

The otter – the great fisher
and winter bather



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How much fish do they need?

A high food
requirement

15 % of body - weight
per day

1 -1.5 kg fish / day

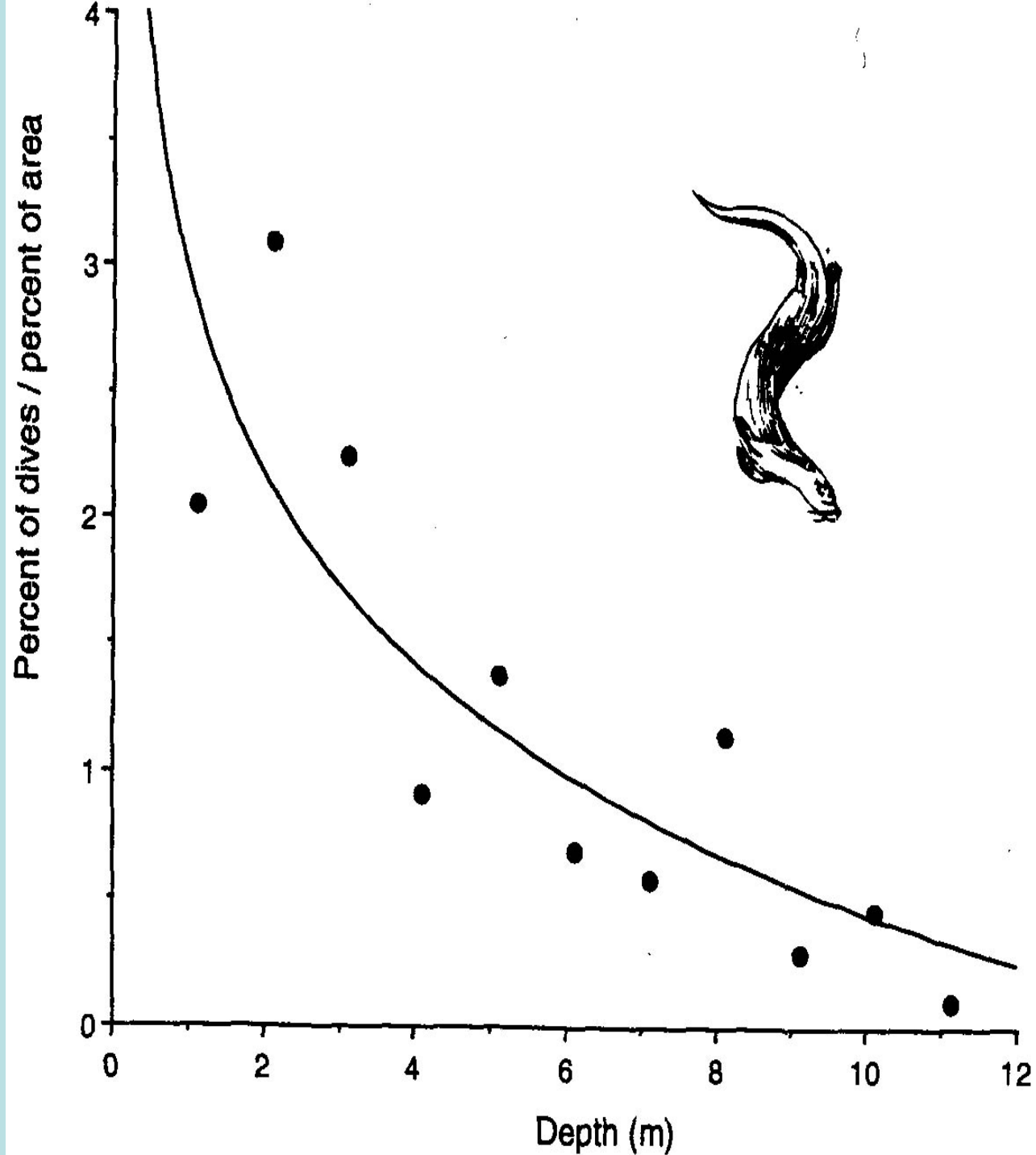
> 50 small fish / day



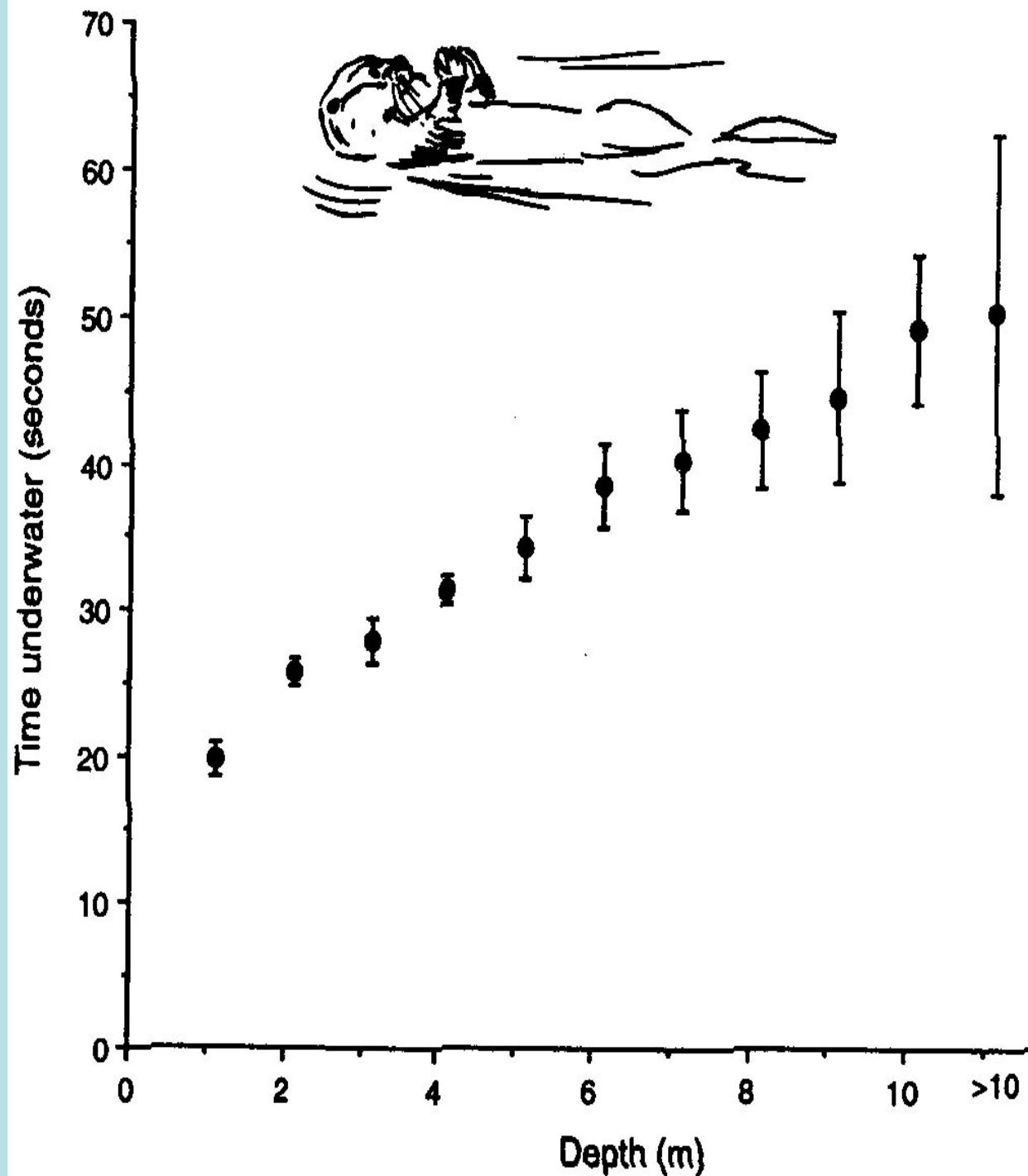
How do otters
perform fishing?



Primarily in
shallow water
(Kruuk 1995)



Shorter diving-time
in shallow water
(Kruuk 1995)



Which fishes do they prefer?

How to find out?

