GENUS ENHYDRA.—FLEMING.

DENTAL FORMULA.

$$\text{Incisive } \frac{6}{4}; \text{ Canine } \frac{4-4}{5-5}; \text{ Molar } \frac{2-2}{3-3} = 38.$$

Head, small and globular; ears, short and conical, placed far back in the head.

Body, very long, covered with a dense glossy fur; tail, less than one fourth the length of the body, rather stout, depressed, covered with strong hairs on the sides.

Hind-feet, webbed.

LICHTENSTEIN says this genus has hind-feet like those of the common seals, ears resembling those of the seals of the genus *Otaria*, and a tail similar to that of the common Otter.

He places the Sea Otter (correctly, as we think) between the Otter and the seals that possess ears (*Otaria*).

Mammæ, two—ventral.

There is only one species in the genus.

Habit, living principally at sea and in bays and estuaries.

The generic name is derived from *ενυδρος*, *enudros*, aquatic; Gr. *εν*, *en*, in, and *ὑδωρ*, *hudōr*, water.

ENHYDRA MARINA.—ERXLEBEN.

SEA OTTER.

PLATE CXXXVII.—MALE.

E. perelongata, cauda depressa, corporis partem quartam æquante, pedibus posticis curtis, istis Phocarum similibus, colore castaneo vel nigro, vellere mollissimo; Lutrâ Canadensis duplo major.

CHARACTERS.

Body, very much elongated; tail, depressed, and one fourth the length of the body; hind-feet, short, and resembling those of the seal; colour, chesnut brown or black; twice the size of the common Otter; fur, exceedingly fine.

Sea Otter

Drawn from Nature by J W Audubon

Lith. Printed & Col^d by J T Bowen, Philad^a

SYNONYMES.

MUSTELA LUTRIS. Linn.

SEA BEAVER. Krascheninikoff, Hist. Kamsk. (Grieve's Trans.), p. 131. Ann. 1764.

MUSTELA LUTRIS. Schreber, Säugethiere, p. 465, fig. t. 128.

LUTRA MARINA. Erxleben, Syst. Ann. 1777.

" " Steller, Nov. Com. Petrop., vol. ii. p. 267, t. 16.

SEA OTTER. Cook's Third Voyage, vol. ii. p. 295. Ann. 1784.

" " Pennant's Arctic Zoology, vol. i. p. 88. Ann. 1784.

LUTRA STELLERI. Lesson, Manual, pp. 156, 423.

SEA OTTER. Meares, Voyage, pp. 241, 260. Ann. 1790.

" " Menzies, Philos. Trans., p. 385. Ann. 1796.

ENHYDRA MARINA. Fleming, Phil. Zool., vol. ii. p. 187. Ann. 1822.

ENYDRIS STELLERI. Fischer, Synopsis, p. 228.

LUTRA MARINA. Harlan, Fauna, p. 72.

THE SEA OTTER. Godman's Nat. Hist., vol. i. p. 228.

ENYDRIS MARINA. Licht., Darstellung neuer oder wenig bekannter Säugethiere.
Berlin, 1827-1834. Tafel xlix.

LUTRA (ENHYDRA) MARINA. Rich., Fauna Boreali Americana, p. 59.

DESCRIPTION.

Head, small in proportion to the size of the body; ears, short, conical, and covered with hair; eyes, rather large; lips, thick; mouth, wide, and furnished with strong and rather large teeth; fore-feet, webbed nearly to the nails, and much like those of the common Otter, five claws on each. Hind-legs and thighs, short, and better adapted for swimming than in other mammalia except the seals; hind-feet, flat and webbed, the toes being connected by a strong granulated membrane, with a skin skirting the outward toe; all the webs of the feet are thickly clothed with glossy hairs about a line in length.

One of the specimens referred to by Mr. MENZIES (the account of which is published in the Philosophical Transactions) measured eight inches across the hind-foot; the tongue was four inches long and rounded at the end, with a slight fissure, giving the tip a bifid appearance.

The tail is short, broad, depressed, and pointed at the end; the hair both on the body and tail is of two kinds—the longer hairs are silky, glossy, and not very numerous, the fur or shorter hair exceedingly soft and fine.

