



Otter News No. 129, February 2022

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Photo by [Adam Śmigielski](#) on [Unsplash](#)

We always start our e-update with some good news but it is impossible to ignore what is going on in Ukraine. People and animals are all suffering under the bombardment of Russia and our thoughts go to all of them.

In 2019 Ievgen Skorobogatov and his colleagues published a paper in the IOSF Otter Journal on “Preliminary results of the first-ever otter survey in Chornobyl Exclusion Zone, Northern Ukraine”. They were all based in Kharkiv. When the invasion first began we tried to contact Ievgen to check how he was but unsurprisingly we have heard nothing. All we can hope is that he, his colleagues, and friends and family have managed to get to safety.

It is at times like these that we all have to be grateful for what we have. Yes, prices are all going up and there are shortages in certain areas but if we have our health, our families and our safety we should certainly consider ourselves fortunate.

Malaysian Otter Training Workshop Gets the Green Light!

We are very happy to say that we can finally go ahead with our next Asian training workshop which will be held in Malaysia from 25-29 April 2022.

Thailand and Myanmar are major hubs for illegal trade in otters for furs and also for pets and so we will bring in people from there to make it a regional event. This will develop more otter workers in these three countries and encourage good cross-border co-operation to identify priorities for future work and collaboration, and counter the trade. As recently as 8 March 2022, IOSF was informed of 25 cubs being rescued in Indonesia so the threat from illegal trade in south-east Asia is large and current.

In Malaysia otters are now appearing in the city of Kuala Lumpur. So Sivasothi, the Otterman of Singapore, will join us to share experience with urban otters in Singapore and hopefully help to avoid potential conflicts.

In 2020 the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) received an IOSF grant as part of World Otter Day and as a part of this they set up the Malaysian Otter Network (MON). They are helping us to organise this exciting workshop.

In addition we will be joined by representatives from Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT), and Myanmar Environmental Innovation Foundation (MEIF).



The workshop will be a mix of classroom studies and discussion, and practical field work, which has proved a successful format in previous workshops. As part of the workshop we will be joined by researchers who are developing Footprint Identification Technology for the four species of Asian otters. There will be an opportunity to test this in the field during the workshop.

Below you can read an update on the work of the Malaysian Nature Society



An Update from the Malaysian Nature Society

The Malaysian Nature Society has provided this update:

MNS Otter Project - Safeguarding the Malaysian Otters

By Woo Chee Yoong^{1&2} & Balu Perumal³

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Malaysia is ranked 12th among the megadiverse countries and is better known for its large mammals found in the country such as the Malayan tiger, Asiatic elephant, Malayan tapir and Orang utan. Small mammals often do not receive much conservation resources and effort. The general public is also unaware of our small mammals including otters, a unique semi-aquatic carnivore. Instead, the public often mistakes them as sea otters or beavers which are not found in Malaysia.

All four species of otter that occur in Malaysia are both freshwater and coastal species. They are the smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*), Asian small-clawed otter (*Aonyx cinereus*), hairy-nosed otter (*Lutra sumatrana*) and Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*). The first three species are globally threatened; the smooth-coated otter and Asian small-clawed otter are classified as “Vulnerable” while the hairy-nosed otter is “Endangered” specifically. The Eurasian otter, however, is classified as “Near Threatened” but this species has not been found in Malaysia for a significant amount of time. It is worth noting that the hairy-nosed otter is endemic to Southeast Asia and is considered the rarest otter species in the world.

The Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) was established in 1940 and is the oldest membership-based environment NGO in Malaysia. Wetland conservation is one of MNS’s priority conservation work areas. MNS has identified otters as the flagship species for its wetland conservation work. Thus, the MNS Otter Project was established in 2019 to advocate for otter conservation along the North-Central Selangor Coast (NCSC), Selangor State in Peninsular Malaysia. NCSC is recognised as one of the Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA) and a potential East Asian-Australasian Flyway site. The Kuala Selangor Nature Park (KSNP) is situated at the centre of NCSC which is a mangrove first protected area Malaysia. KSNP and the NCSC and the three Asian otter



Photo credit: Woo Chee Yoong/Malaysian Nature Society, MNS

currently managed by MNS as education centre. It is also the managed by an NGO in other mangrove forests within KSNP are crucial habitats for species.

