



Otter News No. 115, August 2020

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- A New Way to Make the Pennies Count for Otters

Since the arrival of Covid 19 people are using less cash and rely on their cards more. So traditional collecting boxes, where people could donate loose change, are no longer effective. Nevertheless in these challenging times, these extra pennies can have a big impact.

Nowadays many people use an app for so many things and shopping online is far more popular. So there is now an app called **Pledjar**, which helps people to donate to their favourite charity – like IOSF.

With **Pledjar** you can follow our recent campaigns and give one-off donations with a click of a finger, without changing how you spend. You can securely connect your bank account and round-up your transactions passing on your 'spare change' to us.

Naturally, you will have questions about the security of payments like this but **Pledjar** uses open banking and AML/KYC screening to make sure it is safe. You may not know what this means but Open Banking exists within the banks established and highly secure technology platforms and provides a very secure way to transfer data. Name screening is one of the methods used for risk assessment of existing or potential customers of organisations under Anti-Money Laundering (AML) laws and Know Your Customer (KYC) procedures are a critical function to assess customer risk and a legal requirement.

The **Pledjar** model relies on small donations which all add up and enable us to make big impacts for otters. It is easy to arrange regular donations and round off transactions with the extra pennies going to IOSF. It even allows us to claim Gift Aid on your behalf.

All of this is done within one convenient and easy to use app and you can see more at https://youtu.be/zd7X_UVJlv0.

Please download the app and use code OSF001 when asked during sign up, so you can select IOSF as your charity of choice.

The links to sign up are:

Android: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.pledjar.app&hl=en_GB

iOS: <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/pledjar/id1504894760>



... so much.

Red Lists, Otter Surveys and Population Estimates

Recently the Mammal Society issued a Red List for UK mammals using the criteria set by IUCN, who publish the international Red List. So, of course, we looked at the section on otters. To be honest, this was quite shocking. Otters in Scotland and Wales are classed as “Vulnerable” and those in England are classed as “Least Concern”. Really?



Otter Spraint ©IOSF

National surveys are always based on finding spraint and yet it is impossible to give actual otter numbers using this. This was published by both Hans Kruuk and Jim Conroy (1987), and by IOSF’s Paul Yoxon (2014). An animal can spraint in many areas and so can be counted several times, giving a clear over-estimate. Sightings also cannot be used to give numbers as again the same animal can be recorded several times in different places as otters can have a very big home range. The “otter” may even turn out to be a mink. All these tell you is an

indication of distribution.

The only way to give accurate population figures is by DNA, and so far this hasn’t been done in many areas.

In the report they use both spraint and sightings to come up with populations and yet we know that these cannot give actual figures. Using this “data” they estimate otter numbers as 2,800 for England, 8,000 for Scotland and 900 for Wales, making a total of 11,700. The figures were then compared with those from 1995 which were based on spraint, and this was interpreted as a 49% increase. So two sets of figures are being compared, neither of which can be assumed to be even vaguely accurate and therefore it is not possible to make any comment about any population change. All they can say is that the distribution has changed and otters are being found in more areas.

There has certainly been some sort of increase in otter numbers but certainly not by the amount that the media is suggesting. They are being seen in new areas, including towns and cities, and they are also raiding more people’s fish ponds. We cannot argue with that fact. However, how much of that is due to the reduction in food availability driving them into these new environments. There is no mention of the status of food availability in the report and this is obviously a limiting factor for all species.

One of the criteria for assessing Red List status is habitat status i.e. is it decreasing, increasing or stable? In this report it describes the habitat status as “stable” and yet we all know how much habitat is being lost for construction of housing, roads and HS2.



Eurasian otter ©Edward Lewis

There is also far more traffic on the roads generally causing extra risk to otters – indeed we have had two dead otters brought to us in the past two days by our postie. This is clearly related to the rise in tourist traffic now that restrictions have been reduced.

This gives a very false impression of the status of otters and creates a dangerous situation whereby people in England will think that their otters are doing fine and nothing is needed to provide further protection. This is far from the case.

We have many more concerns about the report and have written to the Mammal Society about it. If you would like to see the technical report yourself go to <https://www.mammal.org.uk/science-research/mammal-review-2018-technical-summary/>)

Otter Watch

Following on from that, we want to increase our database of accurate otter sightings. We have been recording biological data including otters since before IOSF actually started and have been a member of the Highland Biological Recording Group (www.hbrg.org.uk) since it was founded in 1987.

