

otterreview

the International Otter Survival Fund

2020



Glenn Otter © Ann Fulcher Photography

IN THIS ISSUE:

- From Paul **2**
- World Otter Day **9**
- Otter Rescue and Rehabilitation **15**
- Illegal Trade **18**

From Paul...



It is a very difficult time for everyone around the world as our way of life has been changed

so much. Given this I would like to say a big thank you to our supporters who have kept us going over these hard times. Your help is invaluable and a great encouragement to us.

We have had nine otters at our sanctuary, which has kept us all busy. We are delighted to say that some will soon be released.

Our first ever workshop in South America was in Guyana, working with Save The Giants and the local community. Now the local people are taking an active part in monitoring Giant and Neotropical Otters in their area. While we were there we had amazing views of Giant Otters as well as a Sloth and a Jaguar.

Our next international workshop was planned for Thailand in February 2021 but this has now been postponed until the

Autumn/Winter of 2021, Covid permitting.

We have also been giving an increasing number of talks mostly from the computer, but in February we did manage to get to the Isle of Bute in Scotland and give a talk in person. Mind you, we were lucky to get there then as the road was closed both before and after our trip and we just had a brief weather window. As you will read, our team has given online talks in Tunisia, Morocco, Iraq, and the USA and we look forward to linking with more people this way in the future.

May I again say a big thank you to all of our supporters and otter adopters including those on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Quora. I would also like to wish everyone a safe Christmas and let's hope 2021 is the time our world starts to become a better place for us all.



This year the clear envelope containing your Annual Review is compostable and biodegradable. They are made using PLA film from annually renewable corn and other sugar starches. This is certified with the European standard EN 13432 and the OK biobased certificate from Vincotte, meaning you can be sure it will break down quickly. It biodegrades completely into CO₂, water and biomass (organic matter used as a fuel)

under industrial composting conditions. (6 months at 58° C). It can also be incinerated or put in some landfills. PLEASE, DO NOT RECYCLE.

The Year at a glance

OCTOBER

IOSF's rehabilitated otter, Oscar 2, is released back to the wild.

NOVEMBER

IOSF holds its 7th training workshop, partnering with Save the Giants in Guyana.

DECEMBER

SUMECO rescue a Eurasian otter in Sumatra, the first in 80 years, which IOSF supported.

JANUARY

IOSF is approached about rehab for Spotted-necked and Congo Clawless cubs in DR Congo and Cameroon respectively.

FEBRUARY

MSP Kate Forbes is named as the Scottish Government's Otter Species Champion.

MARCH

Team Otter Broadford launches Team Otter news.

APRIL

IOSF announces World Otter Day grants to Lesotho, Malaysia, Morocco and Nepal.

MAY

IOSF takes part in World Otter Day webinars in Morocco, Nepal, Russia, Tunisia, UK and USA.

JUNE

Petition launched to prevent "Otter Café" in Bali, Indonesia.

JULY

Community outreach and Team Otter programme started in Laos.

AUGUST

IOSF, thanks to help from Chloe Shanks, supports care of Neotropical Otter cubs in Mexico.

SEPTEMBER

Grace Yoxon delivers conservation and research presentation to Iraq.



Asian Otter Conservation Network

IOSF has again been busy across Asia and much of this work is included elsewhere in this Review. The Facebook page has photos and videos, although exact location details are confidential to prevent risks to the otters.

However, people are encouraged to send records or incidents of possible illegal trade to us at enquiries@otter.org. This is very important and we have new records of Hairy-nosed Otter in Malaysia and Eurasian Otter in India (IOSF OTTER Journal Issue 6, 2020). This latter record is very important as there is so little data about this species in Asia.

IOSF has various educational resources available for workers in Asia on the website, including the IOSF video in Chinese, Japanese, Nepalese, Khmer, Sinhalese and Lao.

Many Asian countries took part in World Otter Day and there is also a lot of interest in the IOSF Team Otter education programme as we have mentioned.

The otter pet trade continues to be a problem (see *Illegal Trade* section). However, an important step forward was the upgrading of Asian Small-clawed (*Aonyx cinereus*) and Smooth-coated Otters (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) to Appendix I of CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). Until recently the only Asian species listed as Appendix I was the Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*). IOSF worked with other organisations on this and we continue to push for the upgrading of the Hairy-nosed Otter (*Lutra sumatrana*), which is still in Appendix II. The upgrade of the two species restricts trade but of course is only as good as the law enforcement and it does not affect illegal trade.

The Chinese Otter Investigation and Protection Report stated that habitat of Eurasian Otters has shrunk and now the Qinghai Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserve and its surrounding areas may be the largest and most promising area for this species in China. However, this is less than 4% of its potential distribution area and 80% of potential habitats are not yet within protected areas.

In South Korea, Sungwon Hong carried out a study of public perception of otters by looking at images from various videos on the Internet. (IOSF OTTER Journal Issue 6, 2020)

There is a lot of activity in the Middle East with new information about the distribution of the endemic sub-species of the Smooth-coated Otter, Maxwell's Otter, (*Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli*) in SE Iraq and SW Iran (IOSF OTTER Journal Issue 6, 2020). There are plans for more studies in the region on this species and also Eurasian Otters.





African Otter Network

Many local conservationists are still unaware of the existence, ecology and potential threats facing otters in Africa. Raising awareness and education is the best way to build a staircase to fill the gap (see also *World Otter Day* and *Education* sections).

IOSF has supported many education projects in Africa and since our training workshop in 2015 various projects have sprung up. William Mgomo continues his excellent work with communities in Tanzania. He has produced a documentary in Swahili about the traditional notion that otters possess a root in their mouth which helps them to catch fish. Fishermen kill otters to get that root so they can catch more fish and William's video aims to counter this belief and so reduce the killing. The video is at <https://youtu.be/RxRz-P6SvK0>.

