



Otter News No. 141, April 2023

Join our IOSF mailing list and receive our newsletters -
Click on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/p3lrsmx>

Please share our news

otters as Secret Weapons Against Climate Change

There was an interesting article in the Irish Examiner recently entitled “*Why elephants, otters and whales are nature’s secret weapons against climate breakdown*”. It said that all of these three groups of animals increase carbon capture in the ecosystem: elephants disperse seeds and crush low vegetation allowing the growth of tall trees; whales feed deep down and when they breathe and rest at the water surface they release nutrients which stimulates the production of phytoplankton; and as we know, sea otters have a close relationship with the kelp forests by keeping the number of sea urchins down thus preventing overgrazing of the kelp.



Sea Otter Eating a Sea Urchin –Joan Tisdale

Joan Tisdale

Ecology is such a complex science and I am sure we don’t fully understand it. We think we know how to control nature and how to deal with climate change and yet so many species are having a strong effect on carbon capture through their natural everyday activities – eating, moving around, digging, defecating, and “home” building.

According to a new study in Nature, wild animals only produce 0.3% of the world’s carbon but can result in between 15% and 250% of its storage in the ecosystem. This is clearly without all the theorising and discussions which man does – they just get on with it! We can clearly learn a lot from that.

We are very prone to looking for a quick fix and ignoring the many examples of positive action in nature. There are other examples of animals dealing with carbon. When disease crippled numbers of wildebeest on the Serengeti plains there was so much long grass which frequently caught fire releasing carbon. Now that numbers are increasing again they are keeping the grass down. In the Arctic, carbon is stored within the permafrost and wild grazing animals, such as musk ox, reindeer, bison and wild horses compact the snow to keep the soil frozen.

A positive step is being taken in Scotland and this spring will see the start of a £2.4 million project to restore the Forth estuary by planting four hectares of seagrass using seeds from Orkney and reintroducing 30,000 oysters by the end of 2024. Meadows of seagrass not only support many species but also take up carbon and oysters remove pollutants from the water. Sadly, the oysters within the Forth were fished to extinction.

Sea Grass from the Scotsman Article – see link



The project is being supported through ScottishPower Foundation's Marine Biodiversity Fund, set up to mark the UN Climate Summit COP26 held in Scotland in 2021. They will work with the local community to encourage them to help protect these habitats.

We have often said that conservation of the otter is not a sentimental luxury. Being at the top of the food chain and using both aquatic and terrestrial habitats means that both ecosystems have to be in good condition. If the land is good enough but the water is polluted otters cannot survive. Similarly, if the water is fine but there is no room for them on land then they have a problem.

The Irish Examiner article suggests that it isn't just the conservation of the otter which is important but the conservation of all species as they all play such an important role in the protection of our planet. We have heard this before of course but it is vital that we learn to live with nature and not fight against it.

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/environment/seagrass-planting-set-to-begin-in-firth-of-forth-as-major-restoration-project-gathers-pace-4010710>

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/outdoors/arid-41120950.html>

The original article in Nature can be found at <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-023-01631-6>

Ullapool Sea Savers

Some of you will remember the Ullapool Sea Savers, who are a group of local kids who act to protect the seas, seashore and the wildlife around their home village of Ullapool on the northwest coast of Scotland. They are affiliated to our Team Otter and in 2018 they received the Young People's Otter Oscar after they held an amazingly successful campaign to prevent mechanical kelp dredging in the seas around the west coast. This would have destroyed so much of the habitat for many species including otters.

They are still doing more to help their local otters by trying to reduce the needless deaths on the road. They managed to raise funds for road signs to advise drivers to watch out for otters and also red squirrels on the road.

Ullapool is on the popular tourist route the NC500, and it seems that some thoughtless people decided to take the signs as souvenirs. Four of their signs (pictured right), have now been stolen – not only can the group not afford new signs, but it is pretty soul-destroying to see the results of their hard work stolen by such inconsiderate people. It also puts the otters and squirrels at risk again of being run over.