As we have said, this doesn't give numbers but it enables us to get a better picture of distribution and obtain valuable information on behaviour, diet and even health. You will have seen the reports on the Bute otter with glaucoma and we are delighted to say that John Williams has just given us an update to say that the cub is still doing well. We have also just received a report of an otter with a badly damaged ear. In this case too the animal seems to be feeding well and so no steps need to be taken to try and catch it in order to treat the wound but the animal will be monitored carefully.



OTTER WATCH UK
HELP US IN OUR NATIONAL SURVEY OF OTTERS

SEND US YOUR SIGHTINGS TO
enquiries@otter.org
OR
https://otter.org/Public/AboutOtters_OtterWatch.aspx


IOSF 
INTERNATIONAL OTTER SURVIVAL FUND
www.iosf.org

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IF YOU FIND AN INJURED OR YOUNG OTTER YOU THINK MAY BE ABANDONED. CONTACT US IMMEDIATELY AT
01471 822 487

Reports of females with cubs give us more information on breeding and any possible seasonality. Are otters venturing into urban areas or raiding fish ponds more at certain times of the year, perhaps when food is more scarce? Are they taking more unusual types of prey? All of this provides more insight into how these animals are behaving.

We have always had a page on our website for these records (https://otter.org/Public/AboutOtters_OtterWatch.aspx) and we would encourage you to submit your records with as much detail as possible. Of course, sometimes sightings turn out to be mink, but we do check to make sure.

It is very important that records are treated carefully as we don't want to create disturbance for the otters when people find out where they are. So you can rest assured that your detailed records will not be published, although they will be forwarded to the nearest bona fide biological recording centre.

We have designed a new poster (left) which you can download at https://otter.org/Public/AboutOtters_OtterWatch.aspx.

With the current Covid situation many of the locations where we would have displayed such posters, such as libraries, remain closed. So we would also be grateful if you could send them on to others who may be interested and post them where you can. If you need supplies of hard copies then please contact us at enquiries@otter.org

We want as many people as possible to be involved and thank you for helping us to learn even more about these fascinating animals. And remember although Otter Watch is largely for UK, we do welcome records from all over the world.

Otters Traded for Pets in South America

Mi Mundo Verde .L, recently put up a post on Facebook concerning a young neotropical otter which had been found at Coatzacoalcos Veracruz, Mexico. Apparently *“It was in the rubble but it didn't take long for fishermen to grab and sell it.”*



Of course we were very worried about this as we have heard of cases of giant otters being sold as pets too. Focus on the pet trade is mostly on Asia where it is a particularly severe problem, but there is no doubt that it is taking place in other parts of the world.

In this case the story has a happy ending as Mi Mundo Verde had checked up on the otter and found that it had not been taken for sale or any other illegal purpose. In fact it was in good condition and in the care of Club de Pesca Coatzacoalcos, under the guidance of SEMARNAT and the Coatzacoalcos Environmental Surveillance Committee. They hope it could be reunited with its mother but if this isn't possible, then it will certainly be cared for properly and hopefully released when old enough.

Thanks to Juan Antonio Lule Matias of Mi Mundo Verde for the use of the photos.

Although things have worked well for this little cub it just reminds us that we must always be vigilant for any possible trade in otters, no matter where it is. So if you are concerned that this may be taking place do please pass on the information (enquiries@otter.org) so that we can investigate further.

Canada – Vancouver Island Otter cubs

Two young North American River Otter cubs have been rescued on Vancouver Island, British Columbia by Wild ARC who care for wildlife from across the area. The two cubs, one from Victoria, B.C.'s capital, and one from Sooke, are now in the care of Wild ARC and doing well. You can even watch a video of the two cheeky chappies -

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3180928238657870&extid=0phFRcQCZCPi16nQ>



Photo: WildARC

Wild ARC are still trying to raise funds to support the care for one of the little otters that will see the pair eventually released in the Spring time.

http://support.sPCA.bc.ca/site/TR?px=2453378&fr_id=2100&pg=personal&utm_source=branch&utm_medium=emergency&utm_campaign=medicalemergency&utm_term=medicalemergency&ga=2.196319276.1695430107.1598285161-1674818913.1596845446

AND NEWS FROM CANADA

Shelanne and her otters in Canada are doing well. She now has four cubs: Tahsis, a female, was only about 10 days old when she was brought in and her name means "gateway"; Sooke, a male, was the grand old age of 9 weeks when found and he is named after the stickleback fish found at the river mouth; Ucluelet is another female named after a west coast village meaning "safe landing place"; and Jabber was brought in from another rehab centre and is a right bossy lady!