On 16 February 2019 a team from the Association Tunisienne de la Vie Sauvage were travelling with a film director to Nefza when they found a dead otter. This was the first digital proof of the existence of Eurasian Otters in Tunisia and a documentary called "Operation Otter" was subsequently produced. The Association has been searching for signs of otters for years and Zakher Bouragaoui reported on this project in IOSF OTTER Journal Issue 6, 2020.



OTTER *Journal of the International Otter Survival Fund*

Volume 6 of *OTTER, the Journal of the IOSF* was published in May 2020 and is available to download free on the Resources page of our website (https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources_Resources_Journal.aspx) or a paper copy is available at the Otter Shop (<http://www.ottershop.co.uk>).

As usual it contains information and reports on the global work of IOSF

and a wide variety of contributions from all over the world: New sighting of the near threatened Eurasian Otter in Tunisia; A study of the diet and distribution of the Eurasian Otter in the Water of Leith, Edinburgh, Scotland; Using artwork as a tool to raise public awareness for the conservation of Iraq's Smooth-coated Otter; Distribution modelling of the Eurasian Otter on the Isle of Anglesey, Wales;



The potential role of social media in support of otter conservation in the Indian Himalayan Biodiversity Hotspot; First record of Eurasian Otter from Chilika

Lagoon – A Ramsar site situated on the East coast of India; Participatory monitoring committees: an opportunity for Neotropical Otter conservation in Mexico; Bridging the gap: preliminary otter survey on the links between the rivers Dee, Don and Spey catchments, Scotland; Public perception

of otters in South Korea; A preliminary population estimate of Iraq’s vulnerable Smooth-coated Otter in the Hawizeh Marsh in SE Iraq with confirmed occurrence in the Hoor Ol-Azim wetland in SW Iran; Existence of Smooth-coated Otters in the Ganges-Padma River basin area of Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

Anyone wishing to submit a paper for Volume 7 should contact enquiries@otter.org for a copy of the journal guidelines for authors. The deadline for the receipt of papers is 1 February 2021.

Education



TEAM OTTER

IOSF’s Team Otter programme is an environmental education programme that uses

otters as a mascot. We aim to reconnect children with nature and ignite a passion that will last a lifetime. Over the last year we have welcomed more countries into the programme, joining clubs already established in Montenegro, Bangladesh and the UK.

UK



IOSF now has a Team Otter club in Broadford on the Isle of Skye, home of IOSF. In normal circumstances we meet every week and learn more about our local wildlife and the environmental impact we are having. Even though at the time of writing group meetings are suspended, some children are carrying out their own projects with their parents including litter picking and watching wildlife. This is particularly encouraging as they have taken their own initiative to continue environmental work.



ABROAD

Guyana - As part of IOSF’s Guyana workshop (see *Education section*) we worked with Save The Giants on a wildlife day to encourage children to join the local wildlife club. Over 75 children came to learn more about otters, play games and pen-pal with

Broadford Team Otter. The club normally meets twice a week but at the time of writing this is on hold.

Laos - IOSF workshop attendee Kiengkai Khoonsrivong has been delivering an education programme to children in the Bolikhanxai district. As part of general community outreach he has been working on the Team Otter programme across five communities.



© Kiengkai Khoonsrivong



Laos community work

current threats. Community members said they had seen otters and the main problems are over-fishing, habitat loss and illegal trade for furs and meat. The communities are very positive and suggested how they could help THEIR otters by improving local environments, reducing illegal trade with local government support, and by governmental organisations, NGOs and communities working closely together.

Nepal - Two new Team Otter clubs are planned: IOSF's South Asian co-ordinator, Jyoti Bhandari, will visit Bardia National Park, one of Nepal's strongholds for otters. Aarati Basnet will also visit Shuklaphanta National Park to start a club there (See *World Otter Day* section).

Other potential clubs - IOSF has received interest from people wanting to start clubs in countries including Uganda, Zimbabwe, Indonesia and Mexico.

Community Education

Laos - As mentioned in the *Team Otter* section. Kiengkai Khoonsrivong has visited local communities in the Bolikhanxai region to discuss benefits of otters, how populations have changed over the last 10 years and

Uganda - IOSF has been advising the Mutanda Community Conservation Organisation (MUCCO) in their otter and wetlands conservation programme. MUCCO are a passionate organisation working alongside communities to improve wetland habitats as a whole. As part of their programme, they are discussing with government officials how to protect otters, reducing trade and poaching, and working with children to increase their popularity. They are also working with local farmers to improve farming practices, and one farmer has since agreed to keep his area for a fish and otter breeding zone.

Guyana workshop - The Guyana workshop was IOSF's seventh international workshop following similar events across Asia and Africa, and the first in South



Local kids enjoying their otter education day

America. The five-day workshop was held in November in Yupukari village, in the north Rupununi, and partnered with Save the Giants (STG) and Caiman House research centre.

This time the training was designed to inspire communities to monitor and conserve local otter populations and engage in environmental education for children. Local people would conduct regular surveys and be paid for their work, thus providing a valuable income for the community. Through citizen science they will gather data to map otter distribution and populations and will feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for THEIR otters. It was encouraging to find that many community members are already aware of the presence of both Giant and Neotropical Otters and many fishermen reported seeing them while fishing quietly.

We also wanted to set up a community outreach and education programme, partnering with other communities living within the range of otters. This would raise awareness of otters, their conservation and how a thriving population benefits all co-existing species, including mankind.

