



# THE RIVER OTTER

The North American river otter is a playful, curious animal that spends most of its life in rivers, marshy ponds, and wooded riparian areas. River otters belong to the Family Mustelidae, which includes 65 other species, including badgers, weasels, skunks, and mink. River otters are 3 to 4 feet long and weigh 15 to 25 pounds. They live up to 25 years in captivity and about 15 years in the wild. Otters are most energetic from early evening through early morning. They are active all year, even in the cold New England winters. Otters play more than most wild animals – wrestling, sliding, chasing each other, diving for rocks and clamshells, and occasionally even playing with live prey.



*Once abundant in most of the United States and Canadian rivers, ponds, and coastal areas, river otters have suffered from fur trapping, water pollution, habitat destruction, pesticides, and other threats. Today, they can be found in parts of Canada, the Northwest, upper Great Lakes area, New England, and Atlantic and Gulf Coast states.*

## SM&NC and Our Otters

River otters have had a long history at the Stamford Museum & Nature Center. Our first generation of otters came to the SM&NC in June 1973. A most popular attraction, the otters entertained visitors with their playful antics and behavior. In the late 1990's, the SM&NC's otters were moved to a nearby zoo because of aging exhibit infrastructure.

Thanks to a generous gift by The Overbrook Foundation, the Edith and Robert Graham Otter Pond opened in June 2006. Today, SM&NC visitors can once again delight in watching our otters play in the cascading waterfall, dive in the pool, eat, or climb on natural logs.