

otterreview

the International Otter Survival Fund

2021

African clawless otter © Rowan Jordan



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From Paul...

Firstly, I would like to say how grateful we are to all our supporters and donors who have helped us through these strange Covid-19 times. Without your support we would have found it difficult over the last 18 months.

In spite of the pandemic, there has been a lot of positive work achieved in otter conservation and you will read more about some of the achievements and hard work being carried out. Projects are being carried out worldwide and new information discovered and more awareness of otter conservation is being created.

But we cannot afford to be complacent.

We are still hearing reports of Eurasian otters being everywhere in the UK and even some of the organisations who are supposed to be protecting them are considering them less of a priority. For example, the Red List for otters compiled by the Mammal Society listed the otter as “Least Concern” in England but “Vulnerable” in Scotland and Wales! This was largely based on sightings and takes no account for the same animal being counted several times because of the large home ranges. At the same time there is more pressure being put on the natural habitat by human developments. This can lead to calls from certain people (and not all) with fishing interests to implement a cull, based on no population data whatsoever.

In contrast, Hans-Heinrich Krüger from Germany has told us about calls for a cull by fish farmers there. Permission was granted in spite of the clear legal protection of otters and so two NGOs, the “BUND-Bavaria” and the “Action for Otter Conservation” took out a court case to prevent it. And they WON.

This is great news as it also sets a precedent when there are other calls for a cull.

With the attitude that otters are now “safe” it means that there is less attention being paid to their protection. This leads to less funds for such work and then we are heading back towards the old situation where otters began to disappear.

Not much work is being done on the effect of

pollutants on otters. The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, which did this pioneering work, closed down many years ago, so we don't know ages, levels of pollutants, and the effect of a “cocktail” of pollutants. All of this research costs a lot of money, which simply isn't there.

We read that people are “devastated” after an otter has eaten their fish. But no-one asks the question why? Is it because of the loss of natural prey? Is it because otters now have to have larger home ranges to find food and if this is available in a garden pond why won't they take it.

These are all worrying issues but we are sure that you will also see that there is hope for the future through the activities you will read about in this Annual Review.

Our new otter facilities have been well used caring for ten otters since our last Annual Review and plans for our new hospital are well in hand.

Our last otter workshop in Guyana was in November 2019 and because of Covid-19 the next workshop was put off in 2020 and 2021. As we have been working with the Malaysian Otter Network for over two years we have also moved it to Malaysia. Participants for the workshop will be scientists, university lecturers, forest rangers responsible for conservation, members of NGOs and other similar stakeholders.

IOSF World Otter Day was a great success and for the first time we had Zoom conferences in Malaysia, Bangladesh, India and Zimbabwe and we plan to do the same in 2022. We also published our 7th Journal OTTER the Journal of the International Otter Survival Fund.

I said in last year's Annual Report “let's hope 2021 is the time our world starts to become a better place for us all” but because of Covid-19 it didn't, so let's hope for better times in 2022.

I would like to wish everyone a safe Christmas and healthy 2022 and thank you again for your support.

Paul M.



The Year at a glance

OCTOBER

IOSF supports research work into Smooth-coated otters in Sindh Province, Pakistan.

NOVEMBER

On the same day that Sparky is released, DJ comes in to IOSF care.

DECEMBER

IOSF sets up the "Pet Otters Fund" to help numerous sanctuaries that are caring for otters that have been rescued from the pet trade.

JANUARY

IOSF receives tiny triplets weighing just 500g, into the care centre, rescued from Inverness in the Scottish Highlands.

FEBRUARY

IOSF, and our Team Otter Broadford club, appear on TV alongside Dame Darcey Bussell.

MARCH

Following some education on otters, a fisherman in Cambodia releases "his" pet otter back into the wild.

APRIL

SUMECO, in Indonesia, were already caring for Eurasian and Hairy-nosed otters and then received an Asian short-clawed otter rescued from the pet trade.

MAY

IOSF World Otter Day takes place along with our first ever World Otter Day online webinar with attendees from over 60 countries.

JUNE

IOSF holds a webinar with a group from Zimbabwe with a view to more research and conservation across the country.

JULY

Video footage of the rare Smooth-coated otter subspecies, Maxwell's otter, is taken in Iran.

AUGUST

IOSF works with an organisation in Uzbekistan to conduct the first otter survey in the country.

SEPTEMBER

IOSF's Education Officer takes part in an outreach event at Broadford School for COP26 - United Nations Climate Change Conference which will be held in Glasgow.

Asian Otter Conservation Network



Covid-19 restrictions have obviously meant that many projects in Asia have been put on hold but a lot of positive work has still been carried out.

IOSF has various educational resources available for workers in Asia on the website (www.otter.org), including the IOSF video in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Nepalese, Khmer, Sinhalese, and Lao, as well as resources specifically for children.

The Facebook page is for people concerned with Asian otters and wetland conservation. More data on distribution is needed but actual locations of sightings will not be posted to prevent disturbance or deliberate hunting. Please send any information to enquiries@otter.org

You will read elsewhere about activities relating to World Otter Day, the Illegal Trade and Team Otter projects and a summary is given below of other activities.

India: As a part of her MSc, Shaik Shaheen completed a thesis on “Assessment of status and distribution of Smooth-coated otters in Hyderabad and Medak of Telangana, India” and a paper will be submitted on this work for the 2022 OTTER Journal.

Nepal: There is a lot of positive otter work being carried out in Nepal by various



researchers. In addition to activities for World Otter Day and Team Otter projects, Rohit Jha published a paper on the “Status of otters in Nepal: a link with ancient waterways and people”.

IOSF was pleased to provide Mohan Bikram Shrestha with a grant for his project “Gathering substantial evidence of the presence of Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) in West Rukum, Nepal”. In addition to traditional field techniques Mohan is working on genetic analysis of spraint.

