

## Otter Sense



**Background:** Although called river otters, their name is somewhat misleading. River otters live in many different kinds of water throughout North America, including rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands, and coastal shorelines and marshes. Basically, they will live wherever they can find food and clean water to swim in. They are sensitive to pollution so do not tend to inhabit polluted waterways. In Maryland, river otters live in tidewater areas across the state. While hunting underwater, otters rely heavily on their long, sensitive whiskers to locate prey. They eat fish, amphibians, crustaceans, crabs, and the occasional small mammal or bird.

**Materials:** Medium sized box, scissors, pinecone, shell, rock, other items collected from your home or backyard

**Instructions:** Rivers otters often rely on their sensitive whiskers to help them to feel around for food. When underwater, otters use touch as their primary sense, and rely on their other senses to a lesser degree. As humans, we typically rely on our eyes to see as our primary sense, and use our other senses to a lesser degree. In this activity, we are going to test our sense of touch, and try to explore with our sense of touch only.

Take a medium sized box and cut a hole in one side. Collect different items from around your home or backyard. Ask someone to place some of these items in the box while you are not looking. Close the lid so that you cannot see inside. Use your sense of touch to explore the items in the box and try to guess what they are. Open the box to see if your guesses were correct. Repeat with other items or take turns testing your sense of touch!