Food remains
reveal the
prey choice



Vertebrae and
scales reveal
the prey species

Roach

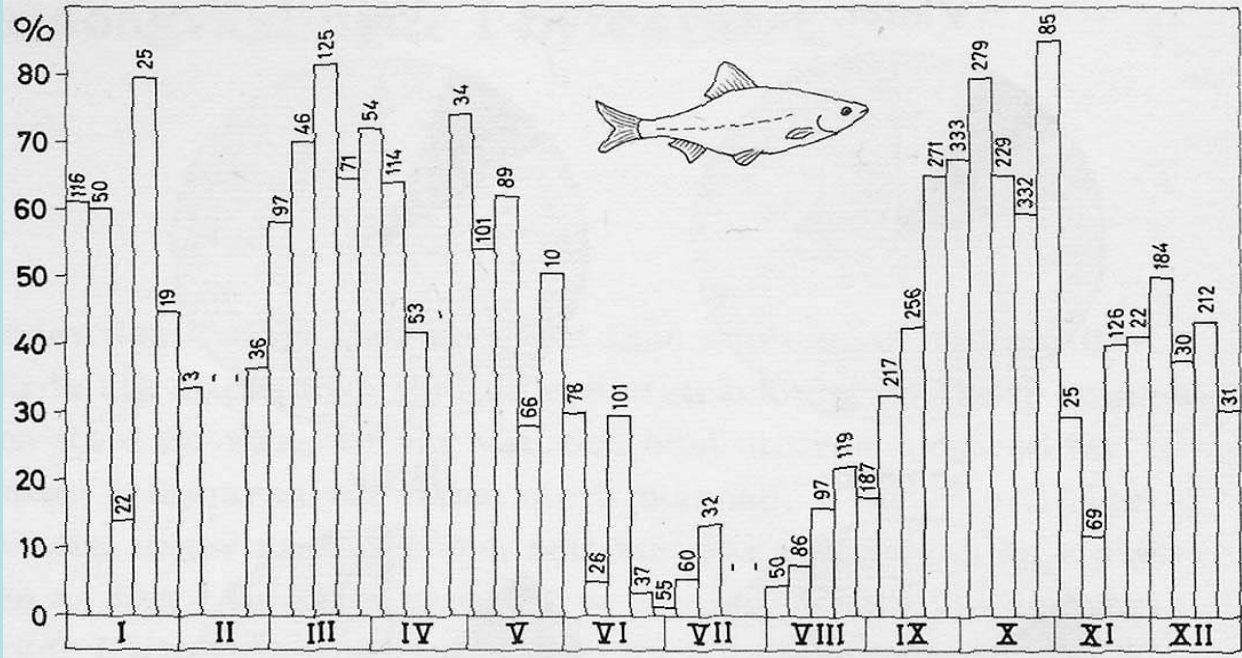


Perch

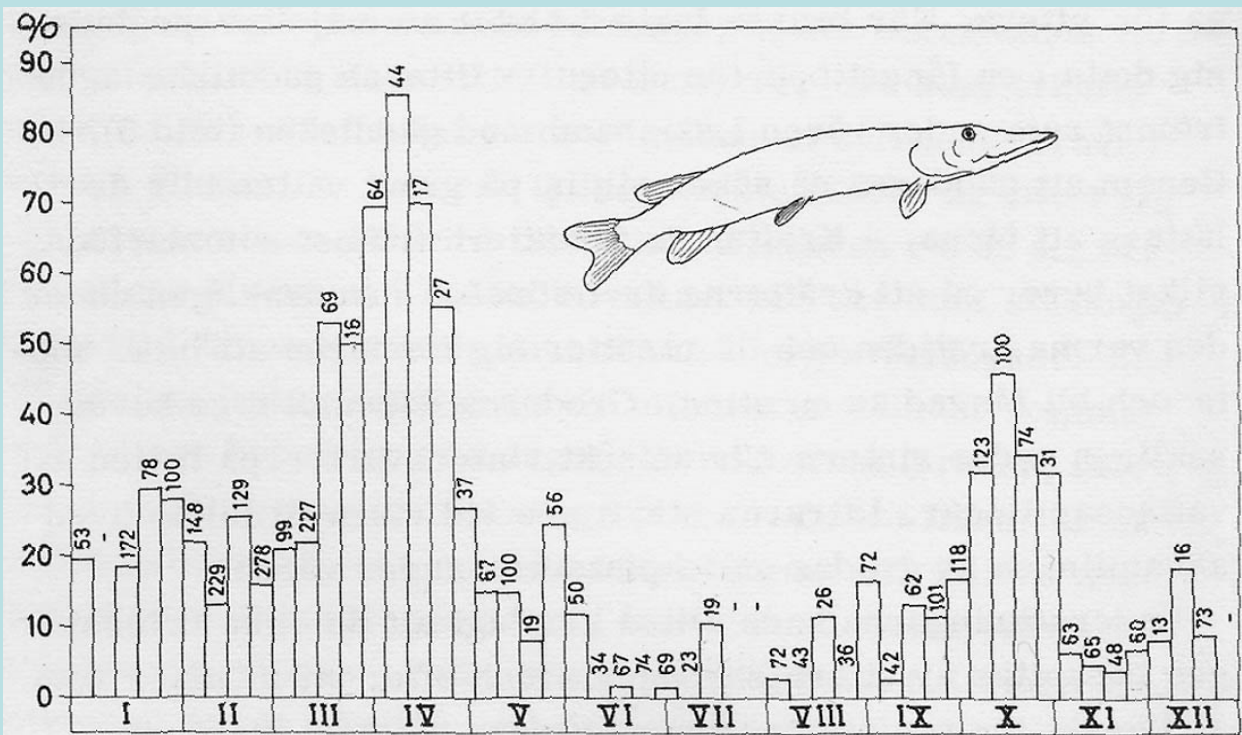
The otter scat is
dried up and
analysed



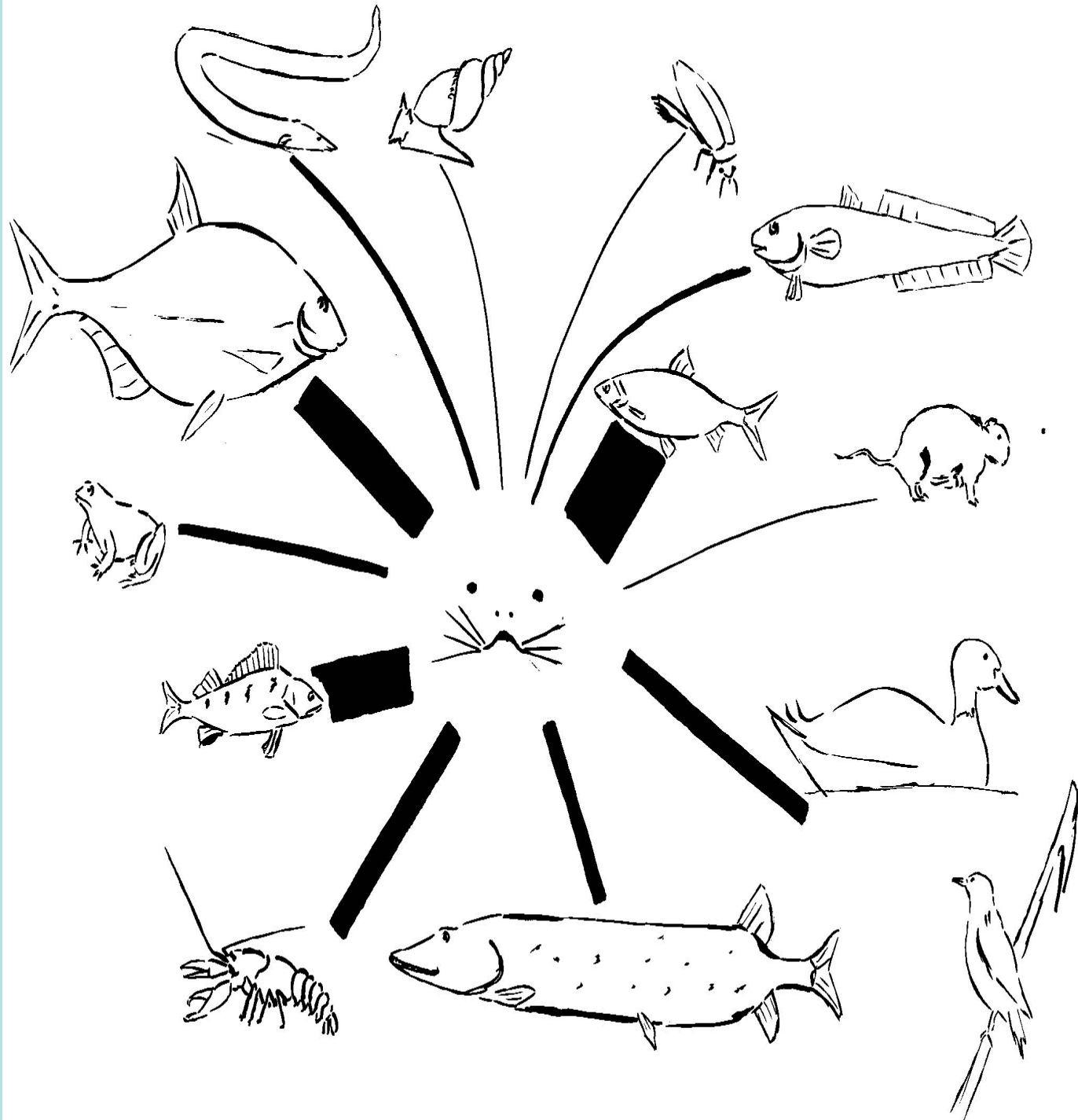
Seasonal changes



Availability in the shore zone determines the choice of prey



Food spectrum
of the otter in
an eutrophic lake
in Southern
Sweden

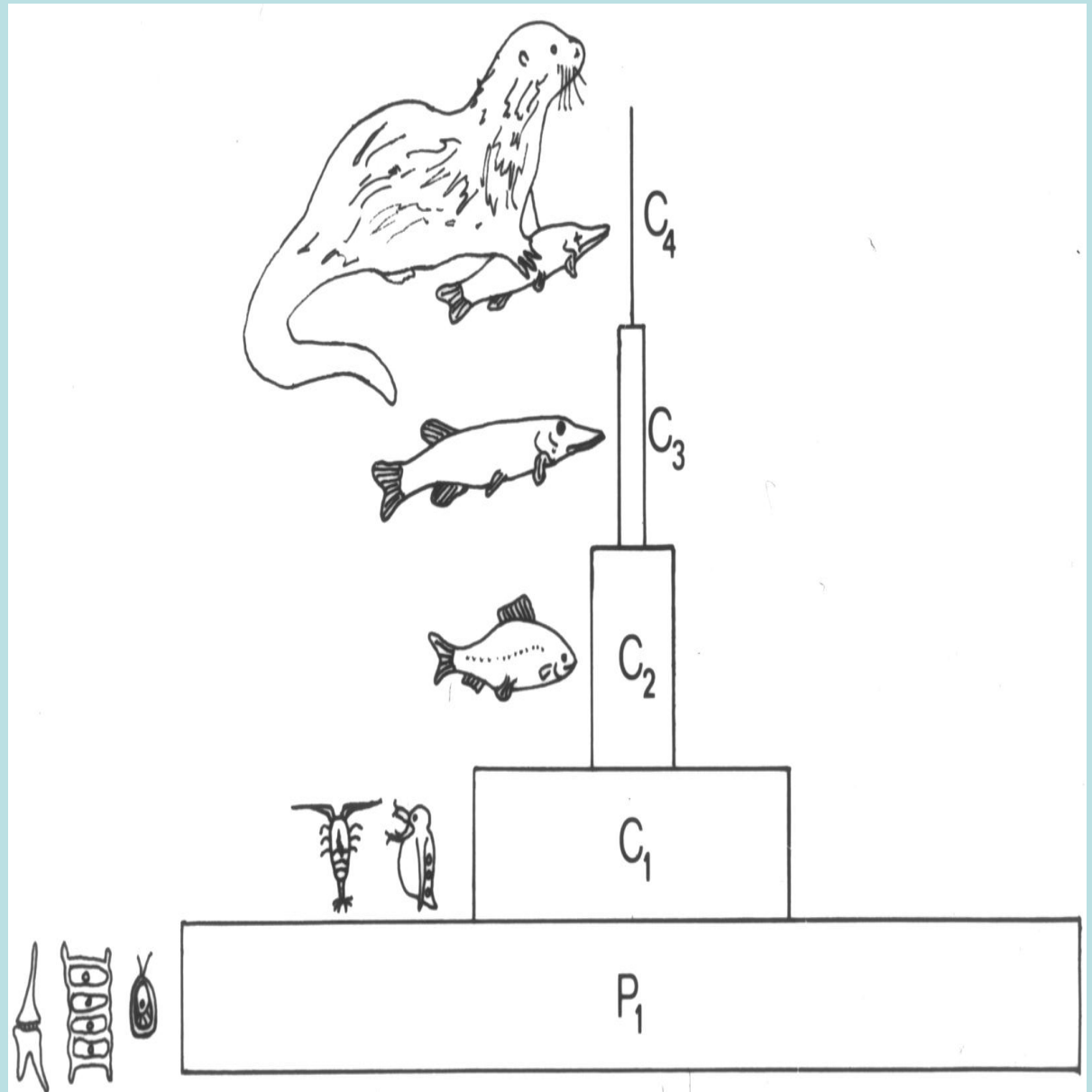


Conclusion:

- The otter has a broad food spectrum
- Easily-caught prey are taken
- Small fish (about 15 cm, 15-20 g) are most common prey

