

The Resources Agency
California Department of
Fish and Game
Nongame Wildlife Investigations

RIVER OTTER SURVEY PROGRESS REPORT
APRIL, 1975^{1/}

Dusty Kirk
California Department of Fish and Game

INTRODUCTION

The river otter (Lutra canadensis) was given status of protected furbearing mammal by the California Fish and Game Commission in 1961. Although they were reported by Grinnell, et. al. (1937) to have been taken in large numbers by fur trappers in the early years of California's settlement, the yearly harvest since 1921 has never exceeded 163. Only 14 otters were reported taken during the 1934-35 trapping season. Since river otter after 1960 were no longer included in the annual report of the licensed trapper, such information on the distribution and relative abundance of this important furbearer was no longer available. Recent public concern over the status of this attractive mammal prompted the Department's Nongame Wildlife Investigations to undertake a statewide river otter survey.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In 1972 a California Carnivore Study was initiated with the University of California, Berkeley through the participation of the Department, U. S. Forest Service, and National Park Service. David Newberry, a graduate student at the University of California, Davis, was employed by the Department to compile an extensive bibliography of California furbearers. (Newberry, D. 1973 "A contribution toward a bibliography on California furbearers" Wildl. Mgmt. Br., Special Wildl. Invest. Job Completion Rept.) Included were references on river otter.

In 1973, the U. S. Forest Service and National Park Service employed Philip F. Schempf, a graduate student at University of California, Berkeley, to gather from the National Forest districts and National Parks data on the occurrence of selected furbearers on federal lands. Information gathered from the National Parks of California were published. (Schempf, P. F. and M. White 1974 "A survey on the status of seven species of carnivores on National Park Service lands in California." Information reported by the U. S. Forest Service is in the process of publication by the University of California, Berkeley.

To carry on with the California Carnivore Study, the Department initiated a licensed trapper interview program in 1973 and a River Otter Survey in September, 1974. William Childs, a student at the University of California, Davis, was

^{1/} Supported by Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project W-54-R,
"Nongame Wildlife Investigations" Job II-1.1 Progress Report.

employed to complete the interview of licensed trappers and to gather from them their recent sightings of river otter. During the course of his survey he contacted 45 trappers. Thirty-four trappers reported river otter observations. These sightings were added to those previously reported by Schempf on National Park Service lands and mapped on a master map (State of California North half, Scale 1:500,000) on file with Nongame Wildlife Investigations.

RESULTS

Figure 1 is a reduced map showing the location of river otter sightings. Table 1 gives the date, location, and source of the river otter observations. Table 2 lists the licensed trappers interviewed.

Appended is a furbearer report form developed to provide additional river otter sightings. These have been distributed to the Regions, federal agencies, and interested parties. A river otter wildlife leaflet was featured in the November-December 1974 issue of "Outdoor California." Persons who have observations to report are requested to provide such information to the Department. Future sightings, together with those reported by the U. S. Forest Service, will be incorporated into the final report of the River Otter Survey.

