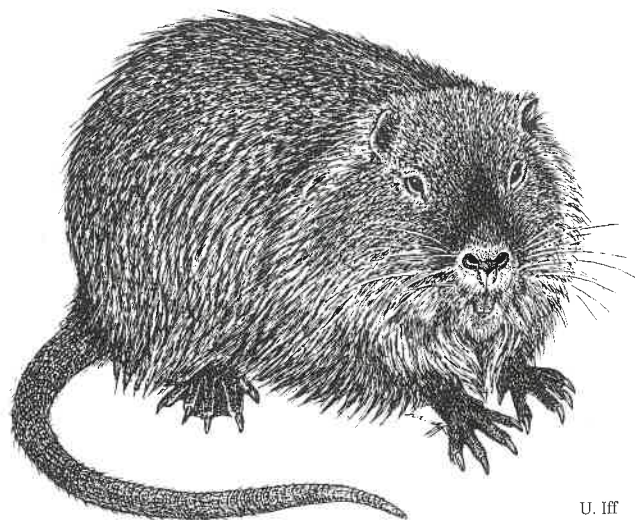


# *Myocastor coypus* (MOLINA, 1782)



U. IFF

## Distribution

**World:** indigenous to South America, where it occurs in sub-tropical Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, the southern part of Brazil, south-eastern Bolivia, Peru and Chile. Introduced to North America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Japan and the Asiatic part of the former Soviet Union.

**Europe:** introduced in the 1920s for fur production; since then feral populations established in many countries. Particularly common in France, Germany and Italy; recently eradicated from Great Britain.

## Geographic variation

Five subspecies recognized. Colour varieties selected in captive stocks. Where recorded, the subspecies introduced to Europe was *M. coypus bonariensis* (Commerson, 1805), from northern Argentina.

## Habitat

Adapted to a semi-aquatic mode of life, coypus inhabit rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, natural and artificial ponds; preferred areas have emergent or succulent vegetation along the banks. Almost exclusively herbivorous, they feed on a broad range of aquatic and semi-aquatic plants. Coypus dig complex burrow systems into the banks of waterways, or build surface nests in waterside vegetation or in shallow water.

## Coypu

AL	Nutria	LT	Nutrija
BG	Нутрия	LU	-
CZ	Nutrie	LV	Nūtrijs
DE	Nutria	MK	Нутрија
DK	Sumpbæver; Bæverrotte	MT	-
EE	Nutria	NL	Beverrat
ES	Coipú	NO	Sumpbever; Beverrotte
FI	Rämemajava	PL	Nutria
FO	Bævurrotta	PT	Coipu
FR	Ragondin	RO	Nutria
GR	Μυοκάστορας, Νούτρια	RU	Нутрия
HR	Nutrija	SE	Sumpbäver
HU	Nutria	SI	Nutrija
IR	-	SK	Nutria riečna
IS	Bjórrotta	TR	Su maymunu
IT	Nutria	YU	Нутрија

## Population status

A rapid increase in numbers and range followed escapes from fur-farms or deliberate releases.

