



Departmental Seminars 2018

Wednesday 18 April 13:00-14:00

John Day Lecture Theatre 3



Conservation ecology of Cape clawless otters *Aonyx capensis* in an urban environment



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Abstract:

Globally, the expansion of coastal cities has impacted negatively on freshwater and marine ecosystems - primarily through habitat loss, fragmentation and pollution. Top predators within these systems are particularly vulnerable due to their greater space requirements and higher risk of bioaccumulation of pollutants. In the Western Cape, South Africa, the Cape clawless otter, *Aonyx capensis*, is now the top predator in many freshwater ecosystems, and is listed as Near Threatened as a result of the rapid degradation of freshwater ecosystems. In this PhD study, we explored the effects of urbanization on the habitat use, diet and pollution levels of otters living on the Cape Peninsula, South Africa. We used occupancy models to determine the distribution of otters across the Peninsula; scats and isotope analyses to quantify their diet, and necropsies on road-killed otters to test for the presence of PCB's in their liver tissue. The study provided valuable insights into the urban conservation measures required to ensure the survival of a top predator in an urban environment.