



East Tennessee State University
College of Arts and Sciences

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Dusty Lombardi
Chair, Otter SSP
Columbus Zoo and Aquarium
9990 Riverside Dr.
Powell, Ohio 43065

Dusty,

05/05/09

In response to our email conversation, please accept this letter as a formal request for the otters listed below.

As part of our efforts to better understand fossil species (and the ecosystems which contained them), we have been/are building an osteological research and teaching collection here at East Tennessee State University. This collection, housed in our Neogene Vertebrate Paleontology Laboratory (NVPL), currently has over 14,000 specimens, representing all major vertebrate groups from around the world. However there are still gaps, which we are actively trying to fill. [For example, we recently obtained a statistically significant sample of Black-Footed Ferrets - which is already a component of two separate student projects.] Among the researchers most directly involved in obtaining specimens are myself, Dr. Blaine Schubert, and Dr. James Mead. Between the three of us we have 11 graduate students (with at least 4 more starting in the Fall), and many undergraduate students. All are involved in active research, with projects ranging from character variation in fossil tapirs, to species validity within fossil hellbenders. Examples of some of the larger projects include, but are not limited to:

- Paleoecologic interpretation of the Miocene-aged Gray Fossil Site in eastern Tennessee. The site was discovered in 2000 and is not only disjunct from other similar-aged sites in North America, but contains a unique assemblage for its age. Among the more unusual members of the fauna are a new species of Eurasian badger (*Arctomeles dimolodontus*) and a new genus and species of Red Panda (*Pristinailurus bristoli*).
- Characterizing (via skeletal features) the different life modes within Musteloids (e.g. swimming, terrestrial, scansorial, arboreal, etc.), to better interpret the life habits of extinct species.
- Scavenging of Mammoth carcasses by large carnivores in the Saltville Valley of Virginia.

Consequently, the following list of otters includes several taxa that are of particular importance to our current research, but it is by no means complete. Feel free to "set aside" any specimens that you would consider valuable to an osteological collection. Because of the typical nature of fossilization, even broken or significantly damaged specimens can be of use as long as



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they can be identified to species. In other words, even animals that have undergone necropsy, etc. are still valuable to our efforts, in addition to complete skeletons recovered by various means.

- Sea (*Enhydra lutris*)
- Asian Small Clawed (*Amblonyx cinereus*)
- Giant (*Pteronura brasiliensis*)
- Cape Clawless (*Aonyx capensis*)
- American River (*Lontra canadensis*)

Otters obtained will be processed in the same fashion as all other specimens in our collection. First, standard measurements for mammals will be collected where possible. Then, the individuals will be skinned, eviscerated (if present), and placed in a dehydrator. Dried specimens are then cleaned using dermestid beetles to remove all organic material. Clean skeletons are then dipped in alcohol before being allowed to dry. When dry, the skeletons are cataloged and numbered. Once properly boxed, their final destination is the NVPL collection, where they will be available to researchers and students alike. Strict protocol for the “checking out” and utilization of the specimens ensures that they will always be available for research, study, and comparison.

Thank you for your time and help on this, and please let me know if you have any questions,

Steve (aka, Wally)

Dr. Steven C. Wallace

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