The kids said "Our signs have made a difference, we've seen less dead wildlife since putting them up." So they publicised their concerns through the local newspaper (<https://www.ross-shirejournal.co.uk/news/look-what-happened-after-public-learned-of-stolen-wester-ros-310063/>) and on social media and a JustGiving page was set up which has raised over £2,100 so far. If you would like to support the great efforts of these kids go to <https://www.justgiving.com/page/hugh-harrop-1681195955413?fbclid=IwAR3v7b41VigxyCCAYUjvXNJFP4sk7kUSfdQRzdfMtNVT5onH5LACxs6bRo>

Well done Ullapool Sea Savers – it's always great to hear about your positive work.



News from The Sanctuary



You may have seen on social media that we have a new otter at the sanctuary, Winston. He was found by the roadside after his mother had been killed by a car and was initially taken to the Scottish SPCA centre at Fishcross. He came up here a couple of weeks ago and this week we introduced him to Eden who had just moved to the croft. To begin with there was a lot of shouting between the two of them but it didn't last long and they are now quite content together. Winston is definitely the bolder of the two and is always ready to "swear" at us when we check on their bedding, while Eden remains hidden in the hay!

And before anyone says it, we are definitely not a political organisation in spite of the fact that we now have two former Tory prime ministers with us – Anthony **EDEN** and **WINSTON** Churchill! This is just a coincidence as we didn't name either of them!



Eden in transit to his new enclosure



Dobhran was very intrigued by his new neighbours who had taken up residence in the empty enclosure following the release of Baird and Marina. We have been getting some octopus again from our fishermen friends and the first time we tried him with one he really wasn't sure. He sniffed at it for quite a while before taking it off into his sleeping box to eat. Now he enjoys his octopus as well as the fish.

What can we say about Bealltainn? She has now been with us for three years and just enjoys her simple life, lying in the sun and having her fish delivered!



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

	<p>Please support IOSF and help to ensure that important conservation and awareness work continues.</p> <p>UK taxpayers...</p>	<p><i>Increase the value of your gift to IOSF: giftaid it</i></p>
---	---	---



A BIG 'Thank You' to everyone who donated to our **Big Give Green Match Fund** campaign in April and helped us reach our target. It was exciting to watch the total rise, knowing that your donations were being matched by our Champion - **one donation, twice the impact.**

Thank you for supporting our Otter Conservation and Training Workshop which takes place in Mexico later this year.



We are really starting to ramp up our preparations for this year's celebration of all things otter. So far we have **over 70 events being held in more than 30 countries** around the world on the day, and we hope to add a few more over the course of this month! If you plan to run an event and want to get it highlighted on our World Otter Day events map, you can do so by contacting ben@otter.org.

You can see all the events so far on the **World Otter Day** map here - <https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1zB14UOhRHDVeJ00tNhKgCV45xE3nL5o&usp=sharing>



Webinar

Don't forget, we are also hosting our third World Otter Day webinar.

The webinar will be hosted on World Otter Day itself, Wednesday 31st May, and will run with a similar schedule to the previous two years, so two sessions, at the following times:

Morning Session - 09.00 - 11.30am (UK Time)

Evening Session - 17.00 - 19.30pm (UK Time)

Speakers and their presentation titles can all be found on the poster (right)...

If you're interested in the World Otter Day webinar, then please visit -



**IOSF WORLD OTTER DAY
WEBINAR
PRESENTATIONS**

MORNING	EVENING
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SIVASOTHI N. – NATURAL HISTORY REVELATIONS OF THE URBAN SMOOTH-COATED OTTERS OF SINGAPORE.• OMKAR PATIL – OTTERS OF WESTERN MAHARASHTRA, INDIA – बुजऱ्या पाणमांजरांचे अद्भुत जग OTTER SPECIES & HABITATS AWARENESS PROGRAMME• CHAMINDA JAYASEKARA – THE IMPORTANCE OF WETLANDS: A SRI LANKAN STORY• CHARLOTTE NEARY/ROSS LAWFORD – URBAN OTTERS IN EDINBURGH. THEIR BEHAVIOUR AND THE ISSUES THEY FACE.• ADDY DE JONGH/HILCO JANSMA – OTTER RECOVERY IN THE NETHERLANDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LALI FASOLA/CLAUDIO CHEHEBAR – CHALLENGES FOR SOUTHERN RIVER OTTERS IN NORTHERN PATAGONIA, ARGENTINA• FAOUZ KILANI – OTTERS IN TUNISIA• MANUEL SANTIAGO – OTTERS IN COSTA RICA• ANGELA DOROFF – SEA OTTERS IN ALASKA• TOUCAN RESCUE RANCH – OTTER AMBASSADOR PROJECT – WORKING ON WETLAND CONSERVATION

©Nick Card

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSciyLpYHnzWbqg1dJhNpCPB6ExilQloh1u2PvQg0IR0kcjiA/viewform?usp=sf_link - for more information and to sign up!