The otter is a
top predator

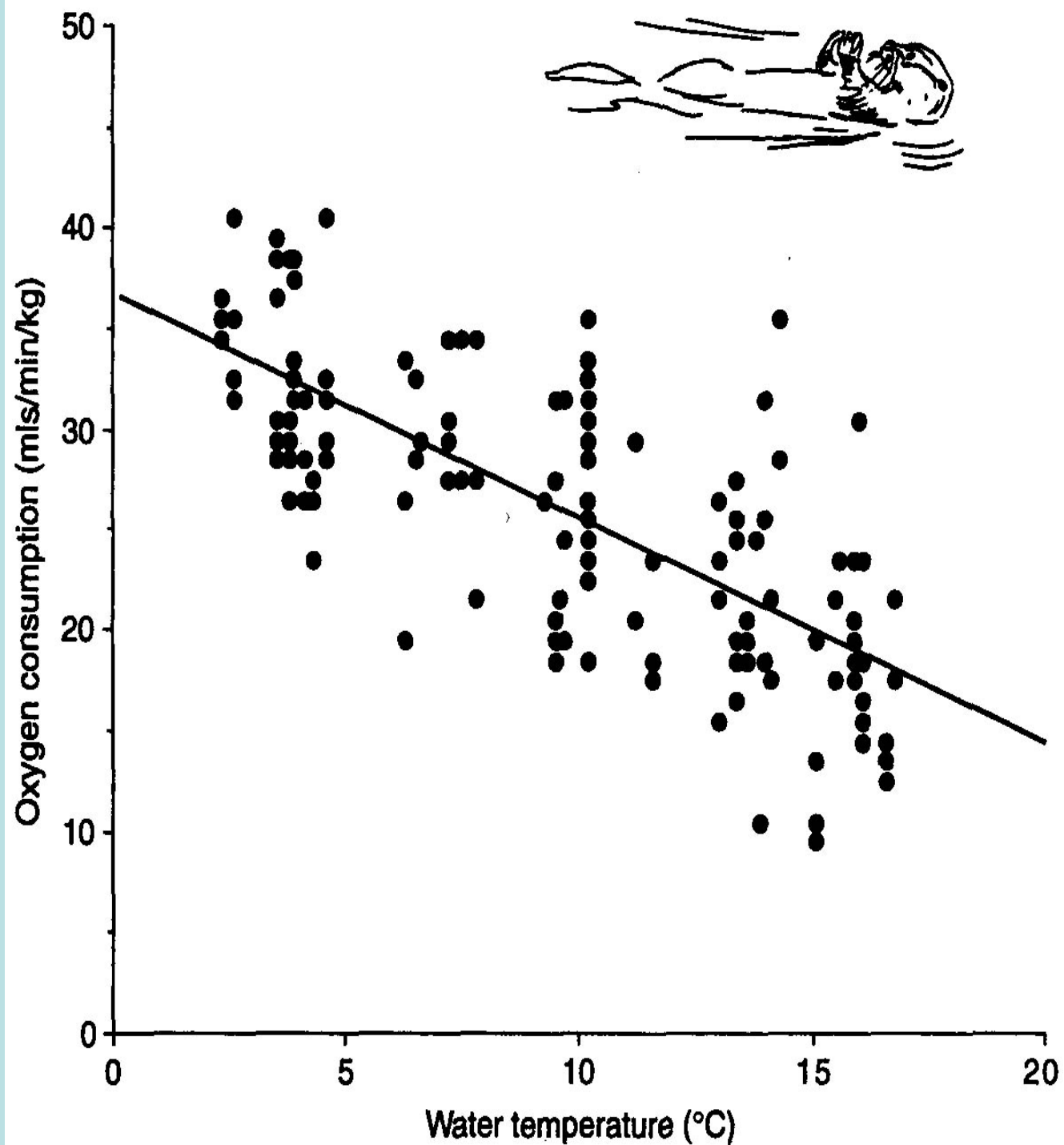
A broad basis of
the food pyramid is
favourable



Lakes rich in fish
with connecting
running waters
are good habitats



Winter-time with low temperature means increased food requirement (Kruuk 1995)



How does the otter manage to keep equal and high body-temperature (38 °c)?

The otter has no thick lard layer but a double fur coat. This has to be kept in good condition.

Grooming

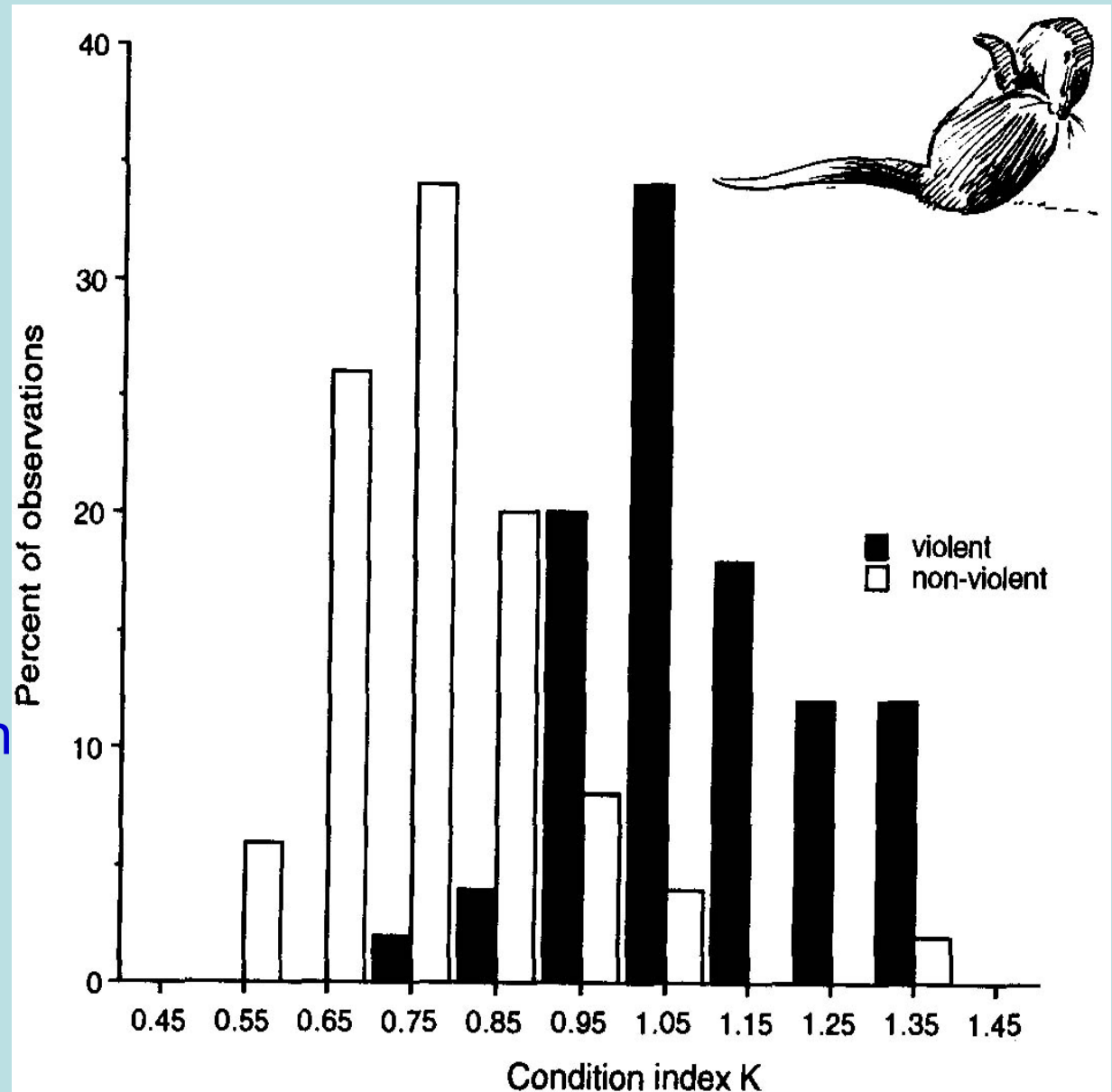


Otter
slides



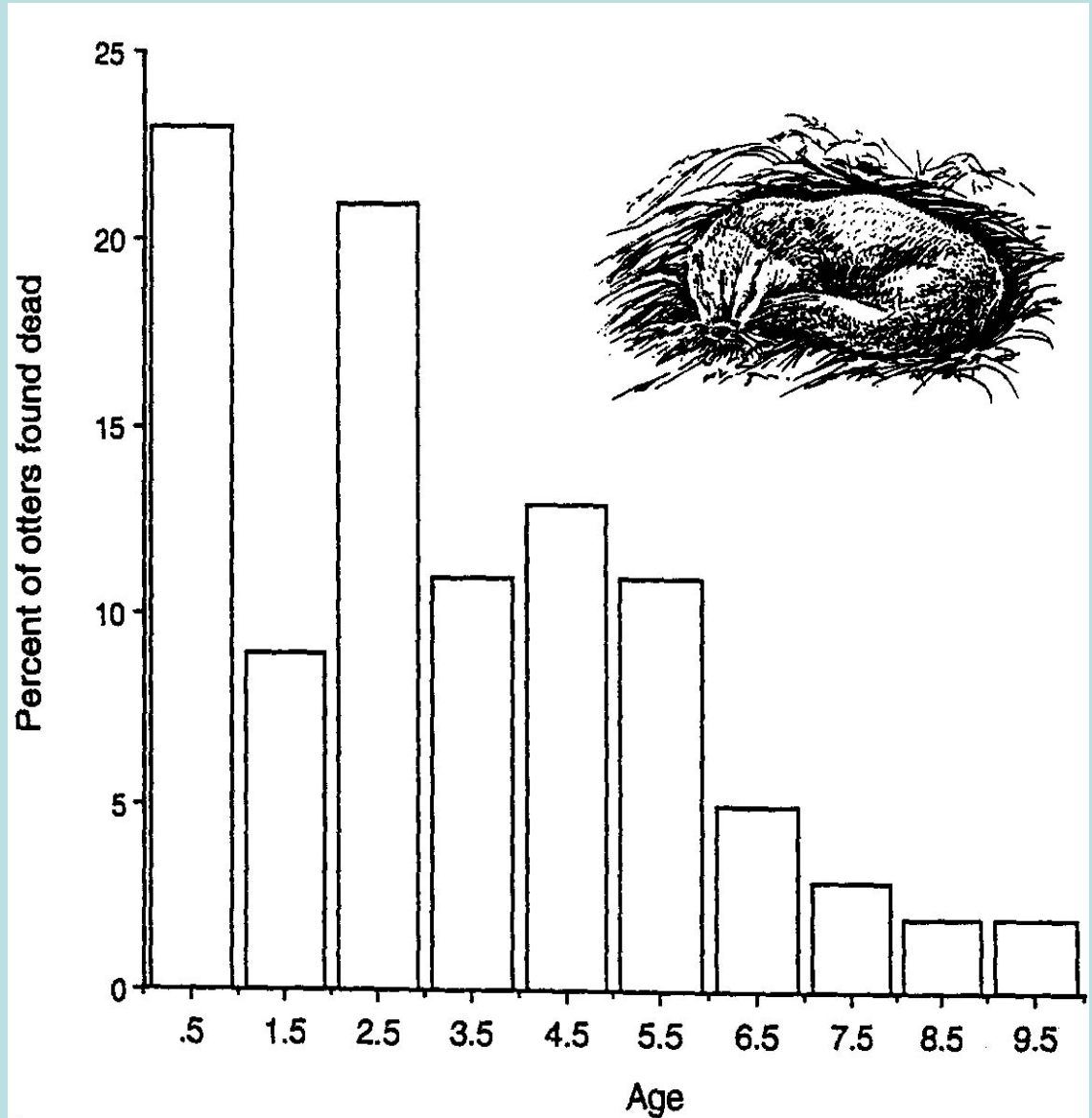
Starvation is a
common cause
of otter-mortality
in Skottland.
(Kruuk 1995)

Probably so also in
many other areas



High mortality among young otters and also during the first year of independence.

