



CONSTRUCTION OF A LOG-PILE OTTER HOLT

One of the most common resting places used by otters are piles of bankside timber debris or old tree roots. Unfortunately this kind of habitat is quite scarce along modern rivers. Artificial log piles imitate this habitat and represent an inexpensive but effective way of increasing the number of available sites. The log site can be built anywhere along rivers, streams, lakes or ponds. Locate as close to the water's edge as possible and in an area where there is natural cover or where cover can be created.

STEPS

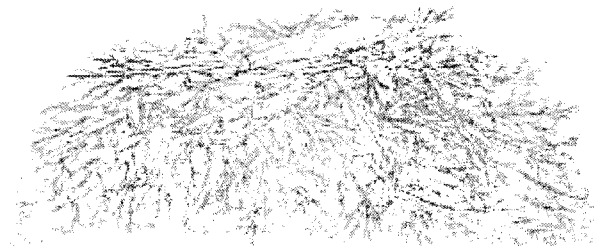
1. Trees and shrubs should not be cleared to create this habitat. Timber can be obtained from fallen trees, pollarding, coppicing or brashings from hedge thinning etc. You will need 12/15 logs up to 1m long and 30-40cm in diameter, 50/65 poles of 3 to 4 metres in length and 3/15 cm in diameter plus a large volume of brashing. **Ensure any chainsaw work is undertaken by a qualified chainsaw operator.**
2. Large logs should be placed and staked to form a holt, roughly 3m in diameter. Create inside chambers of 1m² with the remaining logs (also staked) with 2 entrance gaps of about 15/20 cm, one facing the water's edge.
3. Use large poles to form a roof over the chambers and fill in gaps with smaller poles making it dark and water resistant.
4. If the site is liable to flooding then the holt needs to be secured after stage 3 with staked ropework or wire.
5. Pile the brashing densely on top completely covering the poles and logs (leaving entrances clear) to ensure dark dry chambers.



STEPS 1 & 2



STEPS 3 & 4



STEP 5

OTHER POINTS

- Holt must be situated above the winter flood level.
- Choose a site that has minimal disturbance, and if possible fenced off from livestock.
- Allow the natural scrub to develop around the holt or plant with species typical of the locality.
- Particularly good river locations for holts are where a side channel and main channel meet or within a meander.

For more information contact the Conservation Officer for Rivers and Wetlands at Dorset Wildlife Trust, Brooklands Farm, Forston, Dorchester DT2 7AA. 01305 264620