The MNS Otter in Malaysia that the flagship species coastal and

Project, MNS engages with government agencies, local communities etc. and conducts ecological research on the otters to address knowledge gaps.

Project is also the first project specifically promotes otters as to protect and conserve both freshwater wetlands. In this

Throughout the first two years (2020-2022) of the project, we have achieved the following:

- 1) Produced a preliminary otter distribution map along NCSC;
- 2) Developed a novel PCR-RFLP genetic technique for identifying three Asian otter species using their spraints;
- 3) Identified three species of otter (smooth-coated otter, Asian small-clawed otter and hairy-nosed otter) through spraint analysis, camera trapping and direct observation;
- 4) Trained 10 local people in surveying and monitoring otter populations;
- 5) Initiated human-otter conflict documentation;



- 6) First human-otter conflict workshop was held virtually with the collaboration from the Department of Fisheries Malaysia;
- 7) Founded the Malaysia Otter Network (MON), consisting of 12 otter/mammal professionals who are the experts in otter research and lead otter conservation in different regions (Sabah/Sarawak/Peninsular Malaysia) in Malaysia.
- 8) Celebrated World Otter Day 2021 with an otter webinar.

In the next phase of the project, we will

- (i) complete the spatial distribution map.
- (ii) initiate a radio-tracking study.
- (iii) produce a human-otter conflict hotspot map.
- (iv) form a group of multi-stakeholders consisting of government agencies and local aquaculturists for human-otter conflict mitigation.

We will also hold an international training workshop partnering with the International Otter Survival Fund as soon as Covid-19 restrictions allow.

MNS would like to thank The Conservation, Food & Health Foundation for their support. For those who would like to contribute to our project, please join MNS as a member (<https://www.mns.my/join-us/>) or visit the International Otter Survival Fund to donate (https://www.otter.org/public/IOSFCurrentProjects_Asia.aspx).

NOTE: MNS is saddened to inform you that Balu Perumal, Head of Conservation of the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS), passed away peacefully on 6 August 2021 as a result of COVID-19-related complications. He was 54. He was a strong supporter of the MNS Otter Project.

All of us at IOSF would like to send our condolences to Balu Perumal's family, the MNS team and everyone close to him.

Otter Rehab in Canada

We were recently contacted by WildARC, a rehab centre in Victoria on Vancouver Island, Canada. IOSF has worked with them for a long time and corresponded with WildARC during their rescue of North American river otters, all the way back to the early 2000s.

WildARC have just received a new male otter into their care. The sub-adult was scared, thin and had major wounds to his body but thanks to their expert care he is now, hopefully, on the mend.



As we know from our own work with Eurasian otters you can never be complacent with their care and although first signs for this otter are positive, he still has a long way to go and will be nursed back to full health by the WildARC team before his release back to the wild.

If you'd like to help support the care of this otter or read more about it, visit

<https://medical.spc.ca/participant/2642306/2500/>

Join The River Otter Ecology Project's 10th Year Celebrations

On Sunday 1 May the River Otter Ecology Project is celebrating its 10th year of supporting watershed conservation through research, community science, and education!



You can join them for the afternoon at the Hans Fahden Vineyards in Calistoga, California, and the Executive Director, Megan Isadore, will tell you about their future plans.

Tickets are available at <https://riverotterecology.org/>

News from The Sanctuary

Preparations are well in hand to make the change from the existing hospital to the new facility in April as easy as possible. It has given us the opportunity to assess all the cages, equipment, etc to see what also needs replacing and what is still essential to our work. It is, of course, essential that we can continue to care for the otters and so we have plans for temporary enclosures for any small cubs which come in during the changeover.

We are so thankful to everyone who has offered help and can't wait to share with you our brand new facilities.



Wally hiding as best he can!

Our newest arrival, Wally, is doing very well. He was found near Dingwall in January – hence his name. He had quite a few ups and downs in the early days but is now eating well and putting on weight. He is a really cute little guy and when he was tiny liked to play “Where’s Wally” hiding in his bed with just his little pink nose poking out!