Pakistan: IOSF supported Zafeer Ahmed Shaikh’s project on Smooth-coated otters in selected wetlands of Thatta District, Sindh Province of Pakistan and his paper is included in Issue 7 of the OTTER Journal.

Sri Lanka: Padma de Silva has continued to work with Chaminda Jayasekara, of Jetwing Vil Uyuna. He has done much to conserve the Eurasian otters in the area and is constantly monitoring their progress. Chaminda is also very active in creating public awareness through social media and through the Sri Lankan media.

Padma herself went to her village and took her otter story books for distribution to the children. She also gave books to the priest in the temple at Galagedera which will be used

in the English classes held every Sunday. Also, recently Padma donated a bundle of story books to the children's library of the Sirimavo Bandaranaike Children's Hospital in Peradeniya. These books have become very popular among the children in the wards, which certainly gave them an idea of the otters.

Iran: Further records of the Mesopotamian otter (also known as Maxwell's otters) have

been published in Issue 7 of the OTTER Journal, including two otters seen on 4 March 2021 at the Hour Al-Azim wetland.

Iraq: In February 2021 Emily Garthwaite recorded the first video footage of a Eurasian otter in northern Iraq (Kurdistan). This is the only documented video footage of this species in that area but Emily has seen them there a number of times, and local communities also report regular sightings.

Otter Conservation Network of Africa

Again Covid-19 restrictions have had an effect on otter work in Africa but we are encouraged with what has actually been achieved. You will read elsewhere about projects in Tanzania, Uganda and Benin, but here are summaries from other parts of Africa.



Cameroon: Ape Action Africa (AAA), cared for a tiny Congo clawless otter, Beni, although obviously their expertise is in primates. So they turned to IOSF for advice and help and we immediately contacted the Kikongo Otter Sanctuary in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Unfortunately, it was not possible to transfer Beni across the border to Kikongo, so AAA cared for him themselves and even built this rare species its own enclosure.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Kikongo Otter Sanctuary has cared for

many Congo clawless otter cubs, following the arrival of Mazu in 2010. In 2020, they were brought two little spotted-necked otter cubs, the other species native to the country. Unfortunately, one of the otters did not survive but the other, Mbu, thrived and was released back to the wild in February 2021.

Lesotho: One of the IOSF World Otter Day grant winners in 2020 was the Human Nature Projects Lesotho, a conservation organisation based in the Southern African enclave. They are still planning to do more work once Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

Morocco: Another recipient of an IOSF World Otter Day Grant in 2020 was Nature Solutions, who have now produced education materials in Arabic and French to be used in schools, for visitors, associations, and conservation authorities.



Education

Otters across the world face a number of threats and one of the biggest is a lack of awareness. A lack of awareness leads to a lack of understanding, false perceptions and therefore not enough is being done to conserve them, and their wetland habitats.

IOSF works on a number of different aspects to help raise awareness of otters and their conservation.

TEAM OTTER

IOSF's Team Otter programme is reconnecting children with nature, wildlife, and the environment and igniting a passion that will last their whole life. It is well known that as a species, we have become disengaged from the natural world and as a result we are having a massive detrimental impact on it. IOSF's Team Otter programme is helping to change this attitude and ensure future generations understand the role they play and the steps they can take to ensure a healthier tomorrow for all. Although we use otters as a mascot, we focus on all things in the natural world.



Over the last year we have welcomed more countries into the programme, joining the already established clubs. Please read about some of our Team Otter work below:

UNITED KINGDOM

The Broadford Team Otter is very active and is doing a significant amount to help their natural environment on the Isle of Skye. During the more restricted times we met online to take part in wildlife and natural world quizzes. The children continued to grow their knowledge of both



local and global wildlife and natural world issues. Some children continued to do 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 the project.

Now that we are allowed to meet outdoors, we are back to working on the task of cleaning up the area and making people aware of the threat to wildlife from litter. Birds and animals can get caught in this waste, which also enters our seas and becomes an issue for various marine creatures, including otters. The club is also looking at reducing the amount of litter being dropped and have created signs to encourage the local community to reduce waste. We are also now a part of the Kids Against Plastic movement and are creating a video to encourage more people to make a difference and reuse/recycle as much as possible. During some meetings we take the opportunity to visit various habitats and learning more about the flora and fauna of the area, and the great biodiversity we have in our local area.

Broadford Team Otter has also grown a second “older” club for children in High School which will focus more in-depth on ways they can make a difference locally, and globally.

GUYANA

Unfortunately, with Yupukari's close proximity to the Brazilian border, and the problems they faced during the pandemic, most of the wildlife club's face-to-face work has been limited over the past year. Materials were being dispersed “door-to-

door” and when the situation improves, face-to-face wildlife club meetings will begin once again twice a week.

LAOS

IOSF’s Team Otter programme in Laos is led by workshop attendee Kiengkai Khoonsrivong.

He visited

Bolikhamxay and Luang Prabang provinces visiting schools to talk about otters and held competitions such as artwork to grow children’s love for otters. IOSF is delighted to support this project and help to grow awareness for otters in Laos and we look forward to seeing more from Kiengkai and his team moving forward.



MONTENEGRO

NGO Living Green’s seven Team Otter clubs held an event around Lake Skadar for World Otter Day 2021 event at the end of May.

NEPAL

A Team Otter education day and the start of a club in Shuklaphanta National Park have taken place with

Aarti Basnet and colleagues in Nepal. They delivered a fun day of otter education and have plans moving forward. There are also further plans to start Team Otter clubs in both the Bardia and Chitwan National Park areas.



SOUTH AFRICA

Team Otter is delighted to be able to link with the Hoerikwaggo Kids Club and they are now affiliated to our education programme connecting children with the

natural world.