COLOUR.

The cheeks generally present a cast of grayish or silvery colour, which extends along the sides and under the throat; there is a lightish circle

around the eye ; top of the head, dark brown ; the remainder of the body (above and beneath) is deep glossy brownish-black.

There is a considerable variety of shades in different specimens, some being much lighter than others. The longer hairs intermixed with the fur are in the best skins black and shining. In some individuals the fur about the ears, nose, and eyes is either brown or light coloured ; the young are sometimes very light in colour, with white about the nose, eyes, and forehead.

The fur of the young is not equal in fineness to that of the adult.

DIMENSIONS.

Adult.

	Feet.	Inches.
Length from point of nose to root of tail, -	4	2
“ of tail, - - - - -	1	

Young, about two years old.

	Feet.	Inches.
Length from end of nose to root of tail, -	3	
“ of tail, - - - - -		7½
Width of head between the ears, - - -		4
Height of ear, - - - - -		¾
From elbow of fore-leg to end of nail, -		4½
Length of hind-foot from heel to end of nail, -		6¼
“ fore toe, - - - - -		¼
“ inner hind-toe, - - - - -		1
“ outer hind-toe, - - - - -		3
Circumference of the head, behind the ears, -		10¼
“ of body around the breast, - - -	1	5
“ “ “ loins, - - - - -	1	10

HABITS.

Next to the seals the Sea Otter may be ranked as an inhabitant of the great deep : it is at home in the salt waves of the ocean, frequently goes some distance from the “dull tame shore,” and is sometimes hunted in sail-boats by the men who live by catching it, even out of sight of land.

But although capable of living almost at sea, this animal chiefly resorts to bays, the neighbourhood of islands near the coast, and tide-water rivers, where it can not only find plenty of food, but shelter or conceal itself as occasion requires.

It is a timid and shy creature, much disconcerted at the approach of danger, and when shot at, if missed, rarely allows the gunner a second chance to kill it.

Hunting the Sea Otter was formerly a favourite pursuit with the few sailors or stray Americans that lived on the shores of the Bay of San Francisco, but the more attractive search for gold drew them off to the mines when SUTTER's mill-race had revealed the glittering riches intermixed with its black sands. One of the shallops formerly used for catching the Sea Otter was observed by J. W. AUDUBON at Stockton, and is thus described by him: The boat was about twenty-eight feet long and eight feet broad, clinker built, and sharp at both ends like a whale-boat, which she may in fact have originally been, rigged with two lug sails, and looked like a fast craft. Whilst examining her the captain and owner came up to enquire whether he did not want to send some freight to Hawkins' Bar, but on finding that was not the object of his scrutiny, gave him the following account of the manner of hunting the Otter.

The boat was manned with four or five hands and a gunner, and sailed about all the bays, and to the islands even thirty or forty miles from the coast, and sometimes north or south three or four hundred miles in quest of these animals. On seeing an Otter the boat was steered quietly for it, sail being taken in to lessen her speed so as to approach gently and without alarming the game. When within short gun-shot, the marksman fires, the men spring to the oars, and the poor Otter is harpooned before it sinks by the bowsman. Occasionally the animals are sailed up to while they are basking on the banks, and they are sometimes caught in seines. The man who gave this information stated that he had known five Otters to be shot and captured in a day, and he had obtained forty dollars apiece for their skins. At the time J. W. AUDUBON was in California he was asked a hundred dollars for a Sea Otter skin, which high price he attributed to the gold discoveries.

Only one of these Otters was seen by J. W. AUDUBON whilst in California: it was in the San Joaquin river, where the bulrushes grew thickly on the banks all about. The party were almost startled at the sudden appearance of one, which climbed on to a drift log about a hundred yards above them. Three rifle balls were sent in an instant towards the unsuspecting creature, one of which striking near it, the alarmed animal slid into the water and sunk without leaving, so far as they could see, a single ripple. It remained below the surface for about a minute, and on coming up raised its head high above the water, and having seen nothing to frighten it, as they judged, began fishing. Its dives were made so gently that it was evidently as much at its ease in the water as a Grebe, and it frequently remained under the surface as long at least as the great northern diver or loon. They watched its movements some time, but could not see that it took a fish, although it dived eight or ten times. On firing another shot,

the Otter appeared much frightened (possibly having been touched) and swimming rapidly, without diving, to the opposite shore, disappeared in the rushes, and they did not see it again.

