



The range of North American river otters in Nebraska has expanded greatly from the seven locations where biologists originally reintroduced them (Map from NEBRASKALand)



Range-wide distribution of North American River Otters (Map from D. E. Wilson and S. Ruff [Editors] 1999, The Smithsonian Book of North American Mammals)