

WORKSHOP REPORT



Second Giant Otter International Workshop November 14–17, 2022 Iberá Wetlands, Argentina

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ORGANIZED BY

FUNDACIÓN
REWILDING
ARGENTINA

Zoológico
de Cali



PROJETO
Ariranhas



ZOO
SCHWERIN

ENTIDAD BINACIONAL
YACYRETA

IUCN
Species Survival Commission

CONSERVATION
PLANNING
SPECIALIST GROUP
Changing the Future for Wildlife

PARQUE
DAS AVES

Instituto
Claravis

CSS
BRAZIL
Center for Species Survival

Workshop organization:

Fundación Rewilding Argentina, Zoológico de Cali, Projeto Ariranhas, EEP Giant Otter, IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group (IUCN SSC CPSG), IUCN SSC Center for Species Survival Brazil (IUCN SSC CSS Brazil)

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Fabiana Lopes Rocha and Eugenia Cordero Schmidt (IUCN SSC CPSG/CSS Brazil)

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See Annex 1

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About the workshop

The Second Giant Otter International Workshop brought together people and institutions working on research and conservation of the giant otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*), both *in-situ* and *ex-situ*.

The workshop aimed to strengthen the network of teams studying the giant otter, agree on a joint work plan that contributes to a broader knowledge of the ecology and biology of the species, improve the management of captive populations, and conserve and restore wild populations where the giant otter survives or from where it has disappeared.

When:

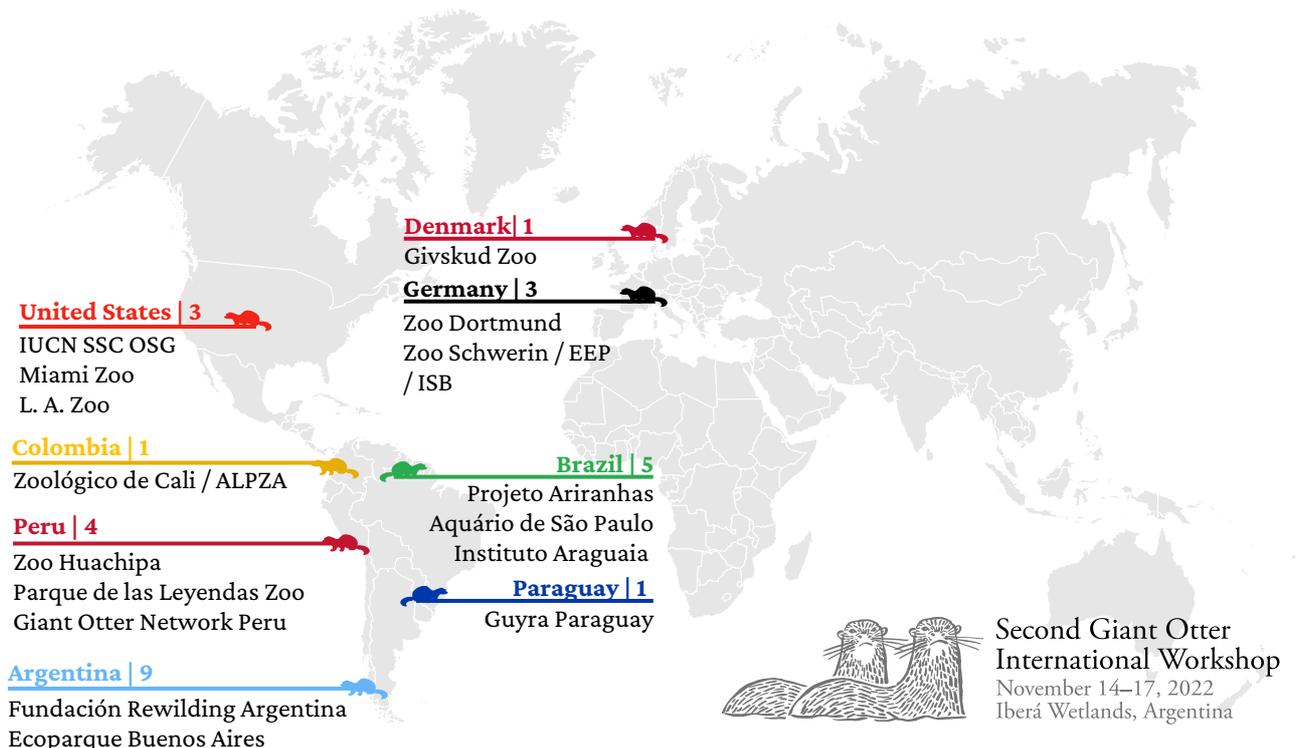
November 14th to 17th, 2022.