The otter can be about ten years old (Kruuk 1995)



Tracking otter



Scent marking

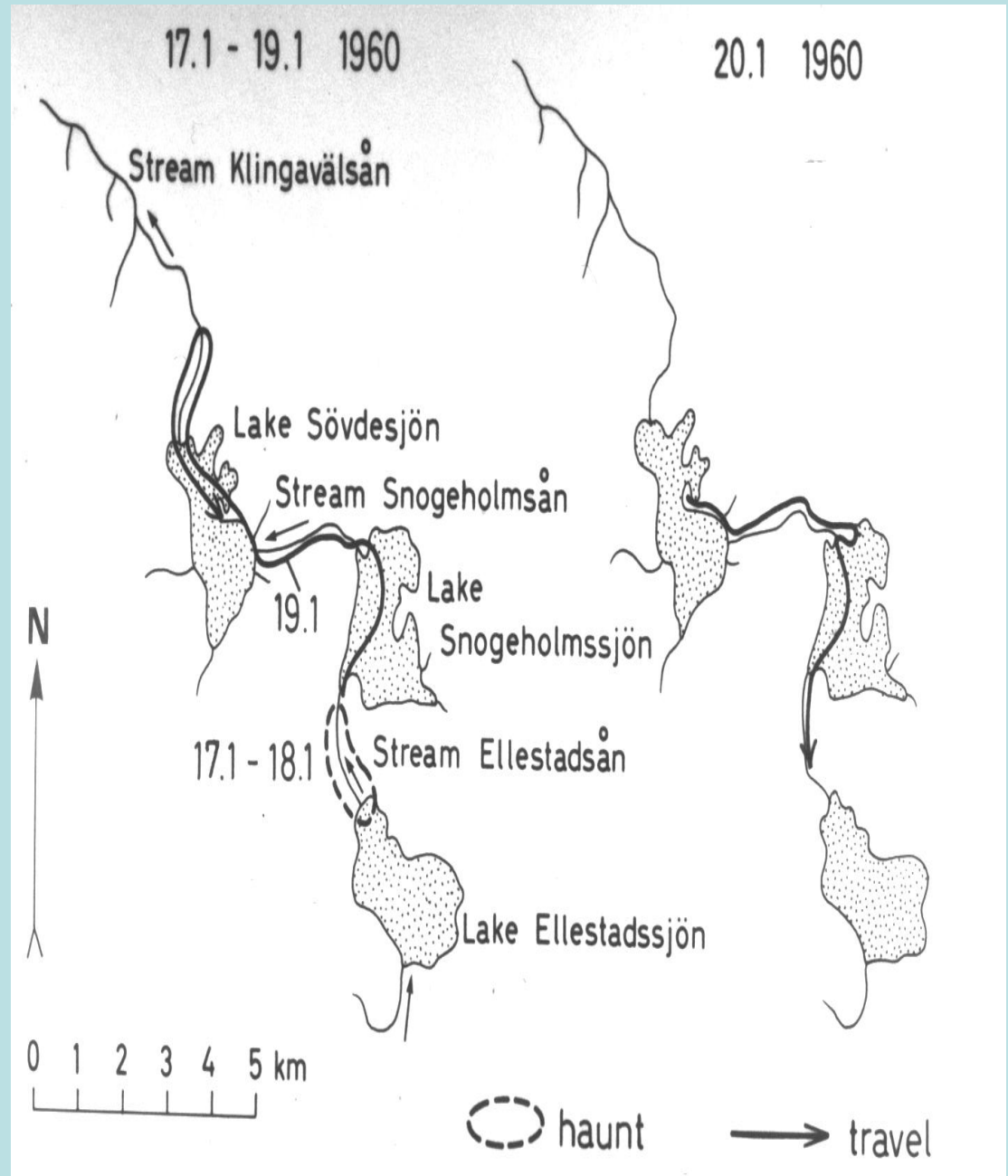


Otter scent marking

A pyramid scratched
up in sand with a
scent mark on the top



Adult males generally
moving alone
Could be long distances
but in restricted areas



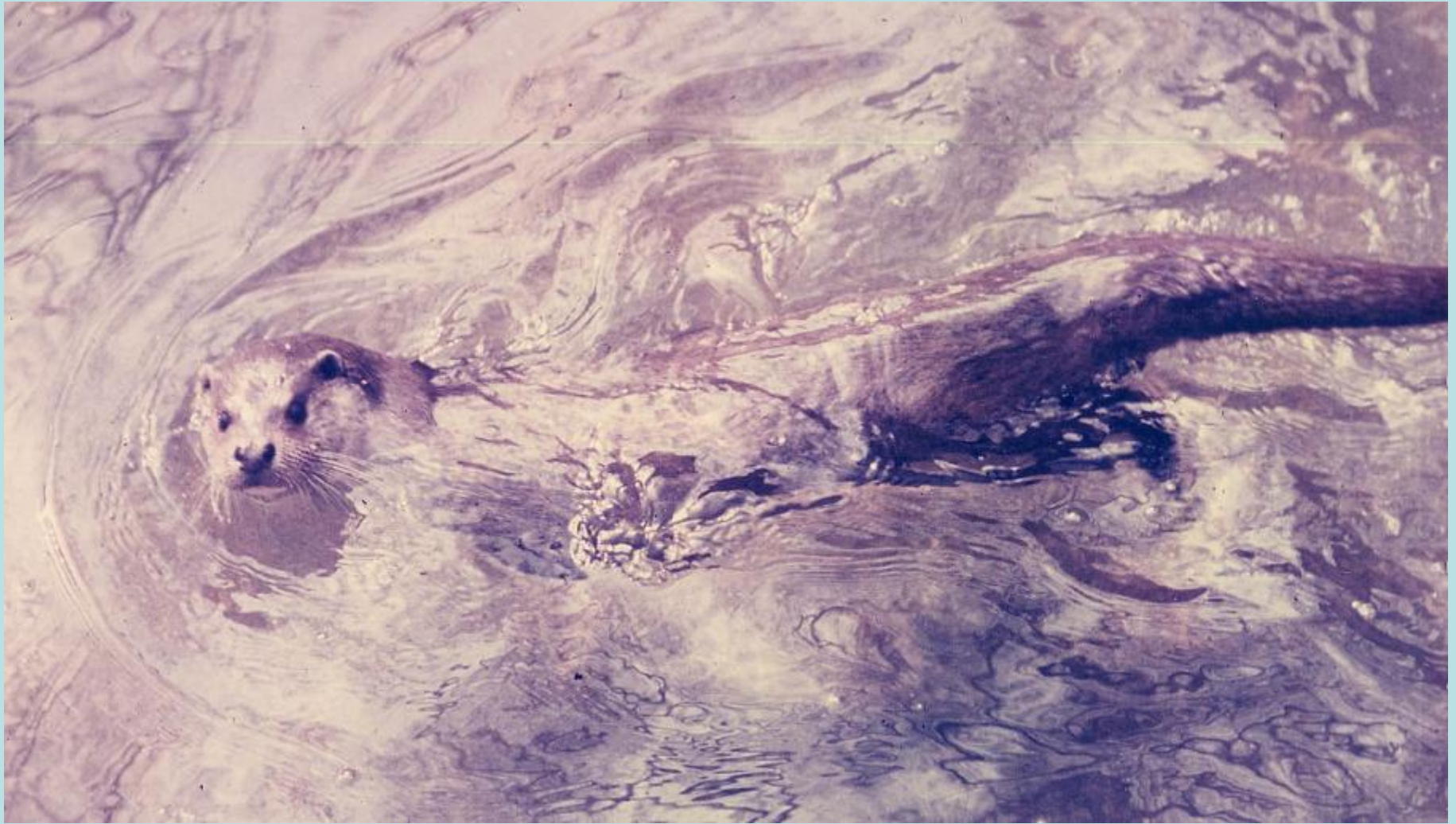
Late winter is a
common mating time
in southern Sweden



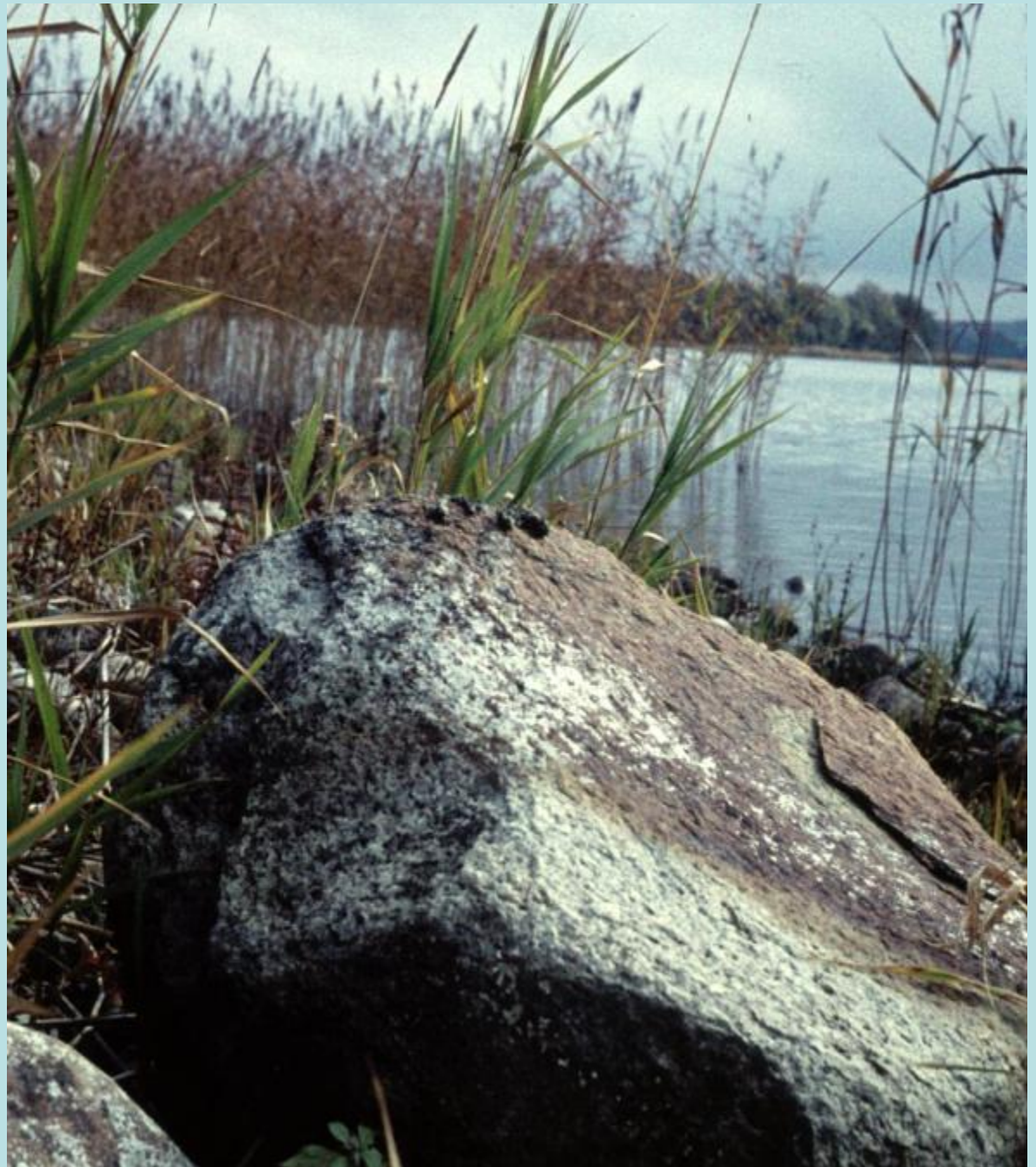
The family group;
a female with
two cubs