UGANDA

The Mutanda Community Conservation Organization (MUCCO) has started a club in the Kisoro District, near Lake Mutanda, an area where otters are known to exist. This year MUCCO celebrated World Otter Day 2021 with the club.

FUTURE PLANS

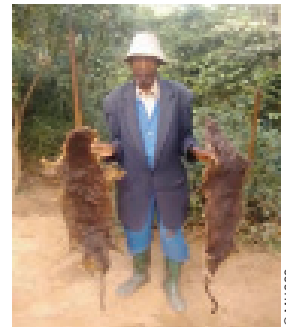
As well as the existing clubs and programmes, we have more Team Otter clubs planned in countries such as Malaysia and Zimbabwe, once restrictions allow.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Uganda: MUCCO continues to work closely with local communities. MUCCO is passionate about maintaining wetland ecosystems and has had positive talks pertaining to otter conservation. Aspects such as encouraging poachers to remove traps, identifying areas of the lake that can be designated as fish/otter breeding sites and improving agricultural procedures have all been achieved by MUCCO.

Laos: During Kiengkai’s Team Otter outreach

programme across Laos, he also took the opportunity to visit local communities and gain a further understanding of otter populations and perceptions within communities that live close to the species. The outreach found that locals believed otter populations have declined and stressed that it is important for NGOs, the government and local communities to work



Uganda otter skins

© MUCCO

together to reverse that trend.

Tanzania: Close friend of IOSF, William Mgomo continues his fantastic outreach working with local fishing communities and children. William engaged with over 400 children and spoke to fishermen about the importance of otters on Lake Nyasa. Over the years he has spoken to many thousands of children living around Lake Nyasa and has just translated our education pack into Swahili. We are delighted to say that William has joined the IOSF team as African Community Education.



William working in community education with school children

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Education Pack: IOSF's children's education pack, which is an introduction to otters, ecosystems and their importance, is now available in four languages. English, French, Montenegrin and Swahili. It can be downloaded free at https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources_Resources_ForChildren.aspx where you will also find other educational resources for children.

There are also videos and other resources at https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources_Resources_OtherEducationalResources.aspx



Training Workshops: As many of you know, IOSF run international workshops to train more people in a number of techniques in relation to otters and wetland conservation. We attempt to hold these regularly with our last held in Guyana in 2019, our first in South America following five in Asia and one in Africa.

Unfortunately, as we are sure you can understand, we haven't been able to hold another workshop since the pandemic started but plans are well under way for our next. We have been in constant dialogue with our friends at Malaysia Nature Society and hopefully will be able to hold our next workshop in Malaysia in February 2022, inviting attendees from neighbouring Thailand and Myanmar.

Student Training Project: Likewise, our student training project that was planned for the summer of 2021 has also been postponed.

The IOSF Student Research Grant is designed to help students carry out an otter field survey under the guidance of a trained ecological surveyor. Andrew Rothwell has carried out many ecological surveys, especially for otters, including the National Otter Surveys of Scotland and England. He will train them in the various techniques involved, including post-survey work such as diet analysis. This could form the basis of their dissertation for their degree and we hope that it could lead to more ecological work in the future.

The first project will be a repeat of the Isle of Barra survey which was done by IOSF in 2000 to see if there have been any changes to populations over the years. The grant will enable two students to join in this survey by covering part of the expenses. Email enquiries@otter.org for more information.

World Otter Day – 26 May 2021



IOSF World Otter Day 2021 was the second year during which we were involved in a global pandemic. As with the 2020 event, we wanted to ensure that all people who planned events did so within a safe, controlled environment and encouraged as many people as possible to continue with their “events” online.

Once again, it proved to be a massive success, thanks to all of you #WorldOtterDay was trending worldwide.

Grants

As always, IOSF was proud to give out three World Otter Day grants to support events around the world and thanks to an anonymous donor, we were able to offer a fourth. This year, the grants were awarded to Argentina, Benin, India and Nepal. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, it has not been possible to hold some events due to Covid-19 issues. The event in Argentina has made progress and it is hoped that those in Benin, India and Nepal can be completed in the next few months.

Adriana Belen Vallejos, Estación Biológica Corrientes, Argentina

Due to major drought issues, the river surveys have been put on hold until water levels rise and otters reappear. Furthermore, Covid-19 restrictions within Argentina have meant that the workshops involving children have been postponed until it is safe to do so.

So, what has been achieved so far? Adriana has gathered all the materials that are necessary, so that the surveys can be done when time allows.

Furthermore, there have been virtual meetings with otter and conservation experts from across Argentina. Adriana, and her team, were also contacted by two radio stations and asked to talk about the Neotropical otter project, IOSF, ecology and behaviour and they invited people to participate in their citizen science project focused on the Neotropical otters. The citizen science project was posted online to encourage people to send in their sightings. So far, they have received sightings of dead and alive otters from four other provinces

(Chaco, Formosa, Cordoba and Sante Fe) and this has provided further information on the distribution of the species in Argentina for the first time since 2003.

Any dead otters reported from within 100 miles of the Corrientes Biological Station will be collected for post-mortem to identify any factors, such as parasites, which may be affecting their conservation.



Coffi Donald Dossou, Human Nature Projects Benin

This project will raise awareness of otters, wetlands and their conservation in the Ouémé Valley in Benin, an area known to have otter populations. It will raise the profile of otters and demonstrate their benefits to the ecosystem, helping their long-term survival. Threats to both otters and wetland habitats will also be highlighted which will help both the otters and local communities.

Eswar Narayana, Janya Foundation, India

This project is focusing on children, local communities and other concerned individuals and organisations near the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh, India. During the event there will be an artwork competition, online quiz and a field site visit to the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary. The sanctuary is a wetland habitat famous for species such as Smooth-coated otters and fishing cats. Participants will be taught vital monitoring techniques, such as camera trapping, and will be provided with education and other materials to continue raising awareness after the project.