He is now eating very well and is an independent grumpy otter.

Over the past month or so the weather has improved quite a lot, although as I write this we have had a day of more gales and rain. But at least the general trend is for better weather and snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils are out. We are looking for our first primrose too.

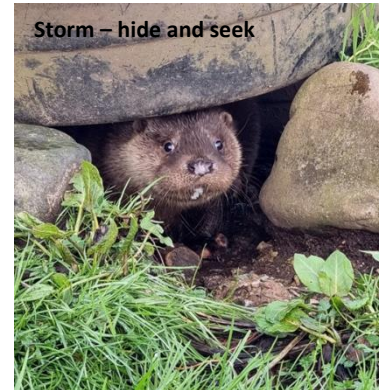
All the older otters are fine. Storm is exploring more of his outdoor run now and enjoys the pool. Holly is such a cheeky thing. She always grabs a fish and runs away to eat in private and sometimes takes it into her pool to play with. She has grown so much recently and will soon be released. Bealltainn is still taking in more bedding for herself and now has a cosy “nest”.



Beautiful Bealltainn



Holly – counting time



Storm – hide and seek

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



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

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Increase the value
of your gift to IOSF:
giftaid it



Otter Shop Product of the Month

www.ottershop.co.uk

Sunday 27th March is Mother's Day and you can find a great selection of gift ideas for your Mum. There's something to suit all pockets, so why not pop over to the [IOSF Otter Shop](http://www.ottershop.co.uk) and buy that special gift now – search 'gift' 'Mother's Day' 'Mother' to find ideas from otter adoption, silver otter jewellery to notebooks and flash drive.



IOSF World Otter Day 2022

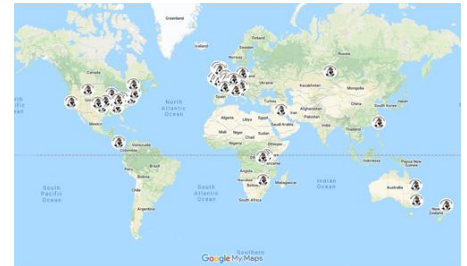
Just under two months away, World Otter Day is fast approaching and we would love for you to join us with an event, raising awareness on social media or any other ways you want to help otters.

Events Map

If you are planning an event, please let us know and we can add them to the World Otter Day

events map found here -

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=14bwLPiHYuKmNXrES8yZh81V-r1fNLmUb&usp=sharing>



Resources

Find our World Otter Day Resources on the IOSF website

(<https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources/Resources/OtherEducationalResources.aspx>).

Grants

World Otter Day Grants are still available and you have until 25 March to submit your application. If you have plans for an event to raise awareness or research otters in your own local area please apply here -

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfs_H1vRoec2_a0BkaQAzH00a-OpxdYNICFAoj1-7-iYsya8Q/viewform?usp=sf_link

2021 World Otter Day Grant event

On World Wetlands Day, 2 February 2022, Dr Eswar Narayana held a two-day awareness programme for a group of students. This was actually a World Otter Day 2021 event, supported by an IOSF WOD Grant that was delayed by the pandemic restrictions.

The programme consisted of an introductory day in the college which detailed the conservation status and need for study as well as a briefing on the importance of the area where they live.

On the second day, a field session was held within the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary, situated near Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh, India. The Forest Department had also organised a programme for the occasion of World Wetlands Day so the students were able to participate in both. These sessions highlighted:

- the biodiversity of the area, its flora and fauna,



© Dr Eswar Narayana



- the management and duties of the forest officers in conserving the habitats of the smooth-coated otters and also fishing cats.

The students also had an unique opportunity to interact with the forest officers and gain insights into their hands-on work within the sanctuary.

Thanks to this event there is now an increased awareness of the importance of these otters within the ecosystem of this sanctuary.

Webinar

IOSF is excited to announce our second Webinar for World Otter Day 2022. Last year's event was a great success and we were joined by people from all over the world. It is important to showcase otters and the amazing work that is being done globally and the webinar gives us the chance to do this. This year is proving just as popular and almost 90 people have already signed up.