Where:

Yacyretá Hotel conference room. Ituzaingó, Corrientes Province, northeastern Argentina.

Who:

The workshop was attended by 27 conservationists, specialists in the species, IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group, NGOs, Zoos and Aquariums from eight different countries (Europe, North and South America) totaling 16 institutions.







Workshop process

Process design and facilitation by:



Conservation Planning Specialist Group

The CPSG is part of the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN SSC). CPSG saves endangered species through planning, increasing the effectiveness of conservation efforts around the world.

For 40 years, CPSG has been using scientifically sound collaborative processes that bring together people with diverse perspectives and expertise to catalyze positive change in conservation. The CPSG works to ensure that all species that need a plan are covered by an implemented and effective plan.

At the workshop, we will adopt the CPSG [Principles and Steps](#): Plan for action, promote inclusive participation, use sound science, ensure good design and neutral facilitation, reach decisions by consensus, generate and share outputs quickly, and adapt to changing circumstances.



Center for Species Survival Brazil

CSS Brazil is the union of three co-founders: the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Specialist Group on Conservation Planning (CPSG) of the IUCN SSC and Parque das Aves.

CSS Brazil combines the experience and resources of the three co-founders to enhance the capacity of the IUCN Species Survival Commission network to Assess, Plan, Act and influence species conservation policies in Brazil and other countries in South America.



Workshop process

The work with the participants began before the meeting in person through an online questionnaire where they were asked: Personal data, information about their work with the species related to the Global Otter Conservation Strategy, needs, gaps, and limitations of working with the species and finally the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats of a collaborative work network.

The leveling phase was subdivided into three days

1. The current state of knowledge about the giant otter
2. *Ex situ* conservation
3. *Ex situ* & *in situ* collaboration.

During the first day afternoon, the facilitators presented the results of the pre-workshop questionnaire, followed by an open discussion. We end the day with a brainstorm about the benefits and needs of working collaboratively.

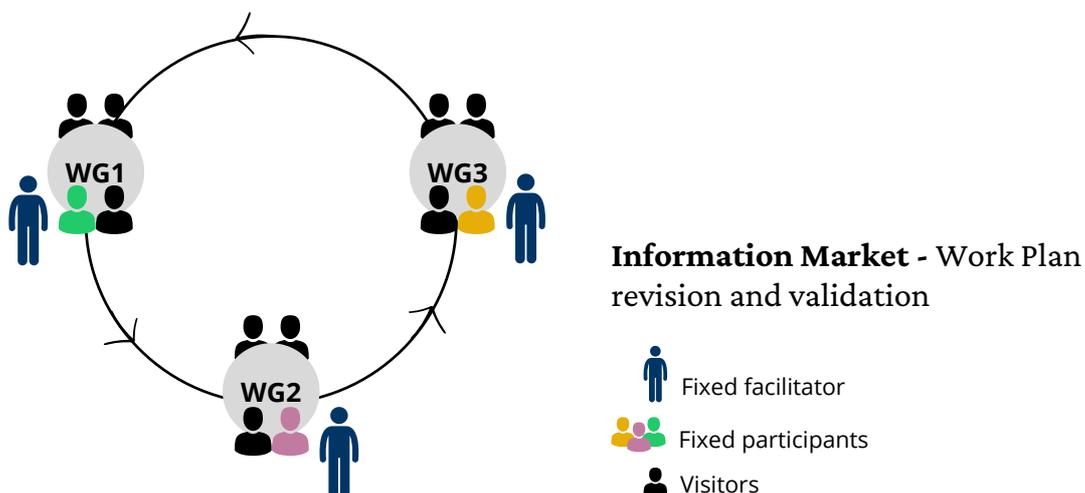
To work on the objectives and the work plan, on the following two days, the participants were divided into three working groups:

WG1: Research and training

WG2: Communication and dissemination

WG3: *Ex situ* collaboration

During the last day, we worked with a dynamic called "Information Market " where the groups rotated to give their opinion and correct the work of the other groups. We finished the workshop with a plenary where governance was discussed, the name of the collaborative network was chosen, the network's purpose was established, coordinators were selected, and the next meeting date was defined.





