

THE OTTER IN EARLY WISCONSIN

A. W. Schorger

The otter (*Lutra canadensis*) was one of the most valuable furs sought by trappers. During the period 1835-1848, the Northern Outfit of the American Fur Company, located on Madeline Island, collected annually an average of 1555 pelts. Based on trapping records the otter was about as plentiful as the beaver. It was much easier, however, to discover the presence of beaver than the wandering otter, so that most trappers devoted their attention to this mammal. The otter has a popular appeal from the ease with which the young can be tamed, a marked contrast to the viciousness of the other mustelids, the skunk excepted. The young in Wisconsin are born mainly in April and May (Knudsen, 1956).

SIZE

Reference books vary widely on the size and weight of otters. Coues (1877) wrote that there was great variation. The average was 4 to 4.5 feet in length, though some individuals attained 5 feet. According to Jackson (1961:383) the total length of adults is 35.4 to 48 inches, and the weight 15 to 20 pounds, rarely to 30 pounds in males. Hamilton (1943) gives a length of 35.4 to 43.3 inches, and a weight of 12 to 15 pounds, the latter being seldom exceeded. Otters in Main weighed from 18 to 20 pounds, 25 being exceptionally heavy (Hardy, 1911:331). Heavy weights have been recorded. On February 17, 1771, George Cartwright (1911:50) shot an otter weighing 33 pounds. A Carolina old male was 4 feet long and weighed 23 pounds; and a specimen from Texas was 4 feet and one inch in length and weighed 20 pounds (Audubon and Bachman, 1851). An adult female (*Lutra c. sonora*), collected at Montezuma Well, Arizona, was 51.2 inches in length and weighed 19.5 pounds (Bailey, 1931); and an adult female from Idaho was 45.3 inches in length and weighed 19 pounds (Merriam, 1891).

I do not know of any data on the dimensions and weights of entire Wisconsin otters given by fully trustworthy observers. George Knudsen of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has examined a large number of carcasses obtained from trappers. Quite fresh carcasses of adult males weighed 19 to 22 pounds; length from tip of nose to tip of tail vertebrae 46 to 48 inches. The

green skin with adhering fat would add an additional 3 to 4 pounds. The carcasses of adult females weighed 15 to 18 pounds, and the lengths were 44 to 45 inches (Unpublished).

FOOD

The food of the otter consists primarily of fish and crayfish, with some mussels, amphibians, insects, and birds. In 1680 Hennepin (1903) appropriated a paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*), which an otter was eating along the Wisconsin section of the Mississippi. Along the banks of the Fox and Wisconsin rivers Featherstonhaugh (1836) found great quantities of mussel shells left by otters and muskrats. D. Cartwright (1875:60) found a bushel of the heads of bass, supposedly rejected by the otter, in the Lake Superior region. One trapper reported to Knudsen (1957:61, 62) that he watched otters catch five northern pike and eat only the heads; while another stated that he saw a "lot of bass heads" on the ice. For some unknown reason the heads of bass appear to be undesirable. Jackson (1961:388) observed in Bayfield County an otter eating a chub, beginning at the head. At Great Bear Lake, Mackenzie District, otters usually took the heads of the fish caught in nets and left the bodies (Richardson, 1829). It has been stated that all but the tail of a fish is eaten, and that when plentiful the otter may take only a bite or so from the head of each fish captured (Godwin, 1935). Apparently the head is the most desirable part of most species of fish. A study by Knudsen (1957:53) of the food habits of otters that had been trapped revealed the following frequency of occurrence: fish 90 percent, crayfish 50 percent, insects 20 percent, and debris 30 percent. In frequency of occurrence of fish, game fish were 30 percent and rough fish 80 percent.

Otters will dive deeply to secure food. Ben Gustavson, a commercial fisherman of Bayfield, Wisconsin, on February 24, 1939, found a drowned otter on one of his baited set lines. The bait was in 42 feet of water and 500 feet from the shore of Bass Island, one of the Apostle group (Waskow, 1939; Scott, 1939).

The teeth become worn with age and kind of food. An old male in Carolina had teeth much worn (Audubon and Backman, 1851). An otter trapper near Sturgeon Bay was believed to be old since "his teeth were nearly all gone," that is worn (Sturgeon Bay, 1896). The teeth of sea otters (*Enhydra lutra*) approximately 4 to 5 years old show marked wear, induced apparently by the preferred diet of the individual (Barabash-Nikiforov, 1962). The teeth of some of the Wisconsin otters examined by George Knudsen were "worn to the bone.