The cubs seem to have split into two groups: the tiny one (Tahsis) and Jabber love each other. Jabber was rather too friendly when she first arrived but she is now improving.

Sooke and Ucluelet are inseparable as the male hasn't left her side since they were introduced. They won't go near anyone which is great.

WildARC is now looking at building a bigger otter pool and enclosure and funds which IOSF supporters have donated will be put towards this.

Exploring

If you would like to donate towards the running costs of the Hospital please send your cheques marked "Hospital" on the back. Alternatively if you would like to donate specifically for the Canadian otters just mark the cheque "Canada"



Sooke
Tahsis

5

After being in touch with Wild ARC we were reminded of another little otter, also named "Sooke", that we had helped with way back in 2004. Nothing like a little blast from the past!

It is great to be back in touch with old friends and we would like to thank them for looking after the otters, among other wildlife, in the area.

News from The Sanctuary

There has been quite a bit of activity in the hospital recently.

The big news is the arrival of little **Effie** (right) who was found in Pefferside Park, in Dingwall. A Belgian lady who had just moved there was walking her dogs when one, appropriately called Skye, found the tiny cub. She wisely took the dogs home and checked what she should do and phoned the SSPCA. They collected the cub and then contacted us to arrange for her transfer here.



She has really kept us on our toes. Initially she was



doing very well but then she went off her food and developed diarrhoea, so she went straight to the vet. He diagnosed gut parasites and even after her first dose of medication there was an improvement. Now she is eating again and is starting to get a little feistier, but we are watching very closely to make sure she keeps on the right track. When a small animal starts to lose weight they can very quickly develop a serious problem.

Bealltinn (left) was moved to an enclosure on the croft which is much bigger and secluded. She was still not wary of us and when we went to feed she would come right up to us showing no fear. This is not a good sign for potential release. However, when we went to catch her in the morning for her move she was having none of it and led us a merry dance,

which was much more encouraging. When we went to check in the afternoon there was no

sign of her but the vegetation in the pen is very high just now and she had so many places to hide. Next morning there she was but far more cautious of us. Hopefully this will continue and we will soon have an otter which will be wild and able to be released.

The other three are being their usual selves. Sparky always lives up to his name and will sometimes “swear” at you in otter language if we aren’t quick enough to leave the food. When the weather has been warmer he was taking his fish up near the pool to eat rather than retreating into his sleeping box.



Otto and Harrie (above) are far messier than Sparky, so we regularly have to clean their sleeping box of the stinky hay – not a pleasant job. But the fun comes when we watch in the webcam how they rearrange their fresh hay to exactly how they want it. It is important that we don’t take every bit out as smell is so important to the otters and they need to know that it is THEIR bed.



The other news is that our gorgeous little stoats which came in at the beginning of July are now back in the wild. I did wonder how I was going to catch them as they are so fast, but they were hiding in their bed and I could just scoop up the whole lot and put it in the box. Lovely to see them go (left).

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.

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

UK taxpayers:

Cubs Abroad

An update from Indonesia (Photos ©SUMECO)

Sam, Kiki and Ben, the otters being cared for by the Sumatra EcoProject (SUMECO), are doing really well. Sam, the Eurasian otter, has now been separated from Kiki and Ben, the two Asian small-clawed otters, to continue their development back to the wild.

In fact, Bobi, who runs SUMECO, has said that "step by step" Kiki and Ben (below) are getting closer to their release. The two otters are taking time to acclimatise themselves to their natural surroundings and have been fishing in local lakes! SUMECO are having to pay for each fish the duo are catching too - to ensure no conflict with the local communities.



Sam, the Eurasian otter (left), is a slightly different case.

Sam is the first documented Eurasian otter in a long time on the island and it is important that they can find the area from which she came for the release. Until this is found, which may take some time given current restrictions, we are not sure of her release date.

