

Field Notes from the Riverbank Survey

A season of counts, a theme built for annotation

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The question we started with

- ▶ Otter sightings along the Ouse had tripled in casual reports since 2019
- ▶ No one had run a systematic transect count in over a decade
- ▶ PN: Check whether the 2019 baseline survey is archived anywhere

This deck walks through method, results, and what we would do differently.

Six transects, one season

Where

- ▶ 6 transects, 2km each
- ▶ Dawn and dusk visits
- ▶ March through September

Six transects felt like a lot in January.

What we logged

- ▶ Direct sightings
- ▶ Spraint and footprint sign
- ▶ Water clarity, temperature

Sign density by transect

Transect	Sightings	Spraint sites	Sign / km
Upper Weir	4	11	2.4
Mill Race	9	22	5.1
Lower Meadow	2	6	1.3
Confluence	12	31	6.8
Reed Bank	7	18	4.0
Old Sluice	1	3	0.6

highest sightings per visit

Confluence stands out

Confluence and Mill Race account for over half of all sign recorded, despite being two of the six transects.

- ▶ Both sit downstream of the new reed-bed restoration
- ▶ Water clarity readings were highest at these two sites all season
- ▶ Standard ecological theory predicts otter density tracks prey-fish abundance, which we did not measure directly

Next season

- 1) Add fish-abundance sampling at Confluence and Mill Race
- 2) Move Old Sluice to a summer-only visit; six months of near-zero sign was not informative
- 3) **Recruit a second observer for dawn visits** — fatigue showed in the May and June logs

Thank you

Questions and transect maps available on request.

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