

# Two otters spotted in Bengaluru, wildlife enthusiasts delighted and puzzled

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**KARWAR:** Wildlife enthusiasts in Bengaluru are both pleasantly surprised and somewhat puzzled, at the sight of smooth-coated otters at Hesarghatta Lake and on the premises of the Indian Institute of Science.

Spread across South Asian and South-East Asian countries, the smooth-coated otter prefers habitats with plenty of freshwater, normally a river.

“We found one otter here. We do not know how it came here. This is not its suitable habitat. Maybe it has come here by mistake,” said Manjunath Prabhakar, a wildlife enthusiast who photographed an otter at Hesarghatta Lake in the last week of November 2020. Manjunath, a weekend visitor to the lake, said that he had never come across an otter in the area and that they live in groups. “This one is an individual. It was harassed by crows and kites when I saw it. Normally otters live in groups and bask on the sandy banks of rivers and burrow beneath trees or boulders. This might be an escapee,” he said.

The other otter has been sighted around a water body on the premises of IISc. “This is a big surprise for us. We sighted it in the lake we created as part of our research,” Prof T V Ramachandra, senior scientist, at the Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc told The New Indian Express. Though otters thrive in the Cauvery basin, the two sightings have thrilled researchers and wildlife lovers.

Hesarghatta Lake does not receive much water as most of its catchment area is either encroached or not capable of feeding water into the lake due to indiscriminate drilling of borewells which once catered to Bengaluru city. Such places are not a suitable habitat for otters, experts say.

Samad Kottur, a wildlife enthusiast from Hospet, who was instrumental in getting the Tungabhadra Otter Reserve Sanctuary declared, said that it could have strayed from a nearby river in search of food. “Or, it might be a pregnant female which is looking to establish a safe den to give birth to young ones. Otters live in groups. If somebody looks for scats with fish bones, and if they are plenty in number, there is no doubt some otters have colonised that place,” he said.

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