

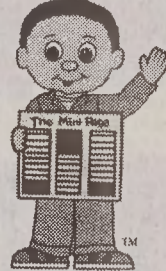
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# The Mini Page

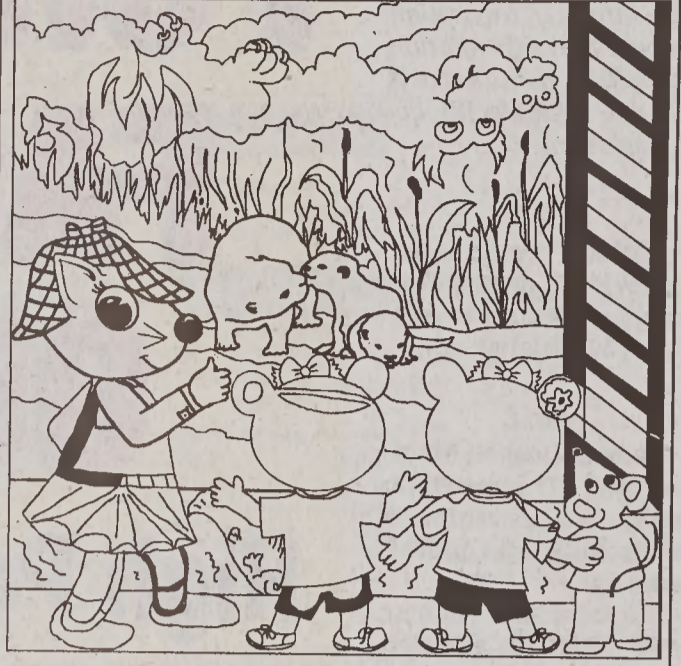
Betty Debnam, Founding Editor and Editor at Large



## Mini Spy . . .

Mini Spy and her friends are watching the otters at the zoo. See if you can find:

- word MINI
- number 3
- ladder
- fish
- lips
- number 7
- doughnut
- letter V
- cup
- umbrella
- teapot
- letter A
- dragon



## Cute and Fierce

# Awesome Otters

Have you ever watched otters playing and swimming at a zoo or aquarium? People often feel happy after watching otters play.

The Mini Page takes a closer look at this bright, fun and fierce animal.

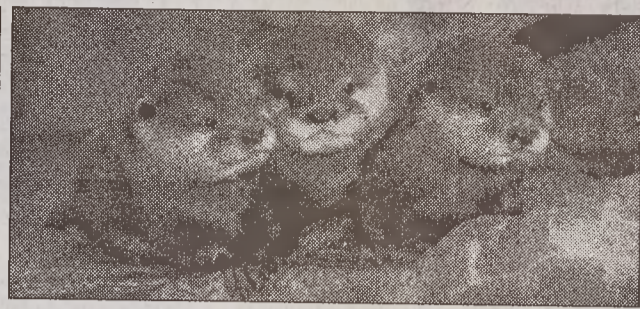
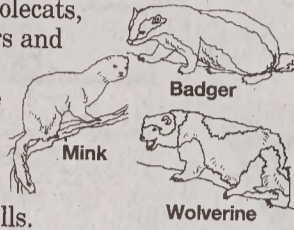
### A family of smelly fighters

Otters come from the same family as weasels, polecats, mink, badgers and wolverines.

Most of these **mustelids** (MUS-tuh-lids) give off powerful smells.

Members of this family produce strong-smelling odors to mark their territory, attract mates and defend themselves. Sea otters don't do this, but river otters do.

They are also great hunters and strong fighters.



These river otter pups are Asian small-clawed otters, the smallest otter species. Adults might weigh as little as 2 pounds.

### Two branches of the family tree

There are two types of otters — sea otters and river, or freshwater, otters. Here are some of their differences:

#### Sea otters:

- live only in the sea. They usually live about a half-mile from the shore, where the water is about 45 to 90 feet deep. They don't live in the deep ocean.
- spend almost every minute of their lives in the water. Alaska otters go onshore to find clams in the mud. Sea otters sleep, mate and have their young in the sea.

