

We hope that you enjoy this copy of our e-Update. Would you like to continue to receive this and other IOSF information, by email? Then join our mailing list. Visit [www.otter.org](http://www.otter.org) and simply click on 'Join our Mailing List'.

## e-Update No 5 May 2011

### Cubs at the Sanctuary

The good news is that there are now two more otters back in the wild.

Tweedie was released recently into a river and loch system on the mainland. The weather wasn't perfect but she was getting restless so we thought it best to let her go.



Another otter back in the wild is one which appeared in the shed of one of our friends in Broadford! Margaret called us when she discovered the otter in a pretty poor condition hiding in the shed. He wasn't injured but was a juvenile who clearly wasn't doing too well fending for himself. So we fed him up and when he had put on some weight and his coat was lovely and shiny again, we set him free.



So now the way is clear for Dee and Luce to move from a nursery pen up to the croft, so that they can prepare for their own freedom.

We do have another otter in care, Lilly. She was found in a warehouse in the Central Belt of Scotland and taken to the SSPCA Middlebank Wildlife Centre. Colin Seddon, who runs the centre, was worried that she was tame as she seemed quite happy to take fish from the hand and she is



about nine months old! We have put her in a pen and are treating her like Fyne, another otter with a similar problem. Fyne had definitely been brought up by people as she even held a drinking bottle in her paws! So we put her in a pen and apart from feeding we left her completely alone. And we are delighted to say that she reverted to her true wild nature and was released a couple of months ago. Although Lilly is older we are hoping that she too will find her wild side and already she is looking for somewhere to hide when I peek in her sleeping box – a good sign.



Last month we told you the sad news that Oron had died. The post mortem revealed that he had contracted pleuropneumonia, but we are not sure how. Apparently it can develop from stress or can follow a bacterial infection but until his sudden death he had seemed very healthy and active.

If you would like to support the care of our otters you can donate or adopt at [www.ottershop.co.uk](http://www.ottershop.co.uk)

### Otter Watching Days

Do you fancy a day on Skye watching for otters with the experts? Then book your own exclusive day with IOSF, which can be tailored to your own needs. As the otters here on Skye are active throughout the day there is a good chance you will spot one. Even so, we cannot give you a complete guarantee as these are wild animals. We will also show you how to spot secondary signs such as droppings (spraint) and otter runs. So join us for your own special day, or why not give a day as a gift for an otter-loving friend. Find out more at <http://www.otter.org/otterWatchingDays.aspx>

## Father's Day - 19<sup>th</sup> June

Make your Dad's day! Find your ideal gift at the Ottershop ... How about a gift donation, an otter adoption or really "splash out" with an Otter Watching Day.



## United Nations Decade on Biodiversity

IOSF is delighted to have become a partner of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (UNDoB), the aim of which is to support and promote implementation of the objectives of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Throughout UNDoB, governments are encouraged to develop, implement and communicate the results of national strategies for implementation of this Strategic Plan.

There are five strategic goals and 20 ambitious yet achievable targets, known as the Aichi Targets. Their purpose is to inspire broad-based action in support of biodiversity over the next decade (2011-2020) by all countries and stakeholders:

- Goal A - Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society
- Goal B - Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use
- Goal C - Improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity
- Goal D - Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Goal E - Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building



Further information can be found at <http://www.cbd.int/2011-2020/>

## Mazu

***We recently received an email from Rita in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She and Glen will shortly be going back to America for a year's sabbatical. Of course, they are looking forward to seeing their friends and family again but naturally they are concerned about leaving Mazu, even if they do have some trustworthy "foster-parents". Here is what Rita said:***