Thank you! Otter lovers



Gray-green otter
scats with fish
remains



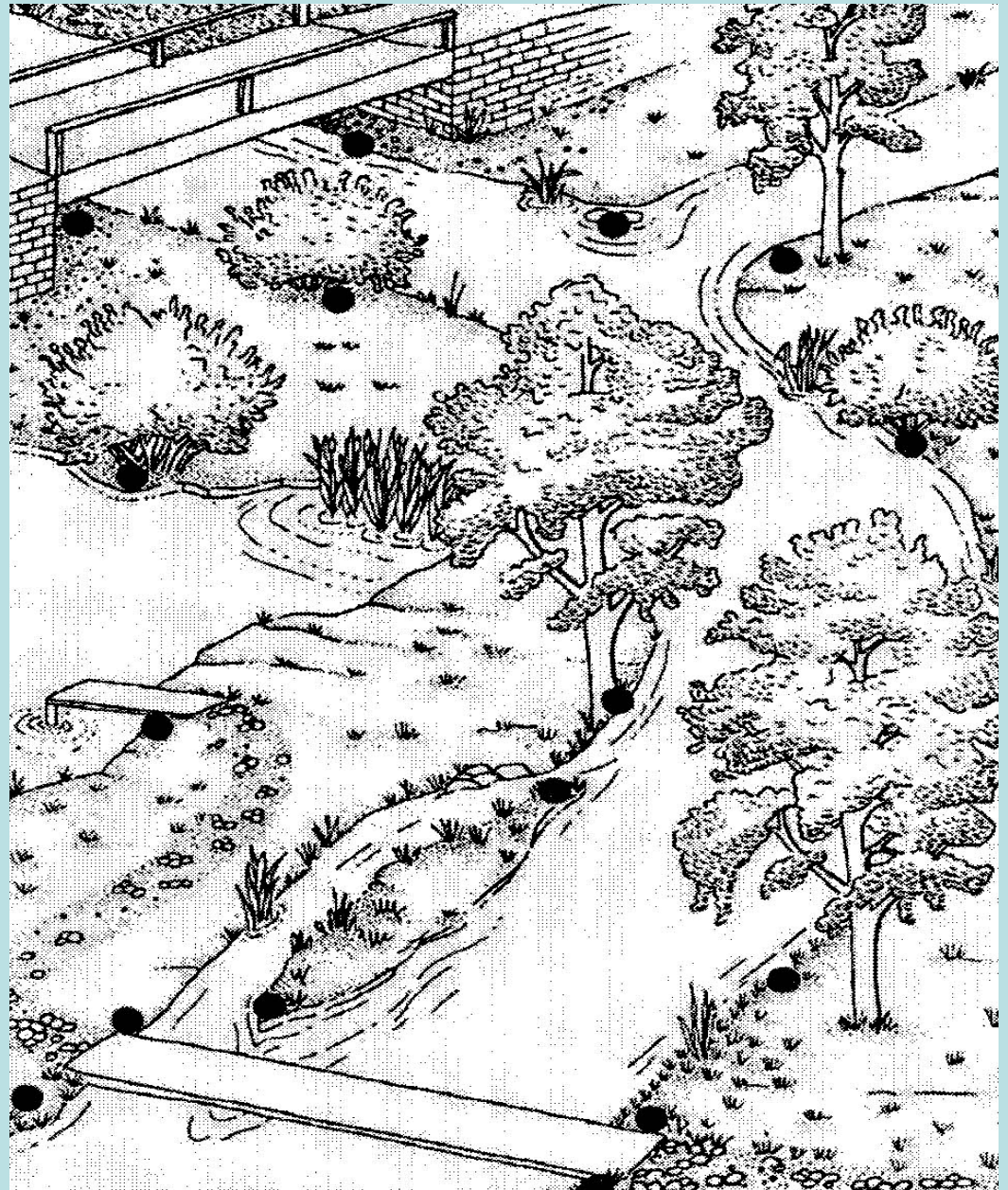
Otter scat with
remains of crayfish



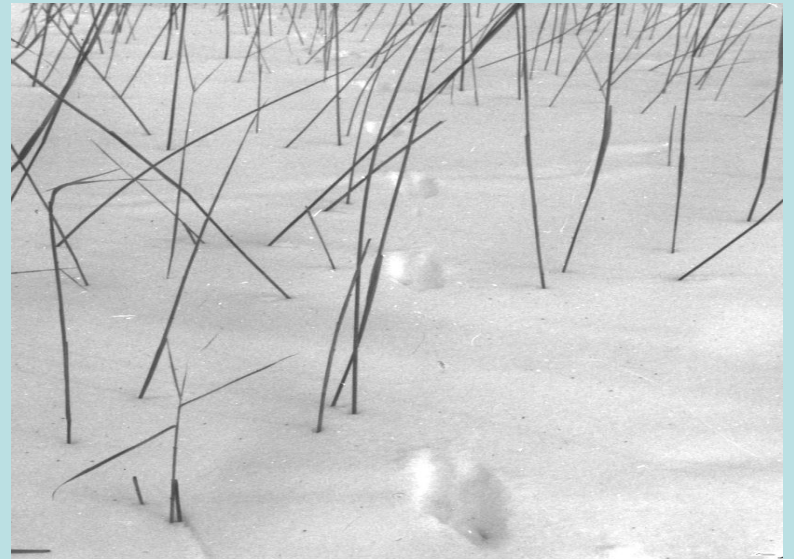
Otter scat with
remains of frogs



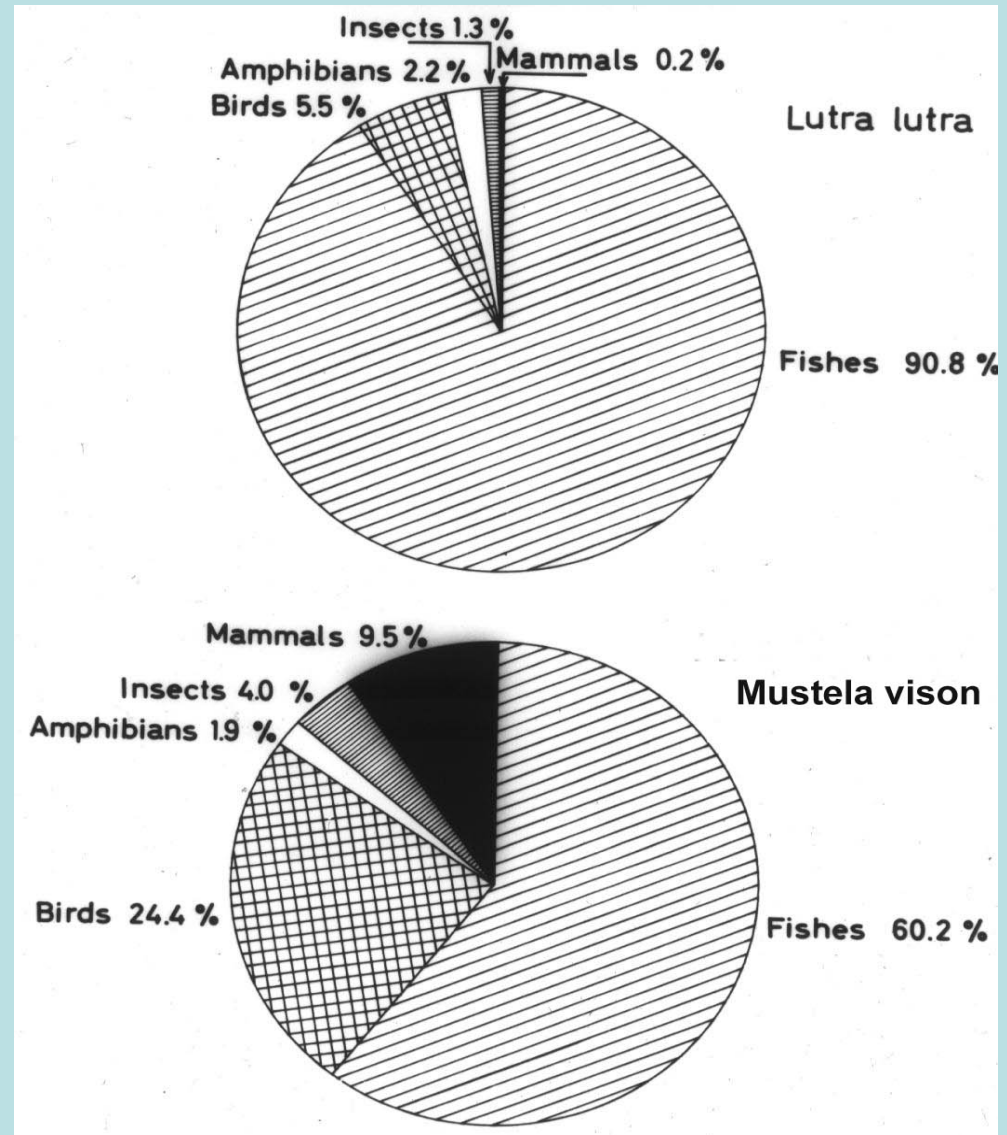
Marking places of otters



The otter and the
mink could occur in
the same habitat.
Do they compete?



