

Sea Otter Puppets and Pantomime



Topics

Sea Otters, Adaptations

Grades

PreK-2

Site

Indoors

Duration

30 minutes

Materials

For each student

- **Sea Otter Puppet** cutout (available on Monterey Bay Aquarium's website)
- Brown paper lunch bag
- Scissors

For the class

- Crayons
- Glue
- Books with sea otter habitats and prey

Vocabulary

habitat, prey

National Science

Education Standards

Life Science (K-4)

The characteristics of organisms
Life cycles of organisms
Organisms and environments

Science as Inquiry (K-4)

Abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry
Understanding about scientific inquiry

Overview

What do sea otters do all day? What body parts and behaviors do otters have to help them survive in their ocean homes? Students learn about these body parts and pantomime otter behaviors. They each make a sea otter puppet and use it to demonstrate common sea otter experiences.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify sea otter body parts.
- Pantomime and sequence four sea otter behaviors .

Background

Sea otters are active marine mammals. They are warm-blooded, breathe using lungs and produce milk to nurse their young. Sea otters also have thick fur, paws, large webbed hind flippers and a tail. They constantly groom themselves to spread oils over their coats.

Sea otter **habitat** is close to shore and often in the canopies of dense kelp forests. A kelp forest ecosystem supports an amazing diversity of marine life through which a sea otter forages for its favorite foods. An adult sea otter will eat 23 to 33 percent of its body weight each day. Even with many possible food choices, individual sea otters will typically eat one to three different types of **prey** and will pass up other food options in search of favorite foods. Abalones, sea stars, sea urchins, crabs, snails and octopuses are just a few of the animals that sea otters depend on for survival. Many of these invertebrates come equipped with shells or exoskeletons for protection. Sometimes otters will crack open these hard shells and skeletons by using a small rock as a hammer. Other times otters will place a large rock on their chest to serve as an anvil and to bang snails and crabs against. They are one of the very few animal species known to use tools.



VOCABULARY

Prey: an animal that is eaten by another animal

Habitat: a home for plants and animals that provides food and protection

Without the thick layer of blubber that whales and other marine mammals have, otters rely on extremely thick and water-resistant fur for insulation. They spread oils from their cheeks over their fur and perform somersaults and “log rolls” in order to clean debris from their coats and waterproof their fur. While grooming, otters also blow air bubbles into their dense undercoat, an action that adds buoyancy and insulation.

Sea otters have very few predators. Aside from humans, the only other predator of sea otters in California is the great white shark. In the past, sea otters were hunted by humans almost to extinction for their fur. There are now laws to protect them but they are still a threatened species.

Teacher Preparation

1. Source a book about sea otters, their habitat and prey. A good option is the book *Pup's Supper*, available on the Monterey Bay Aquarium's website: http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/lc/activities/book_pups_supper.asp
2. Make copies of the **Sea Otter Puppet** cutout for each student.
3. Gather paper lunch bags, crayons, scissors and glue for the class.

Procedure

EXPLORE SEA OTTER BEHAVIOR AS A CLASS.

1. READ A SEA OTTER STORY.

Read a story about sea otters. Make sure students have seen pictures of sea otters and their homes in the book.

2. DISCUSS STUDENTS' DAILY BEHAVIORS.

Ask students what they do in the morning to get ready for the day. *For example, we start out resting and next we groom ourselves (such as brushing our hair). Then we eat something and finally get moving.*

3. PANTOMIME SEA OTTER BODY PARTS.

Tell students that sea otters also have behaviors they do every day. With the class, imagine that you are all sea otters and pantomime putting on sea otter body parts: rub thick fur on your body, kick up your feet for your flippers, wiggle your tail, wave your paws, bare your teeth and scratch your whiskers.

4. DISCUSS SEA OTTER HABITATS.

Discuss where sea otters might rest. *Do they have a bed? Sea otters live in the kelp forest canopy. Together, wrap yourselves in the kelp to keep from drifting away and pretend to be resting.*

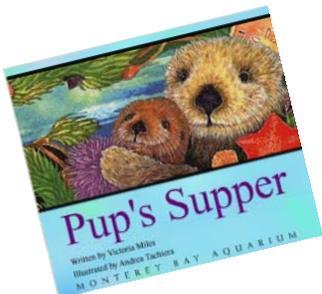
5. PANTOMIME A SEA OTTER GROOMING.