Workshop agenda

DAY 1 | NOVEMBER 14

Morning

- Registration
- Ice breaker activity
- Opening
 - Lecture: Nicole Duplaix
- Current knowledge on the giant otter
 - Lecture: Caroline Leuchtenberger
- Current lines of research on the giant otter
 - Lectures from persons and organizations working *in situ* with the giant otter in Brazil, Peru, and Paraguay

Afternoon

- Ice breaker activity
- Giant otter conservation strategies
 - Lecture: Caroline Leuchtenberger
- Survey results | Simplified monitoring of actions of the Global Plan for otters
- Brainstorm | Group's goal and objectives

Evening

- Welcome dinner

DAY 2 | NOVEMBER 15

Morning

- Ice breaker activity
- *Ex situ* conservation work with giant otters
 - Lecture: Tim Schikora
 - Lectures from persons and organizations working with the Studbooks in Latin America, Europe, and North America

Afternoon

- Ice breaker activity
- Work in Groups - OBJECTIVES
 - 1 Research and training
 - 2 Communication and dissemination
 - 3 Ex situ collaboration
- Plenary | Objectives per group

DAY 3 | NOVEMBER 16

Morning

- Ice breaker activity
- Integration of research, ex-situ, and in-situ conservation work with the giant otter
 - Lecture: Sebastián Di Martino and Tim Schikora.

Afternoon

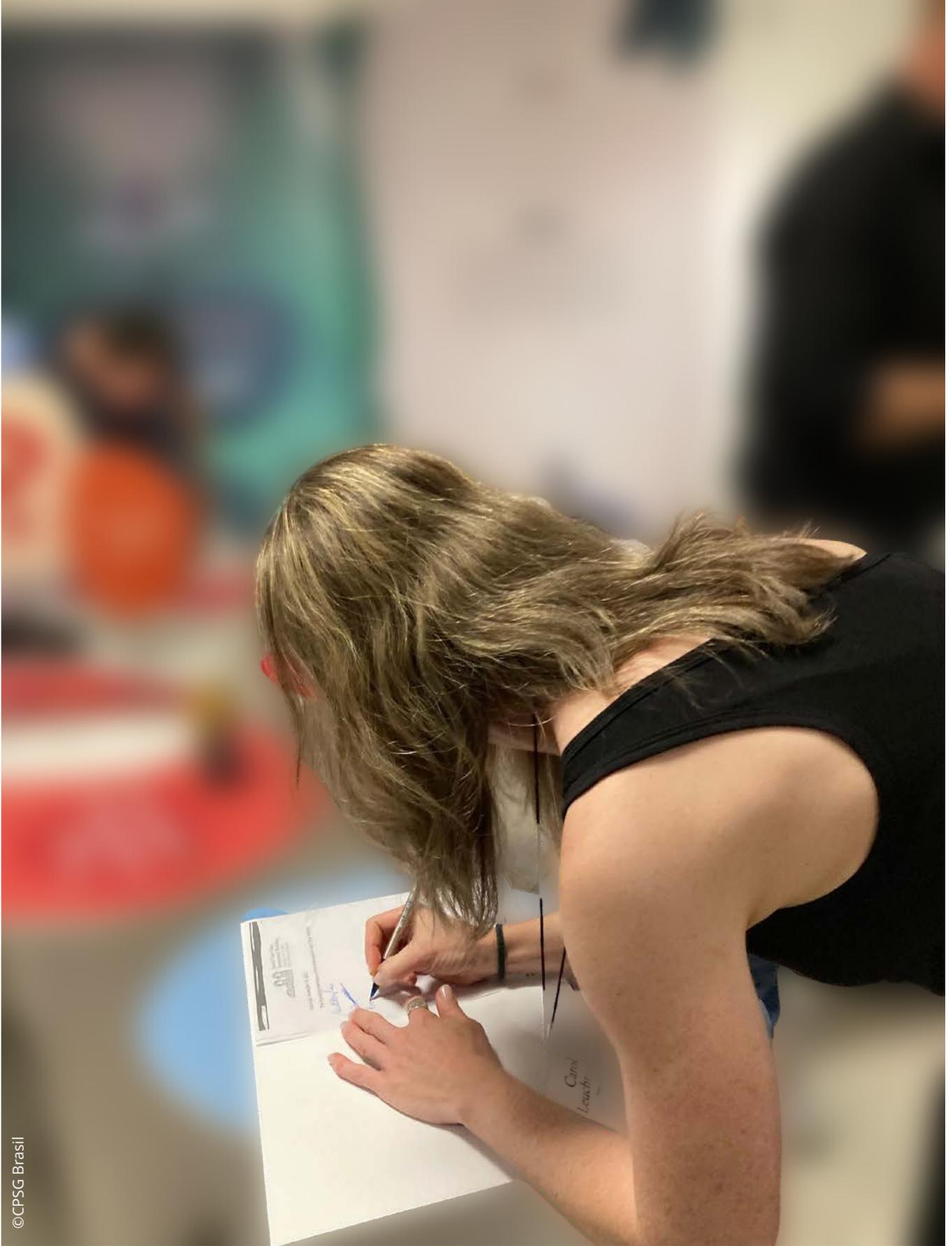
- Work in Groups - WORK PLAN
 - 1 Research and training
 - 2 Communication and dissemination
 - 3 *Ex situ* collaboration
- Market - WORK PLAN Activities, expected result, existing resources, articulator, collaborators, schedule, comments
- Final plenary | Governance, group name, purpose, coordinators, next meeting