*"Leaving Mazu tears at my heartstrings daily. For the last two months we have been working on recreating her living space around the outside of the house in the hopes that it will provide her with a sustainable, secure environment in which to live. As imperfect as we know this will be, we believe this option will be the least stressful and safest for Mazu in the end. We hope to connect her current enclosure to a large already existing fenced in area where our crocodiles and blue dikers live. As we do about so many things in Congo, we have taken a little of this and a bit of that to try and construct a water filter for Mazu which runs on a 12 volt system: a water pump hooked to our solar batteries, an old water filter casing, some foam, rock, sand and charcoal which are too small for the volume of food bits and excrement she leaves in her water. It was a challenge to design the system, but an even greater challenge to make it MAZU proof. Tomorrow, Glen has to make repairs once more, and see what else can be done to keep Mazu from getting her paws on it! It's difficult to predict how she will respond to our absence of a whole year. Will she continue to live at the house, or go wild? Mazu already shows signs of becoming more independent. My absence could tip the scales. She was looking for me the other day after we had been to the river, thought she had lost me and was half way down to the river to try and find me before I called her back. It's possible she will choose to live at the river where she thinks she still might find me when we leave.*

*Mazu was a tiny pup sleeping quietly in my lap the last time I read Ring of Bright Water. Rereading it a week ago, I was amused to find how many of Gavin Maxwell's experiences and observations have taken on a*

whole depth of meaning for us now. Parallels abound. His eloquent conclusions have given me pause to smile. "Otters are extremely bad at doing nothing..." conjures all sorts of real images in my head. When Mazu is in the house, one must always know where she is and what she's doing. If she's unsupervised and quiet for too long, some careful and systematic destruction is probably at hand. As interesting and entertaining as keeping an otter is, the contrast of Mazu in the house and Mazu at the river is always striking to me. At the river, she is totally free and in perfect harmony with her environment. She swims in limitless clean moving water, digs worms in a limitless supply of sand and mud, gets dirty and wet in a wash and wear world. Her beauty there is astounding.



Here's an observation I'm continually impressed with. At the river, Mazu leaves an amazing table of food behind her wherever she feeds. As I watch her dig and eat worms at the edge of the water, fish of every size quickly congregate to feast. Though Mazu is fairly efficient, there are always worms and bits of worms that she misses that float away into the darting crowds of fish. Further out, bigger fish come in to feed off of the smaller fish. A shy sandpiper bobs and paces a couple of meters away waiting for his chance to eat. It really is a wonderful feast - all because an otter came to dig. What a marvellous system.

Everyone in the villages are talking about Mazu. When people visit Kikongo, they have to make a stop here to see the beautiful creature. Appreciation of the wildlife is one of the first steps in conservation right?

We have two men who will be taking turns morning and afternoon to deal with Mazu. The biggest concern is how Mazu can get her daily swim. The men have been going to the river every day with us to get used to observing/playing with Mazu but they will really be on their own when we leave. They have a big challenge in maintaining a high level of continuous care without some supervision: adequate and clean pool water, searching and buying local foods, providing Mazu with toys, play and affection and a clean environment, repairing her enclosure regularly. It's a tall order, day in and day out when nobody is around to care but they are men we trust to take care of Mazu with good hearts.

Question: Are there those who would like to help support Mazu's care while we are gone? We estimate caretaker and food expenses will run at approximately \$3.00 a day.

Cheers to all.  
Rita"

**We have replied to Rita to say that we will support these people who are going to care for Mazu. \$3 a day is not a lot to help them to look after this beautiful animal. So if you would like to donate towards Mazu's care please send a cheque marked "Mazu" on the back or donate online at [www.ottershop.co.uk](http://www.ottershop.co.uk) with the word "Mazu" in the message. Many thanks.**

### **An Otterly Lovely Wedding** (Photo Jon Pear)

Our neighbours in Black Park, Piet and Riet van Barneveld, are from Holland and their daughter recently married here on Skye. She had asked if the IOSF Land Rover could be her "wedding car" and so we were delighted to join them on their special day. Unfortunately the weather early on in the day was pretty awful but by the time we set off for the afternoon it had cleared up and they were able to take some beautiful photos in the grounds of Armadale Castle. We wish Marlies and Arno all the best for their future together and thank them for their continued support for our otters.



## The Indonesian Otters Urgently Need Your Help

The Jakarta Globe and Jakarta Post recently reported that some Asian short-clawed otters are being kept in appalling conditions in a circus in Indonesia. This circus travels from town to town and performs for a month not just with otters but baby sunbears, yellow crested cockatoos and even bottlenosed dolphins. The methods of training are extremely cruel and include force and starvation.



