



Otter News No. 111, April 2020

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Click on this link: <http://tinurl.com/b3lrsmx>

Firstly, we hope that you are all keeping well and safe. It is a very difficult time for everyone but if we all stick together we can overcome this.

In the UK everyone has been very supportive of the National Health Service, but we would also like to say a big thank you to EVERYONE who is providing essential services. This includes those working in care homes and pharmacies; those supplying our food either through deliveries or in shops, and those continuing to produce the foods for suppliers; the postal and delivery services; the refuse collectors who are vital to make sure we don't end up with piles of rubbish; those working in the water and sewage industries; people maintaining our power supplies; vets; those volunteers in communities; and sadly undertakers. I'm sure I've missed some out and I apologise for that. We are all grateful to each and every one who is helping us.



#World Otter Day

Why do we hold World Otter Day each year? Yes, we do hope to raise some funds but we also want more people to know and understand the threats to otters in the world. Habitats are still being lost, pollution continues and hunting and illegal trade is still a very serious problem. We all hope that once we eventually overcome this virus problem that we will emerge to a world which is more caring and there is less greed and exploitation. But being realistic, once they can do it, we know that many people will return to their old ways of putting themselves first. So **World Otter Day** is even more important

this year to get people thinking about how they can help otters, our environment, and ultimately ourselves.

IOSF #WorldOtterDay is going to be very different this year due to the current global situation but we can still make it have a massive impact. For those that can no longer hold an event, we are going to make 27 May an **OTTER TAKEOVER!**

This means that everyone will know it is #WorldOtterDay and can't miss it.

So, how can YOU help?

- Post on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram all about otters, both in the lead up to 27 May and on the day.
- Share and tag your friends in IOSF posts to raise awareness of otter conservation and our cause. We are going to put out regular posts that you can share!
- Encourage your friends to post as well, the more people that post, the more people we will reach.
- Use #WorldOtterDay

- Tag IOSF in your posts:
 - Facebook - @InternationalOtterSurvivalFund
 - Instagram – @IOSF_Otters
 - Twitter - @IOSF

We are currently putting together a downloadable **World Otter Day** social media pack. This is where you can get ideas of what you could post or you can simply share IOSF's posts. You can post about your favourite otter, or your favourite fact. Keep an eye on the website, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and our Blog for updates!

Join in our “13 Challenge”

Some of you may have taken part in the 2.6 challenge which was held to raise funds for charities when the London Marathon was cancelled. In fact Sian Stephens has been doing it for IOSF which is wonderful - the link to her fundraiser is <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/lyras-26-challenge-to-save-otters>

We decided that we would hold a special **13 challenge** for **World Otter Day**. 13 being the number of otter species in the world and will create more awareness. So what we are asking you to do is to set yourself a challenge to achieve 13 of an activity. Here are some suggestions for possible 13 activities:

- 13 miles or km run
- 13 hour silence
- Do something for 13 days in a row
- Bake 13 cakes
- Have a quiz/online party with 13 friends

Post what you are doing on social media to tell the world how important it is to save the 13 species. And, if you can link it to a fundraiser that would be great.

If you need any help with otter facts, otter pictures or anything else – feel free to contact ben@otter.org

On Our Own We Can Do So Little, Together We Can Do So Much!

You can also join in our **World Otter Day Raffle** with lots of great prizes – check it out here <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/grace-yoxon-wod2020>



- IOSF Otter Watching Day
- Otter Adoption Gift Box
- Signed copy of “Otters of the World”
- IOSF re-usable drinks cup
- ... and more

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GIFT AID IS A SIMPLE WAY TO INCREASE THE VALUE OF YOUR GIFT TO IOSF - at no extra cost to you. If you pay tax in the UK, IOSF can reclaim the basic rate tax (25%) on your gift. So, if you donate £10, it is worth £12.50 to IOSF.

It is a simple process to sign up to Gift Aid - all you have to do is make a Gift Aid declaration. If you are donating online, just select the "Yes" option on the Gift Aid box on the donation form. Alternatively you can download and print out the Gift Aid Declaration on page 13 of our Fundraising Pack which can be found at:

http://www.otter.org/documents/IOSF_Fundraising_Pack.pdf

World Otter Day Grants

We are once again delighted to announce that we can offer four World Otter Day grants for work across the world. We are able to offer a fourth thanks to the kind donation from another anonymous donor!

