



## Otter News No. 137, December 2022

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### England's Target for Cleaning Waterways Delayed a Bit!

**Well actually it is more than just "a bit" – it is by 36 years!!!**

The target to clean agricultural and sewage pollution from most of the rivers, lakes and coastal waters of England was originally set at 2027 but the Environment Agency has recently announced that this is to be put back to 2063! – no that is not a misprint – it is 2063.

We are often reassured that the waterways have improved considerably but we all know what a terrible condition they are in. In fact in August 2019 we published a piece in our e-update called "ARE THE WATERWAYS IN ENGLAND REALLY THAT CLEAN?" which was based on an article in The Times, "Pollution: no river in England is safe for swimming"

([https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pollution-no-river-in-england-is-safe-for-swimming-q8thdx678?wgu=270525\\_54264\\_15663127520327\\_f62cdb679e&wgexpiry=1574088752&utm\\_source=planit&utm\\_medium=affiliate&utm\\_content=22278](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pollution-no-river-in-england-is-safe-for-swimming-q8thdx678?wgu=270525_54264_15663127520327_f62cdb679e&wgexpiry=1574088752&utm_source=planit&utm_medium=affiliate&utm_content=22278)). The Times report said that "86% fall short of the EU's ecological standard — the minimum threshold for a healthy waterway — up from 75% a decade ago". And "half of all stretches of river monitored by the Environment Agency exceeded permitted limits of at least one hazardous pollutant last year, including toxic heavy metals and pesticides."



Paul followed this up with a piece on his Blog "ARE WE HEADING FOR ANOTHER DISASTER IN OTTER NUMBERS?" (<https://pauyoxonblog.wordpress.com/2019/08/26/are-we-heading-for-another-disaster-in-otter-numbers/>)

And clearly things don't seem to have improved at all. The latest piece in The Guardian written on 22 December 2022 says: "Not one English waterway, including rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters is in good ecological and chemical health at present, with pollution from water treatment plants and agriculture the key sources of the damage." (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/dec/22/target-date-for-cleaning-up-waterways-in-england-is-moved-back-by-36-years>)

It is no wonder that they have had to put the date back so far as it seems that by 2027, only 4% of waters are currently on track to be in good overall condition. AND if they don't make more progress, this figure will only be 6% by 2043!

The Environment Agency have said that £5.3 billion is being spent "to stop further deterioration of waterways" but they now reckon that it will take until 2063 to get all 3,651 water bodies in a good condition.

How have they managed to get themselves into this ridiculous situation? As the Guardian points out, until we left the EU the UK government was signed up to a directive to make sure that **ALL** waterways were in a healthy condition by 2027. The government then changed that to 75% of waterways should reach a single test of "good ecological status" by 2027 but now this has all been pushed back to 2063.

It is not new that such targets have been missed. In 2009 plans were put forward to restore nearly 5,000 waterways by 2015, and then in 2015 more plans were put forward to restore them by 2021.



This new target of 2063 means that, very little action is likely to take place and these waterways will not be considered healthy within the lifetime of many people. We could ask if this is why they have pushed it so far on as no-one will be alive who remembers the target!

Yes we understand that it isn't simple to deal with agricultural and industrial pollution, including sewage, but it also shows that REAL solutions to the problems are not considered a priority.

Clearly this has serious implications for otters and all wetland biodiversity. Back in 2019 we wrote the following in the e-update:

*“According to EU rules, all rivers should be of a good ecological standard by 2027 and the government is duty-bound to do this. We all know about the Brexit problems but even if we are not in Europe do we not want our rivers and waterways clean?”*



*In spite of this the Environment Agency has said “Water quality is now better than at any time since the Industrial Revolution, largely due to the £25 billion of investment that the Environment Agency has required water companies to make.” Are we really expected to believe that?*

*To us it is simple. We continue to pollute our waterways with sewage and dangerous chemicals. We change the habitat so that fish find it more difficult to find suitable spawning grounds. And man-made structures such as*

*weirs and dams, are making it harder for eels, a popular prey item of otters, to reach the areas where they mature after their long trip from the Sargasso Sea.*

*As a result the fish population in general is at risk, not because of the otter, but because of the careless actions of people, yet again. Otters and fish have clearly co-existed for millennia – it is the basic ecological principal of the relationship between predators and prey. It is only once man upsets this balance that we have a problem – and in this case the otter is being the scapegoat.”*

How much will have changed in another three years, let alone by 2063?