Sujita Dhakal, Global Youth Biodiversity Network, Nepal

This event will be a one-day sensitisation project focusing on fishing communities. It will include presentations regarding otter identification, conservation in the local area, and identifying secondary signs such as spraints and tracks in order to continue monitoring. The area was chosen as it is known to have otters but there have been no recent surveys. Therefore, it will

inspire local communities to help conserve and monitor THEIR local otter populations and be at the forefront of otter and wetland conservation for their area.

Webinar

As many of you will know, IOSF conducted its first World Otter Day webinar as a celebration for the day.

The webinar was split into two parts, a morning session focused on Asian otters, and an afternoon session which focused on otters from the Americas and Africa. We decided to hold a two-part webinar to ensure that everyone across the world could join and to ensure that time zones did not prevent people from being able to join us and celebrate together.

The two webinars offered the following presentations:

Morning Session

Paul Yoxon, International Otter Survival Fund - *“Global status of otter and the work of IOSF”*

Padma De Silva - *“Otter conservation in Asia”*

Woo Chee Yoong – Malaysia Nature Society - *“Research on the Kuala Selangor Otters (including the rare Hairy-nosed otter) and the work of the*

Malaysian Otter Network”

Save Vietnam’s Wildlife - *“Rehab of rescued pet otters, the illegal trade and the threat to wild otter populations”*

Omar Al-Sheikhly - *“The legendary Maxwell’s otter, distribution, threats and conservation work in Iraq”*

Afternoon Session

Megan Isadore, River Otter Ecology Project - *“Supporting conservation, one otter sighting at a time”*

Pablo Hernandez - *“Conservation challenges for the Neotropical otter in Mexico”*

Bridgette San Marco, Save The Giants - *“Giant otters in Guyana and the work of Save the Giants”*

Ben Yoxon, International Otter Survival Fund - *“Team Otter and the importance of children’s environmental education”*

William Mgomo - *“Otters, communities and reducing human-otter conflict in an important African wetland habitat”*

We would like to say a massive thank you to all of our speakers for sharing their expertise on their respective otter species and also for taking the time to help make this webinar such a success. We can’t thank you enough.

We would also like to offer

our thanks to those of you who filled in our review form. We will use the feedback to improve on next year's event.

Other Webinars

Online webinar platforms offer such a great way for us to “get together” and share our information. We were delighted to be involved in other webinars in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia and Zimbabwe.



Other Events

We were also delighted to hear of other events in countries around the world, including Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Republic of Ireland, South Africa,



Spain, Uganda, UK, USA and Zimbabwe.

Here is a short introduction to a few of these:

Italy

Valle della Lontra is an organisation in Campania and they decided to introduce the kids of the school of Casaletto Spartano, to their wild neighbours, the otter. The day was split into two parts, a day learning about the animal in the classroom before going “in the tracks” of the otter and into their habitat.



Malaysia

IOSF friends and partners Malaysian Otter Network held a series of webinars on otters and their conservation.

Singapore

Singapore is well known for its urban otters and the problems associated with human/otter interactions.

Sivasothi, dubbed “The Otter Man”, was part of a group that held an online talk about otters within the city state for World Otter Day.

Mexico

In Mexico, friend of IOSF, Pablo Hernandez partnered with Animal Karma Fundacion for an online presentation on the Neotropical otter in Mexico.