FIGURE 1

RIVER OTTER SURVEY - 1974-75

● - Sightings to 1975

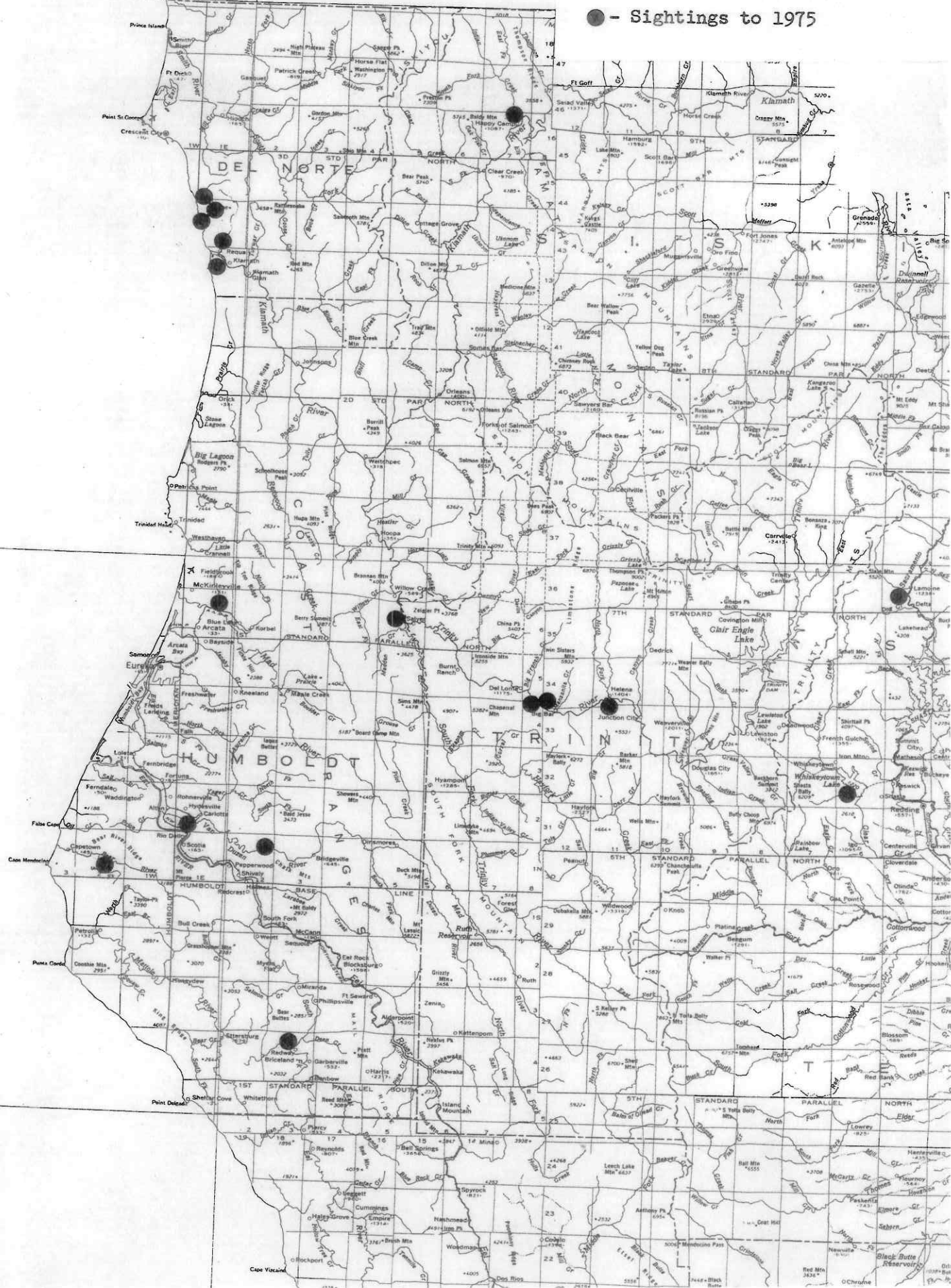


FIGURE 1
RIVER OTTER SURVEY - 1974-75

● - Sightings to 1975

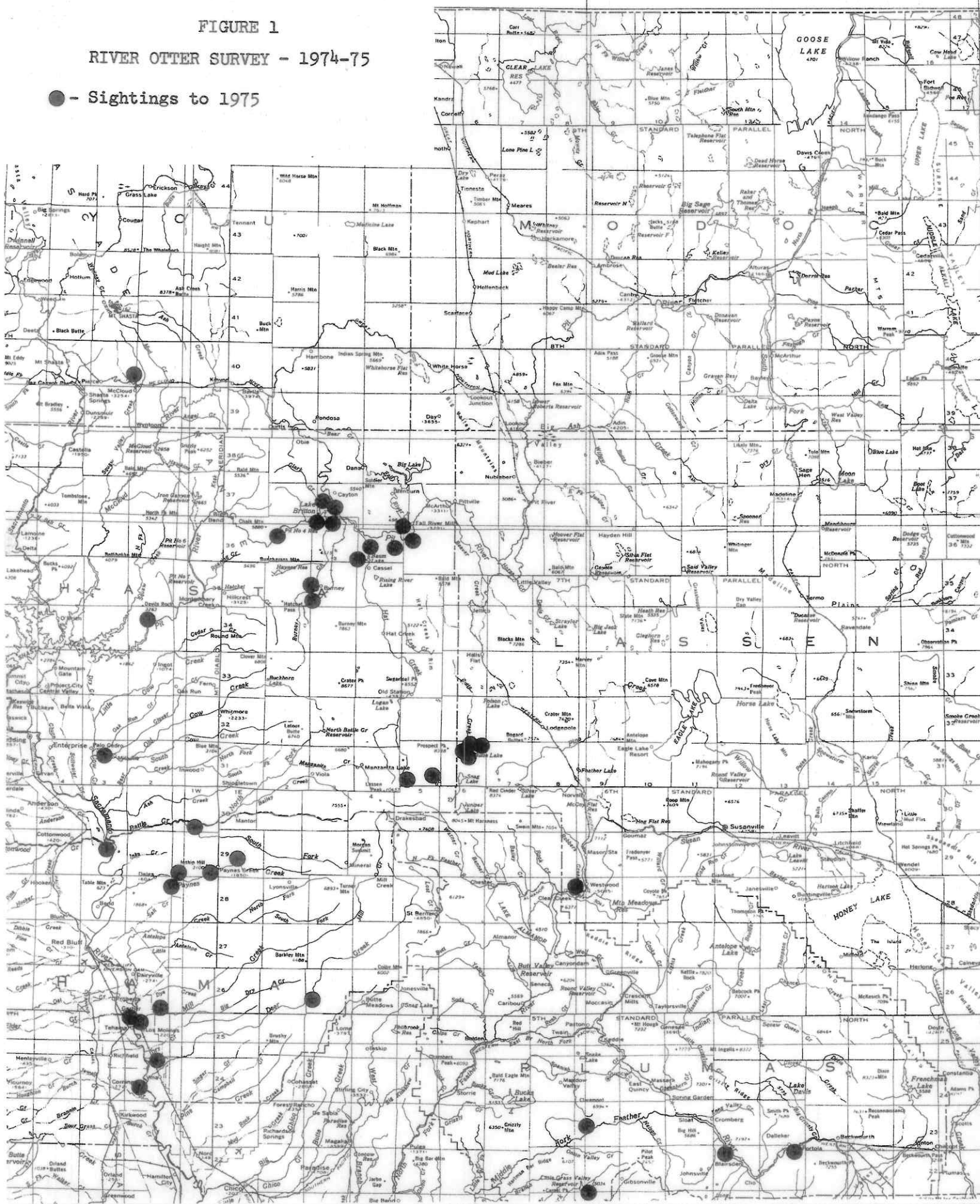


FIGURE 1

RIVER OTTER SURVEY - 1974-75

● - Sightings to 1975

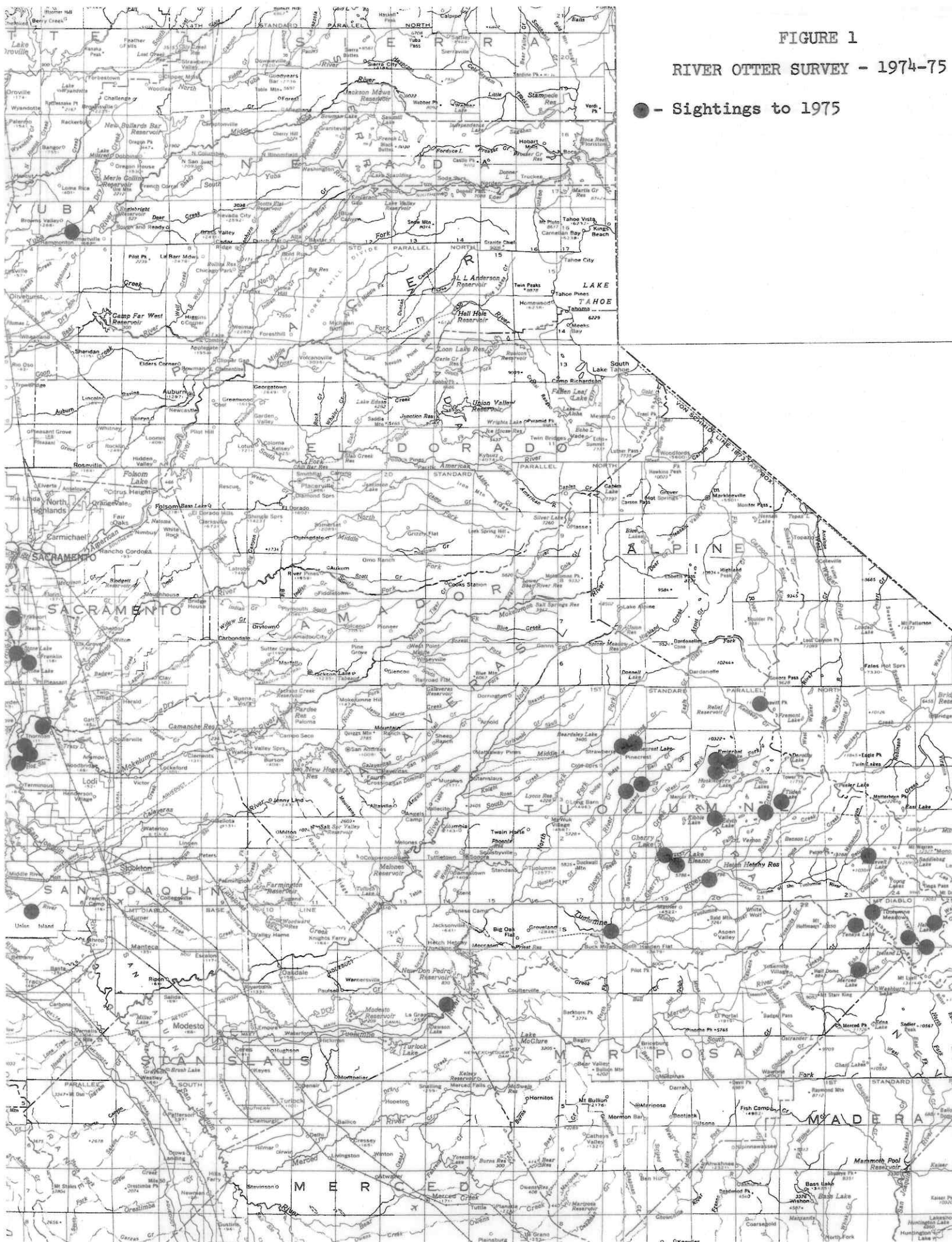


TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF RIVER OTTER SIGHTINGS

Number Region 1	Date	Location	Observer
Lc-1-8-1	10/19/72	Klamath River, Del Norte Co.	Schempf (1974)
" " -2	2/21/73	Lagoon Creek, Del Norte Co.	" "
" " -3	5/13/73	Lagoon Creek, Del Norte Co.	" "
" " -4	5/9/74	Hunter Creek, Del Norte Co.	" "
" " -5	5/10/74	Fresh Water Lagoon, Del Norte Co.	" "
Lc-1-12-1	1965	Eel River, Humboldt Co.	Harley Humphrey
" " -2	1971	Mad River, Humboldt Co.	George B. Price
" " -3	1972	Trinity River, Humboldt Co.	George B. Price
" " -4	1973	Eel River, Humboldt Co.	Warren Sievers
" " -5	1974	South of Bear River, Humboldt Co.	Warren Sievers
" " -6	1975	South Fork Eel River, Humboldt Co.	William H. McClure