We would like to offer a huge thank you to SUMECO's tireless work for the otters, and other species, in their attempts to reduce trade across their area.



If you would like to support Bobi and his work with the otters you can make a donation online at www.ottershop.co.uk - select Other and put "Indonesia" in "Add a note to your order" at cart, or send a cheque marked "Indonesia" on the back.

And from the Philippines (photo ©Diana J Limjoco)

Many of you will remember Diana Limjoco from the Philippines and the amazing way she reared three tiny Asian small-clawed otters which arrived still with their eyes closed and their grey birth fur. This was back in 2013. Sadly one of the otters later died but Uma and Oshka have thrived. The original plan was for them to be released back to the wild but this proved impossible with the level of hunting and poaching in the area. So they have remained with Diana although Uma and Oshka no longer get on together so they have to be kept apart.

A couple of weeks ago Diana woke up to find that Oshka was paralysed in her back legs. The



vet took x-rays and various tests and it appeared that it wasn't an infection, there was nothing broken and there was no pain. Years ago we had had an otter in care which had been hit by a car and suffered radial paralysis caused by the knock but there was nothing else wrong. This otter recovered very quickly and three weeks later was back in the wild. We hoped that maybe Oshka had fallen somehow and the paralysis was caused in a similar way. We contacted the vet Romain Pizzi, who has done a lot of work with otters, including at

Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre in Cambodia, and also our friend Tony Nevin of Zooost, who specialises in animal osteopathy, and treats many wild species. Both gave their expert advice which was passed on to Diana.

Of course, Diana gave her the best possible attention, massaging her back legs and giving her hydrotherapy in her pool. Oshka loved this and would encourage more massaging when they stopped! Slowly things began to improve. First there was movement in her tail, and then she began to kick her back legs a bit so that she could climb out of the pool herself. Then she started to move her right leg and finally her left.

Now she is more or less back to her normal feisty self. Naturally they have looked carefully to see where she could have fallen but as Diana said "accidents do happen". Diana had been so worried that she might lose her but otters are resilient animals and are always ready to surprise us.

So, thanks to Diana and her helpers for their wonderful care again and also to Romain and Tony, for their help and advice.

Sea Otters Saving Seagrass

We all know the importance of a balanced ecosystem and how every species plays its part in maintaining this. Recent studies have shown the role played by sea otters in the complex ecosystem of Elkhorn Slough.



Previous studies had found that agricultural run-offs, and more specifically excess fertilizer and nutrients, had led to an increase in algae, which was killing the seagrass. However, in 2010, researchers discovered that the seagrass had started to thrive once again, and they were curious about the reason for this?

Brent Hughes, a researcher, set out to discover why there has been this sudden up-turn in the situation for the seagrass. He studied various possible factors, including water temperature and pollution, but couldn't find the reason. That was, until local guide, Yohn Gideon, who had been asking his guests to monitor otter



numbers since 1995, offered him his data. While Hughes had often seen sea otters during his studies, he had never paid much attention to them, until now!

So how were the otters saving the seagrass? Well, sea otters weigh up to 45kg and have a high-metabolic rate, so they have to eat a lot. The otters were feasting on crabs within the area, meaning there were less crabs to eat California sea hares, a sea slug, that *lightbulb moment*, eat the algae. So less crabs, meant more sea hares, and therefore less algae – meaning the sea grass was able to thrive!

Now, thanks to the presence of otters, Elkhorn Slough has some of the healthiest seagrass anywhere on the Pacific Coast. In fact, since otters re-inhabited the area, the seagrass has expanded by **600%**.

This study once again shows how important otters are to their habitats and trophic cascades. Their presence keeps everything in balance and ensures that all species can survive and ecosystems remain healthy!

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/aug/14/natures-furry-engineers-sea-otters-in-california-estuaries-surprise-scientists-aoe>



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.



Team Otter

Chloe Shanks, the young girl who set herself an amazing challenge of running a half marathon before she turned 12, and raise money for otters at the same time, visited Broadford and IOSF during August. Chloe, and her family, had taken the opportunity to sail up the west coast of Scotland on her Grandad's boat!

We were delighted to hear that as part of her trip they were going to visit Broadford, the home of IOSF. Education officer, Ben, met with Chloe and her family and heard all about their trip. They had certainly had good weather for it and had been lucky enough to spot species such as dolphins, basking sharks and, of course, an otter, all from the boat!