## When to Intervene to Help an Otter

### Otter in Oban

**The Scottish seaside town of Oban had a new visitor over New Year, a Eurasian otter.** Otters are well known along the Scottish coasts but rarely in a town centre. This particular otter had been seen walking the streets around the seafront and concerns had grown with people approaching it to take photos and the risk from traffic. We can understand that people want to see an otter and even photograph it but it mustn't be at the expense of the animal's wellbeing.

IOSF was contacted by friends in the area, who asked what the best course of action would be. The otter was seemingly healthy, feeding and harming nobody. IOSF director Grace Yoxon commented: *“This seems to be a juvenile or sub-adult which is trying to find its own way in the world. It is not unusual for them to find themselves in strange places like this.*



*‘It is feeding itself and looks healthy and just needs to be left alone and then it will move on. SO WE WOULD URGE PEOPLE TO KEEP AWAY AND NOT APPROACH THE OTTER. THANKS.’*

This advice was put out on social media and also in the Oban Times and the latest update we have is that



people do seem to have taken heed of the message and are keeping away. The situation is being closely monitored and if necessary we will step in but we hope the otter manages to find its own way.

[https://www.obantimes.co.uk/2023/01/03/plea-to-stay-away-from-oban-otter/?fbclid=IwAR3P4orz35a1iaGYOk76amoVHn0BoA1W95QVF\\_0r7qcMx9jiCKhLSJnMWn0](https://www.obantimes.co.uk/2023/01/03/plea-to-stay-away-from-oban-otter/?fbclid=IwAR3P4orz35a1iaGYOk76amoVHn0BoA1W95QVF_0r7qcMx9jiCKhLSJnMWn0)

This is the case for any otter, or wildlife. If it doesn't seem to be in obvious ill-health, or danger, then it is best to leave it alone and monitor it. Certainly, never approach it as distress can cause it to defend itself or run off into danger.

Let us hope that this little otter finds its way to a safer home!

### Otter cub on the Water of Leith

**Ross Lawford from Otter Tracks, keeps a very close eye on the otters on the Water of Leith in Edinburgh and he has been watching two females with two cubs each, which appear to have overlapping home ranges.**

One of the cubs developed an eye problem and we tried to contact David Williams, a veterinary eye specialist, who had previously diagnosed glaucoma in an otter on the Isle of Bute.

Recently however, there appear to have been developments in the other family:

*"After a few weeks of vicious fighting between the cubs both in the day and night one of the cubs at 21/22 weeks (less dominant perhaps) left. It wandered alone up and down the river whilst its mother and sibling were always in a different location. It was hard to track down but was seen rolling in the snow and fishing well on one occasion. A week later it was seen again although it seemed weak and exhausted with its fur looking less than perfect, but still taking small fish out of the river. Eventually after covering many miles of the river course it has returned and been accepted back with its mother and sibling. The fighting seems less frequent and the noise*



*made is the most joyous sound of the riverbank. Hopefully they will all stick together and grow strong."*

The "wandering" cub is on the left – Photo ©Ross Lawford.

We totally understand what Ross means when he says "the noise made is the most joyous sound of

*the riverbank."* It is a totally magical sound.

This is another occasion where we could have rushed in to take the otter but all it needed was some time. As humans, we often want to "do" something to help when the best course of action is actually to leave it alone. This does not mean that we do nothing and just forget about it. No, we have to make sure that we have people monitoring the situation so that if it does become necessary we can step in and act quickly.

In both of these cases there are people watching closely to make sure that all goes well and they will continue to update us.

### News from The Sanctuary

The otters in IOSF's sanctuary are doing really well – so thanks to you all for supporting their care.