" " -8	1975	Grizzly Creek St. Park, Humboldt Co.	R. C. Taylor
Lc-1-18-1	1936-40	Clear Creek, Lassen Co.	George B. Price
" " -2	1970	Butte Lake, Lassen Co.	Howard Schwing
" " -3	1966	Butte Lake, Lassen Co.	Schempf (1974)
" " -4	6/16/67	Butte Lake, Lassen Co.	" "
" " -5	7/11/67	Bathub Lake, Lassen Co.	" "
" " -6	7/24/67	Butte Lake, Lassen Co.	" "
" " -7	7/25/67	Butte Lake, Lassen Co.	" "
" " -8	6/30/68	Butte Lake, Lassen Co.	" "
" " -9	1970	Butte Lake, Lassen Co.	" "
" " -10	8/3/72	Butte Lake, Lassen Co.	" "
Lc-1-45-1	1971-73	Cow Creek, Shasta Co.	Timothy Wion
" " -2	Nov. 1973	Lake Britton, Shasta Co.	Frank Terry
" " -3	1973	Lake Britton, Shasta Co.	" "
" " -4	1973	Lake Britton, Shasta Co.	Bill Childs
" " -5	1973	Pit River, Shasta Co.	Frank Terry
" " -6	1973	Sacramento River, Shasta Co.	Tim Wion
" " -7	1973	Burney Creek, Shasta Co.	Frank Terry
" " -8	1973	Crystal Lake Fish Hatchery, Shasta Co.	Al Johnson
" " -9	1974	Susan River, Shasta Co.	Eiwin Roney
" " -10	1974	Pit River Powerhouse #4, Shasta Co.	Al Johnson
" " -11	1974	Lake-Britton, Shasta Co.	(No data)