During the morning we discussed all things otters and took Chloe, and her sister Effie, to look for otter signs so that they could go and investigate otters in the area, when they get home.



Chloe managed to raise the fantastic sum of £813 - considerably more than her target of £250. Some has been sent to Mexico to help with the care of the two Neotropical otter cubs and some is being used for our otters here at the sanctuary on Skye.

We would, once again, like to thank Chloe for her amazing efforts – she really made a difference!

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.

DR. PAUL'S BLOG

The world has been shaken by the current pandemic. There is no-one who hasn't been affected by it in some way or another.

IOSF's Head of Operations, Dr Paul Yoxon, has written his latest blog in relation to this and how it is ESSENTIAL that we learn from it and move forward as a whole.

It has been well-documented that the pandemic is believed to have originated from wildlife markets in Asia and he asks the question "When will the next pandemic occur?"

It is essential that we, as a whole, learn from our mistakes and stop the wildlife trade. If the world can't do it for the animals, at least do it for ourselves.

You can read Dr Paul's full blog here -

<https://paulyoxonblog.wordpress.com/author/pauliosf2016/>

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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

Enjoy a day out with IOSF looking for otters on the beautiful Isle of Skye. Learn about their behaviour and how to spot them.

<https://ottershop.co.uk/products/iosf-otter-watching-day>



Permission to Kill Otters in Austria Refused

You will remember that the Austrian authorities gave permission for 40 otters to be killed in 2018 and the cull was to be extended in 2019.

Then this year the Hallein Fisheries Association sought permission to “remove” four otters and by this they meant by killing them. However, the good news is that it has just been announced that this has been denied and instead they have to build fences. Killing the otters doesn’t provide a permanent solution as they can simply be replaced by other animals whereas if they build an otter-proof fence it removes the problem. And the authority agreed with this and said “it is the mildest, most appropriate and, above all, most sustainable means.” So now the Hallein Fisheries Association are planning to do this.

It clearly will be the best solution as we have argued since the beginning. All people have a responsibility to protect their own possessions, be it fish, shop goods or even in your own home. We can’t moan that someone has taken our things if we leave the door open for others to wander in and help themselves. It is the same with the fisheries issue – by not protecting their stock with fences they cannot blame otters for coming in for a free meal.



There have been various comments and discussions about this with people arguing that there are too many otters, that they will eat all the fish and all ground-nesting birds that they will end up with the whole Austrian countryside covered in fences. Someone actually said that there are mountain streams where there are no otters and no fish either – well if that is the case then the otters can’t have eaten them all! So much over-reaction and lack of understanding of ecology and the interaction of species.

We are delighted that this decision has been taken and hopefully it will form a precedent which can be used in future calls for a cull.

The Good and The Bad from The USA

First the good – a positive attitude on a thriving otter population in North Carolina

The headline read “*Studies show North Carolina’s river otters are thriving, and that’s good*

news for all of us.” And it continued “*The otters play a seminal role in determining the health of a river system. N.C. State University researchers tested hundreds of river otters throughout the state for diseases and metal accumulation. What they found could be good news for humans.*” A real pleasure to see such a positive attitude and a realisation of the otter’s role in our environment.



In the article it looks at two studies which examined the health of otters related to accumulation of heavy metals and disease. The researcher, DePerno said that levels of metals

were really low and there appeared to be little disease in the otters, which is all good news.

And yet there is a statewide warning against eating fish containing mercury and that many water bodies contain high levels of mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), hexavalent chromium, dioxins and arsenic. Of course, if the otters are eating the fish this will accumulate in their bodies and as this did not show up it suggests the ecosystem is actually healthy.

For the study they examined 317 otters taken by trappers from 2009-2016 and looked for the concentrations of arsenic, cadmium, calcium, cobalt, copper, iron, lead, magnesium, manganese, mercury, molybdenum, selenium, thallium and zinc in liver and kidney samples. Some of these occur naturally and are actually important for our health but cadmium, lead and mercury are a worry. Although they did find higher levels of mercury in the Lower Pee Dee and Cape Fear, none were at a toxic level.