Dòbhran has been 'like a duck in water' or, rather like an otter in water! Skye's famous wet winters have meant little pools and puddles appearing at times in the enclosures. And Dòbhran has really enjoyed this as he takes





time to run around the puddles, playing in the water. He's also a very observant creature and is always watching. If you spend too much time near his enclosure, he lets you know with a squeal as if to tell us that we have overstayed our welcome.




The inseparable pair - Baird and Marina



Bealltinn

The other three otters are doing really well too! The pair, Marina and Baird, continually find comfort being together and rarely leave each-others sides! Cleaning time is met with disdain but they always find a safe place outside before swiftly returning. Bealltinn is just fine and busy landscaping her pen and sleeping box, regularly!

*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)*

	<p>Please support IOSF and help to ensure that important conservation and awareness work continues.</p> <p>UK taxpayers:</p>	<p>Increase the value of your gift to IOSF: <i>giftaid it</i></p>
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## Dijla, The Albino Otter in Iraq



Dijla  
Photo: ©Dr. Haider

In last month's newsletter we gave a brief update on the progress of Dijla, the albino otter being cared for at Baghdad Zoo. Following this, Heidi Davis of the German Otter Protection Network (GOPN), contacted us to say that they had raised £236 for her care. The Network also asked that the fisherman who found the otter, receive some of the funds as he had bravely refused to accept money for her and chose to hand her over to responsible and caring people. These are donations from supporters collected in their BetterPlace fundraising campaign and the GOPN itself.

Not only that but they also donated funds towards the care of our own otters at our Skye sanctuary.

Many thanks to all at GOPN for their care for all otters



## Famous Singapore Otter Dies

The Bishan mum was one of the most famous smooth-coated otters in Singapore and she was also the oldest, having lived to 11-12 years old. However, Otter City announced on their Facebook page that she had died on 15 December 2022.

They had noticed that her physical condition was deteriorating and she seemed to spend more time alone, which often happens when a wild animal knows it is reaching the end.

The otter community kept a constant watch over her but as her time had come due to age they did not want to intervene unless she appeared to be in too much pain. In the end she just went into a holt and never came out.



Otter City posted:

*"While the community is saddened by her passing, we would also like to remember and thank her for the legacy, trust and friendship."*

*This photo was just taken a few days ago. Despite her health condition, she still gave us a very big and hearty smile."*

<https://www.facebook.com/ottercity/posts/pfbid0qoTx9BdMhKLiwnq4MSycsx6K3AR1YaNGqvBvFXx35euDJE62wSqMAMmwz4r3bKmA1>

## Otter Shop Product of the Month

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

Irresistible – you'll just love this small Living Nature plush otter toy, newly added to the range. Only 25cm long. Can you resist it?

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



It's that time again, when we encourage children to get out their pens, pencils, crayons and paints and create something Otter-ly fantastic!

The competition is open to anyone aged 16 years and under from anywhere in the world! We are launching the competition NOW and you have until 10 March to get your wonderful creations in. Winners will be announced the week commencing 13 March and will receive an exciting surprise prize!

To send your entries, simply email [ben@otter.org](mailto:ben@otter.org) with your name, age and the picture(s) you want to enter!

We cannot wait to see your awesome otter designs!



**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)**



## Thank You...

to our amazing supporters – you continue to help with your generous donations through many sources, including CharityCar, social media, Give As You Live, Just Giving, The Big Give.

Our thanks also go to The Rufford Foundation, Hebridean Island Cruises and John Noorani, Sea Changers, St. Mary's Charity, Woburn Safari Park, Lush Retail Ltd and Bartlett Taylor Charitable Trust.

And to our Corporate Sponsors: Andrew Poplett Enterprises Ltd, Nurtured by Nature, [holidaycottages.co.uk](http://holidaycottages.co.uk).

*We can't do it without you.*

## Events

IOSF's Paul Yoxon will be presenting a talk "Otter Ecology and Conservation" for the Assynt Field Club  
<https://www.assyntwildlife.org.uk/event/otters-ecology-and-conservation-with-dr-paul-yoxon/>

This will take place at Lochinver Village Hall, Lochinver, Sutherland, Scotland on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 7.30pm. Adults £3 and refreshments are available after the talk.