TRAILS

Otters are great travelers and seldom stay long in one place. They will take to land to cross from one stream or lake to another and make cutoff trails at the bends of streams. Cartwright (1875: 60, 61) states that he has known them to cross from the head of one stream to another, a distance of two miles. He termed the trails portages. The winter of 1837–38 Kingston (1879) and companion explored the Lemonweir River for pine timber. Concerning their return down the river he wrote. "Following the otter trails or slides cutting the bends of the river, we found the distance greatly shortened."

TRAPPING

There is no clear description of the method by which the Indians took otter prior to the availability of the steel trap. Hennepin (1903:517) stated merely that the Indians caught otters in traps and killed them with arrows or shot. Lahontan (1905) wrote: "These Traps are made of five* Stakes plac'd in the form of an oblong Quadrangle, so as to make a little Chamber, the Door of which is kept up, and supported by a Stake. To the middle of this stake they tye a string which passes thro' a little fork, and has a Trout well fastened to the end of it. Now, when the otter comes on shoar, and sees this bait, he puts above half his Body into that fatal Cage, in order to swallow the Fish; but he no sooner touches, than the string to which 'tis made fast pulls away the Stake that supports the Door, upon which an heavy and loaded Door falls upon his Reins and quashes him." This was a deadfall.

The deadfall could be used only on land while the steel trap could be set on land and in the water. Cartwright (1875:62) opposed a set on land. He favored setting the trap in about four inches of water where a slide entered and on the side of it. The reason for this is that the otter's fore feet are short and wide apart so that if the trap were placed in the middle of the slide the feet were unlikely to touch the pan of the trap. Regarding trapping at the slide, Newhouse (1874) states: "Spencer J. Clarke, . . . who formerly trapped in Wisconsin, recommends setting the trap where the Otter comes out of the water in the following position: The Otter swims to the shore, and as soon as his fore feet strike the ground his hind feet sink to the bottom and he walks out erect. Find the point where the Otter's hind feet strike the bottom, and set the trap there." The otter is frequently abroad in the daytime so that formerly many were captured by shooting.

* "Five" should read "small". It is *petits* in the original (Lahontan. 1703. Nouveaux voyages . . . dans l'Amerique Septentrionale. Le Haye. p. 85).

UTILIZATION

The Indians used the skin for medicine bags and ceremonial purposes. Carver (1784) was at a dance in western Wisconsin when: "I could not help laughing at a singular childish custom I observed they introduced into this dance . . . Most of the members carried in their hands an otter or martin's skin, which being taken whole from the body and filled with wind, on being compressed made a squeaking noise through a piece of wood organically formed and fixed in its mouth. When this instrument was presented to the face of any of the company, and the sound emitted, the person receiving it fell down to appearance dead."

The fur is very durable and equalled only by that of the wolverine, On the basis of 100 for otter, the wearing quality of other aquatic mammals such as beaver is 90 percent and muskrat 45 percent (Innis, 1927). The skins are used for collars, trim, and ladies coats.

Trappers were frequently forced to eat the animals they caught. On February 17, 1771, George Cartwright (1911:66) wrote in his journal that otters are "hard and strong eating."

PRICES

The largest market for otter fur was China. This fact is expressed frequently in the correspondence of the American Fur Company. On November 30, 1821, R. Crooks wrote to J. J. Astor that the otters will go to China (Am. Fur Co.). H. H. Sibley of Fort Snelling was informed on April 7, 1840, that the only hope for otters was resumption of trade with China; and on December 25, Pierre Chouteau and Company of St. Louis was told that there was only a limited demand for the furs for caps. A letter of April 4, 1843, to Joseph Rogers, Toronto, stated that the supply of pelts exceeded the demand of the market in Canton.

Considerable value was placed on otter in 1760 in Milwaukee by an English trader who refused payment for supplies except with otter and the finest fox skins (Western Hist. Co., 1881). The prices of the pelts varied with the demand and quality. In August, 1820, the American Fur Company credited Porlier and Rouse of Green Bay with 50 otters at \$3.53 each. R. Crooks wrote on April 23, 1822, to J. J. Astor that \$3.75 would be paid for Lake Superior otter, and \$3.25 for those from the St. Peter (Minnesota) River. Four days later he wrote to S. Abbott at Mackinac to pay only \$3.00 for otter since there were on hand the entire collections for 1820 and 1821. In June, 1827, 13 otters from La Bulle (Wausau) were invoiced at \$2.50 each.

The pelts received in 1835 from Solomon Juneau of Milwaukee were graded and priced as follows: No. 1, \$7.00; No. 2, \$4.50; No.

