



## Otter News No. 127, December 2021

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

[Please share our news](#)

### IOSF Otter Oscars



Once again, IOSF has been overwhelmed by the number of nominations (and superb otter work) that has been done over the last year and the panel had tough decisions to make in all of the categories. Despite this, the committee came to a decision and we are delighted to announce the following IOSF Otter Oscar winners for 2021:

**Young Person – Prentice Cunningham, Scotland.** At the Youth Climate Film Awards, a video produced by Prentice and his friends, won a prize and they managed to bring the video, and the importance of otters, to a wider audience.

**Community Achievement - ECO-Earth Crusaders Organisation, India.** The ECO-Earth Crusaders team managed to find a compensation scheme for fishermen's nets to reduce any potential conflict. They have also produced a book called "Community-Based Conservation of Smooth-Coated Otter at Nuanai"

**Group or Organisation - Cork Nature Network, Ireland.** This project raised the profile of otters across Ireland. They set up five otter trails and carried out surveys looking at diet, presence and habitat. They created a film on their native Cork otters and over 500 people attend the "premiere". Now their "blueprint" is to be adopted by other areas and other cities.

**Research – Omar Al-Sheikhly, Iraq.** Omar is a researcher and wildlife ecologist, at the University of Baghdad. He is a passionate conservationist and has spent much time studying "Maxwell's Otter", a subspecies of the Smooth-coated otter that only habituates Iraq and Iran. He has published several papers in the IOSF Otter Journal, including a paper in the latest 2021 issue on "ART AS A CONSERVATION TOOL IN THE MESOPOTAMIAN MARSHES, SOUTHERN IRAQ, USING MAXWELL'S OTTER (*Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli*) AS AN EXAMPLE". This unique project involved training a number of wildlife photographers to document wildlife sightings to help with monitoring and identify otter species.

### Photography/Artwork – Stephane Raimond, France

Stephane won this award for his amazing picture of an underwater otter (see below). Once a fish farmer, Stephane developed a passion for otters that inhabited his fish farm. In 2010, Stephane gave up fish farming and instead found ways and protocols to help fish farms protect their fish but also have thriving otter populations. He regularly studies the otters and their behaviour at his home where he and the otters peacefully reside alongside each other.





### Special Award – Rita Chapman, Democratic Republic of Congo/USA

In 2010 Rita and her husband Glen received a tiny Congo Clawless otter cub which they named Mazu. Mazu, rose to stardom and even Government officials came just to see this fascinating creature, whose name and face became a catalyst for change. People no longer saw otters as bushmeat or for poaching, and started to care and protect them.

Since then Rita has cared for many otters including other Congo Clawless, and more recently, Mbu, the Spotted-necked otter. The Kikongo Otter Sanctuary was formed and along with her loyal Congolese helpers, Delphin and Sico, they cared for various otters over the years and helped them return to the wild.

The impact of Rita’s work in D.R. Congo and Kikongo will be timeless and her actions have helped otters be seen in a new light across the nation. Now that she has retired back to USA she is leaving these beautiful otters behind, safe in the knowledge, that the local people, led by Delphin and Sico, truly care about them now.

### **Congratulations to all of the winners.**

We will post photos of them all with their awards in due course.

### News from The Sanctuary

**Our tiny Storm is now a big Storm! It always amazes us how quickly they grow.** He is now eating two-three whole fish per day and we have just moved him up to a croft pen next door to Holly. At first they both ran parallel to each other on either side of the fence curious about the



Holly

other. Then we left them to feed Bealltainn and as we came back down could hear them having a good argument through the fence.

Bealltainn is still much the same, though some storms in Skye



Storm, enroute to his new pen and neighbour. Photo: Astrid Cramer







have seen her return to her sleeping box praying for nicer weather when she can head back out. She is eating well and filling her sleeping box with her own bedding but we still have reservations over her ability to be released.



**Bealltinn - pretending to hide!**

Recently, we received another cub from Mellon Charles on Scotland's North West coast near to Aultbea. This is a real coincidence, as you may remember that Beatha came from there – In fact the new cub appeared at the door of the couple who found Beatha there in December 2017. Aeris and Beatha were both released nearby and so it is actually possible that this new cub is the offspring of one of them. But, we will never know. Thanks to Donna, in Gairloch, we received this little otter and all seemed to be going really well, until a sudden decline which led to its death. We were perplexed as everything seemed to be going so well, but thanks to the staff at the Scottish Rural College, who conduct our post mortems, it was found that the little otter had cardiac issues and there is little we could have done. More tests are being carried out so we are eagerly awaiting any results.

It's a sad end for the little otter, and given Holly's sisters, who faced similar issues, it is a little concerning for future otters!

The buzzards are all back in the wild. Last month we reported how one buzzard had replaced another, but the second buzzard is also now back in its wild home. It took a while to start eating but once ready, it took just seconds before it took off and flew back into its habitat!