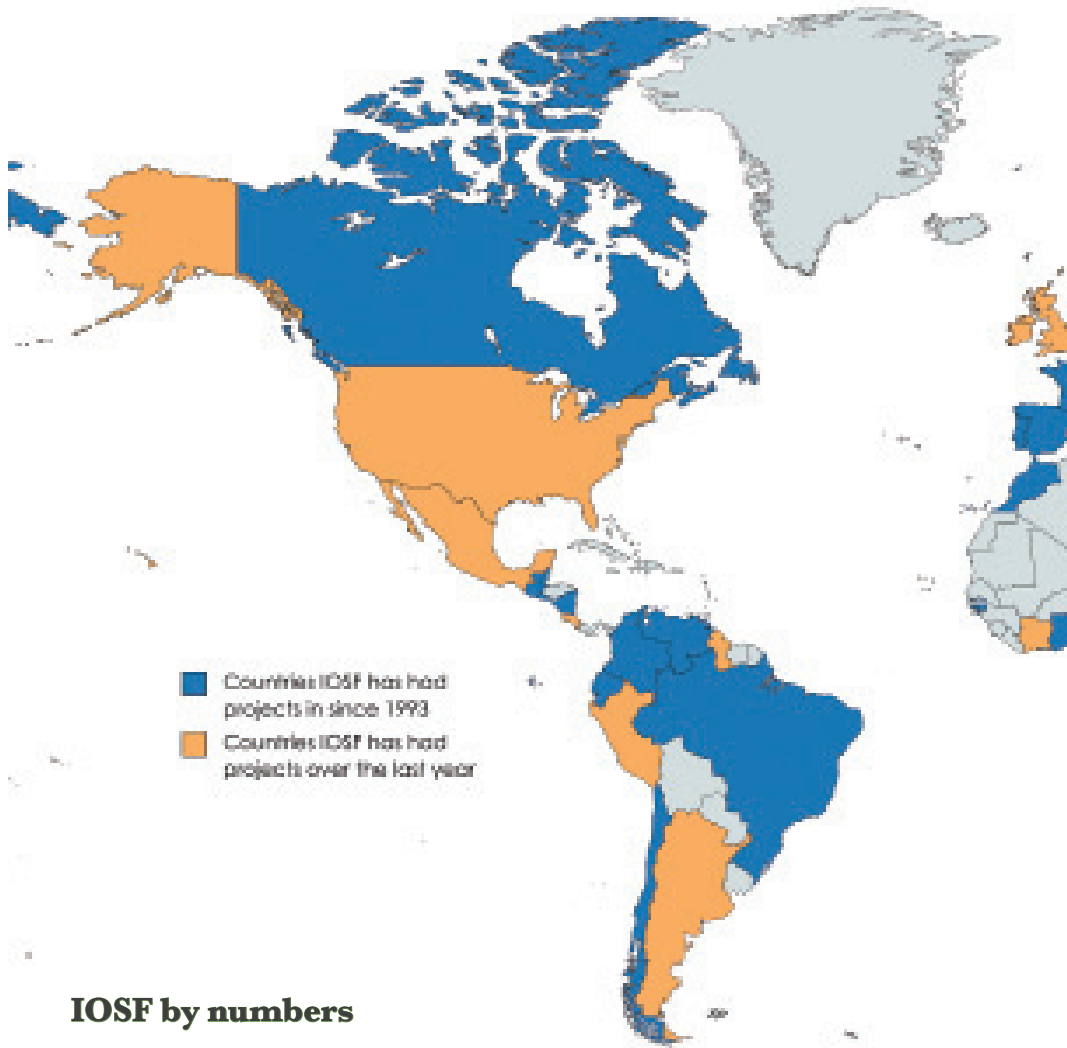
Republic of Ireland

Cork Nature Network held an awareness campaign online for their local Eurasian otters. This included encouraging people to use the new Cork Otter Trail and also an art competition for children, and IOSF gladly offered a prize for the winner.

Uganda

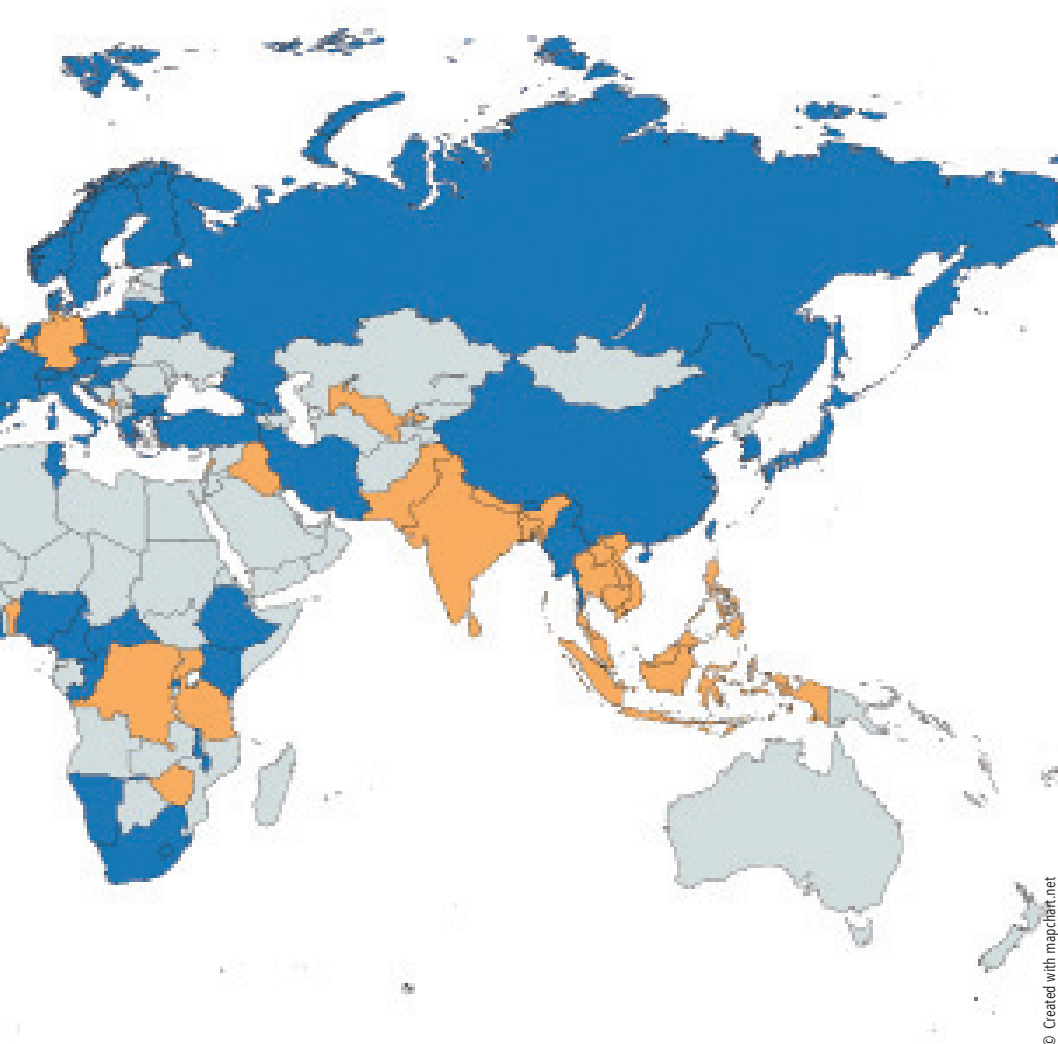
MUCCO held their event at Chameleon Hill Lodge Bay around Lake Mutanda, Kisoro District. The participants for the event were school children, community members, lodge staff and some tourists visiting the lodge and they learned about otters and celebrated their conservation.

