

THE OTTER.

The Otter is found in nearly all parts of the world. Eleven species, or at least varieties, have been noticed by naturalists. These inhabit the following countries: one species each in Europe, Island of Trinidad, Guiana, Brazil, Kamtschatka, Java, Madagascar, Pondicherry, Cape of Good Hope; and two species in North America. The principal species on this Continent, and the most important of all in the fur-trade, is the Canada or American Otter, scientific name *Lutra Canadensis*. The range of this Otter is from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, and from the Gulf of Mexico to the shores of the Arctic Sea. The other North American species is the California Otter.

The Otter is aquatic in its habits, living in and near streams and getting its living from them. In appearance the Otter resembles a magnified mink. Its fur and color are much like those of the mink, and the lightening of the tints in age are the same in both. Its fur is short and thick. The under-fur is slightly waved and silky, and similar in texture to that of the beaver, but not so long. It has a silvery white shade. The color of the overlying hairs varies from a rich and glossy brownish black to a dark chestnut. The under parts are lighter than the upper. The Otter's ears are small and far apart; head broad and flat above; body thick and long; feet hard, short, and webbed; tail long, round, and toward the tip depressed, and flat beneath. The fur on the tail is the same as that on the body, but shorter. Its legs are apparently set upon the sides of its body, which gives it an awkward, waddling appearance when travelling on land. Otters frequently measure three feet and a half from the nose to the tip of the tail, and weigh from fifteen to twenty-five pounds.

They are excellent swimmers and divers, and can remain a long time under water. Their activity in this element enables them to take fish with the greatest ease. They even destroy fish in great numbers for the mere pleasure of killing them, when they do not require them for food. The speckled trout is their favorite game, and they frequent the clear rapid