There is a still more noticeable difference in the coloration of the muzzles: in the Orange River example the upper lip is seal-brown like the rest of the body, with only a small spot of white below the nostrils; in the one from Northern Rhodesia the entire muzzle is whitish, gradually shading into the brown of the head; in the specimen from the Cape the whole of the upper lip is perfectly white, very conspicuous, and in marked contrast with the unusually dark body, the effect being that of a white moustache. A further difference in this last mentioned from the other two specimens is that the usual pale throat and inguinal spots or patches are hardly visible. In a series of *Lutra maculicollis* from the Congo, Allen remarks on the individual differences of tone in different specimens through the varying intensity of the rufous suffusion. Hence it seems not improbable that the characters on which *chobiensis* was based are individual rather than racial.

The weight of the Spotted-Necked Otter is probably not more than 20 lb., possibly less, as it is a smaller animal than the European Species which seldom scales over 25 lb.

"As shown by measurements (of Congo specimens) the males considerably exceed the females in size."—Allen.

The African Clawless Otter

Aonyx

Aonyx Lesson, 1827, Man. Mamm., p. 157; genotype *A. capensis* Schinz, 1821, Cuvier's Thierr., I, p. 214. The Clawless Otter from the Cape.

Cape Clawless Otter—Kaapse Otter

Aonyx capensis Schinz

AONYX CAPENSIS CAPENSIS.
Lutra capensis Schinz, 1821, Cuvier's Thierr., I, p. 214.
Type (untraced) from the Cape.

AONYX CAPENSIS ANGOLÆ.
Aonyx capensis angolæ Thomas, 1908, Ann. Mag. N.H. (8), I, p. 338.
Type (in the British Museum) from the Coporollo River, S. lat. 13°, Angola.

NATIVE NAMES:

PERSONALLY COLLECTED

Herero: *Ómbwa-oméva.*[1]
Ovambo: *Ómbwa-oméa.*[1]
Bechuana (Ngamiland): *Quiananóka.*
Ovacuangari: *Ac'li* (*A|li*).[2]
Ovadirico, Mambakushu: *Li'cli* (*Li|li*).[2]

[1] Also used for *Lutra maculicollis.*
[2] Possibly of Bushman extraction.

OTHER SOURCES

Sikololo: *Mbao, Kabiso* (Lancaster).
Chinkoya, Chilavale, Tonga: *Mbau, Mbao* (Lancaster).
Chila, Kaonde: *Chibawe* (Lancaster).
Makuba: *Imboa* (Zukowsky).
Nama Hottentot: ||*Omitsi*||*ãb* (Krönlein).[1]

DISTRIBUTION IN SOUTH-WEST AFRICA.—The Orange, Cunene, Okavango, and rivers of the Caprivi are inhabited both by *Aonyx capensis* and *Lutra maculicollis*. *Aonyx* is apparently less plentiful than *Lutra* in the Orange River (west of Upington), although it may be the more numerous species in the Cunene and Okavango. Otters (possibly both species) may occasionally wander some distance up the Fish River from its junction with the Orange, although they appear to be unknown so far north as Berseba. The Fish River ceases to flow during the dry season, but disconnected pools of water always remain in its bed.

Judging from spoor observed on sandbanks, *Aonyx* seems to be more plentiful than *Lutra* in the Okavango, although I saw a fair number of pelts of both species in the possession of local natives.

Aonyx was frequently seen in the lower Cunene. Specimens have been sent to the Kaffrarian Museum from the Chobe River by Balme and from the Zambesi (Sesheke) by Lancaster.

Aonyx has also been recorded from the Cunene by Steinhardt, and from the Okavango by Wilhelm—who only once observed it in the headwaters of that river.

The Clawless Otter is widely distributed in the rivers of Angola.

In Bechuanaland it is said to have existed formerly in the Kuruman River.

GENERAL DISTRIBUTION OUTSIDE SOUTH-WEST AFRICA.—The African Clawless Otter is widely distributed in rivers, tidal creeks and estuaries, swamps, lakes, and even large dams, from the Cape Flats, north to Abyssinia, the Congo Basin, and Liberia (Whyte).[2]

HABITS.—Although mainly nocturnal, most otters are to some extent diurnal, and, where undisturbed, may frequently be seen fishing or sporting in the water during the hottest hours of the day.

They appear to be active hunters in the late evenings and on moonlight nights. Otters usually go about singly or in pairs, but family parties, up to half a dozen in number, may form 'schools'; the young often remaining with the parents until almost if not quite full-grown.

"*Aonyx capensis* is solitary as a rule."—Lancaster.

"The Cape otter hunts in companies, but only of three or four."—Moseley.

[1] Probably also *Lutra maculicollis*.

[2] Outside Africa, an allied clawless genus, *Micraonyx*, occurs in Southern Asia, from India to as far east as Java, Borneo, and the Phillipines. It is social to some extent.

At Otjimbundu on the lower Cunene two clawless otters were observed on two or three consecutive afternoons playing and fishing in some comparatively shallow rapids. Just below the Popa Falls of the Okavango several were seen almost daily swimming and diving in the large rock pools. Once I watched an individual splashing about within a few feet of a sandbank on which five crocodiles were lying stretched out in the sun. In spite of their alertness, it is astonishing that otters manage to hold their own in crocodile-infested waters.