2022 IOSF World Otter Day will be Wednesday 25 May



IOSF by numbers

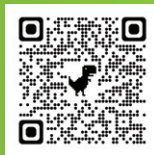
- 18 Languages available for the IOSF video
- 21 Number of countries represented at IOSF workshops
- 28 Years of helping otters worldwide
- 47 Number of countries where we have helped cubs or injured otters
- 60+ countries took part in the IOSF Webinar for World Otter Day
- 64 Number of countries we have supporters
- 69 Number of countries where we have supported projects
- 167 Number of cubs or injured otters abroad that we have helped
- 230 Number of cubs and injured otters we have treated at our Skye hospital
- 300+ people signed up for the IOSF Webinar for World Otter Day
- 139,000+ supporters worldwide



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Otter Oscars

Once again we received a great variety and number of nominations submitted for the 2020 Otter Oscars, especially considering the year that 2020 turned out to be for everyone. Judging is always difficult but a decision has to be made, and after lots of discussion, we were able to announce the winners.

Special Award:

Diana Limjoco, the Philippines

Diana Limjoco has cared for Asian short-clawed otters in the Philippines since three very small cubs arrived with her. She also campaigned successfully to protect Turtle Bay, Palawan, from development for a huge tourist project which would have destroyed much of the habitat. Diana is also concerned with the lack of proper care for “orphaned” otters and is working with IOSF and others to establish proper protocols to be used whenever such animals arrive. She is an ambassador for otters across Palawan and her hard work has ensured that habitats remain intact and otters in need receive the appropriate care.



© Diana Limjoco



© Chloe Shanks

Young People's award
- Chloe Shanks (England)



© Kiengkai Khoonsrivong

Community Achievement Award
- Kiengkai Khoonsrivong (Lao PDR)



© John Reeves-Womble

Photography/ Art Award
- John Reeves-Womble (Scotland)

Research Award - Alejandro Valenzuela (Argentina)



© SWW

Group or Organisation Award
- Save Vietnam's Wildlife (Vietnam)

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 26 November 2021 and the results will be announced on Monday 6 December 2021.

Otter Rescue & Rehabilitation

UK

During the current year we have taken in ten otters – seven cubs and three juveniles/sub-adults. The latest arrived in mid-September with bite wounds to the head from an encounter with another otter. Four otters were released (Reva, Sparky and two juveniles) and two more are to go shortly (DJ and Louis). Five died and at the time of writing we have five otters in care.



Reva's Release



Sparky



DJ and Louis



Bealltain, now collecting bedding

Bealltain, who arrived from Mull showing signs of being tame, has grown into a fine otter. Unfortunately, she has not developed sufficient wild traits for us to consider releasing her. Three very small cubs arrived from Inverness after they were discovered when a container was moved on an industrial site. The cubs weighed less than 500g and their eyes were still closed. Unfortunately, two of them died due to undetected

abnormalities from birth – one had a heart defect and the other a brain problem. The third cub, Holly, continues to do very well. The croft facilities continue to be well used and have proved ideal for our purposes. The plans for the new hospital are now being



Holly

finalised and it is hoped that this can be completed as soon as possible.

Although we specialise in otters we take any wildlife casualty and this year seems to have been a time for hedgehogs and owls.



Barn owl chicks

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. IOSF is supporting rescued otters at Save Vietnam's Wildlife, Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand, Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre in Cambodia, and at two centres in Indonesia (Cikananga on Java and SUMECO on Sumatra). SUMECO has had three species (Eurasian, Hairy-nosed and Asian small-clawed otters) in care over the last few months. All these centres provide exceptional care and the otters are kept in enclosures which are as natural as possible. The aim is for them to return to the wild where they belong, provided they show "normal" behaviour to ensure they survive in the



Albino Neotropical otter cub

wild. If unfortunately, they are judged not capable of release they remain at the sanctuary.

IOSF's Rescued Pet Otters Fund helps these sanctuaries with their care of rescued otters with funds for food, vet treatment, etc.

We have also been helping with other otters in care and you will have read about some of these in the Africa report.

Costa Rica: In March 2021 IOSF was contacted by the Jaguar Rescue Centre who had just received a Neotropical otter cub. They had cared for many wild animals but had never had an otter. We put them in touch with someone else who had looked after this species in Costa Rica.

Peru: In July 2021, IOSF was contacted by Arca Zoológico y Zoolocriadero in Iquitos, Peru, about a Neotropical otter cub that had been rescued in the area. It had been rescued by a fisherman and was very small but did have tiny teeth. Since

then, the otter has grown well and is now eating whole fish! This wasn't any normal otter cub, and was actually an albino. Unfortunately, this means that it is extremely unlikely to survive in the wild as it will be so obvious to both hunters and predators. Consequently, it will remain in care at the park.



Marine otter or Chungungo

Chile: For the first time in Chile, an adult Marine otter or sea cat, known locally as Chungungo, was released back to the wild following a period of time in rehabilitation with Chinchimén. The animal was estimated to be 8 or 9 years old and had symptoms of hypothermia, malnutrition and stomach issues upon arrival.

Germany: Geranda Olsthoorn is still caring for cubs for release and was recently asked for advice for a cub in Latvia.

Research and Conservation

UK

Otter monitoring on the Isle of Skye

In 2014 we began monitoring 15 coastal sections on the Isle of Skye in order to review the otter population research which we undertook in 1999. Every year each section is visited and the number of active holts is counted as there is a relationship between the number of active holts and the number of resident females. The site visits are carried out at about the same time of year so that conditions are the same.

Although holt numbers increased after 2014, there has been no significant difference since and otter populations do not seem to have altered.

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 in Edinburgh.

International

A lot of research has had to be put on hold because of Covid-19 restrictions.

Guyana

A lot of information was obtained soon after the workshop in 2019 but with Covid-19 restrictions surveys were curtailed as the sites are very close to the Brazil border. However, now monitoring work has resumed through camera trapping and river surveys.

Asia

The report of the Asian Otter Conservation Network has already outlined the research projects being carried out in India, Nepal,

Pakistan and Sri Lanka and also in Iraq and Iran in the Middle East.