If you are in the area, why not pop along and enjoy this otterly interesting event.

## World Otter Day

It might not feel like it in all this wintry weather but IOSF World Otter Day 2023 is just around the corner (31 May) and we cannot wait to see what everyone has planned!

As many of you will know, IOSF launched World Otter Day to encourage everyone, both online and in person, to celebrate our favourite animal for the day. This brings the species to the attention of so many people as everyone raises awareness about how important they are and also highlights the threats that they face. There are certain issues faced by otters that some people are largely unaware of, such as the huge trade in these animals for pets and fur. World Otter Day addresses this.



Each year, we have events all around the world and we already have commitments for events in 15 countries for 2023! Our World Otter Day map will soon be up and available to show you what's happening and where.

**We want to encourage you** to hold an event, no matter how small or large to draw attention to otters and make a difference. This can be an educational event, a fundraiser or whatever you think you'd have fun doing. Every effort, no matter how small or how large, really does make a difference! If you do have any plans then email [ben@otter.org](mailto:ben@otter.org) and we can add it to the map and offer any help we can.

You might not be able to hold a physical event but social media is amazing for drawing attention too. You can post on social media, share IOSF's posts and join the otter love-in for the day! Use **#WorldOtterDay** too!

In 2022 we had events in 39 countries – that is 20% of the world's countries. Let's all join together to make 2023 even bigger and better.

[https://www.otter.org/Public/Events\\_OurCurrentEvent.aspx](https://www.otter.org/Public/Events_OurCurrentEvent.aspx)

## World Otter Day Grants

As always, IOSF will offer three World Otter Day grants for small events to be held. Each year we accept nominations for the £100 grant money and these will be accepted from NOW until 24 March. For more





information visit - [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfs\\_H1vRoec2\\_a0BkaQAzH00a-OpxdYNICFAoj1-7-iYsya8Q/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfs_H1vRoec2_a0BkaQAzH00a-OpxdYNICFAoj1-7-iYsya8Q/viewform?usp=sf_link)

## Do 30 For IOSF's 30<sup>th</sup>

We are turning 30 in November of this year, and for our 30<sup>th</sup> birthday we have a challenge for you! We would love it if you, our fantastic supporters, could help us by doing 30 of something, and raising money through our

### IOSF Birthday Challenge!



Just Giving campaign <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/iosf30for30>

Get creative! You can bake 30 cakes, do 30 walks/jogs/runs or anything else that suits you!

For example, IOSF's Ben and Callum have set themselves the target of summiting 30 Munros in 2023 – Munros are mountains in Scotland over 3,000 feet high. You can follow their progress via our social media platforms, and this campaign page, throughout the year!

To help us, all you have to do is click the Start fundraising button on our Just Giving campaign page, and create your own fundraiser to share amongst people you know. Together, let's make our 30<sup>th</sup> year a

great one!

All proceeds will go into helping IOSF and our otter conservation projects around the world, including education, rehabilitation and research.

For any further questions about fundraising for this campaign please email Callum via [callum@otter.org](mailto:callum@otter.org)

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

**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)



## Photo of The Month

This month's Photo of the Month comes from Florida, USA, courtesy of Linda Wilinski (LindaWPhotography on social media). The picture shows the curious face of a North American River Otter that Linda has observed throughout the last year!



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

## News in Brief

### Playful otters

Who says that animals don't play? Watch as these otters enjoy a snowy jetty in Washington, USA!  
<https://www.fox5dc.com/news/video-otters-play-snow-seattle-lake-washington>

And these Eurasian otters in China, are enjoying the ice and river!  
<https://english.news.cn/20221211/471a99c7169f457c901b73062753ef06/c.html>



American River otter  
enjoying the snow ©Jon Nelson

### Otters in Seoul

Seoul, South Korea, is one of the world's most populous cities and yet it is now home to (at least) 15 Eurasian otters.