The Webinar will take place on Wednesday 25 May (World Otter Day) and there will be two sessions with different speakers in each. The sessions will take place at the following times:

Morning Session - 09.00 - 11.30am (UK Time)

Evening Session - 17.00 - 19.30 (UK Time)

We are delighted to announce 10 new topics and speakers for this year's event. Please note, presentation titles may differ from the outlines below:

Morning:

- * Dr Paul Yoxon – "Otter Spraint Surveys and Spraint Analysis - and Limitations"
- * Dr Eleanor Kean - "Unexpected results from a nation-wide otter survey of Wales"
- * Mohan Shrestha, Nepal - "Eurasian Otter in Nepal- Unveiling the presence after three decades"
- * Frederick Kistner – "What you can learn by looking at otter footprints—An introduction to the Footprint Identification Technology (FIT) for Otters."
- * Klaudja Koci/Bledi Hoxha - "An overview of European Otter research and monitoring in the Prespa Lakes, Albania"

Evening:

- * Adriana Belen Vallejos - "The distribution of Neotropical Otters and the climate crisis: A study case in northern Argentina"
- * Fernanda Michalski – Studying Giant otters in Brazil and the effects of hydro-electric dams.
- * Javier Trivelli and Valentina Diaz Savaria - "Chungungo: Re-Ottering Chile"
- * Nicola Okes – Otters in South Africa and the increase in "urban" otters.
- * Heather Barrett, Sea Otter Savvy - "Being Sea Otter Savvy"

The Webinar will be free of charge so that as many people can attend but if you would like to make a donation to support our Webinar please use this link - <https://ottershop.co.uk/products/donate-to-iosf-world-otter-day-webinar>

If you are interested in joining the Webinar, then please complete the form here - <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSciyLpYHZnzWbgg1dJhNpCPB6ExilQloh1u2PvQg0IR0kcjiA/viewform>

Please share these posts and spread the word about IOSF's work with otters. Thank you!

Let's enjoy celebrating otters together this May!



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

donr

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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

Sea Otter Genetic Work

Studies into the sea otter's genome have revealed positive results for the recovery of the otters. As we have mentioned many times, sea otters were hunted heavily during the height of the fur trade in North America. Once boasting a population of around 300,000 animals they dropped to a few thousand during the height of the trade. Populations have since recovered but not to anywhere near their previous numbers.

Annabel Beichman, of the University of Washington, supported by archaeologist Douglas Kennett, has been studying various aspects in relation to the sea otter's recovery, including their genome sequence, and how species decline affects their genetic diversity.



Sea otter - detail. ©April Severin

Kennett revealed that although otters were hunted heavily during the fur trade, they have been hunted in a more sustainable way for around 5,000 years in his study area in Santa Barbara Channel.

The study worked on genome analysis of sea otter populations throughout history. Studies of five major areas, including historical populations, revealed that each had suffered from severe population decline. The study determined a link between the current Californian sea otter population and the population

in the area thousands of years ago. It showed that the current populations are in fact ancestors of the larger population from years ago rather than, what some believe, otters that travelled down from the northern Pacific following the fur trade.

There are also worries that further reductions in sea otter populations could affect them genetically. However, the study revealed that isolated populations had existed prior to the fur trade and otters do not need a large population to maintain genetic health.

Despite the study offering positive results for sea otters, the researchers reminded us that more information needs to be gathered. They emphasised that their study had only been conducted on small populations and to gain a true reflection on otter populations more needs to be done.



<https://dailynexus.com/2022-02-14/peering-into-the-sea-otter-genome-reveals-much/>

Otters in India

Otter watching towers

There are plans to create watchtowers to aid in the watching of otters along the Tungabhadra River in Karnataka state. The area, of around 30km, is the state's only Otter Conservation Reserve due to the number of otters in the region.