As ever, we were overwhelmed by the number of people who wanted to run an event and raise awareness so we had a difficult decision to make but four had to be chosen. But it was also great to learn that some of those not chosen are still holding events and we look forward to working with them in the future!

This year's grants have been awarded to:



Lesotho – Human Nature Projects Organisation Lesotho

This event will raise awareness of otters across the African enclave. Otter populations do exist but very little is known about them or done to protect them. An otter education programme for all volunteers and other relevant stakeholders will be completed. This will focus on teaching about the importance of otter conservation, distribution in Lesotho, a history of otters in Lesotho and how can we raise the overall awareness of otter conservation across the whole country. The participants will include the UN Agency Representative, Relevant Government Ministry's officials and Media Guests, as well as the expert from the Lesotho University.

This will build a strong awareness base of otters in Lesotho. Through this celebration, they will raise awareness through volunteers, media participants and all attendees. By including media coverage the entire nation will gain more of an understanding of otters and their conservation.



Malaysia – Malaysian Nature Society, MNS

An event by the Malaysia Otter Network, the very first established otter network in Malaysia. The celebration will be a 1-day event where the first half of the day will be public engagement activities such as exhibitions, launching ceremony of World Otter Day, a lake clean-up and public talks by the members of Malaysia Otter Network.

The event will help initiate a national effort in bringing together a group of identified otter experts in Malaysia and serve as a valuable opportunity for the group to discuss and exchange knowledge for future otter conservation in Malaysia.

Furthermore, they plan to organise an event at Kuala Lumpur City Hall, which recently pledged to 'adopt' the otter after the phenomenal appearance of wild otters in two urban

parks in the city, to protect them from visitors to the parks. The public event will serve as an outreach and awareness programme in promoting otters as the ambassador of wetland conservation and the threats that they are facing.

The City Hall event has been postponed due to the Covid-19 outbreak but will be conducted once it is safe to do so, under government guidelines.

Morocco – Association Nature Solutions

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 Talassemrane is a stronghold of the species in Morocco but it still only lives in the remote upper freshwater streams. This event will raise awareness among school children, local communities and visitors to the National Park.

Materials will be produced on the species in Arabic and French for distribution to schools, visitors, local associations and conservation authorities. There will also be an event to raise awareness of the otter and encourage field research for students at Tétouan University.

Nepal – Aarati Basnet

Aarati Basnet has conducted World Otter Day events over previous years and we are delighted to support her event this year.

This project will be carried out focusing on children, women and the indigenous ‘Rana Tharu’ community in Shuklaphanta National Park and its buffer zone. The National Park is home to some of the remaining populations of vulnerable smooth coated otters in Nepal.

The event will increase awareness within local communities about the existence and the importance of otters and the roles we can play to conserve them. It will also highlight otters as an ambassador of the wetland ecosystem to draw public attention to its conservation. Children are the future leaders and much of the event will focus on raising awareness among them. It will provide a fun and engaging learning experience by using games for conservation education focusing on otters as ambassadors of the wetland ecosystem. Games, quizzes and an art competition will be more effective than traditional teaching methods in enhancing learning motivation, active participation, and concentration among the children.

In the long term, we believe it will lead to a more peaceful coexistence between threatened wildlife species and people living alongside them.

News from The Sanctuary

The big news this month is that we have a new otter. She turned up in a garden and was very disoriented and incredibly thin. She is not a tiny cub but probably about 6-8 months old. When she was found she was eating grass as there was nothing else but now she is on fish, although we are taking it slowly so that she doesn't overeat. As she turned up on 1 May we have decided to call her “Bealltainn” which is the Gaelic name for May Day.

Our three otters have been enjoying special treats this



week courtesy of one of our local prawn fishermen, DL. One of the most annoying things for these fishermen is that octopus get into their creels and eat all their catch. So DL brings the octopus for our otters. Obviously he hasn't been able to go to sea for a while but now he is able to return to work and brings back food for the otters. This is a big help as it supplements the fish we have in the freezer and also is free, although we do give some treats back to DL and his family in terms of eggs from our chickens.