The first few days focussed on presentations

by experts on the world's otters, Giant Otters and Neotropical Otters, environmental education, trade and research. Later two sub-groups were formed based on how attendees wanted to continue following the workshop: one focussed on research on the river and the other on environmental education. The field group learned about the importance of research and collecting data and then spent time on the river learning about GPS, camera traps, sprainting sites, holts, etc. The education group discussed how to inspire communities to protect their wildlife and worked towards a big "open day" for children to come and re-start the local wildlife club.

Moving on from the workshop, STG had an intern to continue the wildlife club on a twice-weekly basis. The community also planned to monitor both species of otters and gain more important data. However, again due to Covid restrictions the wildlife club has been suspended and field work on the river is not allowed. These will continue once it is safe to do so.

IOSF Resources

Education Pack

IOSF's education pack offering an introduction to otters is now available in French and Montenegrin, which helps to spread our message to a wider audience. If you would be happy to translate this into other languages, please contact us.



World Otter Day – 27 May 2020

IOSF World Otter Day was very different this year due to the current circumstances. Plans were well underway to have our biggest celebration around the world but the pandemic understandably changed that. It was important that we all stayed safe and followed the relevant restrictions.



That being said, World Otter Day was still a success and we were delighted with how many people joined us to help make 27 May a #WorldOtterDay takeover!

As always, IOSF offered three grants to support events around the world and thanks to another anonymous donation, we could offer a fourth grant. These were awarded to Lesotho, Malaysia, Morocco and Nepal.

Lesotho - This community event helped to raise awareness across the African enclave as, although otters are present, very little is known about them or done to protect them. An otter education programme for volunteers and other relevant stakeholders was held in Maseru, the country's capital. It focused on distribution, history of otters in Lesotho, the importance of otter conservation and how everyone can help. Participants included the UN agency representative, relevant Government Ministry officials and media guests, as well as the expert from Lesotho University. Media coverage ensured the entire nation



© Human Nature Projects Organisation Lesotho

was involved. Moving forward, The Human Nature Project Lesotho, who ran the event, have some exciting plans for otters.

Malaysia - Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) celebrated their first World Otter Day with an event themed “Born to be WILD; Not caged; Live WILDLY”. During this event, MNS established the Malaysia Otter Network (MON), the first, long-term, national effort focusing on protecting all four species of otter present. It will bring together a group of like-minded experts from different regions to share data on otter research, identify priorities and strengthen conservation actions. Their first virtual meeting was held on 15 June with nine experts. MON will encourage more research to fill gaps in ecological knowledge and more education activities, such as celebrating World Otter Day annually in Malaysia.

On 21 May Woo Chee Yoong and Balu



© Malaysian Wildlife Society

Perumal from MNS attended a meeting with Kuala Lumpur City Council and representatives from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks for Peninsular Malaysia (PERHILITAN). Woo presented on the conservation of urban otters

around Kuala Lumpur, given their increased presence. This resulted in a partnership between the three agencies to initiate the first ever urban otter conservation project in Malaysia.

Morocco - The Maghreb subspecies of Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra splendida*) is a threatened species in Morocco due to pollution, climate change and human persecution. The National Park of Talassemtane is a stronghold of the species but it still only lives in remote upper freshwater streams. For IOSF World Otter Day, Nature Solutions held an online webinar with over 150 attendees from all over Morocco, as well as neighbouring Tunisia and Algeria. IOSF's education officer, Ben Yoxon, gave a presentation on otters of the world and their long-term conservation.

Education materials have been produced in Arabic and French for distribution to schools, visitors, local associations and conservation authorities. Plans to engage with local communities have been postponed due to current restrictions.

Nepal - Aarati Basnet and a group of Nepalese otter conservationists held a webinar for about 200 people to raise awareness of otters and the delicate ecosystem of which they are a vital part.

Once conditions allow, Aarati will visit local children to start a new Team Otter

club near Shuklaphanta National Park, where wild otters are found.

Other events included:

Russia - Novosibirsk, in Siberia, is an area that regularly holds World Otter Day events. This year they held a webinar attended by IOSF's Ben Yoxon at which they proposed plans to conserve their local otter populations.

Pakistan - As in 2019, the Pakistan Wildlife Foundation (PWF) held an event to celebrate otters in their area, inviting people to come and join in their fun-filled otter education activities.

Online webinars

As face-to-face events had to be cancelled or postponed, we were delighted to take part in many online webinars. It was a great way to spread the word about otters and hold events with many people worldwide,

while still being safe.

In addition to the event in Morocco mentioned above, we were delighted to be invited to webinars in the following countries:

Tunisia - IOSF's Dr Paul Yoxon joined Association Tunisienne de la Vie Sauvage for their webinar and presented on otters in a world context and how we can join together to conserve them.



© PWF

USA - Akron Zoo held an online presentation on otters, and particularly the North American River Otter. IOSF's Ben Yoxon, was invited to speak about all the world species and how to raise awareness of their conservation needs. The event was very popular and there is now interest in starting an IOSF Team Otter club in Akron, Ohio.



