

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

A NEW SEA OTTER FROM SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

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The Biological Survey has recently secured from Geo. M. McGuire, of Santa Barbara, the skeleton of an adult male sea otter killed July 2, 1904, on San Miguel Island, the most western of the Santa Barbara or Channel Islands, California. Sea otters were formerly abundant on these islands, but are now exceedingly rare and believed to be rapidly approaching extinction.

Comparison of the skull of this specimen with a series of skulls from Bering Sea (the type locality of *lutris*) shows the California animal to be a well-marked subspecies. It may be known from the following description :

Latax lutris nereis subsp. nov.

Type from San Miguel Island, Santa Barbara Islands, California. No. 133,508. Adult male. U. S. National Museum, Biological Survey Collection. July 2, 1904. Geo. M. McGuire.

Cranial characters.—Skull large, broad, and high, with long and high sagittal crest and swollen braincase. Compared with *lutris* the following differences appear: Skull as a whole less flattened, braincase more swollen and rounded, the sides (viewed from above) more convex and swollen, especially behind the constriction; anterior part of zygomata more broadly and squarely expanded; basioccipital forming an angle with basisphenoid; coronoid processes sloping strongly backward; sagittal crest much higher and more decurved posteriorly; inner cusp of large upper premolar (pm 3) elongated along anterior part of inner lobe (instead of conical) and showing a tendency to subdivide into two parts; 1st lower molar broader and more broadly truncate posteriorly.

The specimen in the flesh measured 6 feet in length.