



Sea Otter Behavior Study

**A note on animal behavior studies and ethograms: These studies take hours and hours to compile, with endless amount of data to analyze! Just because an otter was swimming for 80% of the time when you were watching him, doesn't mean he will swim all the time!

Sea Otter Focal Sampling (Choose one otter)

Time:	Behavior (Circle one/Describe Other)
Initial: 0 minutes	Forage Locomote Rest Play Other
1 min.	Forage Locomote Rest Play Other
2 min.	Forage Locomote Rest Play Other
3 min.	Forage Locomote Rest Play Other
4 min.	Forage Locomote Rest Play Other
5 min.	Forage Locomote Rest Play Other
6 min.	Forage Locomote Rest Play Other
7 min.	Forage Locomote Rest Play Other
8 min.	Forage Locomote Rest Play Other
9 min.	Forage Locomote Rest Play Other
10 min.	Forage Locomote Rest Play Other
Total Time:	Forage: _____ minutes
	Locomote: _____ minutes
	Rest: _____ minutes
	Play: _____ minutes
	Other: _____ minutes
	Percentages: (number circled / total minutes) ex: 3 locomote / 10 mins = 30%
	Forage %:
	Locomote %:
	Rest %:
	Play%:



MINNESOTA
ZOO

Ethogram

Forage: Activity spent looking for food and/or food particles.

Locomote: Arbitrary motion on land for or self-propelled motion in the water

Rest: Animal is motionless with no apparent activity

Play: Interactions with inanimate objects such as a toy, door, or kennel

Other: Any activity not listed above. Could include social interactions, grooming, mating, etc.

Overall Analysis:

1. What was the most common activity of the Sea Otter that you recorded? Why do you think this is?
2. Is this a natural behavior? How can you tell?
3. What types of enrichment do you find in the otter enclosure?
4. What type of enrichment would you design for the sea otter?

Answer Key

Overall Analysis:

5. What was the most common activity of the Sea Otter that you recorded? Why do you think this is?

Answers may vary. Why could be related to the time of day. For example otters play a lot during the day because they are effective hunters (eating a quarter of their body weight). They also eat a lot at one time meaning they leave a majority of their time for play.

6. Is this a natural behavior? How can you tell?

Yes... similar answer to above. Natural behaviors might include foraging, swimming, playing, or engaging in social interactions. On the other hand, unnatural behaviors might include pulling out fur, not interacting with other otters, begging for food, or being lethargic.

7. What types of enrichment do you find in the otter enclosure?

**Training: operant conditioning and positive reinforcement to keep the minds occupied.
Toys: carrying them, banging them against rocks, playing with them, sleeping with them.
Food: clams, mussels, shelled animals to crack open with their claws and bang them on their bellies
Ice: Eating ice with fish in the middle, playing with it, diving with it.**

8. What type of enrichment would you design for the sea otter?

Answers may vary. Something they could play with. Maybe a ball filled with food that they could swim around with and crack on their bellies. Sea otters could also play together.