Small selection of World Otter Day posters

Other Webinars

It seems that this is the way to get our message out to many people all over the world without putting safety at risk, so IOSF has been delighted to join more online sessions:

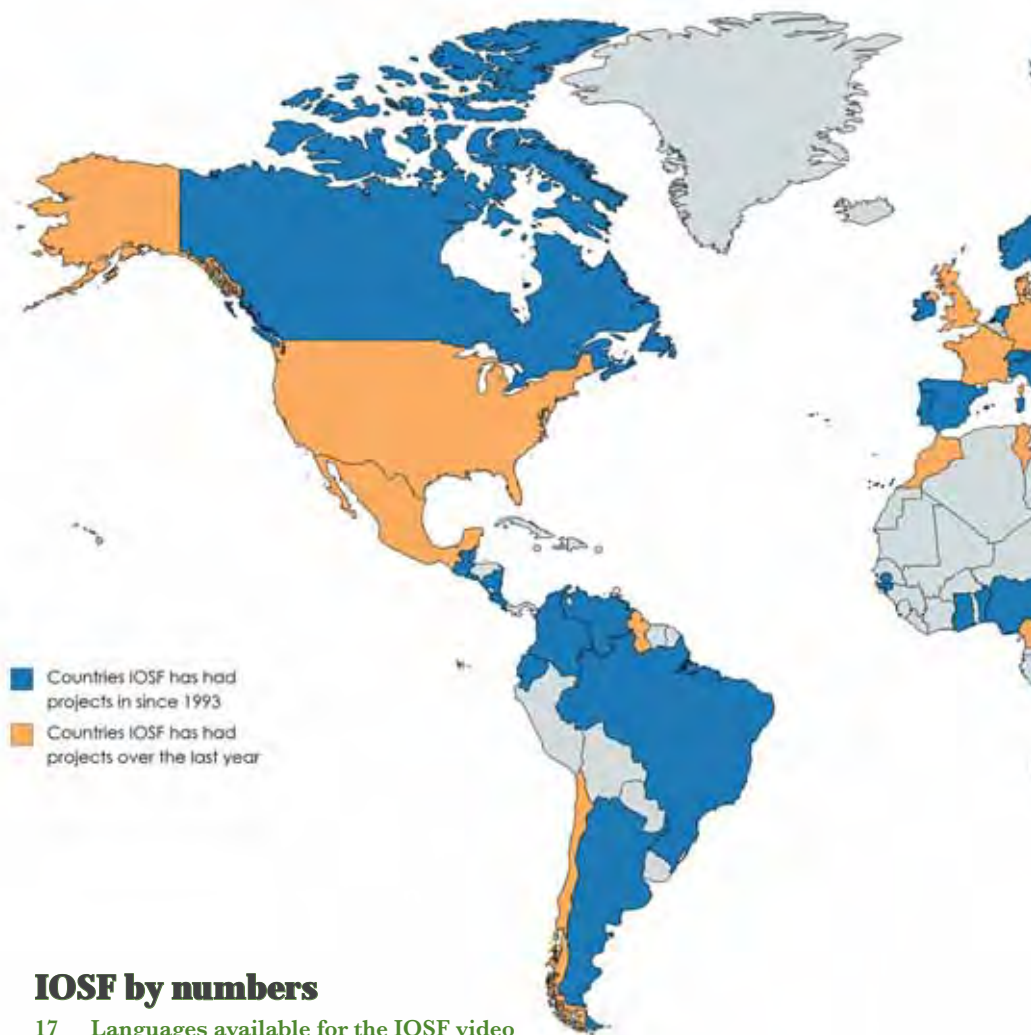
UK - Sharon Lashley of Climate Change North arranged a webinar as part of World Environment Day on 5 June. Although, not World Otter Day it gave an opportunity to tell people about the importance of otters to our environment. The theme was “Time for Nature” and IOSF’s Grace Yoxon gave a presentation on the importance of making time for otters as so many are at severe risk from loss of habitat, hunting, disturbance, etc. There was a lot of interest from the audience particularly on the education side and we hope to welcome more local Team Otter clubs.

Iraq - IOSF’s co-ordinator for the Middle East, Omar Al-Sheikhly, invited Grace Yoxon to give a presentation on “Tools for Otter Conservation” in a Zoom meeting on 15 September. This was in connection with a new project funded by the Goteh Institute - German State of Foreign Affairs to support Iraqi efforts to sustain the UNESCO nomination of the marshes. The project will train young wildlife photographers to record the biodiversity of the area, including both the Eurasian and Maxwell’s Otter, a sub-species of Smooth-coated Otter, found only in Iraq and Iran. Photographers can obtain so much important data, as in the case of the photo taken at Mosul Dam by Bruce McLennan and Bob Zook in 2017. This was the first photographic record of the Eurasian Otter in Northern Iraq ever! (IOSF OTTER Journal Issue 3, 2017).

With over 40 attendees it was great to see so many people who are passionate about otters and the Iraqi marshes and we are excited to work with the group moving forward.