In the disease study they looked at *Leptospira*, *Parvovirus* and *Toxoplasma* in 220 trapped otters from 2014-2016. *Leptospira* was found in less than 1% of otters but it is lethal to them. *Parvovirus* was found in 19% of the otters and domestic pets are often vaccinated against this. *Toxoplasma gondii* was found in 24% of otters and it is common in cats and so its presence in otters often associated with the poor disposal of cat litter.

DePerno summed it up by saying *"These diseases have been in river otters, and they're not new. They're not novel diseases. The diseases, often spread by domesticated animals, wind up in the rivers partly through stormwater runoff. Everything runs to the rivers. Everything on the landscape ends up in the water, and that is where otters live and eat. That is why they are an excellent species to investigate pathogens and diseases."*

<https://www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2020/08/27/studies-show-north-carolinas-river-otters-are-thriving-and-thats-good-news-for-all-of-us/>

... and the bad - South Dakota

South Dakota, one of the few states in North America that doesn't allow trapping of otters, is considering reversing that decision. South Dakota's river otters were listed as threatened in 1978 and there would be the occasional sighting but they were never confirmed. Major conservation efforts were put in place when 35 individuals were released back in to the wild by state authorities around 1998 and 1999. Since then, these individuals, as well as otters migrating from other areas have seen a major upturn in populations which as we know is great for all species and ecosystems – something that should be celebrated.



Otter Family ©J Scott Shannon

The plans to reinstate any trapping season are based on some very flawed data. It states that there have been 50 sightings of otters, but that doesn't mean it was 50 individual otters – the same otter could have been seen several times. Also, there are no confirmed estimates of populations, so any plans to introduce a trapping season cannot be claimed to be sustainable.

The return of North American river otters to the state is undoubtedly a "conservation success story". However, populations are still vulnerable and it is still only a **potential**

success story, and there should not be any consideration of a trapping season.

IOSF continues to contest the trapping of otters and have written to the South Dakota Game Fish & Parks Commission to contest any decision to remove the species protective status and create a trapping season.

<https://eu.argusleader.com/story/news/2020/08/06/gf-p-plan-would-allow-river-otters-trapped-south-dakota/3312146001/>

Edinburgh Otters

You may have read in our latest Journal

(https://otter.org/documents/journals/IOSF_Journal_Vol6_2020.pdf) that Barbara Macfarlane has been doing a study of the diet and distribution of the otters in the Water of Leith in Edinburgh. This was for her MSc dissertation and we have just heard that she obtained a distinction for her study. We were delighted to be able to help Barbara with her studies and she will be writing a paper for next year's Journal with the full results of her studies. Many congratulations Barbara.

Barbara also received a lot of help from Charlotte Neary of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust. The Trust is the first river charity to be established in Scotland and work as guardians of the Water of Leith. Their aim is to raise the profile of this key environmental asset, educating and inspiring people to enjoy the Water of Leith and promote community action to help the river and its wildlife, including the otters.



Charlotte had planned to run the London Marathon in aid of the Trust but obviously this has been cancelled. So instead she is running the whole of the river Leith – 28 miles! Her Bog to Beach run will take place on 4 October and if you would like to donate to her cause go to <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/charlotterunsamarathon>

And while we are talking about otters in Edinburgh, footage was posted on Thursday morning of an otter in the water at Dunsapie Loch, on the east side of Holyrood Park. The film was taken by Jim Slaven during his early morning run.

<https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/people/amazing-footage-shows-cute-otter-playing-and-swimming-holyrood-park-loch-2954902>

Two Great Otter Education Videos India



This was posted recently on Facebook by Gopakumar Menon – the post says it all.

"In just a minute and a half, this lovely little film tells you the story of otters in India.

There's something about otters that I do not think I will ever get over (and guess it goes for you too!). Is it their play and the

aura of fun that seems to envelope them or is it their skill and dexterity in water? Or is it that dog-on-belly waddle when they are on land? Or their continuous, chirpy chatter? All of them and a thousand other reasons?