Our new otter Bealltainn tucking into a tasty fish
© Sarah Corrigan

Harrie is first out to grab an octopus in preference to the fish but little Sparky still prefers his fish. All of the otters are very secretive and wait until they think we have gone before they come out to grab something, which is good to see.

They have also been getting extra additions to their diet in terms of crabs and fish that Ben has caught in creels put out in the sea near to his house, and which he checks daily. It is also great to be able to give them a varied diet.



If you would like to support our cubs in the Sanctuary you can send a cheque marked "Hospital" on the back or make a donation online at www.ottershop.co.uk

Donate to IOSF <https://www.ottershop.co.uk/donate-to-iosf-c2x11601155>



Please support IOSF and help to ensure that important conservation and awareness work continues.

UK taxpayers:

Increase the value of your gift to IOSF: giftaid it



Team Otter

There are less than three weeks for you to get your Otter-y artwork in for the children's art competition. We have been overwhelmed by the number of entries received from all over the world, including Chile, South Africa and Germany.

So keep them coming. Last entries will be accepted on Friday 22 May! Email them to ben@otter.org OR post them to:

International Otter Survival Fund
 7 Black Park
 Broadford
 Isle of Skye
 IV499DE

NATURE HUNT

Hear the sound of a bird - do you know what bird it was?	See a mammal	See 3 separate bird species and can you identify them	Climb a tree - what kind of tree was it?
Find a fossil	Look for animal tracks - what animal created them?	See a fish	Find a bug that can't fly
Find a yellow flower	Find a fresh water source like a river, pond or lake	Draw a picture of the favourite thing you saw on your walk	Find a reptile and amphibian - remember frog spawn/tadpoles
Find a rock that looks like something	Count how many seagulls you can see?	Look under a rock - what did you find? Make sure to put the rock back carefully	See signs of an otter (including an otter itself)
See a butterfly	Find three different shells	Find a bird with yellow or red on it	Spot a Bumblebee



TEAM OTTER

Team Otter Nature Hunt

We have put together a small nature hunt for kids to do during this time away from school.

Simply print off this grid and see how many you can complete!*

We know that some children may not be able to find some things because of where they live but that's what makes it exciting!

***Please make sure to adhere to current government guidelines specific to your area.**

For more information on Team Otter, check out our website (www.loveotters.org) or Facebook. If you are interested in forming your own Team Otter Club contact Ben@otter.org.

Otter Shop @www.ottershop.co.uk

Adopt an otter for #WorldOtterDay (great gift idea too!) or make a donation.

You can do both just by visiting IOSF Otter Shop www.ottershop.co.uk



Hunters in India Turning to Conservation

The headline read “I swapped my gun for binoculars” – what a positive statement by Ivito from central Nagaland, in north-east India. Nagaland is part of the Indo-Burma “biodiversity hotspot” and only a relatively short time ago it was not unusual to hear tigers roaring in the forest. But many birds and animals rapidly disappeared.

Although there was a strong tradition of hunting, the beliefs of the people meant that there was a strong affinity with nature and killing was only done out of necessity with no exploitation of wildlife. However, during the struggle for independence from India things changed and unemployment meant that many young people moved to towns and lost their connection with nature. So instead of hunting with spears and traps to feed their families, they returned to hunt with guns and killed as much as they could for commercial reasons. Bushmeat and animal parts for Chinese medicine became valuable products to sell in markets.



There was such a dramatic loss of wildlife that one village, Khonoma, just south of the capital realised they had to do something. In 1998 they created a community conservation area of 25 km² where all hunting and logging was banned. Other villages followed their example, including Yaongyimchen, which protected 10km² in 2010. Here they have made a real difference to the survival of the Amur falcon which migrates each year from north-east Asia to

southern Africa, stopping off in Nagaland to feed. So many birds were shot that numbers plummeted and one man from the village stated that he used to shoot about 700 falcons each year for sale in the local market. As a result of the people’s initiative numbers of the falcons increased tenfold from about 50,000 to at least half a million.

How was this stopped when there is still a need for employment and an income? The elders told the people that “the falcons were God’s creation, like humans. And that farmers in southern Africa were waiting for them, and would suffer if they didn’t arrive.” The people listened and now anyone caught hunting must forfeit their gun and pay a fine of 25,000 rupees.