#### River otters:

- can live in or near any freshwater source, including rivers, streams, rice paddies and lakes. They can even live in partly salty water, such as canals.
- spend about three-fourths of their time on land. They mate in water and get most of their food from the water.



The three species, or types, of sea otters are about as big as a medium-size dog. Males can reach 100 pounds. Females might weigh from 40 to 50 pounds.



There are 13 different species of river otters. They range in size from 2 to 20 pounds.

## Rookie Cookie's Recipe Pineapple Zucchini Bread

### You'll need:

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 3/4 cup applesauce
- 4 eggs
- 1 (8-ounce) can crushed pineapple, drained
- 2 cups grated zucchini
- 1/2 cup grated carrot
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

### What to do:

1. Combine flour, salt, baking powder and baking soda in a large bowl.
2. Using another bowl, mix oil, sugars, applesauce, eggs, pineapple, zucchini, carrot and cinnamon.
3. Gently stir flour mixture into zucchini mixture.
4. Pour into two greased and floured loaf pans.
5. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes at 350 degrees.

You will need an adult's help with this recipe.

## Meet James Maslow



James Maslow, 19, stars as James in the new Nickelodeon TV series "Big Time Rush." James grew up in La Jolla, Calif. He began singing in the San Diego Children's Choir. In eighth grade, he transferred to a special school for the arts. He wanted to do this so much that he rode several hours on the bus each day.

He has appeared in several TV shows and movies, including the TV show "iCarly." He also enjoys playing the guitar and piano and has written his own music.

James likes football, surfing, riding horses and mountain climbing. He has been training in the martial art Saito Ninjutsu since he was 10. He also speaks Spanish. He has a yellow Labrador.

## Sea Otters

### Habitat

Sea otters used to live along the coasts of California, Alaska, Russia and Japan. Although there is still a small population off the coast of Russia, there are only two large colonies left, near California and Alaska.

In the 1800s, hunters killed nearly all sea otters for their thick fur. Although it is now illegal to hunt them, their numbers have not bounced back.

The several thousand sea otters left are considered to be threatened. Pollution, lower food supplies and habitat loss are now their biggest threats.

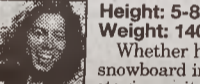


Sea otters often float on their backs.

Sea otters' hind paws have webbed flippers to help them swim. Their front paws are built mainly for grasping objects. Their normal swimming style is like dog paddling. If they need to swim fast, they tuck their front limbs next to their sides so they are shaped like missiles.

## Gus Goodsport's Report

### Supersport: Shaun White



Height: 5-8  
Weight: 140  
Birthdate: 9-3-86  
Residence: Carlsbad, Calif.

Whether he's on a skateboard in sunny California or riding a snowboard in some winter wonderland, Shaun White is capable of staging quite a show.

With acrobatic flair and athletic skill, the 23-year-old White won a gold medal in the 2006 Winter Olympics. And this week he is competing in the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver.

White also won the 2007 Skateboard Vert Title at the Summer X Games. He developed skateboarding skills working out at age 9 with Tony Hawk.

There was a time when it looked as if White would never skate or snowboard. Born with a heart defect, he had two major surgeries as a child. He also wore leg braces at night because he was severely bowlegged.

When he was able to participate in athletics, Shaun received strong backing from his family. Now he's an icon, a healthy two-sport star still going for Olympic gold.

### Kelp forests

Kelp, a large seaweed, is important to their habitat. Otters wrap in it to anchor themselves during a storm or while they're sleeping. Moms wrap their young in it to keep them from floating away while the mother hunts for food.

Otters are a **keystone**, or central, species in kelp forests. Sea urchins eat kelp, and otters eat urchins. Kelp forests house food for animals such as eagles, otters and fish.

### Fabulous fur

Sea otters have the most dense, or thickly packed, hair of any mammal, with about 150,000 hairs per square inch.

The thick fur keeps water from wetting their skin and insulates, or keeps them warm. A thin layer of air under their coats also helps. They are the only sea mammal that does not have a layer of blubber for warmth.

