

Introductory Activity

Sea Otter Quiz

Note to Teachers

- This quiz can be used as both an introductory and culminating activity. Once students have taken the quiz, do not give them the correct answers. Collect the quizzes or have students put them away. Then have them retake the quiz at the end of the unit, or let them go back and change their answers as they discover and learn about sea otters through the activities offered in the unit. Use the quiz to encourage students to be responsible for their own learning.
- The quiz can also be presented as a research project. Have students use various resources (Internet, encyclopedias, books, etc) to answer each question.

Sea Otter Quiz

Write the word “true” or “false” next to each statement.

- 1) Most sea otters weigh about 10 pounds.
- 2) Sea otters are one of the few animals other than primates that use tools.
- 3) Sea otters are about the size of a domestic cat.
- 4) Both male and female sea otters care for their pups.
- 5) Sea otters eat very little food.
- 6) Sea otters live in oceans and rivers around the world.
- 7) Sea otters groom themselves primarily to keep clean.
- 8) Sea otters negatively impact the environment by eating sea urchins.
- 9) Sea otters have an average life span in the wild of about 10 years.
- 10) Sea otters give birth to litters of pups.
- 11) Sea otters keep their paws out of the water because they don't like to get them wet.
- 12) Sea otters were successfully reintroduced in Washington and Oregon.
- 13) The greatest threat to the sea otter is the great white shark.

Sea Otter Quiz

Answers

1) Most sea otters weigh about 10 pounds.

False. Females average 45 pounds, while males average 65 pounds. Alaskan or northern sea otters can reach up to 100 pounds.

2) Sea otters are one of the few animals other than primates that use tools.

True. Sea otters are one of the few mammals other than primates known to use tools. Otters use small rocks or other objects to pry prey from rocks and to hammer or pry open their food.

3) Sea otters are about the size of a domestic cat.

False. From nose to tail tip, most sea otters are about four feet. The sea otter is the largest member of the weasel family.

4) Both male and female sea otters care for their pups.

False. The breeding female is solely responsible for raising the pups.

5) Sea otters eat very little food.

False. Since sea otters have a high metabolism, they consume 20%-30% of their body weight in food in order to stay alive. Sea otters consume sea urchins, abalone, mussels, clams, crabs, snails and about 40 other marine species.

6) Sea otters live in oceans and rivers around the world.

False. Sea otters are found in the Pacific Ocean. Now, sea otters are only found off the coast of California, Washington, Alaska, Canada, and Russia. A few sea otters are found in Japan.

7) Sea otters groom themselves primarily to keep clean.

False. Grooming does keep sea otters clean, but it also serves the important function of helping to keep them warm. They rub their bodies to insulate their fur by trapping tiny air bubbles, which keep the skin and fur warm, dry and buoyant.

8) Sea otters negatively impact the environment by eating sea urchins.

False. Sea otters do eat sea urchins, but that is good for the environment. Sea urchins feed on kelp and if not kept in check, can destroy kelp forests. Kelp has many benefits both economically and environmentally. Kelp extract is used in more than 500 products (including yogurt, paint, surgical thread and ice cream). Kelp forests are an important marine ecosystem and also help prevent shoreline erosion. Southern sea otters are protected as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act, which in turn helps protect California's coastline.

9) Sea otters have an average life span in the wild of about 10 years.

False. The lower range of life expectancy for male sea otters is 10 years, they can live up to 15 years and females generally live for 15 to 20 years.

10) Sea otters give birth to litters of pups.

False. Sea otters usually give birth to only one pup. Biologists have documented the birth of twins, but when this happens one pup is usually abandoned. River otters, on the other hand, do give birth to litters of pups.

11) Sea otters keep their paws out of the water because they don't like to get them wet.

False. Sea otters don't have much fur on their paws, so they raise their paws when they are floating on their backs to keep them warm.

12) Sea otters were successfully reintroduced in Washington and Oregon.

False. While sea otters were successfully reintroduced in Washington between 1969 and 1970 and their numbers remain fairly stable, reintroduction efforts in Oregon were unsuccessful.

13) The greatest threat to the sea otter is the great white shark.

False. Humans are the greatest threat to sea otters. We impact them with our fishing nets and traps, and with oil spills and other pollution. Historically, humans almost caused the sea otter to go extinct through the fur trade.

After completing the unit on sea otters, retake this quiz and answer the following questions:

- Did your score on the quiz increase? Why?
- Identify three interesting facts you learned about sea otters.
- Did you have any false information about sea otters before this unit? Explain.