You can support our Webinar, whether attending or not, by simply clicking on this link to make a donation <https://ottershop.co.uk/products/donate-to-iosf-world-otter-day-webinar> Thank you

You still have plenty of time to enter our **World Otter Day Raffle**.



Check out some amazing prizes which include one night b&b and evening meal for two at Kinloch Lodge Hotel on Skye and a limited edition otter print by wildlife illustrator Lyn Wells. You can see them all on our JustGiving page (link below).

- **Please remember** – if you want to enter the raffle, **do not** gift aid your donation, but provide your email contact so that we can get in touch with your numbers – we can't enter you in the raffle if we have no contact.
- If anyone has marked their donation as anonymous and wants to enter the raffle, please email admin@otter.org with your JustGiving donation receipt and name so that we can assign numbers to you and enter you in the raffle.

Tickets are £5 each and you will find all information on our JustGiving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/IOSFWorldOtterDayRaffle>



Otter Shop Product of the Month

www.ottershop.co.uk

Back in stock, and waiting for you to add one to your otter toy collection! The realistic looking, beautifully soft, 40cm toy otters from Living Nature are a must have for anyone who needs a cuddly toy otter in their life!



ECO alert! Stuffing made from recycled post-consumer PET plastic. Amazing! Get yours from this link! -

<https://ottershop.co.uk/collections/toys/products/living-nature-plush-otter-toy-30cm?variant=42874865778847>

Thank You...

For continuing to care about otters and support our work through difficult times, and for those who have donated in memory of much loved family and friends.

We also thank the Russell Trust.

And to our Corporate Sponsors: Andrew Poplett Enterprises Ltd, Nurtured by Nature, holidaycottages.co.uk.



IOSF's Education Officer, Ben, is on the road this week as he visits two communities in western Scotland.

First Ben is going to Lochgoilhead, where he is spending a day with the children in the Primary School of the Argyll village. He will have different 'sessions' for the various age groups - Early Learning/Nursery, Primary 1-3s, and Primary 4-7s. These will include an introduction to otters, survey techniques and raising awareness about why they are so important.

Following his day in the school, Ben will deliver an "adults" talk to the village and surrounding areas focussing on otters, their importance, such as ecological benefits, conservation needs and much more!

Later in the week, Ben will be joining Mull Otter Group for their otter workshop with the Primary School on the neighbouring island of Iona. The Iona children will travel to Craignure on Mull, for a fun-packed otter day where they will get the opportunity to learn about all things otters! You will see a full report, in next month's newsletter!



Team Otter Broadford is still working towards its 30 for 30 fundraiser, as you can see by the photo! Check out their progress here and please donate if you can! - <https://www.justgiving.com/page/team-otter-broadford-1676536990827>

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



Events

- **World Otter Day 31st May 2023** https://www.otter.org/Public/Events_OurCurrentEvent.aspx including IOSF Webinar.
- Monday 5th June 2023 – last day for [World Otter Day Raffle](#) entries.

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

News in Brief



Otters surprise naturalists at Indian bird sanctuary

The Malyadi bird sanctuary was formed from an abandoned clay quarry at Kundapur taluk, and it now has new residents – otters. The curious thing about it is that there is no river connectivity and it is believed that the otters came when water from the river Varahi was released to help the marshland. The exact number of otters is unknown but Forest Department officials say there could be about 50 otters in the area, but who knows?