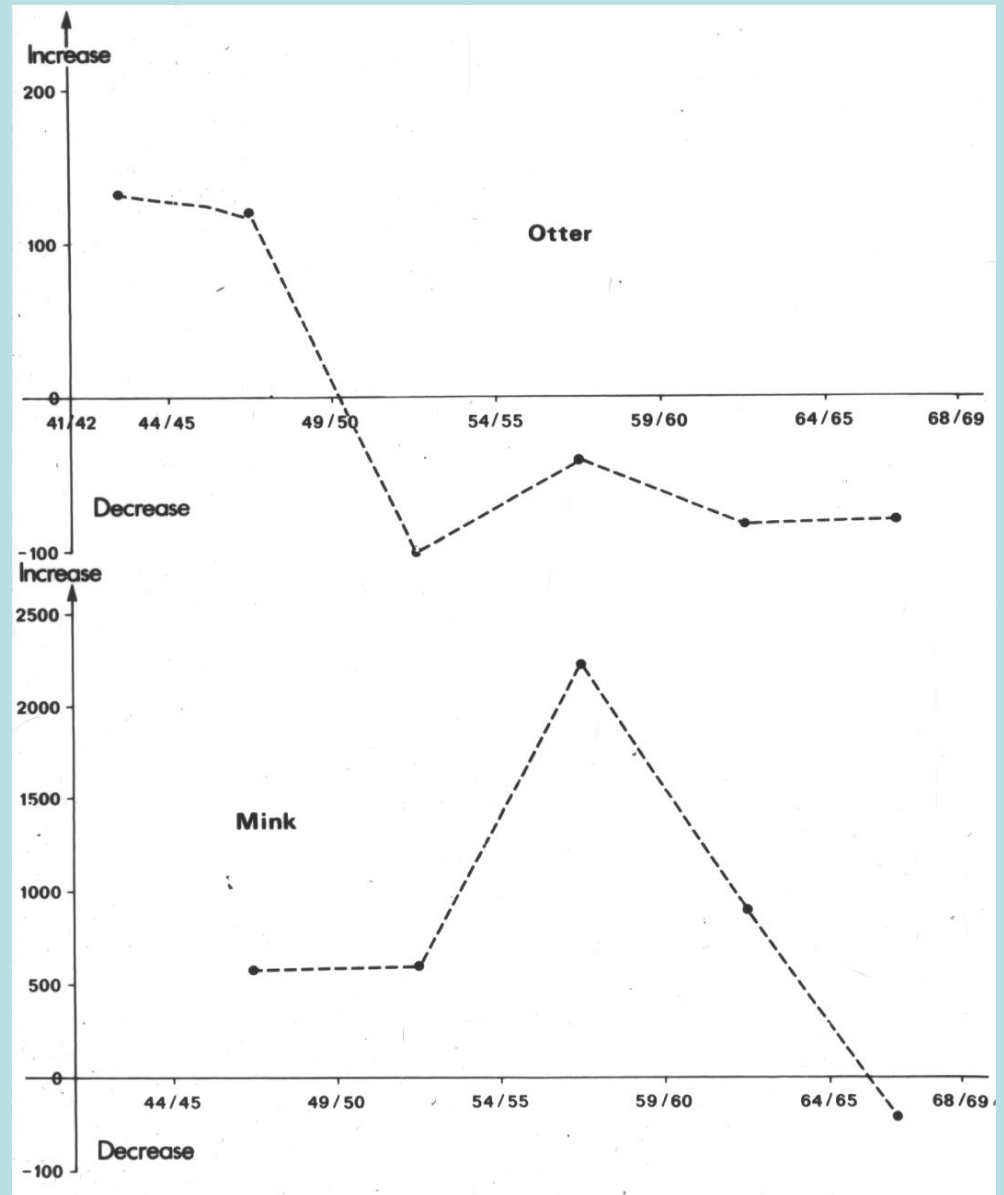
The diet of the otter and the mink overlap, but the otter feeds mainly on fish and the mink has a more mixed diet oftenly with more mammals and birds in the diet



Did the mink caused otter
decline in Seden?

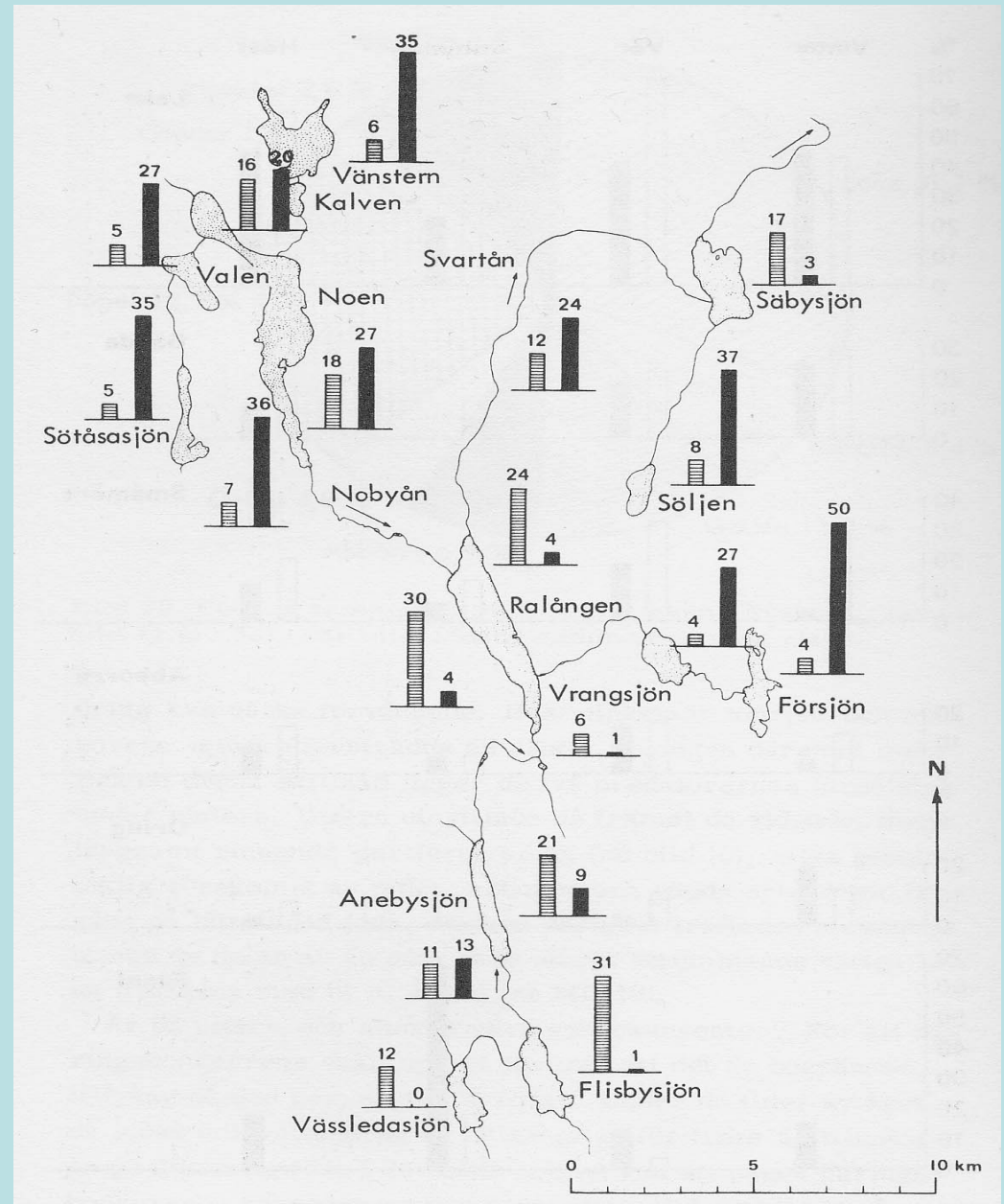
The decrease of otter numbers preceded the increase of mink numbers.

The mink was not the main cause of the decrease of otters



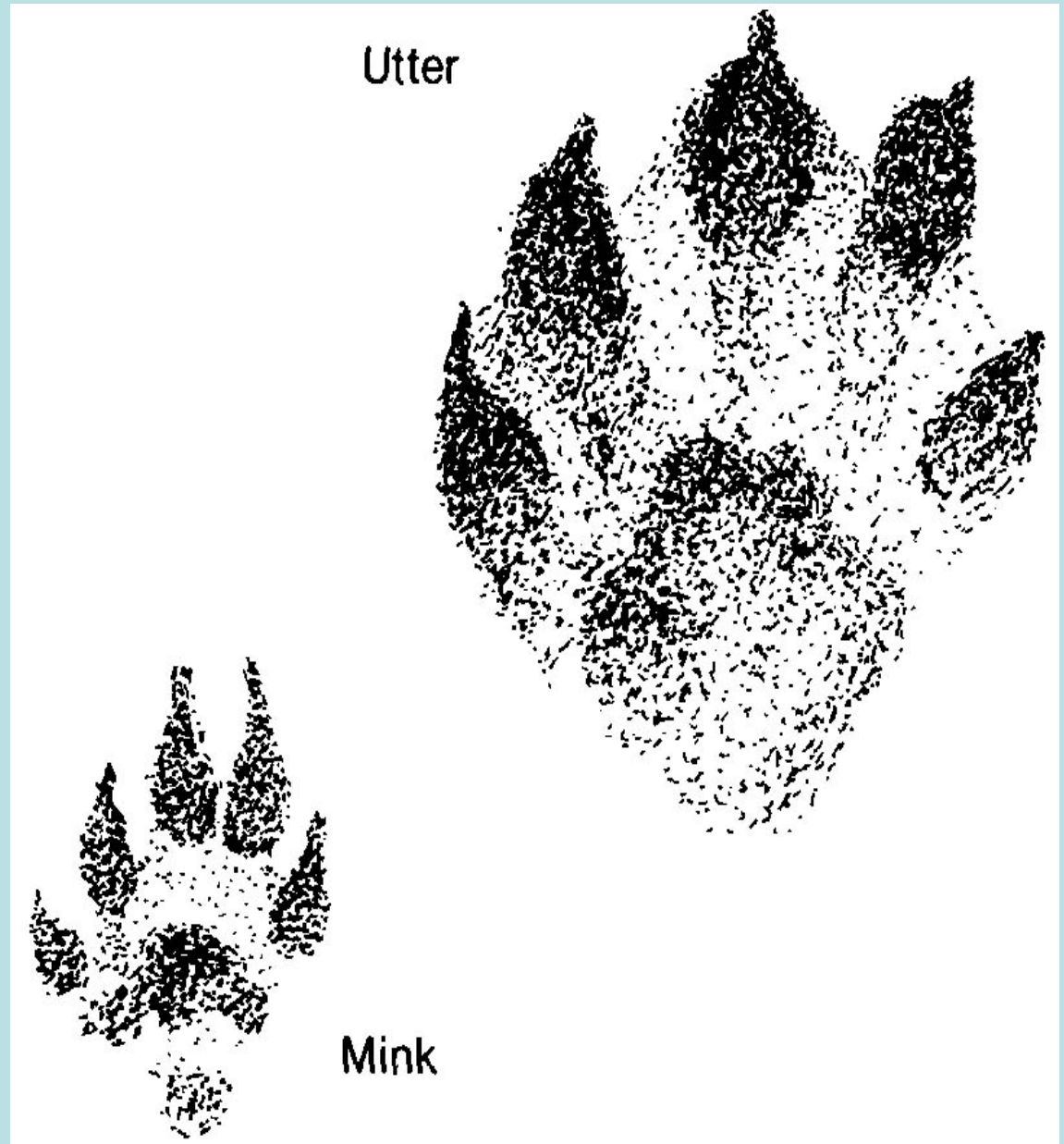
The otter and the mink
might co-exist

The otter dominated
in lakes rich in fish



How do I separate tracks and signs of
otter and mink?