3, \$2.25; and cubs \$0.75. Juneau in 1840 made several purchases at prices ranging from \$5.00 to \$7.00. Myrick and Weld (1843), merchants at La Crosse, in 1843 purchased pelts at the very low price of 20 shillings (\$2.50). In November, 1847, the prices paid at Prairie du Chien were: No. 1, \$4.00; No. 2, \$3.00; No. 3, \$2.00; and No. 1 cub, \$0.50–\$0.75. The winter of 1856–57, in Buffalo County, Cooke (1940) was pleased to receive \$2.00 for an otter pelt. Low prices prevailed in 1859 at Eau Claire (Eau Claire, 1859), the range being \$0.75 to \$3.00. In 1880, in Waukesha County, the pelts were said to be worth \$9.00 to \$20.00 (Western Hist. Co., 1880).

ABUNDANCE

In the first half of the 19th century, the otter appears to have been somewhat more abundant than the beaver in the Great Lakes region. Compilation of 159 inventories at various posts of the American Fur Company gave 51,067 beavers and 65,781 otters, a ratio of 1 beaver : 1.29 otters. There are insufficient data to determine the number of otters collected in Wisconsin in any one year. It has been possible from the papers of the American Fur Company possessed by the Wisconsin Historical Society to compile for a number of years the collections made by the Northern Outfit at La Pointe, Madeline Island (Table 1). Essentially all of the pelts were taken in northern Wisconsin. The principal subposts were at Lac du Flambeau and Lac Court Oreilles. The year 1835, e.g., represents the pelts taken during the winter of 1834–35.

The table shows a steady decline in the number of otters taken. Fur statistics show fluctuations in numbers, but there does not appear to be any cyclic phenomenon for the otter (Hewitt, 1921). During the 1968 season, 1007 otters, with an average value of \$21.50, were taken in Wisconsin, so that the present status of the species is gratifying.

TABLE 1. OTTERS COLLECTED AT LA POINTE

YEAR	NO. OF PELTS	YEAR	NO. OF PELTS
1835.....	4,831	1842.....	1,072
1836.....	1,842	1843.....	1,005
1837.....	2,997	1844.....	512
1838.....	1,270	1845.....	478
1839.....	2,384	1846.....	1,140
1840.....	1,574	1847.....	559
1841.....	1,791	1848.....	321

DISTRIBUTION

The otter is generally found on rivers, large creeks, and interior lakes. Large lakes such as Michigan are less attractive; however, when Fonda (1868) was carrying mail between Green Bay and Chicago the winter of 1827–28, an otter or a fisher would glide from the ice-fields to a retreat in the bank of the lake. The otter has been recorded for nearly every county in the state. More recent records and specimens examined are to be found on the map by Jackson (1961:384). According to Strong (1883) it was to be found occasionally in the northern half of the state. Subsequently Cory (1912) gave it an increased range, "the greater portion of Wisconsin." That the otter still has a wide distribution is to be seen in Fig. 1