Image – Smooth-coated otter by Harshit Sharma

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Mangalore/sighting-indian-otters-in-landlocked-malyadi-bird-sanctuary-of-kundapur-taluk-surprises-naturalists/article66698708.ece>

Good and bad news for Welsh otters

First the bad. We have mentioned before the survey in Wales which indicated that otter numbers are going down. One of the obvious causes of such a decline is pollution through agricultural run-off and sewage. In the past we have been told that our water quality is improving but we are hearing more and more now that this is far from the truth and our rivers are in a drastic condition.

According to the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales levels of pollutants in the River Teifi is threatening the survival of otters – indeed the Teifi catchment area is one of the regions showing the greatest decline. They are now calling on landowners, water companies and environmental regulators to work together on the problem.

It has been confirmed that there were 1,900 separate discharges into the Teifi last year alone and Ceredigion County Council were forced to act due to dangerous phosphate levels in the river.

<https://www.cambrian-news.co.uk/news/environment/pollution-in-river-teifi-threatening-otter-populations-experts-say-610617>



And now for some good news. The Welsh Government has recognised that wildlife conservation is becoming more critical as time goes on and has announced a funding package of £11 million to support 26 projects. These will help various habitats – seas, forests and grasslands home to species such as curlew, bottlenosed dolphin and otters.

It is estimated that without such intervention fish like salmon could disappear from the rivers within 20 years with obvious knock-on effects for other wetland species. Habitats have become broken up by development such as roads and the Nature Networks Programme aims to create more wildlife corridors and enable species such as the salmon to migrate as they have always done.

This work can only be good for all wetland species including the otter.

<https://nation.cymru/news/welsh-govt-announces-11m-for-conservation-projects-to-help-wales-endangered-wildlife/?fbclid=IwAR2G5RQZr-kDQUmmnuLXmybbaJmNPZIdYfPgA1KjXtJmc6-k9oF7VC9cf0M>

North American River Otter scares off two coyotes

We have often mentioned about the strength and tenacity of otters as they defend themselves or even attack large predators such as alligators and jaguars. Recently the River Otter Ecology Project (<https://riverotterecology.org/>) got some amazing footage on their camera traps showing an otter standing up to not one but two coyotes which had discovered its holt! You can see the video at <https://www.whiskeyriff.com/2023/04/26/river-otter-defends-den-from-two-coyotes-in-california/>



Image - North American River Otters by Karen James

Farmer pays the price for destroying the riverside

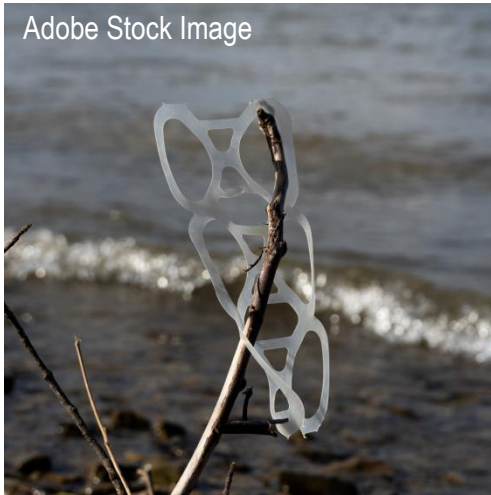
A farmer hired diggers to dredge the river and destroy trees over a mile long stretch of the River Lugg at a local beauty spot, near Leominster, in Hertfordshire. He has now been jailed for 12 months and ordered to pay £1.2 million in costs!

The area is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and one of the UK's most important salmon rivers and his actions will clearly have a devastating effect on the local wildlife, including otters. This is why Natural England used their powers as regulators to take the case to court and to warn others not to take such matters into their own hands.

The farmer, John Price, claimed he did this to prevent flooding of local homes and he has known the river all of his life. However, the Environment Agency say that his actions have made matters worse and the Judge hearing the case described it as "ecological vandalism on an industrial scale".

<https://www.aol.co.uk/news/farmer-hired-diggers-rip-trees-080002721.html>





Yet another otter dies due to someone's carelessness

A dead otter was found on the beach near Derrybeg in county Donegal, Ireland, and it appears that it died because a plastic ring for drinks cans got caught around its neck. The adult female otter was found by wildlife ranger David Ferguson with the plastic cut deep into her neck. Of course they do not know who dropped the ring and it is even possible that it washed ashore from a long way away.

