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PRESS RELEASE

Cozy Companions: Otters Share Dens and Dreams in Equatorial Amazonia



A new study published in *PeerJ Life & Environment* sheds light on the nocturnal behaviors of sympatric otters in equatorial Amazonia. Led by Darren Norris, a researcher at the Federal University of Amma Park, Brazil, the study challenges conventional wisdom about competition between otter species and unveils intriguing insights into their coexistence dynamics.

The study, titled "Carnivore Coexistence without Competition: Giant Otters are More Nocturnal around Dens than Sympatric Neotropical Otters," presents findings that highlight how giant otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) exhibit more nocturnal activity around dens compared to sympatric neotropical otters (*Lontra longicaudis*).

Traditionally, studies on otter behavior have been scarce, particularly regarding their nocturnal activities. However, this research, conducted along 20 kilometers of rivers within protected areas, utilized camera traps to monitor den usage by both species.

"We were intrigued by how these sympatric otters avoid competing for resources," said Darren Norris. "Our findings challenged our initial expectations. Despite the smaller size of neotropical otters, we found giant otters to be more active nocturnally around dens, while neotropical otters displayed greater daytime activity."

The research provides valuable insights into the ecological dynamics of sympatric otter species, emphasizing the need for further studies in similar regions. "Our study underscores the importance of baseline data for understanding species interactions and highlights the urgent need for conservation efforts to safeguard these rare and endangered species," added Norris.

One of the key discoveries of the study was the overlapping use of dens by both species. This finding has significant implications for monitoring efforts, as dens are often utilized as indicators of otter presence. Norris emphasized the necessity of incorporating complementary techniques to ensure the accuracy and robustness of monitoring data.

"We hope our research serves as a catalyst for similar studies in other regions where these otter species coexist," remarked Norris. "As human threats to these animals continue to escalate, understanding their behaviors and interactions becomes increasingly vital."

The study, conducted over three months, represents a crucial step forward in unraveling the mysteries surrounding otter behavior and coexistence. By challenging preconceptions and providing novel insights, the research sets a precedent for future studies in otter ecology and conservation.

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