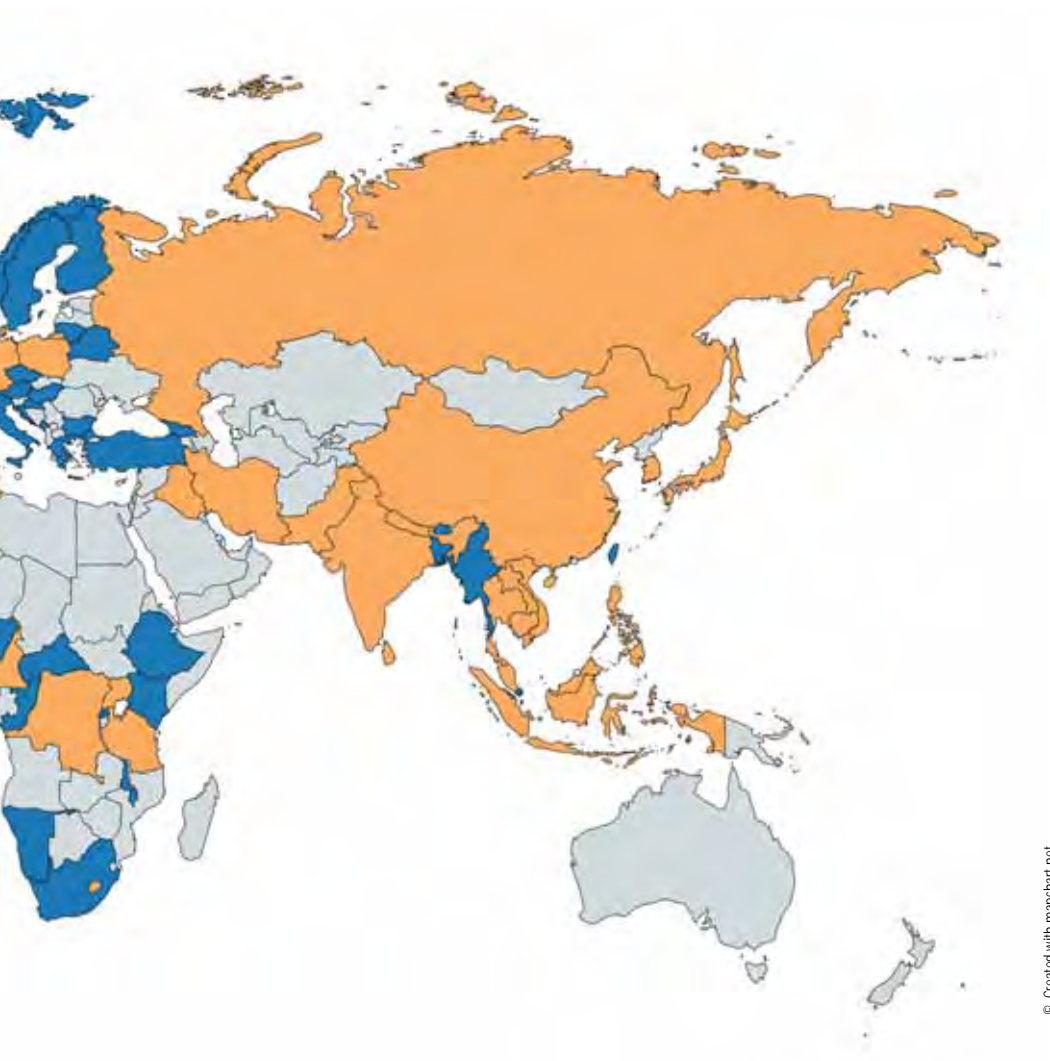
2021 IOSF World Otter Day will be Wednesday 26 May

IOSF Global activity map



IOSF by numbers

- 17 Languages available for the IOSF video
- 21 Number of countries represented at IOSF workshops
- 27 Years of helping otters worldwide
- 38 Number of countries where we have helped cubs or injured otters
- 45 Number of countries where we have supported projects
- 64 Number of countries we have supporters
- 155 Number of cubs or injured otters abroad that we have helped
- 219 Number of cubs and injured otters we have treated at our Skye hospital
- 43,000+ supporters worldwide



© Created with mapchart.net

Otter News on PDF – Help reduce waste and our costs.

Help IOSF to put more money into otter conservation by reading your Otter Review online. If you are happy to do this please email us at enquiries@otter.org quoting your sponsorship number, and reduce our printing and postage costs. If you prefer, we are still happy to send out a printed copy to you.

IOSF Otter Oscars

2019 saw our fourth Otter Oscar Awards presented. We're always impressed by the number of projects and work that people do that involves otters. As always the submissions received were truly international and gave us plenty to think about, and in early December we announced the winners.

Special Award:

Hans Kruuk

Hans Kruuk is a renowned otter scientist who has written many papers and books about otters and other carnivores. He carried out a lot of work in Shetland and was probably the first to really study coastal Eurasian otters. As Paul's supervisor for his PhD, Hans was a great help to him during his studies.



© Mary DePaolo

Children's award -
Annie, Lula, Clara and Sky (USA)



© Chaminda Jayasekara

Photography Award - Chaminda Jayasekara
(Sri Lanka) Rare image of a Eurasian otter
in Sri Lanka



© Ninoslav Djurovic

Group or Organisation Award - NGO
Living Green (Montenegro)



© Hans Kruuk

The next Otter Oscars are now open for nominations and you can find more information at https://otter.org/Public/News_OtterOscars.aspx Nominations can be for yourself or someone else; young or old; amateur or professional; anyone who has done a lot for otters.

Your nominations must be received by Friday 27 November 2020 and the results will be announced on Monday 7 December 2020.

© Sarah Corrigan



Young Peoples Award-
Grace MacLean (Scotland)

© Heidi Davis



Community Achievement
Award - Heidi Davis & Otter
Patschel Team (Germany)

© Suthar Akshit



Research Award - Suthar
Akshit (I ndia)

Otter Rescue & Rehabilitation

UK

During the current year we have taken in nine otters – seven cubs, one juvenile and one emaciated young adult. One cub and the young adult died and at the time of writing we have seven otters in care. Three otters have been released (Oscar 2, Juggles and Karma) and three more are to go shortly (Otto van Crask, Harrie and Sparky).



Otto



Harrie



Sparky

The new facilities have proved to be ideal and much easier both for the animals and for us.

Sometimes it is not necessary or even advisable to take in an animal which appears to be injured. Such was the case when John Williams from the Isle of Bute contacted us about a young otter with a damaged eye. John is an exceptional photographer and we sent his photos to Dr. David Williams (no relation to John!), who specialises in veterinary ophthalmology and who joined us for our Skye conference on Otters and Toxicology back in 2000. He diagnosed glaucoma and unfortunately the otter would be blind in that eye. John watches the family regularly and the cub can still hunt while Mum is taking special care, so it should survive.



Bealltinn



Effie and Reva



© John Williams

Bute otter with glaucoma

Although we specialise in otters we take any wildlife casualty. This year we have received hedgehogs, bats, stoats and birds and September has seen the usual influx of grounded Manx shearwaters.