***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](http://www.ottershop.co.uk)***

***Another way you help the otters is through our Amazon Wish List ([https://otter.org/Public/HelpUs\\_WishList.aspx](https://otter.org/Public/HelpUs_WishList.aspx)). These include items which we use regularly such as Hibiscrub, protective gloves, stationery, etc.***

## Otter Shop Product of the Month

[www.ottershop.co.uk](http://www.ottershop.co.uk)

Our perennial favourite, otter adoption gift box is selling well – look out for the new letterbox option! We have a great selection of soft toys too, as well as otterly lovely items for your home.





### 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 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](http://otter.org/Public/HelpUs_Legacy.aspx) will take you to our dedicated web page concerning making a Legacy.



### Team Otter

Both of our Team Otter clubs have been busy over the last short while.

You may already know about the crisp packet campaign that was led by the high school group which encouraged people from around the island to drop empty crisp packets to us. These were then sorted and sent to the "Iron Man" to be made into survival blankets to help the homeless through Christmas and the cold winter months.

Helped by the Primary School group, and collection stations at places such as Broadford Co-op, surgery and Primary School, Kyle Pharmacy and An Crubh, we managed to gather a massive amount of packets. Cut and cleaned we sent them down to the Iron Man for his amazing campaign. Miley Porritt is 23 and spent five years living rough and in a YMCA hostel before he could get his own flat in October. He confessed to having two loves – eating crisps and ironing! So he devised a method where 150 crisp packets can be ironed and joined to form a sleeping bag liner as the foil from the packets reflects the body heat back to the person to keep them warm. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-54888102>



Furthermore, the High School group has finished its Team Seas poster which will go into Broadford Co-op to help raise money and reduce ocean plastic. I think you can agree that the poster (left) looks great and the kids have done a great job! <https://teamseas.org/>

To finish, before Christmas, we held a big End of Year Quiz with a quick fire round, picture quiz and sound quiz. The primary school quiz was won by Oscar, Struan and Koen; while the high school (joined by the eldest of the primary school children, P7s) was won by John and Ruairidh!

**For more information on Team Otter, check out our website ([www.loveotters.org](http://www.loveotters.org)) or Facebook.**

**If you are interested in forming your own Team Otter Club contact [Ben@otter.org](mailto:Ben@otter.org)**







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*

## Thank You...

We'd like to thank you all for your continued support over the past 12 months. It has not been an easy time and yet again, we are very much encouraged by your generosity.

We would also like to thank the following for their support during December: Sea Changers Trust, Henry C Hoare Charitable Trust, ABC Foundation and The Russell Trust.

***We can't do it without you.***

## Otters in Singapore

**Populations of the famous otters in Singapore have almost doubled within the last four years and there is always a lot in the media about their antics.** One of the nation's otter experts and friend of IOSF, Sivasothi, dubbed Otterman, has stated that although otters have increased the population is still quite low. Singapore has made a lot of effort to become a greener place and the local otters are one of the species to have benefitted massively from this.

Recently there was a lot of publicity about an incident where an individual was attacked by the otters – of course there was a lot of exaggeration in the media such as “a pack of 20 otters”!! As with any incident like this, there are calls for a cull of the otters that are a famous part of Singapore's landscape and as Sivasothi stated “Why is culling the first word people think about?”

Instead, it is important for people to learn to co-exist with the otters. They must realise that although these particular otters may be relatively comfortable around humans they are still wild animals and we must maintain a safe distance, both for us, and the otters. As the Executive Director of SPCA, Aarthi Sankar, said “admire from afar and with respect”. This goes for any otter encounter, or any wildlife encounter for that matter, not just the otters in Singapore.

Otters will generally not attack but will defend themselves when they feel scared or stressed. It is also important to remember that it is us who are encroaching on their habitat and not vice versa. The YouTube link below gives more information on this.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Egkbq8x1OoQ>

<https://www.todayonline.com/minute/otter-population-sharply-still-manageable-say-experts-who-urge-public-learn-co-exist-them-1767541>



Smooth-coated otter. Photo: Try Sitheng

**Otter bravery?** Still in Singapore, there was a recent report of a confident otter family taking on a crocodile! We have shown you various occasions where otters have taken to annoying bigger and stronger species, such as





caiman, jaguar and tigers. In this link you can see pictures of two otters “picking on” a crocodile in Singapore. Brave otters!

