

Congo clawless otter *Aonyx congicus*
Near Threatened (IUCN Red List, 2015)



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General appearance	Very large, bulky otter.
Size	HB: ca. 85 cm; T: ca. 50 cm; Skull very large: 116 – 130cm; W: 13 – 18 kg
Fur	Pelage is deep chocolate brown with conspicuous silvery gloss on the anterior parts of the body due to white tips on hairs. Vibrissae grayish or white, weakly developed, and present on sides of face, ears, nose, and upper parts of the chest. The distinct, well defined dark area between the eyes and nostrils is one of the more obvious distinctions between it and the Cape clawless otter.
Feet/footprints	No webbing on front feet, slight webbing on hind. Vestigial claws on 2 nd – 4 th hind digits, but not visible in footprints.
Distribution & Habitat	Swamps, marshes, rivers, and lakes of the Afrotropical forest zone from Cameroon in the east to western Uganda and Central African Republic in the north to northern Angola in the south.
Diet	Primarily worms and snails, which it forages in the mud with its fingers. It may also hunt fish and amphibians. It's difficult to find their faeces due to the characteristics of the habitats they live in and to the complete digestion of the worms. When they feed on fish, their spraints have the same consistency as those of Cape clawless otters.
Behaviour	Usually solitary or in pairs. Forages along water features.



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Differentiating *Aonyx capensis* and *Aonyx congicus*



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Cape clawless otter

- The top of head is **dark**
- Chest **white** or **beige**
- Ear outlines are **dark** or **slightly lighter**
- Border around quadrangular dark brown area between eye and nostril is **indistinct**
- Whiskers typically **long** and well developed
- Rhinarium (snout) **rounded** or **slight V**
- **Footprints** of both species look similar, but may be confused with monkey prints
- **Sprints** are similar, but when *A. congoensis* eats worms, they produce little fecal matter



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Congo clawless otter

- Top of head appears **frosted**
- Chest **white**
- Ear outlines are **white**
- Border around quadrangular dark brown area between eye and nostril is **well defined**
- Whiskers relatively **short**
- Rhinarium (snout) **straight**



Sprint (faeces)



© E. Andarge

A. capensis footprint



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A. congicus footprint

The African Otter Network is looking for information on current distribution. If seen, please help us by contacting africanotternetwork@gmail.com with location, date, time, number seen, and behaviours observed. Photos are most welcome!