" " -12	1974	Hat Creek Powerhouse, Shasta Co.	Al Johnson
" " -13	1974	Pit Powerhouse #1, Shasta Co.	Al Johnson

Table 1 (Continued)

-5-

<u>Number</u> <u>Region 1</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Observer</u>
Lc-1-45-14	12/19/73	Judge Carr Power Plant, Shasta Co.	Schempf (1974)
" " -15	6/22/62	Twin Lake, Shasta Co.	" "
" " -16	7/22/67	Between Hat & Summit Lakes, Shasta Co.	" "
" " -17	3/15/75	Mouth of Potem Creek, Shasta Co.	Neal Ravencraft
Lc-1-47-1	1973	Klamath near Happy Camp, Siskiyou Co.	Bill Childs
" " -2	1973	Huckleberry Creek near McCloud, Siskiyou Co.	Bill Childs
Lc-1-52-1	1973	Sacramento River; Battle Creek, Tehama Co.	Eugene Burrill
" " -2	Jan. 1974	Paynes Creek, Tehama Co.	Irwin Hudson
" " -3	Jan. 1974	Deer Creek, Tehama Co.	Irwin Hudson
" " -4	Jan. 1974	Battle Creek, Tehama Co.	Irwin Hudson
" " -5	Jan. 1974	Lanes Valley Fish Farm, Tehama Co.	Kieth Brown
" " -6	Sept. 1974	Darrah Springs Fish Hatchery, Tehama Co.	Danny Reno
" " -7	1974	Sacramento River, Tehama Co.	Mike Murchison