There has been a campaign to have the circus closed but it has now been licensed as being “educational”!

The government is very sensitive to pressure from abroad and so we would ask you to write and ask them to revoke this license and close the circus. Please send your letters to [Grace@otter.org](mailto:Grace@otter.org) and we will collect them and forward them to the Indonesian government together. Many thanks.

A sample letter is below:

*To the Minister of Forestry*

*I have heard from articles in the Jakarta Globe and Jakarta Post about the appalling condition of animals being used in travelling circuses run by Wersut Seguni Indonesia. Otters, sunbears, cockatoos and bottlenosed dolphins are being used and trained using force and starvation.*

*Apparently the circus is licensed as being “educational” under the regulation ‘Peraturan Menteri Kehutanan Nomor: P.52/Menhut-II.2006 but it is not educational to abuse animals to entertain the public.*

*I would respectfully urge you to revoke the license which allows this circus to continue so that this cruelty will stop and also so that Indonesia can demonstrate to the world that it will not tolerate this type of activity.*

*Thank you.*

## Otters in Suffolk

A friend of ours in Suffolk has been having the most wonderful experiences with otters in her area. It was at the end of last year that she first told us of a female and four, yes four, cubs, and to everyone’s amazement and delight it seems that all four have survived. Here is a message from Theresa:

*“Just wanted to update you on our gorgeous otters. We think the four cubs survived and are now dispersing. That’s early, isn’t it at about 9 months? Well, one has adopted a stretch of the river and is being seen a lot. I have seen him/her three times this week and twice it was for at least 20 minutes. He/she favours a fallen branch in the river and fishes for ages around it. Two fascinating things – he has big feet! And also, when they were all together the cubs would play for ages in what I called a ‘cauldron’. They would roll round and round together and when the otter was fishing the other day he used just that technique in fishing. Wow. Couldn’t see what it was catching but every time he emerged he was eating something.*



(Photo Graham Britten - otter family on an English river)

*Anyway, hope our little population is of interest to you. They are being brilliant ambassadors!*

*All the best  
Theresa”*

Actually, cubs can become a bit more independent from 8-9 months but don't leave the mother completely until 12-15 months. The mother has done so well to get all four through the winter and hopefully they will eventually disperse to their own areas.

## Otter Cupcakes

Daphne Neville gave us the following recipe for Otter Cupcakes – could be useful for fundraising?

### Ingredients

2 eggs

Use the weight of the eggs in butter or margarine,  
sugar and self-raising flour

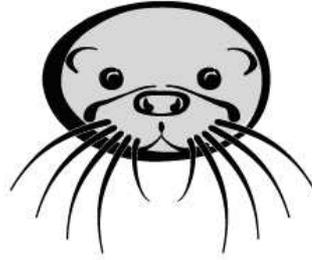
Lemon juice

1 tsp cocoa

Chocolate butter icing

Smarties/small sweets

Few strands of spaghetti



### Method

Mix the eggs, softened butter and sugar and add a little lemon juice. Stir in the sieved flour and cocoa. Half fill cake cases and bake in a moderate oven for about 10 minutes. When cool decorate with the chocolate butter icing and leave to dry. Make an otter face with the sweets and put spaghetti whiskers. Enjoy!

## Thanks

**Matthew Hood of confuzzled.org.uk** recently organised a Roaring Twenties weekend and held a charity auction in support of the otters. The weekend was a resounding success and they managed to raise a magnificent £4000!

Many thanks to Matthew and all those who are “confuzzled”!

**Students of the University of Texas** teamed up to make an otter awareness video in support of IOSF which you can see on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0UHte5R2LM>. Thanks to everyone involved.

## Product of the Month

We have teamed up with Applecross Aromatics to bring you these wonderful handmade, natural products. Deliciously aromatic these natural soaps contain pure essential oils and fragrances to suit your mood. Quite simply a feast for the senses!



Make your donations and buy your adoption boxes online at [www.ottershop.co.uk](http://www.ottershop.co.uk)

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working to save the world's otters**