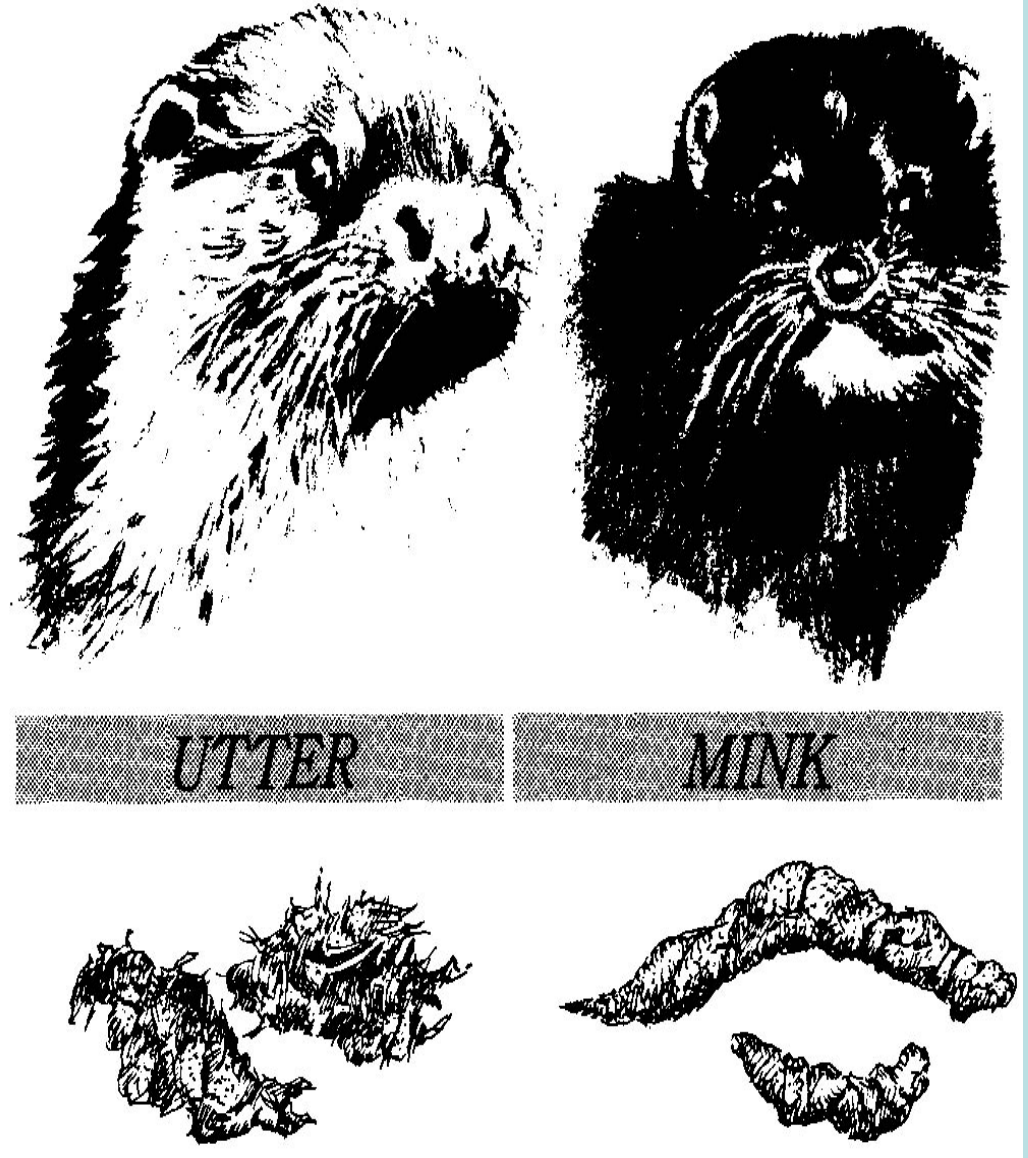
The foot-print of the
otter is much larger
than that of the mink.
A box of matches
cover the footprint of
the mink completely.



The faeces of the otter vary in shape and size, those of the mink are cylinder- formed.

The remains in otter scats could be large but those of the mink are chewed in small pieces.

The scent of the faeces differ. Those of the otter have fragrance of violets, Those of the mink are scented by sulphur compounds.