Evening

- Farewell dinner

DAY 4 — NOVEMBER 17

- Field trip to Iberá National Park.



International Giant Otter Alliance - IGOA



International Giant Otter Alliance

The formation of the IGOA was decided unanimously by all the participants during the final plenary session of the Second Giant Otter International Workshop with the purpose to work as an international collaborative group to communicate, share information, build capacity, and act to promote and strengthen giant otter conservation.

The group defined the frequency of their meetings would be every two years. **The Third International Giant Otter Workshop will be held in Lima, Peru in November 2024**

The IGOA is a Community of Practice (CoP), a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. In search of:

- **Connect people** who might not otherwise have the opportunity to interact, either as frequently or at all.
- **Provide a shared context** for people to communicate and share information, stories and personal experiences in a way that builds understanding and insight.
- **Enable dialogue** between people who come together to explore new possibilities, solve challenging problems, and create new, mutually beneficial opportunities.
- **Stimulate learning** by serving as a vehicle for authentic communication, mentoring, coaching, and self-reflection.
- **Capture and share existing knowledge** to help people improve their practice by providing a forum to identify solutions to common problems and a process to collect and evaluate best practices.
- **Introduce collaborative processes** to groups and organizations to encourage the free flow of ideas and exchange of information.
- **Help people organize** around purposeful actions that develop tangible results.
- **Generate new knowledge** to help people transform their practice to accommodate changes in needs and technologies.



Governance

The IGOA was established under the umbrella of the IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group and has two coordinators, who's main role is to act as contact point of the IGOA.

In situ coordinator

Caroline Leuchtenberger



Ex situ coordinator

Tim Schikora



Global Species Management Plans

The participants decided that they wanted to create a GSMP for the Giant Otter under the guidance of Tim Schikora, the IGOA *ex situ* coordinator.

At the 58th WAZA Annual Conference on 20 November 2003 in San José (Costa Rica), a document on procedures and responsibilities for inter-regional *ex situ* management programs was unanimously adopted by the plenary. This was the birth of what is today referred to as Global Species Management Plans (GSMPs), held under the auspices of the now-called Committee for Population Management.

GSMPs are born out of growing concerns about the long-term sustainability of wild animal populations in human care.

To fulfill the full suite of conservation roles required of animals in zoos and aquariums, they must be demographically robust and genetically representative of wild counterparts. Many species will be able to sustain these characteristics for the foreseeable future only when cooperatively managed at a global level (see [WAZA Magazine 12: Towards Sustainable Population Management](#)).

A GSMP involves the management of a particular taxon with a globally agreed set of goals, while building upon and respecting existing regional processes.





