

# **Report on reconnaissance survey among fishermen along the Niger River (Niamey) regarding the spotted-necked otter**

## **Context and Justification**

The otter, an emblematic species of the Niger River, is crucial to the ecological balance of the region. However, it faces increasing threats such as habitat loss and conflicts with human activities. To better understand these challenges, a reconnaissance survey was conducted among local fishermen on February 26th and 27th, 2024. This survey aims to gather knowledge and perceptions of fishermen regarding the otter, as well as to establish contact with them and assess the terrain for further study.

## **Methodology**

Respondents were targeted to ensure reliable results through focus groups. The equipment used included an Android phone for data capture, a key for identifying the spotted-necked otter, and a notepad for recording responses.



## **Results**

### ***- Demographic profile of surveyed fishermen:***

All respondents were male, aged between 23 and 70 years, with the majority being at least 30 years old. Their primary occupation is fishing along the Niger River (from Niamey to Mali).

### ***- Characteristics of the otter:***

According to respondents, the otter found in the Niger River is entirely spotted-necked and about the size of a cat (small compared to those in the sea). It feeds on fish and is very fast in water. It primarily emerges late at night for behavioral activities, but traces and droppings are visible during the day when water levels recede.

### ***- Knowledge, perceptions, and interactions of fishermen with the otter:***

98 percent of respondents claimed to be familiar with and have seen the otter, while 2 percent stated they were unaware of the species.

***- Identification of areas where otters are most frequently observed:***

Surveys indicated that otters are mostly observed on river islands and in adjacent water bodies.

***- Main perceived threats to otter populations :***

The survey revealed that the main threats include habitat loss, capture for mystical purposes, and conflicts with fishermen.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is evident that the otter, as an emblematic species of the Niger River in Niamey, faces multiple threats resulting from human actions. However, the lack of regular monitoring of the conservation status of this species compromises our ability to implement effective conservation measures. Without a thorough understanding of the otter population, the threats it faces, and the necessary measures for its preservation, the negative impact on its survival and the repercussions on the local ecosystem could intensify.

## **Recommendation**

It is imperative to provide technical and financial support to further research on the otter along the Niger River in Niamey. This will help gain a clear overview of the otter population, the threats it faces, and the necessary conservation measures. By investing in comprehensive studies and supporting targeted conservation initiatives, we can better protect the otter and its habitat, ensuring the health and diversity of the Niger River ecosystem in Niamey for future generations.

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