Sea otters have to groom themselves constantly to prevent their fur from getting matted and less effective as insulation. They continually blow air into their fur.

## More About Otters

### Family life

River and sea otters both eat shellfish and other fish. River otters might also eat small land animals such as rodents, birds or snakes.

Sea otters are one of the few animals that use tools. They find rocks at the bottom of the sea and use them to crack open clams and other shellfish. Experts believe tool use is a sign of intelligence.

Sea otters are very active and need a huge amount of food. The activity and extra food help to keep them warm. The father sea otter does not help raise the young. The mother has to hunt a lot of food for herself and her pup. A sea otter usually has only one pup at a time.

The river otter dad does help raise the pups, and the family unit is very strong. Family members curl together on land at night. Males and females stay together after they have mated.



River otters have thousands of hairs per square inch, which help keep them insulated. Their thick fur keeps water off their skin like a rain jacket.

### River otter communication

River otters are very social. They have about 12 different vocalizations, or meaningful sounds. Throughout the day, they trade calls. The most common are chirping calls to say, "Hi, I'm over here."

They also have threatening calls that sound like a cat in a fight.

### River otter swimmers

River otters have webbing that goes about one-quarter of the way up their paws. When they swim, they do a type of dog paddle. They are shaped like big footballs, which makes them naturally streamlined.

When they are gliding, they use their flat tail like a rudder in a boat, swinging their tails back and forth like a shark to help them balance. River otters can sit upright, using their tails to balance.

### Threats

Freshwater otters are considered to be vulnerable (between threatened and endangered). Their biggest threats are pollution and loss of habitat. They hide and nest in tall grasses, and when these are cut down for farming, they have no place to be safe and raise families.

Next week, The Mini Page is all about Newspaper in Education Week.

## Mighty Funny's Mini Jokes

All the following jokes have something in common. Can you guess the common theme or category?

Oscar: What did the otter get when he slid into the river head-first?

Olivia: Wet!

Ozzie: Where does an otter in a spaceship go?

Ollie: To otter space!

Otis: What do you call an otter in the desert?

Ophelia: Lost!

## TRY 'N FIND Otters

Words that remind us of otters are hidden in the block below. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally. See if you can find: AIR, ALASKA, CALIFORNIA, CALL, COAT, FRESH, FUR, HABITAT, INSULATE, KELP, KEYSTONE, PAW, POLLUTION, RIVER, ROCK, SEA, SHELLFISH, THICK, VOCALIZATION, WARM, WATER, WEBBING.

F R R K E N O T S Y E K A P S  
H R I V C G N I B B E W L O H  
A K E V A O L R E T A W A L E  
B F E S E R A K C I H T S L L  
I C U L H R M T M W A P K U L  
T A A R P S E A R O C K A T F  
A L I A I N R O F I L A C I O S  
T L R K V E T A L U S N I O S  
L N O I T A Z I L A C O V N H

## Ready Resources

The Mini Page provides ideas for Web sites, books or other resources that will help you learn more about this week's topics.

### On the Web:

- [www.seaworld.org/animal-info/info-books/otters/index.htm](http://www.seaworld.org/animal-info/info-books/otters/index.htm)
- [www.biokids.umich.edu/critters/Mustelidae](http://www.biokids.umich.edu/critters/Mustelidae)

### At the library:

- "Welcome to the World of Otters" by Diane Swanson
- "Lootas, Little Wave Eater: An Orphaned Sea Otter's Story" by Clare Hodgson Meeker
- "A Raft of Sea Otters" by Vicki Leon
- "Ring of Bright Water" (DVD)

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### The Mini Page Staff

## NEW! The Mini Page Book of States

The Mini Page's popular series of issues about each state is collected here in a 156-page softcover book. Conveniently spiral-bound for ease of use, this invaluable resource contains A-to-Z facts about each state, along with the District of Columbia. Illustrated with colorful photographs and art, and complete with updated information, The Mini Page Book of States will be a favorite in classrooms and homes for years to come.



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