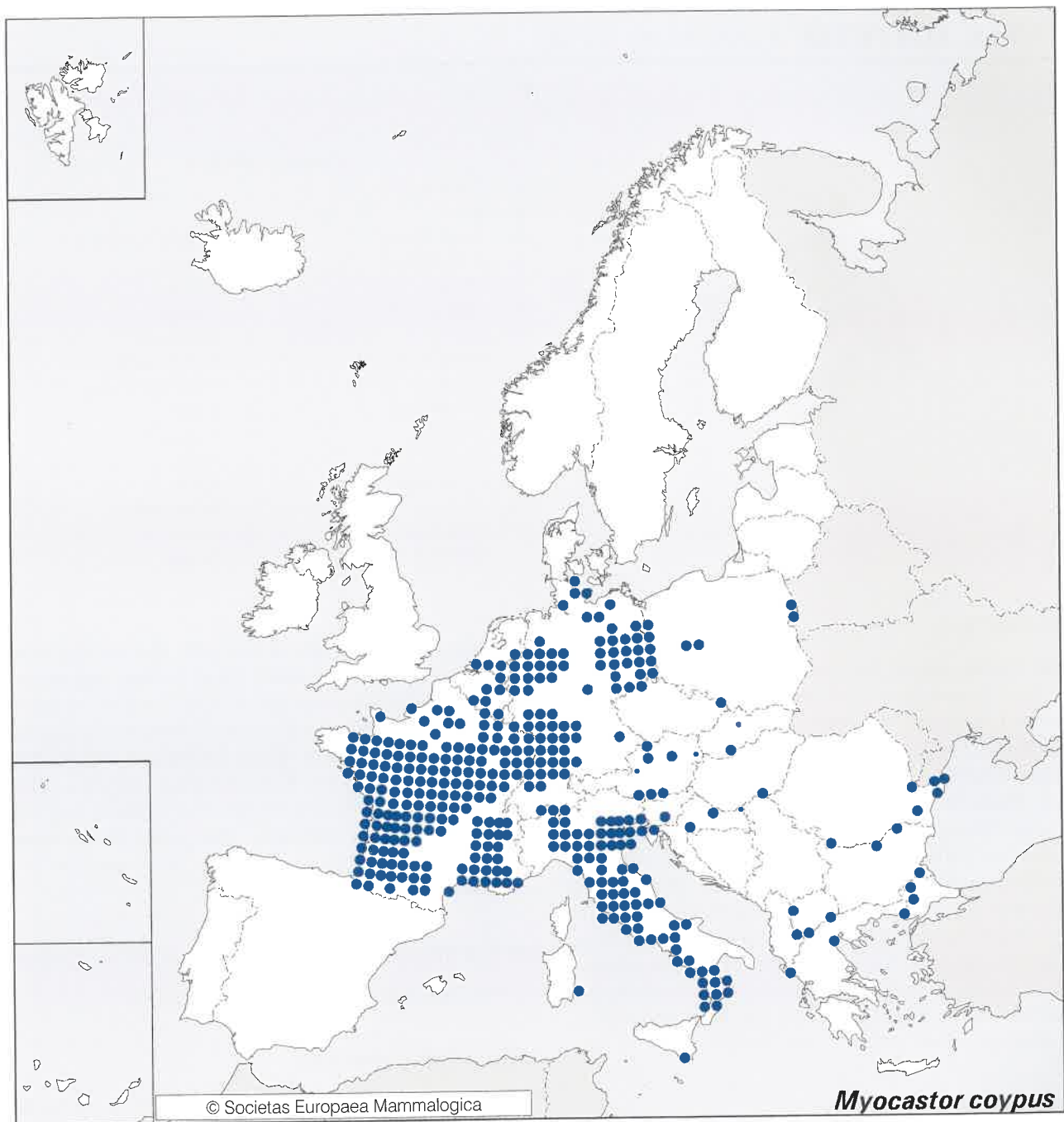
Outside its native range, the coypu often reaches a remarkable population density, causing damage to crops, to drainage systems and to native plants. As a consequence, introduced populations are generally considered to be pests. Reduced in numbers in some parts of their natural range through over-exploitation or eradication. Seasonal fluctuations in the northern hemisphere range from less than 1 to more than 24 ind./ha and are generally ascribed to periods of freezing weather.

## International legal & conservation status

None.

## Other information

Exploited for fur and meat in South America, North America and Russia. It carries various infections transmittable to animals, and in some cases to man: leptospirosis, salmonellosis, pasteurellosis, botulism, some viral and fungal infections, and parasitic infections such as toxoplasmosis.



## Literature

- Doncaster & Jouventin (1989)  
 Gosling (1989)  
 Gosling & Skinner (1984)  
 Niethammer (1963)  
 Reggiani *et al.* (1993)  
 Stubbe (1982b) – review  
 Woods *et al.* (1992) – review

G. Reggiani