" " -8	1974	Deer Creek, Tehama Co.	Mike Murchison
" " -9	1974	Macon Springs Fish Hatchery, Tehama Co.	Kieth Brown
" " -10	1974	Mill Creek, Tehama Co.	Mike Murchison
" " -11	1974	Woodson Bridge S. P., Tehama Co.	Mike Murchison
" " -12	1974	Mill Creek, Tehama Co.	H. R. Williams
<u>Region 2</u>			
Lc-2-4-1	1966	Butte Creek, Butte Co.	Lawrence Coleman
" " -2	1973	Gray Lodge, Butte Co.	Bill Childs
" " -3	1973	Gray Lodge, Butte Co.	Walt Frazier
" " -4	1973	Butte Creek, Butte Co.	Bill Caldwell
" " -5	1973	Gray Lodge, Butte Co.	Bill Caldwell
" " -6	1973	Feather River, Butte Co.	Bill Childs
" " -7	Jan. 1974	Feather River, Butte Co.	Melvin Rhoads
" " -8	Feb. 1974	Gray Lodge, Butte Co.	Ed Stafford
" " -9	2/8/75	Gray Lodge, Butte Co.	Joan B. Cowan
Lc-2-6-1	Feb. 1973	Sacramento River, Colusa Co.	Bill Caldwell
" " -2	1973	Colusa, Colusa Co.	Bill Childs
" " -3	1973	Princeton, Colusa Co.	Bill Childs
Lc-2-32-1	1963	Middle Fork Feather, Plumas Co.	Clyde Shehorn
" " -2	1969	Little Grass Valley Res., Plumas Co.	Howard Schwing
" " -3	1970	Blairsden, Plumas Co.	Jack Foster