The watchtowers are planned to help people view the otters in areas where they are known to fish and come across to play – therefore, providing perfect viewing areas. Furthermore, otter enthusiasts have been known to get too close on riverbanks and force otters to leave for deeper waters. It is thought that the new “watchtowers”, in five locations, will help reduce otter disturbance while providing otter watchers with the perfect place to see their favourite animals.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/karnataka/2022/feb/22/watchtowers-to-come-up-at-otter-sanctuary-along-tungabhadra-river-2422473.html>



Smooth-coated otters in India
© DrBivash Pandav (WII)

Concerns over illegal fishing

Illegal fishing in the National Chambal Sanctuary in Kota, Rajasthan, is causing concerns for species within the reserve. Fishermen are taking advantage of the lack of patrolling within the area to cast tubes and nets to catch fish which are causing issues for local wildlife, including smooth-coated otters. Dynamite fishing is also being used which is illegal and highly destructive.

Conservationists are calling for the Forest Department to monitor these protected areas and the threats to the native wildlife.

[https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/illegal-fishing-hits-aquatic-](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/illegal-fishing-hits-aquatic-life-in-chambal-study/articleshow/89859856.cms)

[life-in-chambal-study/articleshow/89859856.cms](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/illegal-fishing-hits-aquatic-life-in-chambal-study/articleshow/89859856.cms)

Otters re-appear

Smooth-coated otters have not been seen in the Upper Anaicut near Mukkombu, Tamil Nadu, for some time but during a search for storks they were spotted once again. Initially, believed to be crows it turned out to be eight otters enjoying the river bank.

Severe drought in the area was believed to have driven away the otters in previous years but it seems they are back – for now at least.

Otters are known as neer naai (aquatic dogs) in Tamil, which is a common translation of local names for otters e.g. kalb al-ma'a in Arabic and madra uisce in Irish Gaelic. The giant otter in Spanish speaking countries in South America is often called perro de agua, again water dog, and even lobo del rio, strictly river wolf.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Tiruchirapalli/smooth-coated-otters-seen-near-mukkombu-after-a-long-break/article65092310.ece>



Team Otter

Let's all say a massive 'Hello' to Anakin, a major otter lover from Georgia, USA!

Anakin fell in love with otters when he visited an aquarium at the age of 3 and bought his first soft cuddly otter! Since then, Anakin's otter collection has grown to a beautiful otter family which you can see in the picture below.

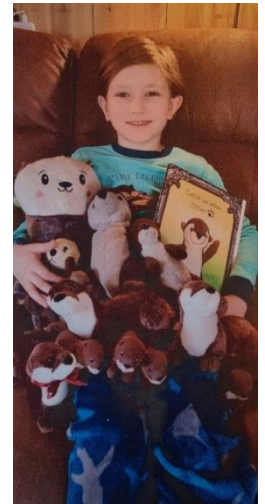
As with many people, the pandemic has been tough for Anakin and our own little otter 'Holly' has helped revitalise his happiness and confidence. He attaches his otter badge, received in a Holly adoption, to his school pencil which he calls his “confidence pencil” and this has helped grow his confidence towards his school work.



Santa brought Anakin two new otter adoptions, Bealltinn and Storm, two more of IOSF's otters and this brought more joy to his life and he "literally shouted with excitement". All three otter pictures proudly sit on his desk and overlook his school work. As Anakin has been working on his handwriting, he decided to write a letter to his favourite three otters, Holly, Bealltinn and Storm. Anakin's letter emphasised his love for the three otters and showed his passion for the species.

We all love otters but it is really refreshing to see how much of a positive impact otters, and our rehabbed otters in particular, can have on people's lives. It is so important and brilliant to see how Anakin's passion for the species is also a major benefit to himself and bringing him confidence.

Anakin, the three otters are very grateful for your support and care for them and knowing you have so much love for them will stand them in good stead for their eventual release!



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

Otters and Orcas

How about "Not for the first time we have been shown photos of otters being chased by Orcas in Scotland. On this occasion the pod, known as the 27s, were led by one major bull and two of the animals went after the otter but it managed to evade them. This is the first time that the 27s pod have been documented going for otters but the other two pods around the Shetland Isles have been seen to do this."

Sharon Jack, the photographer and Orca enthusiast, said that she believed that if the Orcas had really wanted to catch the otter they could have done so but it could also have been the quick wit of the otter that saved it. A trait often used by seals is to head to the kelp for protection, as Orcas don't like it there, and the otter's decision to do the same maybe spared its life.