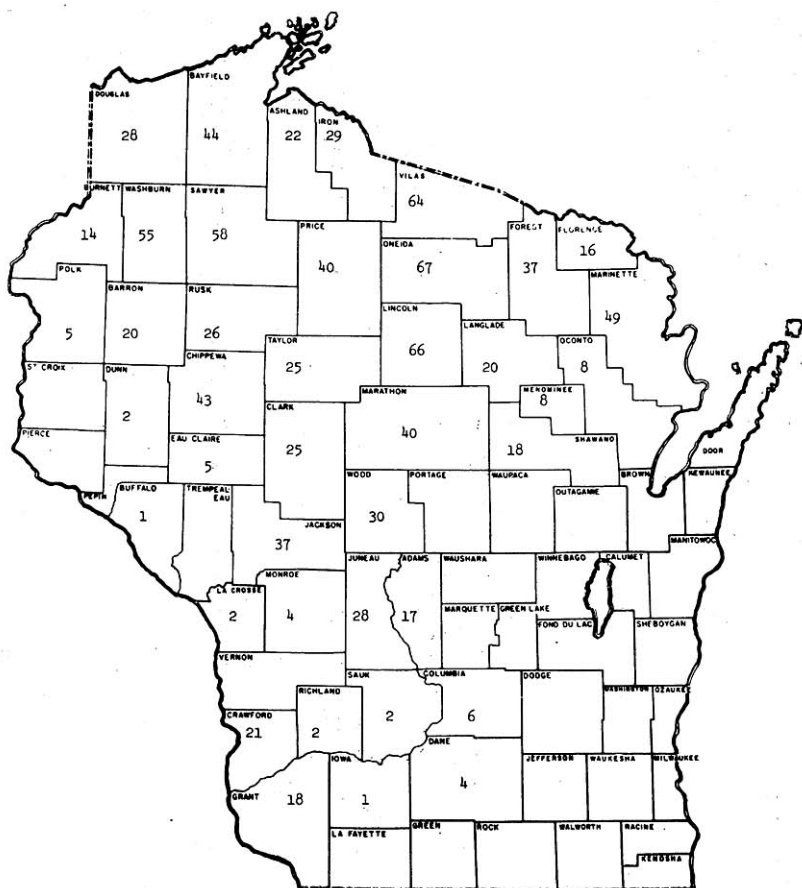


FIGURE 1. Otter Harvest by Counties in 1968.

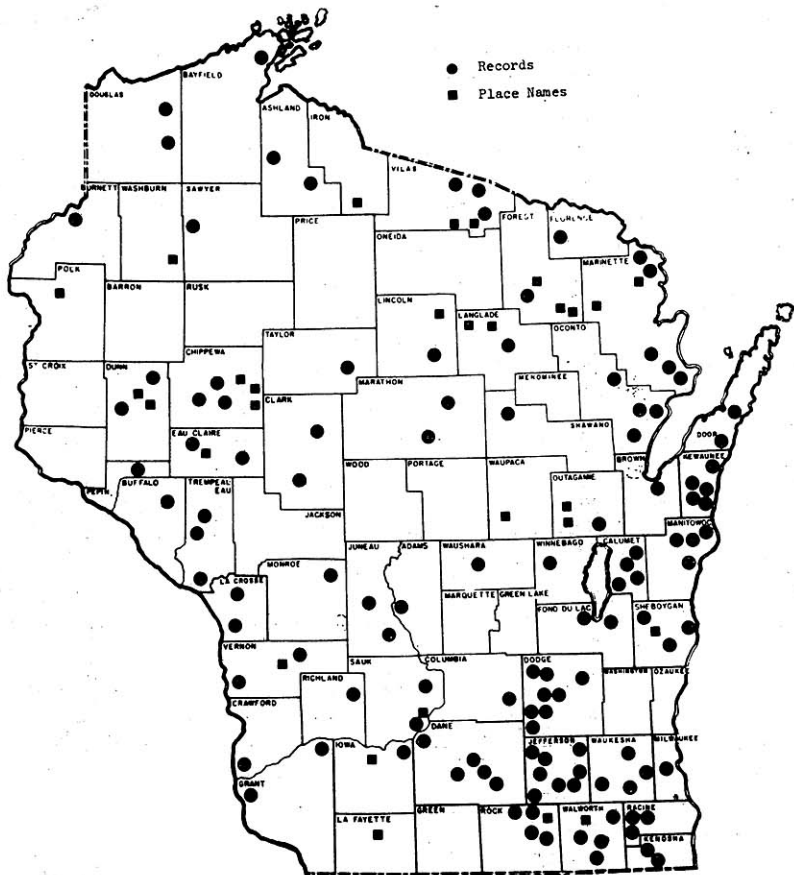


FIGURE 2. Early Distribution of the Otter in Wisconsin.

where the harvest in 1968 is shown by counties. The early records and place names are shown in Fig. 2. The Sea Lion and Seal lakes of northern Wisconsin, not plotted, presumably were named from the otter through erroneous identification. A swimming otter resembles a seal.

Adams.—It was stated in 1919 that the otter no longer occurred (Cole and Smythe, 1919). This statement must have been made from lack of sufficient information as it is still quite common along the Wisconsin.

Ashland.—In the spring of 1885 E. B. Gordon and H. A. Mallory had a fine lot of otter and other furs taken near Glidden (Glidden, 1885). In the early months of 1885, George and Frank Bell trapped on the headwaters of the Bad River, said to be 15 miles west of

Penokee, and caught a number of otters (Ashland, 1885). The farthest west tributaries of Bad River are in the town of Marengo, about 10 miles from Penokee.

Otter Island is one of the Apostle group.

Bayfield.—A Mr. Hayward of Bayfield had a fine lot of otter pelts (Bayfield, 1877). Jackson (1908) and Cory (1912) examined specimens from the county. At present it is one of the best otter counties.

Brown.—The otter killed by a farmer with a heavy whip (Green Bay, 1895) was very probably traveling on land.

Buffalo.—The family of Cooke (1940) settled within five miles of Gilmanton in the fall of 1856. His father did much hunting and trapping, and otter was among the furs marketed.

