

Does the reproductive status of female sea otters (*Enhydra lutris*) affect habitat use and prey selection in nearshore areas on the central coast of B.C.?

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The use of focal observation techniques for sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*) populations on the central coast of British Columbia allows researchers to explain foraging behaviours in different classes of sea otters. Foraging behaviour is influenced by many factors including, but not exclusively, geographic location, prey type and abundance, predation, parental and/or reproductive status, sex, and age class. Specialized foraging tactics may reduce intraspecific competition and help ensure individuals acquire enough food to meet energy and nutritional requirements. An understanding of preferential foraging techniques and prey selection in different demographic classes of sea otters furthers our understanding of their habitat choices. We analyzed data from three different demographic groups of sea otters at four different occupation sites ranging in years occupied from 2013-2016 on the central coast of British Columbia. Foraging observations of adult female sea otters of different reproductive status were analyzed when tide levels were high so the intertidal and subtidal zones were both available for foraging. Our results suggest that regardless of sea otter class and occupation site, female sea otters forage, on average, more in the subtidal than in the intertidal. There was no difference between sea otter classes or occupation sites for intertidal forage use.