

Nutria (*Myocastor coypus*)

BC Prohibited Species Alert



PRIMARY THREAT: Destructive feeding and burrowing habits threaten wetland habitats, agricultural crops and infrastructure such as dikes

NATIVE RANGE: South America

DESCRIPTION

Large semi-aquatic rodent; coarse dark brown fur. Distinguishing features include a white muzzle and long white whiskers, webbed hind feet and bright orange/yellow incisor teeth. Hunched appearance with tail held still while swimming. Adults weigh 5-9 kg with a body length of 40-60cm and a 30-45cm long tail.

IMPACT

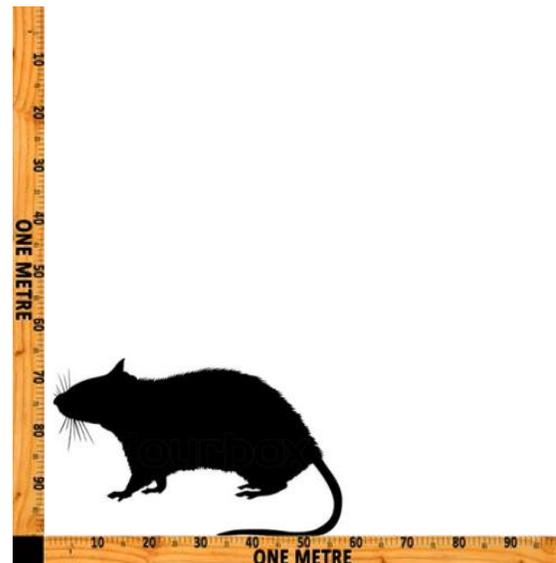
Turns wetlands and marshes into open water by drastically reducing biomass through feeding. Feeding damage to agricultural crops including vegetables, berries, corn and alfalfa. Burrowing causes erosion of wetlands and streambanks, dikes, irrigation ditches and roadbeds. Hosts a variety of diseases and pathogens that affect human and livestock health.

BIOLOGY & SPREAD

Originally introduced by fur traders. Only lives to be 3 years old; 80% don't make it past 1 year of age. Each female nutria can have 1-13 offspring per litter and can have 3 litters per year.



NUTRIA HAVE ORANGE INCISOR TEETH



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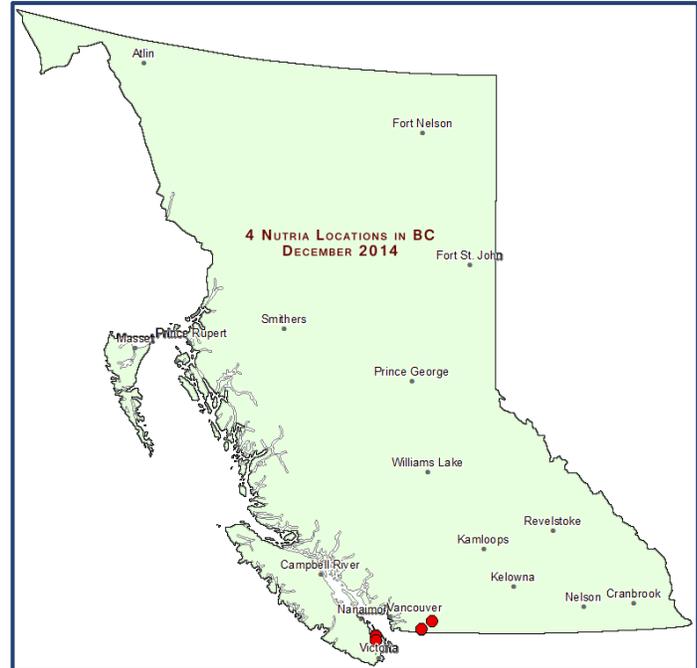
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HABITAT

Most commonly found in marshes, wetlands, slow-moving streams and sloughs; prefers freshwater but occasionally found in brackish habitats. Prefers a semi-aquatic environment (boundary between land and permanent water) due to the abundance of aquatic vegetation.

DISTRIBUTION

Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, Southern Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands. Populations of nutria expand during mild winters but constrict during colder winters.



LOOK-ALIKES: Muskrat, beaver

* **Muskrat:** smaller than nutria (1-2 kg). Tail mostly hairless, vertically flattened and moves with snake-like motion when swimming.

* **Beaver:** larger than nutria (16-32 kg). Horizontally flattened tail that is often smacked loudly on water to signal alarm.

* Both species have subtle black whiskers.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- REPORT any sightings
- RAISE awareness
- CONTROL vegetation along fences and gardens to discourage nutria



NUTRIA HABITAT PHOTO CREDIT: TREVOR SHEFFELS