Uzbekistan

IOSF was asked to provide training in field techniques to help ecologists carry out an otter survey in Uzbekistan. The ecologists concerned are experienced in field work for other species but just not in otter survey techniques. Clearly, we couldn't do this in person so we arranged a Zoom meeting to give a presentation with video and provided them with a field guide with more detail. Obviously the biggest problem is explaining what spraint actually smells like!

Illegal Trade

The trade in otters continues to be a major threat to their survival, with the pet trade an ever-growing issue. Otter cubs are stolen from their mother and forced into a life of cruelty and neglect, far from the social, loving, wild life they were born into. Although the pet trade is a particular problem for Asian short-clawed otters, we have helped care for all four species rescued from the pet trade across Southeast Asia (Eurasian, Hairy-nosed, Smooth-coated and Asian short-clawed otters).

The pet trade is highlighted by the number of otters being rescued. IOSF is helping to support rescue centres in Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand (See Rescue and Rehabilitation section) as well as helping with one rescued otter in Malaysia.

The cruelty of this trade was highlighted in the case of an Asian short-clawed otter in Indonesia as this young otter had its teeth removed so it couldn't bite its owner. It would never have been able to be released but the stress on the animal eventually led to



its death. This is what really happens in the pet trade and is the real cost of the “cute, playful” otters you see on social media.

Social Media

Social media continues to offer traffickers a platform to advertise and sell otters, among other species, as well as driving demand. It doesn't take long before you find otters portrayed as cute and playful and you can see images of otters in harnesses, or playing in people's kitchens. Many of these animals do not look particularly healthy and they can also be smelly and aggressive, which is just their wild nature. It is important to remember that otters are wild animals and they were born into and deserve to be living in the wild.

All social media platforms have rules to ensure that the sale of any animal, including domestic pets, is strictly forbidden. Facebook, for example, states “Listings may not promote the buying or selling of animals.” Yet, it is easy to find otters being traded online. Social media platforms have a duty to do more to enforce these rules and reduce the trade of all wildlife.

Japan

“Otter Cafés” in Japan continue to drive the demand for pets and the country remains one of the world's largest markets for exotic pets and this is growing. An article in TRAFFIC (March 2021) reported attitudes within Japan with regards to the exotic pet trade and produced some alarming results. 66% of people are interested in petting exotic animals, while 33% are

interested in owning them. Given the otter's popularity in Japan, this is potentially very dangerous.

Furthermore, 68% of people knew nothing about issues with regards to the trade, such as, zoonotic diseases, animal welfare, impact on wild populations and risks of invasive species, such as the Asian short-clawed otter which is not native to Japan. Given everything we know, and everything that has happened over the last 18 months with the pandemic, it is crazy that people are still unaware of this.

We need to change attitudes and reduce demand to help otters, and other wildlife, embroiled in the trade.

Vietnam

Good news from Vietnam. A wildlife trafficker was caught trying to sell six Asian short-clawed otters on social media, which just underlines what we have said about the lack of enforcement of rules for such platforms. The individual was sentenced to six years in prison and fined 27 million



Otters used in 'otter café'

© Yumiko Odamato

Vietnamese Dong (£850/ US\$1,185) for the animals he had.

Although not actually involved in this particular incident, Save Vietnam's Wildlife are also very active in working to reduce trade in otters and rehabilitate them back to the wild.

Southeast Asia

Across Southeast Asia we are working with organisations who are rescuing otters from the pet trade and you can read more about these groups, and the otters, elsewhere in this Review.

Rest of the World

Although Asia is a particular problem area when it comes to illegal trade it is important to remember that this issue is not exclusive to this region and does happen across the world. For example, in Uganda local NGO Mutanda Community Conservation Organization (MUCCO), has managed to get a number of poachers to remove traps for otters, specifically around Lake Mutanda. Otter skins are transported across the border to neighbouring DR Congo and Rwanda. You will read more of MUCCO's work in other parts of the Annual Review.



© SUMECO

Illegal trade rescued otter

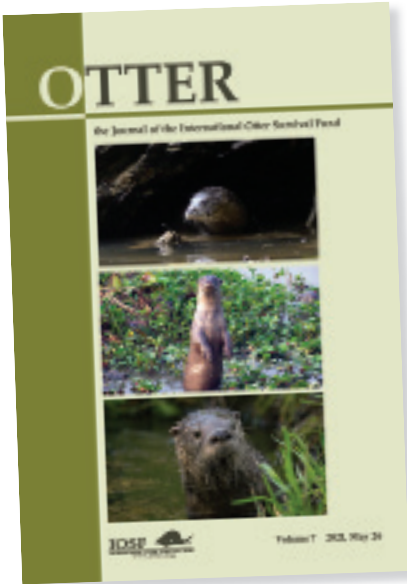
Illegal trade for otters, and other animals, happens across the world and it is important that we remain vigilant and report any concerns we may have to the relevant authorities. If you see what you believe to be illegal trade you can report it to us at IOSF or alternatively at <https://wildleaks.org/>. Any information you provide will be treated in strictest confidence.



The clear envelope containing your Annual Review is fully compostable and biodegradable. They are made using PLA film made from annually renewable vegetable starch and has been accredited to 'OK biobased' and DIN EN 13432, 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. In a colder home composter or landfill this process will just take longer. **PLEASE, DO NOT RECYCLE.**

OTTER

Journal of the International Otter Survival Fund



Volume 7 of *OTTER*, the Journal of the IOSF was published in May 2021 and is available to download free on the Resources page of our website (https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources_Resources_Journal.aspx) or a printed copy is available at the Otter Shop (www.ottershop.co.uk).

This volume is even bigger than previous issues, showing the amount of positive work being done in otter conservation worldwide and it is important that this is made available to other researchers. *OTTER* contains information and reports on the global work of IOSF and a wide variety of contributions from all over the world.