This is a positive story for the Amur falcon but it has also provided a safe place for many

other species including bears and leopards. It is believed that there is also now a lone tiger in the forest, a species which had gone extinct in the area.

This may sound small scale with areas of about 10-25km² but about a third of the villages in Nagaland now have conservation areas. So this makes it a substantial effort in conservation. Bushmeat is no longer sold for profit and the villagers are seeing the results of their combined efforts. They are hoping that eco-tourism will provide more money for the community but it is an inaccessible area which deters many tourists.

Ivito is from the Tizu Valley Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Network, and he said "I used to take my gun and catapult to the jungle. Now I've sold my gun to pay for my children's education, and I patrol with my binoculars instead."

https://focusingonwildlife.com/news/i-swapped-my-gun-for-binoculars-indias-hunters-turn-to-conservation/?utm_source=mailpoet&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter-post-title_1120
Reproduced from The Guardian, 10 March 2020.

News In Brief

Elakha Alliance

The Elakha Alliance, who are looking into the possibilities of restoring sea otter populations in Oregon, are partnering with Northwest Nature Matters and the Oregon Wildlife



Foundation to produce a weekly series of podcasts on the species and their ecosystems.

Due to the current global situation, outreach in person has been stopped and therefore they have decided to create these podcasts to help continue

to spread awareness and understanding of sea otters and their role in the environment.

Visit <https://www.myowf.org/nwnaturematters> to listen to various experts on an important topic and the great work of the Elakha Alliance.

Good news in India

A recent wildlife survey by the forest department in Gudalur, India has found that there appear to be populations of otters in two forest areas. Otter evidence including four sprainting sites was found in the two areas and it suggests that the species present is Asian short-clawed otter. However, this still to be confirmed.

There are substantial human pressures on wildlife in the area from habitat loss and pollution but it is great to see that otters are still there.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Coimbatore/census-points-to-presence-of-otters-in->



gudalur/article31260616.ece

Giant otters found dead in wildlife trade seizure

Four giant otter cubs have been found dead in Trinidad in connection with the wildlife trade. The otter cubs were found with various other species including yellow-crowned parrots and capuchin monkeys. The photos in the link below show that the animals were severely underfed and most likely died of starvation.



Giant otter cub with mother
©Philip Perry

Given that Trinidad has no wild populations of giant otters we cannot be certain where they have come from. Two men were arrested in connection with the incident and hopefully they will receive an appropriate sentence if the case is proven.

IOSF has reached out to various people for more information on this sad event.

<https://www.looptt.com/content/2-held-43-parrots-4-dead-river-otters-found-dead>

Otter stuck in a pipe

Perhaps this North American river otter had one too many fish the day before!

In Oak Bay, Canada, residents noticed an unusual amount of water coming out of a culvert. After investigating further they found that an otter had got itself stuck and was blocking the water flow. After 10 minutes of trying to get the otter out of the pipe, it was free and ran off as fast as it could out of sight – perhaps to spare its blushes!

<https://www.oakbaynews.com/news/oak-bay-public-works-crew-rescue-otter-from-culvert/>

Otters in Dublin

Just under 200 otter signs have been found around the waterways of Ireland's capital, Dublin. The otter survey, which was carried out during 2018 and 2019, found 196 otter signs across a number of rivers and streams, spanning an 84km survey area.

The rivers Dodder and Tolka had the highest recorded signs whilst other areas had none. Areas that had less human interference did have more otters but the study also found that a “buffer” between humans and waterways can help otters to thrive too. Aspects such as lines of trees or large walls, which provide some sort of peace and quiet for the otters help them live in surprising spots.

The study shows the health of the rivers around Dublin and also that otters can survive, and thrive, in fairly highly populated areas.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/environment/nearly-200-signs-of-otter-activity-recorded-across-dublin-s-rivers-1.4232725>



Otters and dogs

What happens when a group of feral dogs attempt to attack a baby otter? Well, we found the answer to that - the adult otters protect their baby fiercely.

In India's Gandhi Nagar Sanctuary the two adult otters quickly appeared to drag the younger otter back into the water. Shortly after, the three otters took to land to warn the dogs back and to think again.

The video emphasises how protective otters are of their young and the sad consequences that they face during illegal hunting for pets.