International

We are often contacted to provide help and advice for people caring for otters all over the world and we have been particularly involved with otters rescued from the pet trade in SE Asia.

Indonesia: We are supporting two centres – Cikananga on Java currently have five Asian Small-clawed Otters and SUMECO on Sumatra have two of this species and also one Eurasian Otter. This is the first record of a Eurasian Otter in Sumatra in 80 years!



© SUMECO

Asian Small-clawed Otters

Vietnam: In November 2019, a truck trafficking 19 Asian Small-clawed Otters was stopped by police and the quick response team of Save Vietnam’s Wildlife rescued the animals. Sadly, four were already dead and three more died later. All the otters were very small and four still had their eyes closed but following expert intensive care they are making good progress.



© SWW

One of the rescued cubs

Thailand: Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand have 17 Asian Small-clawed Otters including one whose owners bought her through Facebook and no longer wanted her.

Cambodia: Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre, near Phnom Penh, had 24 otters at one time – 1 Hairy-nosed Otter, 1 Asian Small-clawed Otter and 22 Smooth-coated Otters. A few Smooth-coated Otters have since been released and are breeding.

All these centres provide exceptional care and the otters are kept in enclosures which are as natural as possible. The aim is for them all to return to the wild where they belong, but this has to be done very carefully so they do not risk being hunted or caught again. The animals are assessed to make sure they show “normal” wild behaviour and are monitored after release. If unfortunately, they are judged not to be able to survive in the wild they remain at the sanctuary.

IOSF has set up an Emergency Fund to help these sanctuaries with their care of rescued otters. It is always hard to raise the funds for food, vet treatment, etc but now



with the pandemic it is even worse. There are no volunteers to help with animal care and these volunteers also contribute towards costs to keep the sanctuaries running.

IOSF has also been helping with other otters in care:

Democratic Republic of Congo: In April, our friend Rita Chapman and her helpers at the Kikongo Otter Sanctuary, received a new cub. But this was not a Congo Clawless Otter as before, but a Spotted-necked Otter. They are much smaller and her descriptions of Mboo sound very much like the Eurasian cubs that we are familiar with.



© Rita and Glen Chapman

Mboo, Spotted-necked Otter cub

Cameroon: In January, Ape Action Africa (AAA) needed help with a Congo Clawless cub which had been with them for two months. As they are

dedicated to primates they wanted to transfer him to Kikongo. Unfortunately, in the end the bureaucracy proved unsurmountable and he stayed at AAA. He is now about a year old and they are looking into a safe place for release in Cameroon.

Mexico: COBEA (Conservadores de la biodiversidad y educadores ambientales) is an organisation that aims to create awareness to reduce wildlife trafficking. They also rescue and rehabilitate threatened species and are caring for two young Neotropical Otters, Bey and Tar. IOSF has been able to help fund a new enclosure for these two otters.



© COBEA

Neotropical Otter cub

Chile: Chinchimen have now been able to release Kalfu, a Marine Otter cub which came into their care in 2019.

Philippines: Some of you will remember Diana Limjoco who has been caring for two Asian Small-

clawed Otters which she reared from tiny cubs. She had hoped to release them, but unfortunately with the level of human activity and risk of hunters, they have remained with her for seven years. One morning, Diana found Oshka was totally paralysed from the waist down – very distressing. The vet could find nothing broken and no signs of infection, so we suspected it may have been caused by a fall. We turned to vet, Romain Pizzi, and animal osteopath, Tony Nevin, for advice which we passed to Diana. She massaged Oshka's back legs daily and gave her hydrotherapy in her pool, and gradually movement began to return. We are delighted to say that Oshka has made a full recovery and is again enjoying her normal visits to the beach. Many thanks to Romain and Tony for their help.

Germany: Geranda Olsthoorn has cared for many otter cubs and three were released in September. This year she also received a young adult which was not surviving in the wild and even eating flower heads out of compost bins – clearly desperate. With her expert care the otter recovered but he is too tame for release.

Research and Conservation

UK

Skye otter population monitoring project:

This is the seventh year of this project but unfortunately due to Covid restrictions we have not yet been able to complete all the field work. However, all sites checked so far have been positive. A complete report will be included in a future e-update. Our long-term camera trapping programme continues to reveal new data on behaviour and seasonal habitat use but again we have been unable to monitor throughout the whole year.

Water of Leith: IOSF

has been working with the Water of Leith Conservation Project and a student from Edinburgh University who completed a research project looking at distribution, habitat use and diet of otters in that part of the city (IOSF OTTER, Journal Issue 6, 2020).



Otter Post Mortems: Dead otters are still sent for post mortem and samples collected for future analysis through the Cardiff University Otter Project and Scotland's Rural College.

International

Asia and Africa: More information on Research and Conservation can be found in the continental reports. Of course, there have been problems for field work due to the Covid virus. However, there are plans for more research work in India, Pakistan and Nepal, which will hopefully go ahead soon and also for further work in Lesotho and Uganda.

Guyana: A lot of information has been gained following the workshop, particularly from camera traps, and this is logged into a

new database created by Save The Giants. There are photos showing Neotropical Otters visiting holts of Giant Otters, although as yet we have not seen any physical interaction between the two species. This may come.

Illegal Trade

Trade in otters continues to be a major threat to their survival. The pet trade is a major problem and is highlighted by the number of otters being rescued, particularly across SE Asia. IOSF is helping to support rescue centres in Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand (See *Rescue and Rehabilitation* section).

One centre in Sumatra received three young Asian Small-clawed Otter cubs, still with their eyes closed. Despite the best possible care all three of these sadly died.

THIS IS THE REAL COST OF THE PET TRADE.