Second Giant Otter
International Workshop
November 14-17, 2022
Iberá Wetlands, Argentina

Ituzaingó, November 16, 2022

The founding members of the International Giant Otter Alliance

Nicolas

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Work Plan



Second Giant Otter
International Workshop
November 14–17, 2022
Iberá Wetlands, Argentina

INTERNATIONAL GIANT OTTER ALLIANCE (IGOA) - WORK PLAN

WG1: Research and training

WG2: Communication and dissemination

WG3: *Ex situ* collaboration

Eight objectives with **36 Activities** to execute collaboratively during the next **two years** (November 2022 to November 2024).

[HERE](#) you can see the full activities spread sheet.





Work Plan | Research and training

Objective 1.1 Gather and disseminate knowledge (best practices, guidelines, and other materials) to improve accessibility to the members.

| Number | Key strategies/Activities |
|--------|--|
| 1.1.1 | Create an accessible platform for the archive |
| 1.1.2 | Create rules for the archive |
| 1.1.3 | Create a spreadsheet with information of the uploaded material |
| 1.1.4 | Request, compile and organize the content |

Objective 1.2 Provide training, advice and technical/practical knowledge to improve the capacity of members.

| Number | Key strategies/Activities |
|--------|---|
| 1.2.1 | To create a whatsapp group |
| 1.2.2 | Create rules for the whatsapp group |
| 1.2.3 | To organize regular virtual meeting to provide training opportunities identify THE TRAINNING NEEDS-survey |
| 1.2.4 | To create a list of organizations, training opportunities/needs that they offer and costs |
| 1.2.5 | To look for funding to provide training opportunities (as defined by 1.2.3) |



Work Plan | Research and training

Objective 1.3 Define in situ and ex situ research priorities and needs to inform the conservation of giant otters

| Number | Key strategies/Activities |
|--------|--|
| 1.3.1 | Compile and organize priorities of all regional/national action plans |
| 1.3.2 | Create and organize priorities of ex situ research for giant otters |
| 1.3.3 | To hold a planning/prioritization workshop (virtual or in person) to decide on the critical research priorities. |
| 1.3.4 | Update the rangemap with existing available information |





Work Plan | Communication and outreach

2.1 Establish a fast and informal communication channel to address subjects and share updates within the "collaborative group"

| Number | Key strategies/Activities |
|--------|---|
| 2.1.1 | Agree on the best platform/channel and create it |
| 2.1.2 | Define ground rules and content |
| 2.1.3 | Develop a directory of members with their expertise to easily identify focal people for specific subjects |
| 2.1.4 | Establish the moderator role and terms of the position |

2.2 Organize formal opportunities/strategies to discuss complex/specific topics

| Number | Key strategies/Activities |
|--------|--|
| 2.2.1 | Create the format and frequency to schedule virtual meetings |
| 2.2.2 | Develop an open forum with pre establish themes |
| 2.2.3 | Establish the frequency of the in person workshop |
| 2.2.4 | Check-list of things to consider when organizing the next in person workshop |



Work Plan | Communication and outreach

2.3 Develop a united front of communication and outreach aimed at different audiences* to promote the global conservation of the endangered giant otter

| Number | Key strategies/Activities |
|--------|--|
| 2.3.1 | Define audiences and suggest tools to communicate with them |
| 2.3.2 | Create a WG to think of strategies on how to communicate/involve/approach governments |
| 2.3.3 | Gather existing communication and outreach materials |
| 2.3.4 | Define governance of this "collaboration group" |
| 2.3.5 | Develop an style guide with images, stories and messages that can impact positively and negatively the species |
| 2.3.6 | Develop and share a workshop report |
| 2.3.7 | Media release about the workshop (social networks) |



Work Plan | *Ex situ* collaboration

2.1 Establish a fast and informal communication channel to address subjects and share updates within the "collaborative group"