Burnett.—Curot (1911) was in charge of a post on the Yellow River the winter of 1803–04. His entries show that he purchased 16 otters.

Calumet.—An otter was shot near Chilton (Chilton, 1880). Two were killed by N. Cheseboro near Clinton in 1887 at which time otters were rarely seen (Chilton, 1887). One was killed near Brothertown in April, 1897 (Chilton, 1897); and another was trapped at Forest Junction, town of Brillion, in March, 1899 (Chilton, 1899).

Chippewa.—Cartwright (1875:245), the winter of 1857–58, trapped otters on O'Neil Creek, town of Eagle Point. In the spring of 1865, otters were being caught in large numbers (Chippewa Falls, 1865). A large shipment of furs made by Mairet, Allen and Company of Chippewa Falls contained many otters (Chippewa Falls, 1871);

Otter Lake, town of Colburn, is drained by Otter Creek which flows north then west into Yellow River. Little Otter Creek rises in the town of Thorpe, Clark County, flows south by west and enters the Wolf River in the town of Delmar, Chippewa County.

Clark.—The winter of 1844–45, Manly (1927:56) and companion while trapping on the Black River above Neillsville found two otters coming towards them on the ice. One was killed, the other escaped. At the time of settlement of Neillsville, 1844, otter and other mammals were plentiful (Neillsville, 1873; French, 1875; Curtiss-Wedge, 1918).

Columbia.—The American Fur Company received from the Portage post 6 otters in 1827, and 17 in 1840. Wayne B. Dyer came to the present site of Columbus in 1843 and trapped many otters along the Crawfish (Butterfield, 1880). A few otters had been observed during the past year in the Wisconsin River between Kilbourn (Wisconsin Dells) and Portage (Cole, 1918).

Crawford.—In the early days H. L. Dousman had at Prairie du Chien a tame otter that would catch fish for him "at his bidding" (Bunnell, 1897).

Otter Creek, town of Kickapoo, flows east into the Kickapoo.

Dane.—When Stoner (Madison, 1899) came to Madison in 1838. the surrounding marshes and streams were full of otters and other game. The first settlers who arrived at Mazomanie in 1843 found otters and other fur bearers common (Kittle, 1900). A large otter was trapped on the north shore of Lake Mendota on April 18, 1854 (Madison, 1854). One was captured by D. A. Waterman, of the town of Rutland, in the Yahara near Lake Kegonsa in March, 1891 (Madison, 1891; Carr, 1891). According to Brown (1915) it occurred formerly at Lake Wingra.

Dodge.—Two otters were taken at Fox Lake in December, 1858 (Fox Lake, 1858). One weighing 16.5 pounds was killed by L. Rushlow at Beaver Dam Lake in April, 1860 (Beaver Dam, 1860). Another was caught at Fox Lake in January, 1867 (Fox Lake, 1867). A large otter was trapped in 1877 in the town of Elba by E. Sweet (Portage, 1877). A trapper caught two in the Horicon Marsh in November 1884 (Delevan, 1884). The winter of 1887–88 one was trapped in the town of Portland (Waterloo, 1888). According to Snyder (1902) the otter was common at the time of settlement. In the early 1890's Adam Ergotz, a former professional trapper, found a slide on Beaver Dam Lake but could not catch the otter. One was captured since 1890.

Door.—An otter, then rare, was caught by R. Haash at Forestville in the spring of 1887 (Sturgeon Bay, 1887). One weighing 20 pounds was trapped at Lilly Bay in March, 1896 (Sturgeon Bay, 1896). Lilly Bay is on the Lake Michigan shore near Clark Lake.

Douglas.—In the spring of 1766 while Henry (1921) was at Chequamegon Bay, the Chippewa went to war with the Sioux. A battle was fought at a river which was undoubtedly the Brule, as it was the traditional battle place for the two tribes. They returned with a rich cargo of furs and Henry purchased from them and other Indians 150 packs of beaver and 25 packs of otter and marten skins. The Brule was a noted stream for trapping. When Allen (1834) was at La Pointe in 1832 he was informed that the trading posts on this river took in primarily muskrats, bears, and otters. Cram (1841) reported that at the proper season the Indians resorted to the Brule to trap otter and beaver which occurred throughout its length; however, their numbers had been greatly reduced. Cory (1912) examined specimens from the county.

Dunn.—The winter of 1857–58, Cartwright (1875) and companions caught otters on Pine Creek, town of Sand Creek, and on Gilbert Creek, town of Lucas. Altogether the party of three caught 50 otters, most of them in the county.

