

Comments to otter reintroduction project

The stated purpose of the otter reintroduction project (ORI) - within the movement "100 square meters" to restore Shiretoko's ecosystems. The purpose of our participation – to restore a natural area of the Euroasian otter to secure a look against disappearance if the situation with its preservation in our country will be worse. With the same purpose we say that the Japanese party has a historical debt to the nature of the Southern Kuril Islands where the otter disappeared during their management of Japan. But we agree not to declare it publicly understanding that round this fact political speculation can begin. So, we help with this project not for Japan, but for otter.

Personally I had an impression that participants of the project unsubstantially judge counteraction of local community of ORI. Unfortunately I can't read completely the review on this subject published in the Bulletin of the Shiretoko museum, No. 26 (KATO Mineo. 2005. Can We See Wolves and Otters again at Shiretoko Peninsula? A study on sociological and legal aspects of the reintroduction of extinct species).

Here a fragment from an abstract of this article: *"From the social tolerance point of view, reintroduction can be considered as a release of alien species. People also fear predation on livestock or human injuries. In conclusion, considering legal and social conditions, there are a lot of problems in the reintroduction of the wolf and the otter. Hence, present situation isn't yet suitable to proceed the reintroduction of locally extinct species to a practical stage"*.

Perhaps it is worth repeating this research by other methods and if this is true, to begin carrying out the special public campaign directed on change of public opinion in the relation to ORI. Actually during our arrival this campaign already started. Remember visit to the mayor who is the authoritative representative of fishing community, he didn't tell anything about harm of ORI. At Paul's lecture there were questions on this subject, but I didn't feel sharp counteraction.

As for our supervision, we once again can repeat – we don't note any harmful effects of otter neither on fishery, nor on fish breeding. Our hatcheries release juveniles are weighing to 1 g. According to the optimal foraging theory (McArthur, Pianka, 1966), the effective predator (otter – an effective predator) won't spend time and energy for search, capture and processing energetically not of favorable production. Than to catch 200 pieces on 1 gram, it is better to catch 1 piece weighing 200 g. On the contrary the otter destroys many predators for juveniles of salmon than brings benefit to fishery.

We know also that an otter – very dynamic, mobile animal. It can move between the rivers and the sea, to use different sources of forage during different seasons. Therefore existence of safe for otter corridors is very important. Yes, there is a threat of death on roads, but there are no hunters and stray dogs.

We agree that to Hokkaido the otter can become important sight for tourists such as bears, salmon, itou, fish owl. But in one place – Kami-no-Ko Pond we could see how otter can become threat for tourism. If it comes to this place where people observe Dolly Vardens, the behavior of fishes will change soon.

I suggest to carry out strategic planning of the project, having begun with drawing up the simplest SWOT analysis. Here only part it, participants can add it.

SW OT	Helpful	Harmful
Internal	Strengths	Weaknesses
External	Opportunities	Threats

S – strengths of the project:

High level of professionalism of the main team.
 Serious and deep preparation and planning.
 Enough time is allowed for implementation of the project.
 There is the leading organization – Shiretoko's Fund.
 There is the main project – 100 square meters.
 There is a design territory – natural park, the territory of the World heritage.
 Attraction of team of the best experts (myself I don't mean, of course).
 Use of the international standards and development (manual IUCN).

W – weaknesses:

On the most part of the peninsula of Shiretoko not the best habitats.
 On many sites the stern isn't enough.
 Not enough safe corridors for migrations.
 Objective research of public opinion isn't conducted.
 Work on preparation of the project in the donor country isn't conducted.

O – opportunities:

The otter can migrate in the best places.
 The otter can use the replacing forages.
 Creation of coalition government, business, scientific and public organizations.
 Public lecture of the Floor began public campaign for involvement of supporters of the project.
 It is possible to address to the firm of Mitsui having interests on Sakhalin behind support of the project.
 It is possible to transfer the project to other area (for example, to the basin of the river Sarufutsn where the Oji Paper company supports preservation of a taimen).

T – threats:

It is supposed that there will be an increased death of an otter on roads and in ground traps.
 Without proofs it is accepted that locals will be against the project.

It is considered that the Ministry won't finance the project as reintroduction of storks cost very much.
Political problems between Japan and Russia.

Sergey Makeev
10.20.2014