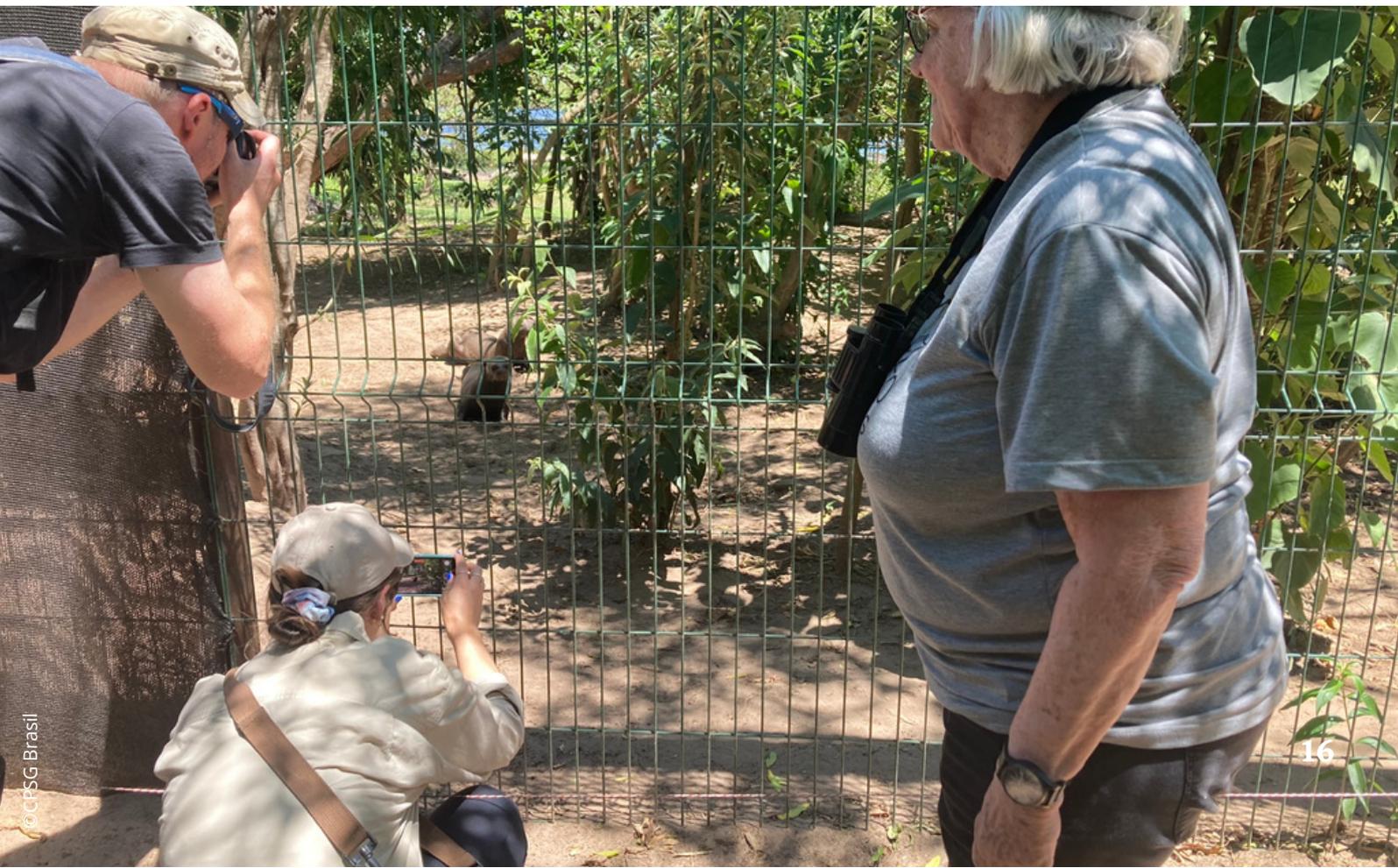
| Number | Key strategies/Activities |
|--------|---|
| 3.1.1 | Establish a working group for improving and developing a system and protocols , including emergency channels for wild pups rescue services |
| 3.1.2 | Establish an advisory ex-situ giant otters working group to improve husbandry and welfare of giant otter in ex situ institutions in South America |
| 3.1.3 | Formal ex-situ giant otters coordination/steering committee/working group to coordinate species management plan for integrated in situ and ex situ |
| 3.2.4 | Support letter of IGOA for ex-situ & in-situ institutions to reachout to local/regional authorities, explaining the importance of sending found giant otter (cubs) to ex-situ experts. Official support letter (IUCN SSC OSG) that indicates the urge to send founders giant otters to ex-situ experts. |
| 3.2.5 | Working group to support importing and exporting individuals and samples transfers between countries |