© SUMECO

Social media, among other things, continues to drive trade and a simple search for otters on any platform will show plenty of cute, pet otters, but this must stop! Cubs are taken from their mother who is killed protecting her litter. They are then forced into a life of cruelty and neglect and far away from the “wild” life they were born into. We need to remember, **WILD. MEANS. WILD!**

Indonesia

Indonesia has one of the highest demands for pet otters in the world. This could, potentially get worse as Bali has plans to open an otter café, just like those in Japan. Given the popularity of otters already across Asia, this could be catastrophic. Furthermore, as otters are not native to Bali, should they escape or be released, this will upset the ecological balance of the area. IOSF, is part of a taskforce with other organisations and individuals, that is strongly opposing this proposal and has written to the Ministry to express our concerns.

Japan

Although Japanese otter cafés are driving trade and otter smuggling is a major problem, there are some positive developments. On 3 November 2019 the Asian Otter Conservation Society of Japan (AOCSJ), held a symposium on pet otters at the University of Tokyo to encourage control of commercial sales of Asian Small-clawed and Smooth-coated Otters. On 26 November 2019 the government brought in new regulations to deter people from “collecting” otters which covers renting, borrowing, giving and receiving as well as buying and selling. Current owners can register their pets but hopefully this should prevent, or at least reduce, smuggling into Japan.

This is a small “victory” as any owner is one too many, but it is at least a step forward in reducing demand and trade in Japan.

Sharne McMillan attended our China workshop in 2016 and has just co-authored a paper on exotic animal cafés. They found 406 animal cafes across Asia, of which 27% had exotic species, including otters. We know these cafés are popular in Japan but the study also looked at Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia,

China, Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam, and exotic species were found throughout. These lead to an increased demand for exotic pets and this is having a serious effect on wild populations. The first domestic cat café opened in Taiwan in 1998 and it is worrying to see how quickly the number of cafés has increased.

Rest of the World

Much attention is on Asia, where it is a big problem, but we must not forget that trade in otters happens in other parts of the world too. In Trinidad and Tobago, four Giant Otter cubs

were found dead, along with other species, all severely malnourished. As this species is not native to Trinidad and Tobago, it begs the question as to where these otters came from.

Our partners at MUCCO are continually working to reduce trade for furs in Uganda and in neighbouring DR Congo and Rwanda.

It is clear that this is a global problem. Issues may be more severe in Asia but we need to realise that this is happening on a worldwide scale. We need to stop this and we urge anyone who suspects trade to contact us.

Impact of the pandemic

As we all know, the world has been shaken by the current pandemic and everyone has been affected by it in some way or another. It has been well-documented that it is believed to have originated from wildlife markets in Asia and so we must ask “When will the next pandemic occur?”

If one positive can come out of the situation it is the hope that it opens people’s eyes to the cruel and barbaric wildlife trade. It is essential that mankind, as a whole, learns from our mistakes and stops this trade. If the world can’t do it for the animals, do it for ourselves.



© Sharne McMillan

Young otters used in a 'pet café'.

Help IOSF

What can YOU do?

There is no doubt that Coronavirus has impacted on how you can help and it is important to follow the regulations set out for your area, but there is always something that you can do. Fundraising has become more innovative in the use of the internet and we learn of people organising and taking part in virtual events, including swims and marathons as well as quizzes, auctions, challenges and talent shows... see where your imagination takes you. You can always raise awareness via social media, create information posters to display and post there, and share our posts on Facebook @InternationalOtterSurvivalFund; Twitter @IOSF and Instagram @IOSF_Otters.

Follow us:   

Click on the Help Us tab at www.otter.org where you will find our downloadable fundraising pack. If you want to hold a raffle please contact enquiries@otter.org for details of IOSF's licence.

Other ideas:

- **Keep us up to date with otter-related news**
- **Forward your e-updates to friends and family**
- **Download and print the IOSF leaflet on our website (also available in German and French) and put it in shops, libraries, etc.**
- **Help to translate our leaflets and videos into other languages**
- **Speak about otters in your school's "Show and Tell"**
- **Enter a picture, photo or poem for various general competitions to tell others about otters**

- **Calling all children – join Team Otter!**
- **Think of the otters when choosing a gift for a birthday or other important day**
- **Get involved in IOSF's World Otter Day**

We have lots of free resources for you to download and use, including ideas and games for children, on <https://www.otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources.aspx>.

Remember IOSF in your will – leave a legacy to help otter conservation work continue in the future.

Facebook Fundraisers are proving a popular option to replace birthday presents or to collect donations for a charity event.

Selling on eBay? Please opt to support International Otter Survival Fund with your sales – eBay for Charity.

If you have a business or are senior management, IOSF welcomes Corporate Sponsors (https://www.otter.org/Public/HelpUs_CorporateSponsorship.aspx).

Let us make the world a better place for otters and all species.

PASS IT ON

Recycle your otter news by passing it on to friends and family, your local library or school; doctor's surgery or hospital, vet's waiting room, etc. *Don't waste it, spread the word.*

Payroll Giving



Donate to IOSF through Payroll Giving

Payroll Giving is a flexible scheme which allows anyone who pays UK income tax to give regularly and on a tax-free basis to the charity of their choice. You can now use this system to donate to IOSF.

For more information go to www.givingonline.org.uk/International-Otter-Survival-Fund_2623/index.html

A New Way to Make Pennies Count for Otters

Since the arrival of Covid-19 we are all using less cash and more card payments and so for charities like IOSF, traditional collection boxes are no longer effective. This is where the new Pledjar app comes in. Once your bank account is securely connected, opt to round up your transactions - just like putting your loose change in a collection box, or make regular donations, all with the tap of a finger. And please, don't forget to sign up for Gift Aid.