Table 1 (Continued)

-6-

<u>Number</u> <u>Region 2</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Observer</u>
Lc-2-32-4	1973	Johnson Creek, Plumas Co.	Donald Bundy
Lc-2-34-1	1972	Franklin, Sacramento Co.	Geo. Simunovich
" " -3	1974	Stone Lake, Sacramento Co.	Tony Brinkoetter
Lc-2-39-1	1963-72	Mokelumne & Consumes Rivers, San Joaquin Co.	Bill Roper
" " -2	1963-73	Union Island, San Joaquin Co.	Delbert Hansen
" " -3	1972	San Joaquin Delta, San Joaquin Co.	Harley Humphrey
" " -4	10/24/74	Mokelumne River, San Joaquin Co.	Mark Caywood & James Tilley
Lc-2-46-1	1970	Portola, Sierra Co.	Harold Moeglin
Lc-2-48-1	1972	Greenhead Duck Club, Solano Co.	Frank Terry
" " -2	1974	Suisun Marsh, Solano Co.	June Kindelt
Lc-2-51-1	1964-69	Sacramento River, Sutter Co.	Bruce Gossett
Lc-2-57-1	1968-70	Yolo Bypass, Yolo Co.	Dave Mitchell
" " -2	11/24/74	Knights Landing, Yolo Co.	Dave Tefft
Lc-2-58-1	1968-69	Yuba River, Yuba Co.	Dave Mitchell
" " -2	1973	Marysville, Yuba Co.	Dave Mitchell
<u>Region 3</u>			
Lc-3-7-1	1973	Delta, Contra Costa Co.	Harold Moeglin
Lc-3-23-4	2/11/75	Robinson Creek, Mendocino Co.	Mike Charles
Lc-3-43-1	July 1974	Coyote Creek, Santa Clara Co.	Dave Tefft
Lc-3-49-1	6/73-1/75	Russian River, Sonoma Co.	Dale A. Barney
" " -2	3/3/75	" "	" "
" " -3	2/27/75	" "	" "
<u>Region 4</u>			
Lc-4-10-1	1910	Kings Canyon, Fresno Co.	H. Bryant
" " -2	1910	Simpson Meadow, Fresno Co.	H. Bryant
Lc-4-22-5	8/5/28	Babcock Lake, Mariposa Co.	Schempf (1974)
" " -7	8/11/42	Cathedral Lake, Mariposa Co.	" "
Lc-4-54-1	pre 1937	Kaweah River, Tulare Co.	Grinnell, et al.
Lc-4-55-1	1965	Clear Lake, Tuolumne Co.	George Price
" " -2	1968	Tuolumne River, Tuolumne Co.	Walter Fountain
" " -3	1973	Tuolumne River, Tuolumne Co.	George Price
" " -4	pre 1928	Lyell Fork Tuolumne, Tuolumne Co.	Schempf (1974)

Table 1 (Continued)

-7-

<u>Number</u> <u>Region</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Observer</u>
Lc-4-55-6	7/29/38	Tilden Lake, Tuolumne Co.	Schempf (1974)
" " -8	July 1948	Tuolumne River, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -9	5/14/49	Hetch Hetchy Dam, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -10	6/15/51	Wilmer Lake, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -11	8/11/54	Poore Lake, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -12	4/20/57	Lake Eleanor, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -13	1960	Clavey River, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -14	1963	Blue Canyon Lake, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -15	1963	Long Lake, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -16	1963	Leighton Lake, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -17	1965	Same as Lc-4-55-1	"
" " -18	1969	Pinecrest Lake, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -19	1971	Buck Lake, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -20	Aug. 1971	Iyell Fork Tuolumne, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -21	Aug. 1972	Kuna Lake, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -22	8/8/72	Beyond Elbow Hill, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -23	7/5/73	Lake Eleanor Dam, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -24	Oct. 1973	Robinson Creek, Buckeye Creek, and W. Walker River, Tuolumne Co.	"
" " -25	June 1974	Edyth Lake, Tuolumne Co.	William Sweeney
<u>Region 5</u>			
Lc-5-14-1	Sept. 1973	Owens River, Inyo Co.,	Riley Patterson