At IOSF we have also had cases of otters being injured or killed with litter including fishing twine and cable ties. In Singapore some otters there have been found with fishing hooks in their mouth or foot.

So the message is still the same – always take your litter home.

<https://www.donegaldaily.com/2023/04/18/otter-found-dead-on-donegal-beach-had-plastic-beer-ring-around-neck/>

Differing attitudes to otters taking people's fish

We hear many accounts of people getting angry when a hungry otter takes fish out of their pond. We can understand their frustration, especially as some of these fish are very expensive. However it is the responsibility of all livestock owners to look after their stock, and that includes fish. Also these fish are not native, whereas otters are and if there was enough prey in the waterways they would not need to resort to raiding fish ponds.

So we were delighted to read an article about a woman who caught images of an otter helping itself to fish from her garden pond near Wilsden, in Yorkshire. She shared these images on Facebook and was horrified to find people calling the otter a pest! So she quickly deleted the posts.

She went on to say "I needed to remind people that the otter is protected and we live in a rural area and not a Disney theme park. If we don't want these attacks (on pond fish) then we have to ensure our waterways are well stocked and clean. Cottingley, Wilsden and other local becks are so polluted and full of fly-tipping. My idea (to post online) was amazement that such an elusive wild creature was in my garden and to warn pond owners with expensive carp not to be complacent and to protect their stock. In recent times we've had local badgers killed with dogs and a fox shot. People seem to like their wildlife on TV and not in their gardens."

We couldn't have put it better ourselves.

<https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/west-yorkshire-news/watch-elusive-creature-caught-bradford-26864653>

Photo of the Month

Our Image of the Month this time comes from Uganda where Tomer Ben-Yehuda and Alex Meyer captured this shot of a spotted-necked otter navigating its way out of the water!

If you would like to submit a photo for our Photo of the Month please send it to Ben@otter.org together with the credit for the photographer.

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



Become an IOSF Life Supporter

Our supporters are always valued by us as a crucial source of support for the work that we are doing, and those of you that become life supporters are highly appreciated.

For a one-off payment of £350 you can become a Life Supporter and give your long-term commitment to help secure a better future for otters in the UK and around the world.

We will send you a certificate showing your life supporter status and you will continue to receive full updates in our newsletters, on all of the work that we are doing.
<https://www.ottershop.co.uk/become-a-life-supporter-c2x9466694>

A LEGACY IS A GREAT WAY OF GIVING TO SOMETHING CLOSE TO YOUR HEART and every gift makes 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.

You can follow us on:



Give a Little Extra Help

YOU can raise **FREE** donations when you shop online...

It's simple and costs no more than what you spend:

Donate – one-off or regular


<https://www.giveasyoulive.com/charity/iosf>


<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/iosfund>


<https://www.thegivingmachine.co.uk/causes/international-otter-survival-fund/>


OR, scan and add our charity code 62575





<https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/donate?cid=630>


<https://donate.justgiving.com/donation-amount?uri=aHR0cHM6Ly9kb25hdGUtYXBpLmp1c3RnaXZpbmcuY29tLTJFwaS9kb25hdGlvbnMvZjZiMjIxODlyZyE5NGZkZjhlMGM4YWYzMDQzODYyYzU=>




<https://giveacar.co.uk/charities/international-otter-survival-fund/>




<https://www.charitycar.co.uk/international-otter-survival-fund>



Vehicle Disposal – yes, even your old vehicle can earn great donations whether it's scrap or auction (fees apply)



Annual Adoption Renewal Rates

UK and EEC Countries:

Adult: £24.00 per year

Child: £13.00 per year

Family: £34.00 per year

Life Membership (all countries): £350.00

All other countries:

Adult: £30.00 per year

Child: £15.00 per year

Family: £40.00 per year

Have you enjoyed reading this? Then please SHARE 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**.

International Otter Survival Fund
7 Black Park
Broadford
Isle of Skye IV49 9DE
Scotland

Email: enquiries@otter.org
Tel/Fax: ++(0)1471 822487



Charity Number SC003875

Join our IOSF mailing list. Click on this link:
<http://tinyurl.com/p3lrsmx>

www.otter.org

The International Otter Survival Fund
Working to Save the World's Otters

