

Deep Sea Learning with Georgia Aquarium



Animal Behaviors and Ethogram Studies

*As seen on Deep Sea Learning with
Georgia Aquarium*

Key Terms:

- **Domestic setting:** An environment under human care.
- **Zoological setting:** An environment within the zoo and aquarium community.
- **Ethogram:** A list of commonly observed behaviors for a species or individual.

Activity: Conduct an Ethogram Study

- Use the attached Sea Otter Behavior Ethogram and the Georgia Aquarium southern sea otter webcam (georgiaaquarium.org/webcam) to observe sea otter behavior.
- Observe one animal and place a check mark in the column next to each behavior observed in a 30-second interval.
- Complete ten observation intervals, then total the check marks for each behavior.
- Compare your totals to predict behaviors people are likely to see if viewing southern sea otters.



Why do we study animal behavior?

- To help humans understand animals better.
- To help humans care for animals in **domestic** and **zoological settings**. Any new or unusual behaviors for individual animals can be a sign of changes in their health.
- To bring awareness of species behaviors such as feeding, mating and migration to help with the management and conservation of wildlife. It can help identify areas that need protection and helps us understand how human behaviors impact wildlife.

How do we study animal behavior?

- Repeated observations and records create a baseline behavior for comparison to anything unusual for that individual animal.
- **Ethograms** are a listing of commonly observed behaviors for a species or individual. These tools help record observed behaviors in a scientific way.
- Tracking animals can help to document migration, swimming and diving behaviors. This may help identify feeding and breeding areas.



Image courtesy of sanctuaries.noaa.gov

Visit <https://www.georgiaaquarium.org/at-home-learning-with-georgia-aquarium/f>

Sea Otter Behavior Ethogram

Sea Otter: _____ Students: _____

Place one ✓ in the box for every behavior you see in a 30-second interval.

Behavior	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Totals
Sleeping											
Grooming											
Feeding											
Interacting											
Swimming											
Vocalizing											

		
Sleeping	Grooming	Feeding
		
Interacting	Swimming	Vocalizing