In the accounts of this species given by various authors we find little respecting its habits, and it is much to be regretted that so remarkable an animal should be yet without a full "biography."

Sir JOHN RICHARDSON, who gives an excellent description of its fur from one who was engaged in the trade, says, "It seems to have more the manners of a seal than of the land Otter. It frequents rocks washed by the sea, and brings forth on land, but resides mostly in the water, and is occasionally seen very remote from the shore."

GODMAN states that "its food is various, but principally cuttle-fish, lobsters, and other fish. The Sea Otter, like most other animals which are plentifully supplied with food, is entirely harmless and inoffensive in its manners, and might be charged with stupidity, according to a common mode of judging animals, as it neither offers to defend itself nor to injure those who attack it. But as it runs very swiftly and swims with equal celerity it frequently escapes, and after having gone some distance turns back to look at its pursuers. In doing this it holds a fore-paw over its eyes, much in the manner we see done by persons who in a strong sunshine are desirous to observe a distant object accurately. It has been inferred that the sight of this animal is imperfect; its sense of smelling, however, is said to be very acute."

The latter part of the above paragraph at least, may be taken as a small specimen of the fabulous tales believed in olden times about animals of which little that was true had been learned.

Dr. GODMAN relates farther that the female Sea Otter brings forth on land after a pregnancy of eight or nine months, and but one at a birth, and states that the extreme tenderness and attachment she displays for her young are much celebrated. According to his account the flesh is eaten by the hunters, but while it is represented by some as being tender, juicy, and flavoured like young lamb, by others it is declared to be hard, insipid, and tough as leather. We advise such of our readers as may wish to decide which of these statements is correct, and who may be so fortunate as to possess the means and leisure, to go to California and taste the animal—provided they can catch or kill one.

We will conclude our very meagre account of the habits of the Sea Otter by quoting the following most sensible remarks from Sir JOHN RICHARDSON, given in a note in the *Fauna Boreali Americana*, p. 60: "Not having been on the coasts where the Sea Otter is produced, I can add nothing to its history from my own observation, and I have preferred taking the descrip-

tion of the fur from one who was engaged in the trade, to extracting a scientific account of the animal from systematic works, which are in the hands of every naturalist."

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

The Sea Otter inhabits the waters which bound the northern parts of America and Asia, and separate those continents from each other, viz. the North Pacific Ocean and the various seas and bays which exist off either shore from Kamtschatka to the Yellow Sea on the Asiatic side, and from Allaska to California on the American.

GENERAL REMARKS.

Although this animal has been known and hunted for more than a century, and innumerable skins of it have been carried to China (where they formerly brought a very high price), as well as to some parts of Europe, yet no good specimens, and but few perfect skulls of it, exist in any museum or private collection. The difference between the dentition of the young and the adult, being in consequence unknown, has misled many naturalists, and caused difficulties in the formation of the genus.

LINNÆUS, strangely enough, placed it among the martens (*Mustela*); ERXLEBEN, in the genus *Lutra*; FLEMING established for it a new genus (*Enhydra*); FISCHER in his synopsis endeavoured to bring this to the Greek (*Enydris*), which was also applied to it by LICHTENSTEIN.

The best generic descriptions of the Sea Otter that we have seen are those of the last named author, who has given two plates representing the skull and the teeth; the latter however were deficient in number, owing to the fact of his specimen being a young animal with its dentition incomplete. In the Philosophical Transactions (1796, No. 17) we have a description of the anatomy of this animal by EVERARD HOME and ARCHIBALD MENZIES, which gives a tolerable idea of its structure.

There are only two authors, so far as we are aware, who have given reliable accounts of the habits of the Sea Otter—STELLER and COOK. The information published by the former is contained in Nov. Com. Acad. Petropolit., vol. ii. p. 267, ann. 1751; the latter gives an account of the animal in his Third Voyage, vol. ii. p. 295.

Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1854. "Enhydra marina, Sea Otter [Pl. CXXXVII, male]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 3, 170–175.

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