Find out more at https://youtu.be/zd7X_UVJIv0

Install the Pledjar app from Google play or itunes store and use code OSF001 when asked during sign up, to select IOSF as your charity of choice:

- Android: www.play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.pledjar.app&hl=en_GB
- iOS: www.apps.apple.com/gb/app/pledjar/id1504894760

Become a regular giver to help otter conservation

<https://donr.com/iosf>



Other ways you can help

- Check out our Fundraising Pack www.otter.org
- You can donate something through our Amazon Wish List www.amazon.co.uk



amazon

- Turn your old car into a donation for otters through www.charitycar.co.uk/international-otter-survival-fund



- Earn FREE donations for IOSF when shopping online:
www.giveasyoulive.com
www.easyfundraising.org.uk
www.thegivingmachine.co.uk



- Evergreen Insurance Services
www.vergreeninsuranceservices.co.uk/
www.international-otter-survival-fund/
Evergreen will give up to 25% of their commission income at no cost to you.



- Are you in America?
Contact us through enquiries@otter.org to donate through CAF America



Thanks

It has not been an easy time for everyone due to the pandemic and so we are very grateful to you for your support. You all play a very important role in otter conservation – be it fundraising, sharing information with us and with others through social media, carrying out your own projects – it is all essential. This year, as we have said, World Otter Day was very different and we very much appreciate all the efforts that went in to make people aware of otters through social media. Thank you all.

We must also thank those organisations who have helped financially to ensure our work continues:

Animal Friends Insurance, The Co-op Local Community Fund, The Marjorie Coote Animal Charitable Trust, Craignish Trust, Fondation Ensemble, Barry Green Memorial Fund, Mary Heap Charitable Trust, Michael and Shirley Hunt Charitable Trust, Idea Wild, JTH Charitable Trust, The Alice McCosh Trust, The Matthiesen Foundation, Mitchell Trust, Alice Noakes Memorial Charitable Trust, Nurtured by Nature, Neil and Pauline Pettifor Trust, Padma and Krishna Foundation, The Shirley Pugh Foundation, Spear Charitable Trust, Stafford Trust, Trelis Charitable Trust, West Surrey Natural History Society.

We would also thank Joyce Lund and Kathy H Luther for remembering us in their wills.

And a special mention of the following: John Noorani, Judith Young, Princess Michael of Kent (Patron), Wolfgang and Traudl Gettmann, Dennis Furnell, Daphne Neville and Budjarn Lambeth.

We are as ever grateful to Gareth and his team at the Old School Vets in Broadford who are always there for us and provide great help and advice.

And finally as ever we are grateful to our Board who provide much support and advice. Thank you Jackie West, Andrew Cameron, Andy Rothwell and Sarah Neill, who joined the Board this year. Padma de Silva is also on the Board and is our Asian coordinator/Chair of the Asian Otter Conservation Network and works together with our four Asian regional coordinators: Aad Adrean, Ling-Ling Lee, Jyoti Bhandari and Omar Al-Sheikhly. Our Journal copy-editor is Samantha Holland and she always does such a great job, often at very short notice.

Supporter Renewal Rates

Increase the value of your gift to IOSF:

giftaid it

UK and EEC Countries:

All other countries:

Adult: £24.00 per year

Adult: £30.00 per year

Child: £13.00 per year

Child: £15.00 per year

Family: £34.00 per year

Family: £40.00 per year

**Life Membership
(all countries):**

£350.00

If you are paying by standing order, please ensure you are paying the correct amount.

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ABOUT IOSF

IOSF is one of the world's leading otter conservation organisations and is the only UK charity solely dedicated to the protection and care of all 13 species of otter, based on over 20 years of scientific research in the UK and around the world.

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Tel: 01471 822 487 Fax: 01471 822 487 Email: admin@otter.org Web: www.otter.org**

Charity number SC003875

IOSF is regulated by The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). IOSF has been vetted and approved to receive grants from CAF America; if you are a US donor wishing to make a tax-deductible contribution to support us, you may give to CAF America and recommend that the grant be made to IOSF.

Who's who at IOSF

**Patron: Julian Pettifer | Presidents: Dennis Furnell, Laurence Broderick
Advisory Board: Andrew Cameron, Andy Rothwell, Sarah Neill
Head of Operations: Dr Paul Yoxon | Education & Research Officer: Ben Yoxon
Development Officer: Helen Stephenson | Data & Communications: Aodhan Stoddart
Asian Co-ordinator: Prof Padma da Silva
Asian Regional Co-ordinators:
SE Asia: Aad Adrean, Indonesia | South Asia: Jyoti Bhandari, Nepal
East Asia: Ling-Ling Lee, Taiwan | Middle East: Omar Al-Sheikhly, Iraq
Journal copy-editor: Dr Samantha Holland**

A NOTE WHEN WRITING:

Whenever you contact us, please provide your sponsorship number as it does help us to find your records more quickly. Thanks.

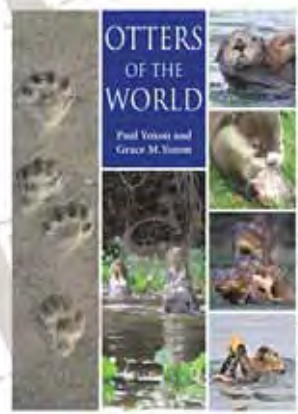


IOSF Otter Shop

www.ottershop.co.uk

01471822487

Check out our selection of otter-themed products for the perfect gift idea for any otter lover. There is something to suit every pocket and occasion. Visit the Otter Shop to see our full range.



Season's Greetings



IOSF Christmas Cards:
Pack of 10 with envelopes.