Stevenson-Hamilton records an instance of a wounded otter being immediately seized by a crocodile.

"Seeking their prey, as they often must, in waters teeming with crocodiles, African otters have to be exceptionally quick, and, although no doubt their habits when resting and sleeping are considerably influenced by fear of these reptiles, under ordinary circumstances they are well able to elude them."—S. Hamilton.

Aonyx capensis may sometimes be met with along the sea coast, several miles from the mouth of any river, apparently subsisting on small fish, crustaceans, and other marine animals in the rock pools, and occasionally swimming short distances into the sea.

"The Cape Otter is often found near the sea in places where there are no streams, and is probably in some places adapting itself to marine life."—Sclater.

Otters are inclined to be conservative in their choice of special reaches or pools in a river for playing or hunting grounds. They habitually come ashore to devour their catch on rocks or sandbanks—as indicated by accumulations of droppings, fish bones, crab shells, etc.

"They appear to spend a good deal of their time on land, haunting dense bush, and lying up in holes in the neighbourhood of rivers."—S. Hamilton.

"The African Clawless Otter appears to be a species bent on returning to land habits."—Moseley.

"It travels about considerably."—Hewitt.

"It is more of a marsh-frequenter than *Lutra maculicollis*."—Pitman.

They hide by day in holes or tunnels under banks, or under the exposed roots of trees overhanging the water; in any rock cover that may occur near a river; or in dense reed-beds. I do not know if clawless otters ever excavate their own burrows. The European Otter is said occasionally to excavate its own 'den' or 'holt' where the ground is soft, and to make deep burrows with several entrances, one of which usually opens below water-level. Like ant-bears, otters are exceedingly difficult to trap. Their sense of smell is extremely acute, and, unless set under water, traps will nearly always be scented and avoided however carefully hidden. They may be attracted either by fish or fresh meat, but will never touch a bait that is in the least degree tainted. Blanford believes the sight of an otter to be somewhat defective in comparison with its faculties of scent and hearing.

The spoor of *Aonyx*, not unlike that of a small monkey, cannot be mistaken for that of the web-footed *Lutra maculicollis*.

If caught young, otters, as is well-known, may become extremely tame, and

show a considerable amount of intelligence. An individual I had in Burma was accustomed to swim about by day in a river close by, always coming to the bank when called, and sleeping in the house at night.

Food.—Fresh-water crabs, frogs, fish, monitor lizards, mud-tortoises, aquatic birds, eggs (including those of crocodiles), mussels (*Unio* spp), and swamp rodents—up to the size of cane-rats. Otters destroy a considerable number of wild duck and other water-fowl, even swans sometimes, these being either pounced upon among the reeds or seized by the feet in open water and pulled under. When opportunity offers they will sometimes raid poultry yards.

When inhabiting large dams or other sheets of inland water where sub-acquatic life is scarce, otters doubtless prey to a large extent on land animals. African otters are very largely crab-eaters, what they leave of a meal, like the casts of river cormorants, usually showing a higher percentage of broken crab-shells than fish-bones—even in such rivers as the Okavango where fish are particularly abundant.

Judging from remains observed on the banks of the Cunene and Okavango Rivers, their fish prey are mostly silurids, the vertebræ and heads of which are left. Fresh-water mussels are also carried ashore and eaten, their rather thin shells being easily crushed.

I have frequently heard otters barking, but never had the chance of comparing the bark of *maculicollis* with that of *capensis*. Probably their calls are quite different.

The cry I have always ascribed to *Aonyx* is not unlike that of the European Otter.

"When at bay, the Cape Otter utters a throaty 'Kwa-a-a, kwa-a-a.' "—S. Hamilton.

Young otters are very noisy, their cry being a series of querulous squeaks, uttered incessantly.

"An Indian otter lived in the Trivandrum Zoo for nearly 15½ years. I have notes on eighteen individual otters, of perhaps three species, whose average age is 8 years 5 months."—Flower.

Breeding Habits.—The usual number of cubs in a litter appears to be from two to three: but U. B. Chivers informs me that he has occasionally seen adult animals in the Vaal River accompanied by four and, in one instance, five cubs. Two young, supposed to be about three weeks old, were obtained from the Buffalo River (King William's Town) on October 21st.

"Period of gestation, about 63 days."—Wilhelm.

Descriptive Notes.—Weight, 40–50 lb. (♂♂), 35–40 lb. (♀♀)—Kaffraria. 30–40 lb. (Lang)—Congo.

The three record Natal weights for African Clawless Otter, out of a very large number of individuals are 63, 61 and 60 lb. (L. A. Day, Inland Fisheries, Natal). A particularly large otter shot some years ago at the Perie Trout Hatcheries weighed 62½ lb., and measured 5 ft. 4 in. (total length). The mask of this specimen suggests that in aged individuals the white under-parts have a tendency to darken; hence the line of demarcation between the two colours is less sharply defined.