With the class, pretend you are otters waking up and grooming yourselves. *Sea otters rub their paws against their cheek to collect oils that they rub over their fur. Sometimes they roll to further spread the oils, which help to keep water away from their body.*



ELL TIPS

The book *Pup's Supper* is available in Spanish on Monterey Bay Aquarium's website. Support in a primary language can help an English language learner with new vocabulary.



6. DISCUSS AND PANTOMIME A SEA OTTER EATING.

Show images of some of the foods sea otters like to eat, such as sea urchins, abalones, clams and crabs. *Otters dive to catch prey on the ocean floor. Sometimes they will store their food items in pouches of skin found under each forearm. Next, otters will float on their backs and use a rock to crack open the hard shells of their prey.* Pretend to eat.

7. PANTOMIME A SEA OTTER SWIMMING.

Finally, the otters are ready to move. Swim away together! Sea otters can be found in groups, called rafts. Students could form a raft of resting otters.

STUDENTS MAKE SEA OTTER HAND PUPPETS.

1. STUDENTS CONSTRUCT A SEA OTTER PUPPET.

Pass out a brown paper lunch bag and a **Sea Otter Puppet** cutout to each student. Students color and then cut out the sea otter body parts. They glue them to a brown paper lunch bag to make a puppet.

2. STUDENTS CHOOSE PREY ITEMS TO MAKE FOR THEIR PUPPETS.

Sea otters tend to have food preferences, eating only one to three different kinds of prey. Use the clam from the **Sea Otter Puppet** cutout or have students draw a different prey item to glue onto their otter puppet.

3. STUDENTS MODEL SEA OTTER BEHAVIORS USING THE PUPPET.

Have the students use the puppet to show you or other students what sea otters do. See if they can recall some of the behaviors on their own.

4. STUDENTS SEQUENCE SEA OTTER BEHAVIORS.

Students write up the sequence of sea otter behaviors they modeled with the puppet. They should write complete sentences using words such as: first, then, next and finally. They can add describing words about sea otter body parts, habitat or prey.

Extensions

- Play sea otter charades. Have a student act out one of the sea otter behaviors. Let the other students guess which behavior is being modeled.
- Make copies of the sea otter favorite foods animal fact cards. Students can color the cards and play games such as Concentration and Go Fish.

Resources

Website

Monterey Bay Aquarium. www.montereybayaquarium.org

Find information about the sea otters and kelp forest habitat at the Aquarium. Watch the the sea otter web cam, print the sea otter puppet pieces and play games with the Sea Otter Favorite Foods Animal Fact Cards.



CONSERVATION TIPS

Sea otters are vulnerable to run-off waste from our streets. Keep your backyard and neighborhood free from trash. Use non-toxic materials in your yard and to clean your car. These actions will help keep our oceans clean for sea otters and other animals.

**THE MISSION OF THE
MONTEREY BAY
AQUARIUM
IS TO INSPIRE
CONSERVATION OF THE
OCEANS.**

Books

Oliver and the Oil Spill. Chandrasekhar, Aruna. Landmark Editions, Inc., 1991.

Pup's Supper. Miles, Victoria. Monterey Bay Aquarium, 1999.

Sea Elf. Ryder, Joanne. Morrow Junior Books, 1993.

Sea Otters. Riedman, Marianne. Monterey Bay Aquarium, 1997.

Standards

California Science Standards

Grade K: 1a; 2a, c; 4b, c, e

Grade 1: 2a, b, c; 4a, d

Grade 2: 4d

California Language Arts Standards

Reading

Writing

Written and Oral English Language

Conventions

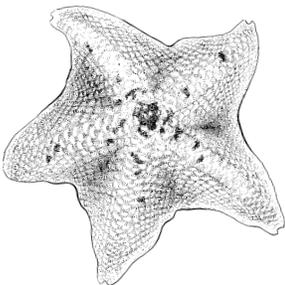
Listening and Speaking

California Performing Arts Standards

www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/vpastandards.pdf

Head Start Framework

- Use senses, tools and measuring devices to gather information, investigate, observe processes and relationships
- Collect, describe and record information through discussion, drawings, maps, charts
- Observe, describe and discuss natural world, materials, living things, natural processes



Sea Otter Puppet Parts