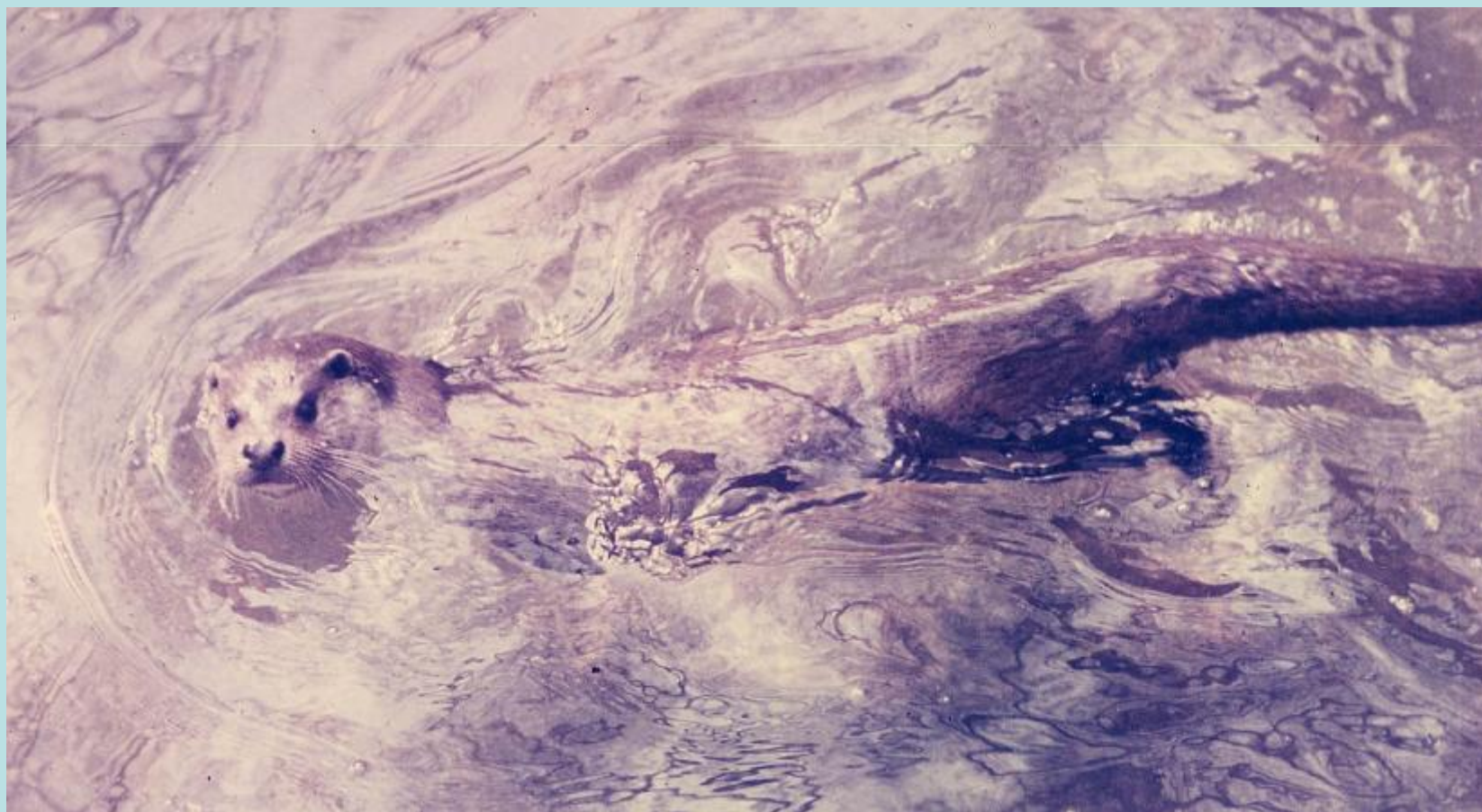


At the intrance of a
mink lodge you often
find a large heap of
excrements



A lodging place
of otters

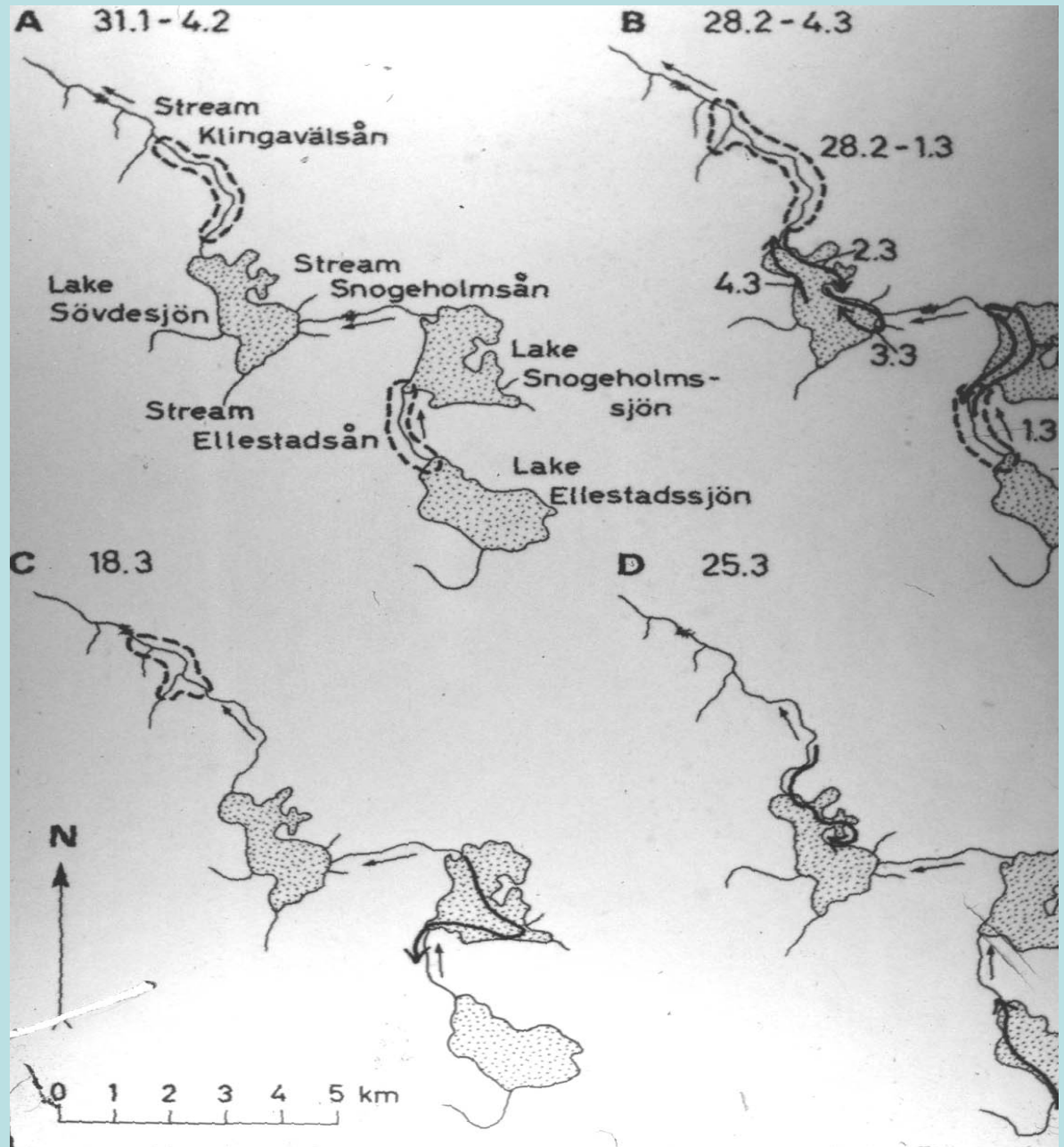




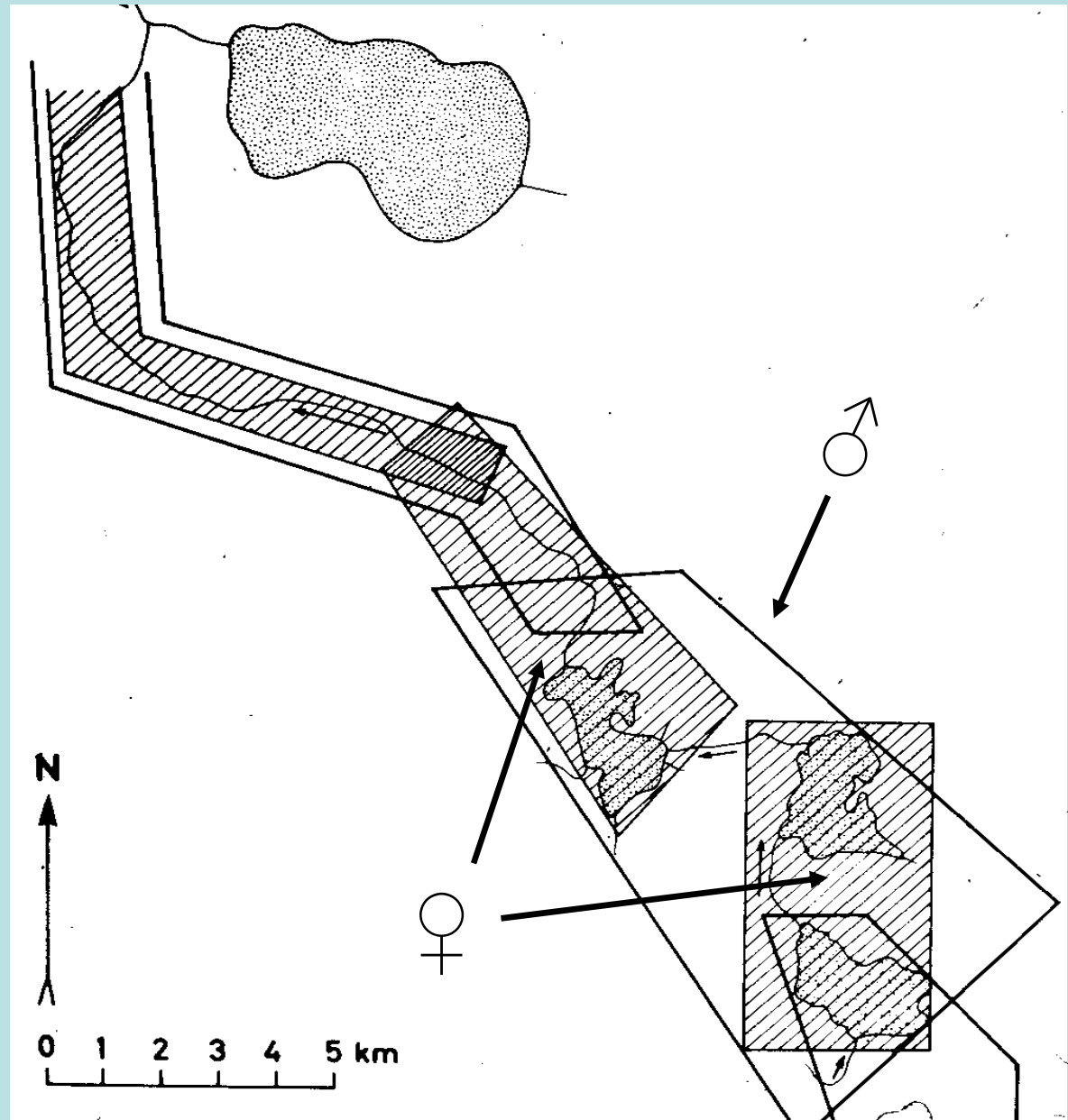
The otter can keep
fishing holes open



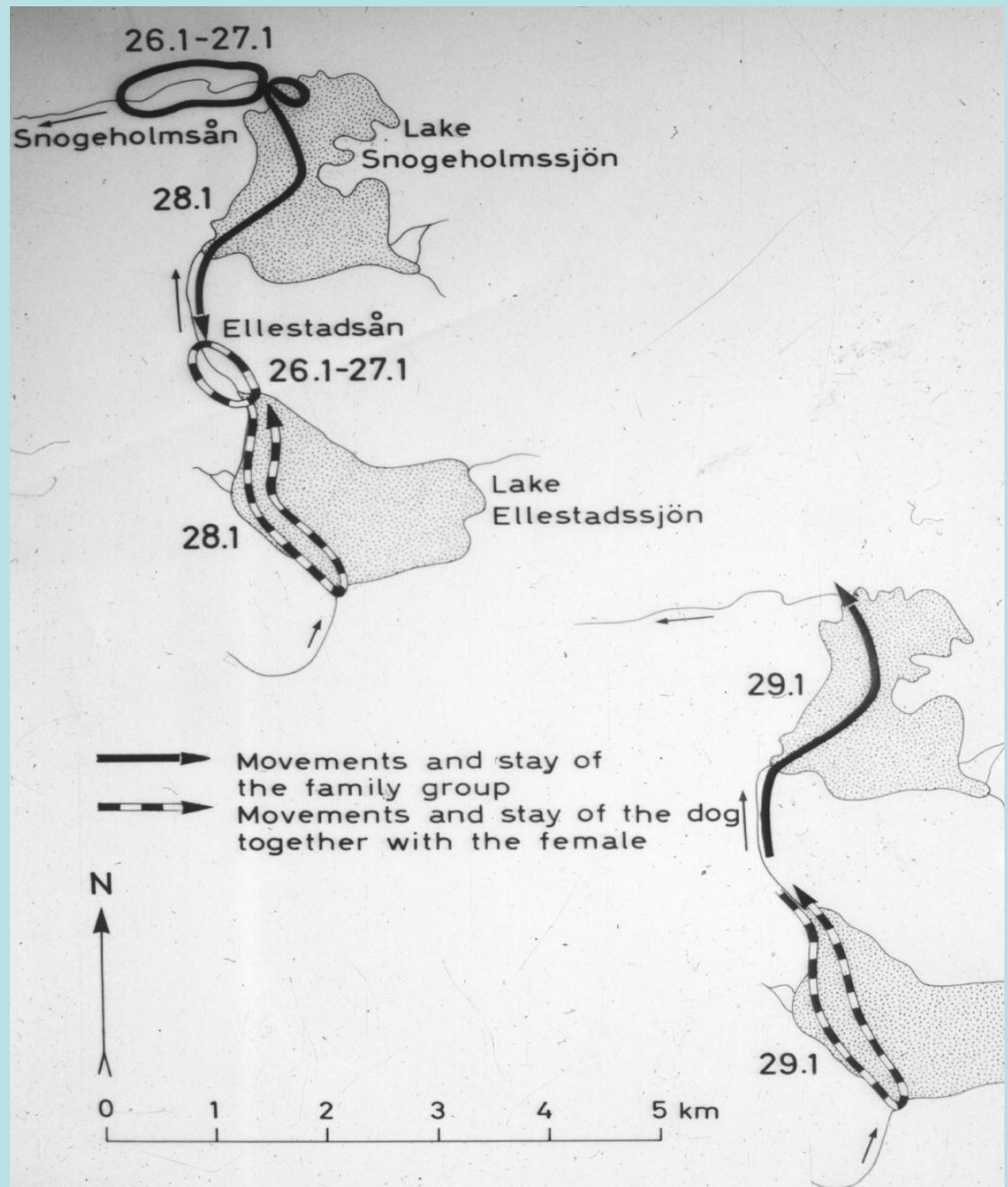
The family groups
had separated
home ranges



One male's
home range can
cover several
females' ranges



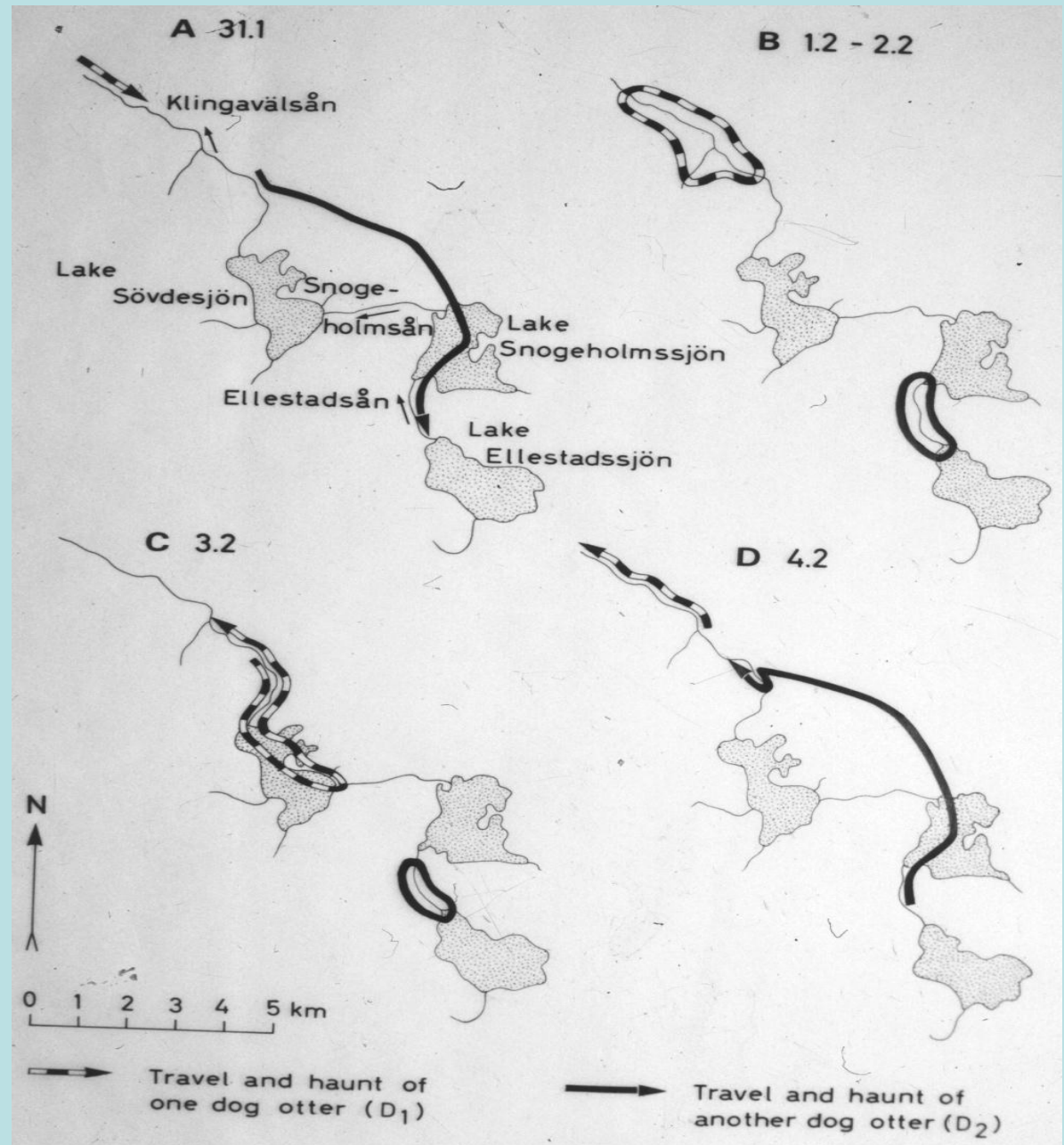
The family group
avoided a male
together with a
female in an
overlapping area



Are the home ranges defended?

Are they territories?

Adult males' ranges could overlap but the males often avoid each other



Direct observations confirm.

Avoiding most common between females.

Direct fight is common between males (Kruuk 1995)