<https://www.news18.com/news/buzz/watch-brave-otters-fight-off-pack-of-dogs-to-protect-their-baby-in-madhya-pradesh-2595913.html>

Otters in Livingstone

This is becoming a regular feature in our newsletters but otters in the Lothian area keep appearing. This time, they are in the River Almond in Livingstone.

<https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/people/watch-adorable-otters-play-and-swim-river-almond-west-lothian-2551471>



Can AI help save animals?

Kyle van Houten, the chief scientist at Monterey Bay Aquarium, has found a way to help siphon out irrelevant paper articles to find exactly what you need. Nowadays with the hundreds of articles that are available it is hard to find exactly the information you want but this new process may make it a lot easier.

Using a tool called sentiment analysis, which is used by corporations to help gauge customer reaction to certain products, it is possible to order papers in terms of relevance. By assigning a number to a word it is possible to distinguish how relevant or important a paper can be to your particular subject, therefore making it easier and quicker to find out which papers you need to study most.

<https://baynature.org/2020/03/25/can-ai-read-scientific-literature-to-help-save-animals-like-otters/>

Thank You to...

The Rufford Foundation, Idea Wild (In Kind), Stafford Trust, JTH Charitable Trust.

And, to everyone continuing to support IOSF and the otters. It means so much to us that in these difficult times people are able to think about this still important work.

Events

Visit our website to find out what might be happening in the otter world near you, including:

Need we say more...

World Otter Day Wednesday 27th May 2020

IOSF #OtterWatchingDay Raffle (end 12 June 2020)

Don't forget, if you are aware of any otter-related events taking place, send us the details (Title, time, date, place and cost (if applicable), and we will post it on our Events page.

<http://otter.org/Public/Events.aspx>

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP - WHETHER YOU OWN A BUSINESS OR ARE EMPLOYED, does the company have a green policy/ support conservation? Then perhaps the company would like to consider becoming a Corporate Member with IOSF and supporting our work with otters. You can find out more information on our website http://otter.org/Public/HelpUs_CorporateSponsorship.aspx

Keep Us in Mind

Raise FREE Donations... when you shop online. It's simple and costs you no more than your shopping. Visit one of our charity pages to discover how easy it is for you to help otters even more:



Regular and secure giving to IOSF and otter conservation... at your fingertips. Text **OTTER 10 to 70085 to donate £10 (or change the amount to however much you wish to give)**



You can donate monthly via our partners at the DONR giving platform that allows an easy and safe way method to give. This can be as little or as much as you can afford. Visit <https://www.donr.com/iosf> to find out more.

LEGACY - A LEGACY IS A GREAT WAY OF GIVING TO SOMETHING close to your heart and every gift will make a difference. After your family, have you ever thought of leaving something in your will to charity? Please consider remembering the International Otter Survival Fund in your will and help our work, protecting otters, to continue.

Including a legacy in your will ensures that your wishes are carried out, so it is important to discuss this with your solicitor. You can stipulate a specific restriction for its use, but remember that without restriction your legacy can be directed to where it is required most urgently.

Should you choose to provide a legacy for the International Otter Survival Fund in your will, we thank you and appreciate your support in this way.

This link http://otter.org/Public/HelpUs_Legacy.aspx will take you to our dedicated web page concerning making a Legacy.

All photos are © to the name/s as indicated, otherwise ©IOSF

You can follow us on:



Annual Supporters' Rates

UK and EEC Countries:

Adult: £24.00 per year
Child: £13.00 per year
Family: £34.00 per year

All other countries:

Adult: £30.00 per year
Child: £15.00 per year
Family: £40.00 per year

Life Membership (all countries): £350.00

Have you enjoyed reading this e-newsletter? Then please forward it to someone else and spread the word.

If you are reading this for the first time and would like to receive all IOSF mailings, click [here](#) to sign up. Please be assured that we will never pass on your details to any other party and you will only ever receive emails from us.

Discover Ways You Can Help

There are many ways in which you can raise money and awareness to help the otters in our **Fundraising Pack** or find out what some of our supporters have done over the years in the online **newsletters**.

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Charity Number SC003875

Join our IOSF mailing list. Click on this link:
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www.otter.org

The International Otter Survival Fund
Working to Save the Worlds Otters