Otter Creek, the two branches of which rise in the town of Wilson, flows south into Hay River, town of Otter Creek. Little Otter Creek rises in the later town and flows west into Otter Creek.

Eau Claire.—In the fall of 1883 “several more” otters were caught in Seven Mile Creek, town of Seymour (Eau Claire, 1883). Charles Martin, the famous hunter, caught an otter near Augusta in October, 1897 (Augusta, 1897).

Otter Creek rises in the town of Otter Creek, flows northwest and empties into the Eau Claire, town of Seymour.

Florence.—C. Hanson while hunting along Pine Creek, town of Long Lake, in October, 1884, saw seven otters and killed three of them (Florence, 1884).

Fond du Lac.—In 1852, a few miles east of Fond du Lac, otter and other game were “too numerous to attract much attention” (Titus, 1936). In 1881 the capture of an otter on the west side of Lake Winnebago by Jacob H. Horn resulted in the comment that it was the first taken in many years (Fond du Lac, 1881).

Forest.—Two males were killed two miles west of Crandon on February 12, 1908 (Jackson, 1910). Cory (1912) examined specimens from the county.

Otter Creek rises in Otter Springs, town of Lincoln, and flows northeast into the Peshtigo. A second Otter Creek, town of Wabeno, flows southeast into Otter Lake.

Grant.—The fall and winter of 1845–46, Robert and William McCloud, at Muscoda, purchased otter and other furs from the Indians (Butterfield and Ogle, 1884). In the spring of 1858, Austin Birge captured a large otter in the bluffs along the Mississippi (Prairie du Chien, 1858).

Iowa.—Cory (1912) examined specimens from Arena.

Otter Creek rises in the town of Dodgeville and flows north into the Wisconsin.

Iron.—Otter Lake is in the northern end of the town of Oma.

Jefferson.—The Coe (1908) family settled on the west bank of Rock River, town of Ixonia, in 1839. The following winter Indians camped on the opposite bank and caught otter and other fur bearers. In 1855, while going down Bark River, Cartwright (1875: 161) shot an otter. Within two weeks he and a companion captured sixteen. In the spring of 1879, an otter was shot in the town of Hebron (Fort Atkinson, 1879). Six large otters were taken at Waterloo early in 1881 (Waterloo, 1881). According to Hawkins

(1940) the otter was never common at Faville Grove, and it disappeared from the Crawfish River about 1883. About 1882 an otter was trapped at Faville Grove and another at Mud Lake, town of Lake Mills. In April, 1887, Frank Tooker shot one on Bark River at Ft. Atkinson (Ft. Atkinson, 1887). A very large otter weighing 25 pounds was killed on Bark River by Roy Chase the spring of 1890 (Ft. Atkinson, 1890). In July, 1901, there was an otter slide at Lake Koshkonong, section 34, town of Summer (Jackson, 1908).

Juneau.—The winter of 1837–38, Kingston (1879) and companion traveled down the Lemonweir, following the otter trails. In December, 1890, George Dillon of Lemonweir, town of Lemonweir, trapped an otter 44 inches in length (Mauston, 1890).

Kenosha.—In a letter dated November 7, 1837, Quarles (1933) wrote from Southport (Kenosha) that otters were very plentiful on his contemplated farm on Fox River, and sought information on trapping them. In autumn Indians came from the north to the town of Salem and camped on the Fox River. Here deer, otter, and some other fur bearers were abundant (Lyman, 1916).

Kewaunee.—The otter was reported scarce when one was taken late in 1886 a few miles west of Kewaunee (Kewaunee, 1886). An otter, the first in many years, was seen in April, 1893, in East Twin River, town of Carlton (Kewaunee, 1893). One was caught in the town of Ahnapee in October, 1894 (Ahnapee, 1894). In October, 1896, quite a number were shot along the Kewaunee River (Kewaunee, 1896). M. Vesseley trapped a large otter in the town of West Kewaunee in January, 1897 (Kewaunee, 1897).

LaCrosse.—At the time of settlement there were otters in Lewis Valley through which flows Fleming Creek (Sisson, 1955). There were brought to La Crosse the pelts of four otters which were trapped a few miles from the city the winter of 1880–81 (La Crosse, 1881).

Lafayette.—Jesse Shull came to the present site of Shullsburg in 1818 and established a post to trade for furs (Gregory, 1932). In so sparsely wooded a county, it is probable that otter and an occasional beaver were the only valuable furs obtainable.