Watch this and be enchanted...and do rewind at the 37th second to see a dive into a raging

stream that had me enthralled."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=prqVUa_vkOE&feature=youtu.be&mc_cid=0fc190ccc3&mc_eid=5e1ac0fb98&fbclid=IwAR2jN9pv67oM98x34eRmsvzoT2lui1hlf7jcSwkFFIAujnhDYWnP8Tmd0Xk

Argentina

The Southern river otter is known locally as the Huillín, and its distribution is confined to the southern Andes region of Chile and Argentina. The area has unique landscapes and a documentary has been prepared by Timbó films for Fundación Biodiversidad Argentina, for its cycle "Biodiversidad en Acción". This shows the efforts of biologists to learn about and conserve this fascinating carnivore of the Patagonian fauna.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cA1QYxXQ5TQ>

Thank You to...

everyone who has continued to support us through these difficult times.

We also thank the Alice Noakes Memorial Trust.

We can't do it without you.

News in Brief

Eurasian Otters in China

Eurasian otters have been caught on camera for the first time in northwest China! The otters were snapped at Sanjiangyuan National Park, which is the source of three rivers - the mighty Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers. The presence of the otters shows that a healthy ecosystem is present and the source of three major Asian watersheds is clean and healthy.

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-08-07/Meet-the-Eurasian-otter-family-in-Sanjiangyuan-in-NW-China-SL0yL6cOQ0/index.html>

Sharks and otters

Great white sharks, the world's most-feared and notorious marine animal, are having a detrimental effect on sea otter populations off the Californian coast. More and more sea otter carcasses are being found that are a result of shark attacks, leaving scientists baffled as to why.

Great white sharks are notorious predators and for them to be attacking smaller animals is not rare, given their size and their need for prey. However, the large fish doesn't like otters and very rarely actually eats them – so why are they attacking them?

Scientists are unsure of the actual reason but believe it may be down to a case of mistaken identity. Sharks are famous for attacks on prey by mistake – hence any attack on humans. They see a silhouette that resembles seals, their common prey, and attack, only to be left disappointed.

Another reason could be due to the fact that major efforts have been put in place for the conservation of both great whites and otters, and the increased population has led to increased meetings between the two species.

<https://meaww.com/shark-week-2020-great-white-serial-killer-extinction-otters-dead-california>

Otter in Coventry, UK

An otter has been spotted in the centre of Coventry, a very unusual sight. Otters in the UK seem to be popping up in strange places and urban areas where they may not have been before, after reporting of otters in cities such as York and Edinburgh.

It is always great to see otters anyway and amazing to see such a shy, elusive creature in such a highly-populated area, but why is it happening? It could be for one of two reasons: firstly, and what we hope is the reason, that otters are doing better and wetland habitats in the area are much cleaner allowing them to reside there; or secondly the fact that less prey is leading to them having to travel further and to other areas to get food. Unfortunately, as you will have read in the article on Red Lists, we suspect it is the latter.

<https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/watch-otter-spotted-coventry-city-18749029>

Otters found in contaminated river in Mexico

Our friend, Pablo Hernandez, recently shared a Facebook post on the page of Otters of Latin America, which is quite worrying. Apparently two neotropical otters had been photographed by Professor César Lezama Garcia in a river in Huatusco in Veracruz even though the river is known to be highly contaminated. Cesar Lezama is dedicated to nature and conservation and so he was very surprised to see the otters in that situation. The otters were swimming in the foam of detergent and it is hoped that the authorities will examine the system for dealing with contaminated waste which is broken in places allowing the pollutants into the water.

Pollution is a big problem for otters in Mexico with waste coming from industrial, domestic and agricultural sources. Although the otters in Huatusco are surviving just now, this is a major threat to their future survival.

African clawless otter in Capetown

Local residents, Amy and Bremner Bruwer, were on their way to Smitswinkel Bay when they spotted an African clawless otter on the main road just past a place called Simon's Town. At first it came close to them but then it ran back into the sea and swam off. Amy said "The otter stayed in front of us for about three minutes or so. It was about one-metre away from us. Seemed friendly but we didn't know if it would hurt us if it came too close. It was an extremely special encounter." They were certainly very wise not to try and approach even closer to the otter and just let it go off when it was ready.

<https://www.capetownetc.com/cape-town/cape-clawless-otter-spotted-in-simons-town/>

Coming Events

Thursday 1 October.: 7.15 for 7.30 start. Berkshire Mammal Group.

Talk by IOSF's Grace Yoxon on "Otters, Ecology and Conservation".

This will be an online meeting and non-members should email berksmammals@gmail.com.

The online event is free but membership of the Group is £8 standard, £5 concessions.

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

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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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