TABLE 2

CALIFORNIA RIVER OTTER SURVEY
TRAPPER INTERVIEW LIST

Ed Stafford
H. R. Williams

Ed. note: Addresses
removed

Fred Rose
Mike Murchison
Dave Tefft
Bill Caldwell
Melvin Rhoads
Warren Sievers
June Kindelt
Tony Brinkoetter
Al Johnson
Irwin Hudson
Danny Reno
Kieth Brown
Clyde Shehorn
Don Bundy
Howard Schwing
Harold Moeglin
Dave Mitchell
Bruce Gossett
George Simunovich
Harley Humphrey
Lee Bowen
Howard Hughes
Bill Roper
Delbert Hanson
Lawrence Coleman
Frank Terry
John Parker
George Price
Eugene Burrill
Tim Wion
Vern Cunningham
Leslie Powis
Willis Thompson
Jim Wilson
Harry Flaherty
Charles Griep
Don Ott
Herman Christensen
Fred Jefferson
Don Baracosa
R. Kieser
David Murphy
Hal Burrows

Oroville
Red Bluff
Castro Valley
Red Bluff
San Jose
Palermo
Gridley
Dixon
Suisun
Sacramento
Fall River Mills
Manton
Manton
Red Bluff
Blairsden
Chester
Oroville
Loyalton
Marysville
Yuba City
Elk Grove
Modesto
Stockton
Stockton
Thornton
Byron
Oroville
Half Moon Bay
Potter Valley
Modesto
Red Bluff
San Leandro
Fall River Mills
Redding
Dunsmuir
Weed
Klamath River
Stockton
Stockton
Concord
Woodland
Fairfield
Isleton
Arcata
Redding

**Sighting Report on
Furbearers**

**help is needed
for protection
and management**

HAVE YOU SEEN THESE FURBEARERS? FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES NEED YOUR SIGHTINGS OF THESE ANIMALS TO ESTABLISH PROGRAMS OF PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT. YOUR COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE IS APPRECIATED. PLEASE REPORT ANY SIGHTINGS TO THE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BRANCH, DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME, 1416 NINTH STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814. COMPLETE THE FORM ON THE BACK OF THIS PAGE, FOLD, AFFIX STAMP AND MAIL. THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

RIVER OTTER

The River Otter is a long, slender aquatic animal with short legs and a small round head. Its tail is long and thick, tapering toward the tip. The fur ranges from dark brown to gray. They are most often seen playing in or around water, sliding down mud banks or playing tag. Length, 2 to 5 feet; shoulder height, 10 inches; and weight, 15 to 25 pounds.



MINK

Mink are much smaller than river otter. They are long and slender with short legs and have a thickly furred tail about 6 inches long. The head is small and round with barely visible ears. The fur is rich, dark brown with a dark tip on the chin. Occasionally there may be a white spot on the throat or chest. Mink may occasionally be seen swimming but most often are observed running along stream banks, hunting for fish, crayfish, or frogs. Length, 12 to 24 inches; shoulder height, 6 inches; weight, 1/2 to 2 pounds.



FURBEARER OBSERVATION

SPECIES OBSERVED: _____

DATE: _____ TIME OF DAY: _____

PLACE SEEN: (Describe as precisely as possible, including miles to nearest landmark, elevation, county, and other information.)

DETAILS: (Include identifying factors and observed activity of the animal.)

NAME OF OBSERVER: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

TO:

California Department of Fish and Game
Special Wildlife Investigations
1416 Ninth Street
Sacramento, California 95814