Otter Creek rises in the town of Mineral Point, Iowa County, and flows south into the Pecatonica.

Langlade.—Otters were among the fur bearers taken (Dessureau, 1922). Cory (1912) examined specimens from the county.

Otter Lake is in the town of Elcho. There is also a small Otter Lake in the northwest corner of the town of Parrish.

Lincoln.—Two otters were trapped in May, 1884, on Pine River, town of Pine River (Merrill, 1884).

Otter Lake is in the town of Skanawan.

Manitowoc.—August Sprech, in January, 1894, complained of the ravages of otters at his carp pond at Mishicot (Manitowoc, 1894). In the fall of 1895, Joseph Stangel caught in the town of Two Creeks an otter weighing 27 pounds (Kewaunee, 1895). Another was shot by Peter Zinn in the fall of 1896 (Two Rivers, 1896). The winter of 1897–98, trappers at Neshoto (Shoto), town of Two Rivers, captured five otters (Two Rivers, 1898).

Marathon.—In the early days Michael De Jardin, a Chippewa, assisted his father at Mosinee in trapping otter and other fur bearers which were plentiful (Ladu, 1907). The small post of the American Fur Company at La Bulle (Wausau) shipped 13 otters in 1827.

Marinette.—Stanislaus Shappus reported that he had on hand June 27, 1834, at the American Fur Company post on the Menominee River, only one pack of furs in which were some otters. On June 5, 1835, he had 80 otters. A black otter was trapped on the Peshtigo in December, 1875 (Marinette and Peshtigo, 1875). In November, 1889, two otters were killed near the village of Peshtigo (Marinette, 1889). The fall of 1895, Gus Wendt caught two otters up the Peshtigo (Peshtigo, 1895). One was shot in November, 1898 (Peshtigo, 1898). At that time the capture of the fourth otter near the village of Peshtigo was reported (Marinette, 1898). The same fall Tom Bone trapped two otters six miles up the Menominee (Marinette, 1898.1).

Otter Lake is in the town of Pembine. Otter Creek, town of Silver Creek, flows east into the Peshtigo.

Marquette.—On December 5, 1824, Jacques Porlier wrote to A. Grignon that he had obtained 12 otter pelts from the Indians at Buffalo Lake (Porlier, 1911). In 1849 there were otters and other fur bearers (Acme, 1890). In July, 1880, a den of young otters was discovered at the foot of Buffalo Lake. They were being raised on a bottle (Montello, 1880). An otter was seen swimming in the mill pond at Westfield, October 1, 1882. It evaded capture (Montello, 1882).

Milwaukee.—The otter was listed by Lapham (1853) as one of the indigenous mammals of the county.

Monroe.—In the late fall of 1844, Manly (1927:52) found sign of otter on the headwaters of the Lemonweir and set traps.

Oconto.—J. I. Bovee caught two otters on the upper Pensaukee in the spring of 1884 (Oconto, 1884). In the fall of 1885 an otter was caught in Leigh (Lee) Lake, town of Bagley, and another was shot within the corporate limits of Oconto (Oconto, 1885). A large otter was killed in December, 1886, a few miles west of Oconto where it was considered rare (Oconto, 1886).

Oneida.—Specimens from the county were examined by Jackson (1908).

Outagamie.—In April, 1873, Louis West shot an otter on the edge of the city of Appleton (Appleton, 1873).

Black Otter Lake is in the town of Hortonia. It is drained by Black Otter Creek which flows north into the Wolf.

Pepin.—On April 16, 1888, Benjamin Dickinson shot an otter on Plumer (Plummer) Lake (Durand, 1888). It was 4 feet in length from tip to tip and weighed 20 pounds. The lake, in sections 30 and 31, town of Durand, has nearly disappeared.

Polk.—According to Surface Water Resources of Polk County (1961), Otter Lake with an area of 8.3 acres is in the town of Milltown.

Racine.—Dr. H. V. Ogden had in his collection a skull from the town of Waterford (Cory, 1912). On December 12, 1879, Charles Graves speared near Waterford an otter weighing 20 pounds (Waterford, 1879). E. Alaxson, in April, 1886, killed one otter and wounded another which escaped (Waterford, 1886).

Richland.—C. C. Derrickson caught a black otter in Willow Creek, in the town of Willow (Richland Center, 1889).