There had been a number of sightings along the Han River, which intersects the city, and so the Seoul Metropolitan Government began a monitoring project using camera traps. The otters are largely nocturnal and were spotted in three locations.

Due to rapid development and a hydro-electric dam, otters in the capital had not been seen for decades but their





return shows a positive result for their rivers!

<https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20230102000564>

### Trouble for Israeli otters

However, across the continent, in Israel, the story is not so rosy for the Eurasian otter.

A study into Israel's mammals, birds and reptiles by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority has suggested that Eurasian otter populations are in 'serious decline' across the nation. Otters were once widespread across Israel and the researcher used sightings, roadkill and spraint surveys to determine the otter's presence/absence across its previous range.



It was determined that otters are no longer present across much of their previous southern range and are now only seen in two areas: the Hula Valley and the streams flowing into it, and the Sea of Galilee region. However, these populations are believed to be stable. There was also some otter evidence in the River Jordan, which flows out of the southern part of the Sea of Galilee.

This is a worrying sign for otters in Israel and it has been suggested that threats, such as roadkill, must be reduced and more wetlands need to be created to increase populations.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israels-griffon-vultures-european-otters-in-serious-decline-new-report-finds/>

In 2003, IOSF held a conference on Skye entitled "Return of the Otter in Europe – Where and How?" and Amit Dolev and his colleagues presented a paper on "Israel's Otter (*Lutra lutra*) Population - Status and Future Conservation". They reported that otters were abundant in Israel until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – much like most of Europe and they declined largely because of illegal hunting, water pollution, and the drainage of above ground water sources.

Surveys were carried out in the 1980s and 1990s with a more comprehensive survey in 2000-2001. This was followed by increased research efforts in 2001-2003, including distribution surveys every six months. Those observations confirmed that:

1. Otters were present in aquatic habitats and fishponds in the Hula Valley, in the northern Jordan River catchments and the Harod Valley.
2. A single record from the Zvulun Valley and Carmel coastal area in 2000 suggested the existence of a remnant population along the coast, which may become extinct.
3. The findings indicated previously undocumented otter activity in the Golan Heights.
4. A landscape bottleneck between the Harod and Yisrael Valleys may act as a barrier and prevent the recolonization of the coastal region.

They finished by saying that any reintroduction in Israel "must be preceded by an intensive restoration project around the release site and educational efforts among the local and the general public. We believe that unless action is taken, otters will disappear from Israel's landscape." Let's hope this prediction does not come true.

The paper by Dolev et al was published in the IOSF Journal Volume 2 (2003) and can be downloaded from our website at [https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources\\_Resources\\_Journal.aspx](https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources_Resources_Journal.aspx)



## The curious case of the Indian otter



Smooth-coated otter  
Photo: ©Prof. MM Feeroz

A lone Smooth-coated otter continues to defy logic as to how it came to be on the campus of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru, India. The otter made its first appearance at the Centenary Pond around five years ago, disappeared for a while and then returned again. But the question as to how it got there is the mystery. There is an assumption that no one introduced the otter and there have been various theories but nothing has been agreed. The fragmentation of habitats, pollution and other similar factors has meant that the exact origin of the otter is still unknown.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/2023/jan/07/otter-makes-pond-on-iisc-bangalore-campus-its-home-keeps-up-mystery-2535500.html>

## Correction:

In our last e-update we told you about Omkar Patil and his team from Mumbai Tarum Bharat who have produced a video on the otters in the creeks of Konkan, Maharashtra. We said that this is in the east of India but as Omkar pointed out it is actually in the west of the country. Sorry for any confusion.

(Article - *And how about crocodiles*)

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

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Adult: £24.00 per year  
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Family: £40.00 per year

Life Membership (all countries): £350.00

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<https://www.giveasylive.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



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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** - turn your old car/bike/van/caravan into cash for IOSF. With free collection, your vehicle will be auctioned or sold for scrap, depending on its condition, and the proceeds (minus service fees) raised going to support our work in otter conservation.  
**Find out more at <https://giveacar.co.uk> or call 020 7736 4242**

*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**.

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