[https://sg.style.yahoo.com/otters-around-singapore-otter-fights-crocodile-and-other-sightings-022623130.html?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xILmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAAAyCGMOB2zWQbQPmUGViVOEAAq01cEnC6NEJ8iYDVFP\\_sLiXijzawUuyw5kgNHr8AadVazDiKE9ws2HcCt0o5ZvpXlOdt0kXCCYRJ\\_6hLsXqQxD3Blr\\_0aUeGo2sLyC2hzfWkD3ahiL9CPNxlTOA5p4AajCXGhSYpWK98E5a\\_-](https://sg.style.yahoo.com/otters-around-singapore-otter-fights-crocodile-and-other-sightings-022623130.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xILmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAAyCGMOB2zWQbQPmUGViVOEAAq01cEnC6NEJ8iYDVFP_sLiXijzawUuyw5kgNHr8AadVazDiKE9ws2HcCt0o5ZvpXlOdt0kXCCYRJ_6hLsXqQxD3Blr_0aUeGo2sLyC2hzfWkD3ahiL9CPNxlTOA5p4AajCXGhSYpWK98E5a_-)

And it is not just big wild creatures such as crocodiles which otters may encounter. Sometimes it is animals we generally regard as more friendly – such as domestic dogs. However, when dogs become feral and form a pack they can attack and in the video included in the article below a lone otter is surrounded by a gang of feral dogs in a canal in Singapore. The otter tries to defend itself by circling and lunging at the dogs which come too close but it does appear to get bitten a few times. Eventually someone throws some stones towards the dogs which frightens them away and the otter makes its getaway. Fortunately it doesn't seem to have any serious bite wounds.

<https://stomp.straitstimes.com/singapore-seen/wild-dogs-gang-up-on-lone-otter-in-canal-showdown>

We have been aware of dog attacks in other countries, including in the UK, and cubs are obviously vulnerable even to a single dog. Of course, we all love our pet dogs, but each one of us has a responsibility to keep it under control so that it is not a threat to otters and other wildlife, and also to farm animals such as sheep.

### Update from Phnom Tamao, Cambodia (Photo: Phnom Tamao)

**In September, the Wildlife Rapid Rescue Team (WRRT) at Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Center managed to obtain a search warrant for a suspected trader's premises. Joined by various authorities, including the local police, a search was made on the trader's house. They found a variety of illegal wildlife items such as otter furs, porcupine bones and bear canines. Due to the severity of the case, the offender now faces 1-5 years in prison and/or a fine between \$2,500 and \$25,000USD. The wildlife trade continues but cases such as this demonstrate that offenders will be punished and hopefully this will act as a deterrent to some others.**



And more positive news... three of the otters released by Phnom Tamao in the Angkor region of Cambodia continue to thrive. They are seen regularly, although sightings are becoming less frequent and the trio seem to be able to survive for themselves now. There are now further plans to release two female otters into the area as an addition to the group.

*giftaid it*



**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](http://www.otter.org/documents/IOSF_Fundraising_Pack.pdf)





## News in Brief

### Otters near Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Otters have been caught on camera near Amsterdam for the first time in 50 years. There have been signs of their presence in the IJburg suburb of Amsterdam but recent footage has confirmed this. Many of you will know that otters became extinct in the Netherlands but after reintroduction programmes in the north of the country populations have started to recover and increase. Since then, they have been seen across much of the nation but this is the first footage near the country's capital.

A great story of success and the return of otters in the Netherlands! <https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2021/12/otter-caught-on-film-near-ijburg-first-amsterdam-sighting-in-over-50-years/>



Eurasian otter. Photo: Alan Horner

### And in Berlin...

Not to be overshadowed by their Dutch counterparts, Germany's capital, Berlin, is also seeing a return of otters. Believed to be extinct since the 1960s the Eurasian otter has now been spotted in five different locations around the city's canal system. According to the Foundation for Nature Conservation, the animals now also have offspring in Berlin which bodes well for future

populations.

<https://www.rbb24.de/panorama/beitrag/2021/12/fischotter-berlin-sichtungen-spree-havel-teltowkanal.html>

Great to see these two big metropolises playing home to our favourite animals!

### Otters in Ireland

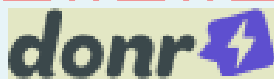
Across Europe, Eurasian otter populations plummeted during the 1950s and 1960s, mainly due to chemicals leaching into waters from industry and agriculture. In Ireland, the "madraí uisce", or otter, has a stronghold across the Emerald Isle, and this is largely down to voluntary organisations, such as Cork Nature Network.



IOSF was delighted to award the Cork Nature Network an Otter Oscar this month, as you will have read about earlier, and we were happy to read an interview with Gill Weyman, co-founder and director of the Cork Nature Network.

Otters are now in the city of Cork and around the harbour and the Network have established walking trails in order to raise awareness. Gill pointed out that they are legally protected but there are still threats from pollution and habitat destruction.

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/munster/arid-40773567.html>



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.



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

Giveacar is a not-for-profit social enterprise that can turn your old car into cash for any UK charity. With free collection, your car will be auctioned or sold for scrap, depending on its condition, and the proceeds (minus our service fees) raised going to a charity of your choice.

Find out more at <https://giveacar.co.uk> or call 020 7736 4242







**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](http://otter.org/Public/HelpUs_CorporateSponsorship.aspx)

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

You can follow us on:



## 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:



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



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



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

### 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? Then please **SHARE** it with 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**.

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

Email: [enquiries@otter.org](mailto: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](http://www.otter.org)

**The International Otter Survival Fund**  
Working to Save the Worlds Otters