Rock.—Caswell (n.d.) came with his parents to section 7, town of Fulton, in 1837. At that time there were many otters. On February 24, 1839, Ogden (1839) wrote in his diary that he saw two otters in the town of Milton, presumably on Otter Creek. This creek's name was derived from the number of otter slides on its banks when first surveyed (Guernsney, 1856; Smith, 1872). An otter was captured alive on Bass Creek in the town of Rock in January, 1870 (Janesville, 1870). In the spring of 1876 an otter was taken at Otter Creek near Milton (Janesville, 1876). In June, 1902, Jackson (1961:383) saw tracks along Otter Creek, section 5 (probably 3) town of Milton.

Otter Creek rises in the town of Lima, flows west into the town of Milton, then north into Lake Koshkonong.

Sauk.—Canfield (1870:38) stated that the otter was "quite plentiful." In March, 1887, a trapper of North Freedom caught an otter four feet in length in the Baraboo River where there were several others (Wonewoc, 1887). Occasionally seen along the Wisconsin River (Cole, 1922).

Otter Creek rises in the town of Freedom, flows south and enters the Wisconsin 1.5 miles below Sauk City.

Sawyer.—The American Fur Company on July 22, 1822, reported 80 otters among the furs received from Lac Court Oreilles.

Sheboygan.—In 1859 a boy caught two young otters near Sheboygan (Sheboygan, 1859). Otters were present and their skins were purchased by traders (Buchen, 1944). Prior to 1870 the Indians took in the town of Rhine about \$800 worth of deer, muskrat, and otter in a season (Gerend, 1920).

Otter Pond, very small, is in the northwest corner of the town of Plymouth.

Taylor.—The summer of 1885, A. Bonneville of Medford was keeping two young otters as pets (Medford, 1885).

Trempealeau.—James Reed, a well known trapper, settled at Trempealeau in 1840 when otter was one of the abundant fur bearers (Pierce, 1915). In the spring of 1850, Grignon (1914) traded with the Indians who had trapped up the Trempealeau and secured a fine lot of furs including otter. Two otters were seen on a slide on the Trempealeau as late as 1880 (Bunnell, 1897). The species disappeared long ago (Curtiss-Wedge, 1917).

Vernon.—The winter of 1839–40 Robert Douglas came upon an otter using a slide on the Bad Axe River (Polleys, 1948). Mather (1896) and his trapping companion caught several otters on the headwaters of the Kickapoo (erroneously called the Bad Axe) the winter of 1855–56.

Otter Creek rises in the town of Webster, flows southeast, and enters the Kickapoo at La Farge.

Vilas.—Perrault (1909–10) in 1791 bought of Dufund Dufault the furs, including one pack of otter, for which he had traded at Lac du Flambeau. The winter of 1804–05 Malhiot (1910) was in charge of a post at this lake. On October 5, 1804, his inventory of furs included 44 otters, and on May 21, 1805, he recorded a return of 20 otters. Cram (1841) stated that the Lac Vieux Desert region was tolerably well provided with otters. In the spring of 1857 H. P. Poler of Eagle Lake arrived in Wausau (1857) with furs including otter. Jackson (1910) had the report that during the winter of 1908–09 otters were quite common at Oak Lake and Mamie Lake, which are at the Michigan boundary.

Otter Lake is in the town of Lincoln, and Otter Rapids on the Wisconsin River about five miles west of the village of Eagle River.

Walworth.—W.H.M. came to the town of East Troy in 1845. Honey Creek was full of fish, and lakes and streams were "alive with muskrat, mink, and otter" (Burlington, 1882). In the early days otters were seen occasionally, the town of Sugar Creek being mentioned specifically (Western Hist. Co., 1882). The Indians hunted otter in the vicinity of Lake Geneva (Simmons, 1875).

Otter (Wandewaga) Lake is in the northeast corner of the town of Sugar Creek.

Washburn.—At present one of the most productive counties for otter.

Waukesha.—A settler who came to Waukesha in the spring of 1841 wrote that an otter would occasionally plunge into the Little Fox (Waukesha, 1890). Two young otters were captured by Rolla Clark at Big Bend, town of Vernon, near the Fox River in April, 1876 (Waukesha, 1876). About a dozen otters were taken in a month's time during the past season (c. 1880) by A. Vieu, who lived near Little Muskego Lake, town of Muskego (Western Hist. Co., 1880). An otter measuring three feet and eleven inches was shot at the head of Eagle (Spring) Lake. It was carrying a trap (Kaukauna, 1889).

Waupaca.—Otter Lake is in the southeastern part of the town of Farmington.

Waushara.—A farmer living a few miles north of Wautoma is said to have trapped a large otter (Chilton, 1889.1).

Winnebago.—At the Menominee payment at Lake Poygan in 1847 the Indians traded a large number of otter and other furs (Anon., 1847).

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