Work Plan | *Ex situ* collaboration

Objective 3.2 Create an *ex situ* communication structure to interchange information and management techniques.

| Number | Key strategies/Activities |
|--------|--|
| 3.2.1 | Reactivate the giant otter website - Prepare a list with links with Giant otter <i>ex situ</i> (published) materials to be linked to the Giant otter website |
| 3.2.2 | Gather, organize and update a google drive folder <i>ex situ</i> unpublished documents, husbandry manuals in this topic |
| 3.2.3 | <i>Ex situ</i> whatsapp focal group for managment |





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Appendices

- 01 Participants list
- 02 IUCN SSC OSG
Manifesto



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IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group
... leading global otter conservation since 1974



GIANT OTTER CONSERVATION MANIFESTO 2022

NOTING that the giant otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) is a unique carnivore that helps increase public attention on the importance of South American wetlands and freshwater ecosystems;

ALARMED that the majority of the endangered giant otter populations are declining due to environmental threats including pollution, deforestation, degradation of wetland habitats, gold mining, overfishing, human-wildlife conflicts and now climate change impacts;

UNDERLINING that giant otters are categorized as Endangered on the IUCN Red List and have lost almost 40% of their original distribution range;

ALSO NOTING that the giant otters are on Appendix I of the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)*, where all international commercial trade is banned;

ACKNOWLEDGING the *Species Survival Commission (SSC) Otter Specialist Group's* leadership in otter conservation, including its 2019 *Global Otter Conservation Strategy*, that highlights the need for governments, policy makers, the private sector, conservation funders, scientists, and local and indigenous communities to work together to reduce threats and to increase their populations;

CONCERNED that giant otter's level of legal protection varies in the countries in its range and need to be better enforced to reverse their decline and habitat loss;

INSPIRED by the resiliency of giant otters which, when provided with protection from illegal and unsustainable persecution, and given effective conservation management, and suitable enforced legal protection, can repopulate and flourish in a wide range of natural, near-natural and human-altered habitats;

CONCERNED that giant otter populations under professional human care are experiencing declining genetic diversity by the lack of exchange between zoos, aquariums and rescue centers, due to the burden of international regulations for endangered species, such as CITES Appendix I animals;

WORRIED that local government actions can hinder giant otter conservation management by ill-conceived local regulations.



IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group
... leading global otter conservation since 1974

The participants of the 2nd International Giant Otter Workshop 2022, at its sessions in Ituzaingó, Argentina recommend:

The *IUCN/SSC Giant Otter Specialist Group* members, giant otter range states and other stakeholders SUPPORT the goals and objectives listed in the *IUCN/SSC Global Otter Conservation Strategy*, the *International Giant Otter Alliance (IGOA)* and other efforts to address threats to the species by:

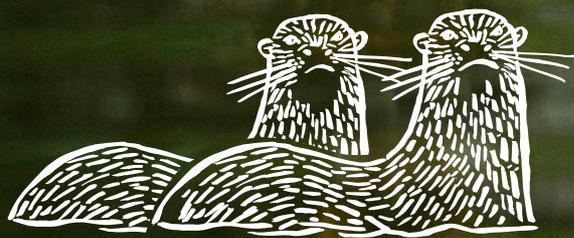
- a. ensuring that the ex-situ and in-situ organizations collaborate more closely with joint conservation efforts;
- b. promoting scientific research and giant otter population surveys, as well as educational and awareness activities;
- c. increasing societal support for giant otters and their environment and facilitating peaceful co-existence between otters and people everywhere;
- d. developing new outreach and education programs to change negative human perception and improve the engagement of the community in giant otter conservation activities;
- e. overcoming local and political boundaries and differences, to provide more active collaboration and conservation management throughout the giant otter's range;
- f. establishing new protected areas in current and former giant otter habitats.

* * * * *

Dr Nicole Duplaix and Prof. Anna Loy, Co-Chairs, IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group

Prof. Caroline Leuchtenberger, Continental Coordinator, Giant Otter Species Coordinator, IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group

Dr Tim Schikora, IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group, International Giant Otter Studbook Keeper, Director Schwerin Zoo, Germany



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