

Coypu (*Myocastor coypus*)



ORIGIN: Southern South America, from Peru and southern Brazil to the Magellan Straits

INTRODUCED TO EUROPE: 1920

IMPORTED WAYS AND IMPORTED VECTORS: Introduced to Europe as early as the 19th century for zoological gardens and fur farms and escaped to the wild, but on a larger scale only after 1930. Independent dispersal over several kilometers possible after releases and captive escapes.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS: The nutria is 40 to 65 cm tall and has a 30 to 45 cm long, round tail. The fur is reddish brown on top and gray underneath. Particularly striking are the mostly orange colored nail teeth.

BIOLOGY: Semiaquatic on the banks of still and flowing waters with abundant vegetation. Females give birth 1 to 3 times a year to 4 to 6 young, which become sexually mature after 5 to 6 months. Nutrias can live up to 10 years. Nutrias live socially, they swim and dive very well and are crepuscular. They dig burrows in the shore area, above the waterline and feed mainly on aquatic plants. Feeding activity can affect populations of rare and endangered aquatic plant species. Burrowing activity alters hydrology and reduces habitat structure.

STATUS: Widespread in Europe; absent from the Iberian Peninsula, successfully eliminated in Great Britain, populations failed to persist in Scandinavia and Ireland. Especially common in France and Italy.