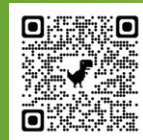
Other papers were on Community education in Lao PDR; Art as a conservation tool in the Mesopotamian

marshes, Southern Iraq, using Maxwell's otter as an example; A review of trapping of North American river otters; The otter on the Isle of Wight, 2020; A study of the diet and distribution of the Eurasian otter on the Water of Leith, Edinburgh; Urban otters of Bucharest, Romania: threats and conservation; The diet of the Eurasian otter in a southern Mediterranean aquatic environment; Distribution of the Mesopotamian otter in Iran; Presence of Smooth-coated otter in selected wetlands of Thatta District, Sindh Province of Pakistan; Activity budgets and behaviour of the Smooth-coated otter in a human-dominated landscape; Distribution, threats and community perceptions of otters in Shuklaphanta National Park, Nepal; Recent records of the endangered Hairy-nosed otter in Selangor, Malaysia.

Anyone wishing to submit a paper for Volume 8 should contact enquiries@otter.org for a copy of the journal guidelines for authors. The deadline for the receipt of papers is 1 February 2022.

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.



Help IOSF

What can YOU do?

As we experience some normality in our lives, following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, you may feel able to get involved in alternative ways to fundraise and raise awareness about otters. Of course, it is important to continue to plan safely and follow any guidance. Don't forget that IOSF is registered with JustGiving and GiveAsYouLive, where you can create your fundraising pages.

The use of virtual events, including swims, marathons, quizzes, auctions, challenges and talent shows, really seems to be popular. Of course, many people are glad to be out and taking part in bigger events with other people. So there is more choice for you to help IOSF and otters. The simplest thing you can do is using social media; create information posters to display and post, 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 to download our fundraising pack. If you want to organise a raffle, please contact enquiries@otter.org for details of IOSF's licence.

Become a regular giver to help otter conservation

<https://donr.com/iosf>



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If you are a UK taxpayer you can make regular donations to IOSF on a tax-free basis through Payroll Giving. For more information go to www.givingonline.org.uk/InternationalOtter-Survival-Fund_2623/index.html



Other ways you can help

- **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**
- **Donate something through our Amazon Wish List www.amazon.co.uk**
- **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.easyfundraising.org.uk, www.thegivingmachine.co.uk**
- **Evergreen Insurance Services evergreeninsuranceservices.co.uk/international-otter-survival-fund. Evergreen donate up to 25% of their commission at no cost to you.**
- **Are you in America? Contact us through enquiries@otter.org to donate through CAF America**



Thank You

So again we would like to say a big thank you to all of our supporters, otter adopters, donors and corporate sponsors, including those on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Quora. You have kept us going over these hard times and your help is invaluable and a great encouragement to us.

Paul and the IOSF team.

We send our thanks and appreciation to those organisations whose financial support we have received:

Alice Noakes Memorial Charitable Trust, Alpkit Foundation, The Animal Defense Trust, Animal Friends Insurance, The Beryl Evetts & Robert Luff AW Trust Ltd, Big Wild Thought, The Bryan Guinness Charitable Trust, Caledonian MacBrayne, The Craignish Trust, Fondation Le Pal Nature, Garfield Weston Foundation, The Goldcrest Charitable Trust, The Henderson Charitable Trust, The Humane Society, The Lennox Hannay Charitable Trust, The Marjorie Coote Animal Charitable Trust, Nurtured by Nature, The Nineveh Charitable Trust, Oakdale Trust, Pettefar Trust, Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust, The Slater Foundation, William Dean Trust, William Haddon Charitable Trust, Walker 597 Animal

Corporate Sponsors: holidaycottages.co.uk, Fenn Bell Conservation Project.

We would also thank the Kathy H Luther Estate, Ms Joan Bryan and Dr Stella Gibson, for remembering us in their wills.

And we have to give a special mention to the following: John Noorani, Judith Young, Princess Michael of Kent (Patron), Wolfgang and Traudl Gettmann, Dennis Furnell and, of course, Gareth and his team at the Old School Vets in Broadford.

And finally, as ever we are grateful to our Board who provide much support and advice. Thank you Jackie West, Andrew Cameron, Andy Rothwell, Sarah Neill and Padma de Silva. Padma is also our Asian coordinator/Chair of the Asian Otter Conservation Network and works with our four Asian regional coordinators. They are: Aad Adrean, Ling-Ling Lee, Jyoti Bhandari and Omar Al-Sheikhly. Samantha Holland our Journal copy-editor always does such a great job. And we welcome to the team, William Mgomo, African Community Education.

Supporter Renewal Rates

*Increase the value of your gift to IOSF: **giftaid it***

UK and EEC Countries:	All other countries:	Life Membership (all countries):
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Family: £34.00 per year	Family: £40.00 per year	

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 nearly 30 years of scientific research in the UK and around the world.

**Registered address: 7 Black Park, Broadford, Isle of Skye, IV49 9DE, Scotland
Tel/ Fax: +44(0) 1471 822 487**

**IOSF is regulated by The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR),
Charity number SC003875.**

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/Trustees: Andrew Cameron, Padma de Silva, Andy Rothwell,
Sarah Neill, Jackie West, Grace Yoxon**

**Head of Operations: Dr Paul Yoxon | Education & Research Officer: Ben Yoxon
Development Officer: Helen Stephenson | Data & Communications: Astrid Cramer**

Journal copy-editor: Dr Samantha Holland

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**

African Community Education: William Mgomo

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.



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www.ottershop.co.uk

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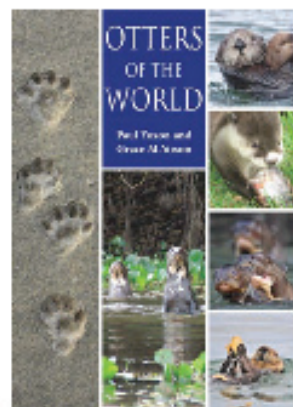
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IOSF Christmas Cards:
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