It is hard to determine whether the Orcas were hunting the otter or merely playing with it. Orca are well known for being incredibly playful, especially with prey, and normally predate on seals in the area. Otters are much leaner and therefore offer less of a meal than a seal so it is difficult to know if otters are being preyed upon regularly or merely misidentified by the whales.

When we first heard of Orcas going for otters we queried it as we thought the otters wouldn't go that far from shore. Then we saw photos showing just how close the Orcas are coming in! In this incident the interaction between the two species happened in a bay and the picture below shows how close and how stealthy they can be!

Whatever the case, this is one lucky otter!

Still on the theme of whales...

Pilot Whales off Skye

On the morning of Friday 4 March we received a phone call from a Janet who used to work with us. She lives in Dunan, about 5 miles from Broadford, and she told us that there was a large pod of pilot whales in the water just in front of her house. In this area there is a narrow channel between Skye and the island of Scalpay and at very low tides you could even walk over to Scalpay. That Friday low tide was about 2pm and it would be very low so there was a real risk of a mass stranding.

We went out to check for ourselves and contacted British Divers Marine Life Rescue. At the narrowest point a



small pod of about six dolphins swam past really quickly but we could see the whales further along the channel towards Portree.

There turned out to be about 45 whales and they seemed to be staying more or less in one place circling one individual. Fortunately they were still in the deepest part of the channel but they did very little apart from spy-hopping.



Pilot whales off the Isle of Skye
© Harry Martin

Things changed at about 3.30pm after the tide had turned and the group became very active and splashing about. Something had obviously happened and at about 5pm they started to move north with more purpose but stopping every few minutes for a rest. They then turned east between Raasay and Scalpay and into deeper water. A similar incident had

happened a few years ago and then the pilot whales moved out of the Scalpay narrows and up to Staffin where some did strand and died. This time they were last seen at about 6.15pm but we were all still on alert.

Within the group there were a few small calves and a very small one was also spotted. It is thought that maybe they moved into the safety of the channel for a female to give birth and this was the one being protected. It is more usual for pilot whales to give birth in summer but they can do this at any time of year on occasions. Maybe the excitement at 3.30 was the arrival of the youngster.

It was a truly amazing sight to see so many whales but we were all so relieved when they left and headed out to open water.

Sea Otter Lamp

Amazing Aberdeen-based potter AJ Simpson brought otters into The Great Pottery Throw Down competition recently.

Inspired by their love of otters, AJ created this amazing sea otter lamp which was described as “genius” and “beautiful” and even earned AJ the “Potter of the Week” award which helped them through to the next round.



©Love Productions

The piece was difficult to perfect and AJ had concerns about making the face “cute and not creepy” but we think this amazing lamp depicted the sea otter perfectly.

“Congratulations!” to AJ, who went on to win the final of The Great Pottery Throw Down. You can keep an eye on AJ's pottery on Facebook -<https://www.facebook.com/ajceramic/> - and Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/ajceramic/?hl=en-gb>

News in Brief

Man caught with endangered species

An associate professor in Texas has been charged with importing illegal wildlife products without acquiring the necessary permits and declaring his possession of them. The Endangered Species act means that anyone



importing parts of certain species must have certain permits etc. to bring these items into the country. Furthermore, the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) requires permits for moving endangered and threatened species or parts of them, and this man had failed to do that. He has been charged with possession of 14 protected species, including Eurasian otters.

https://focusingonwildlife.com/news/texas-biology-professor-charged-for-illegally-trafficking-14-protected-wildlife-species/?utm_source=mailpoet&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter-post-title_1120

Otters in Ireland

A couple of otters have been spotted in Lough Ree near Athlone by the warden for the area. Despite being highly elusive it is great to see photos of otters in the area and see the healthy duo!

<https://www.westmeathindependent.ie/2022/02/16/pair-of-otters-spotted-close-to-athlone>

Otters return to the “Windy City”

Chris Anchor, a longtime wildlife biologist with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, was strolling through Chicago heading for his jury duty. As he was crossing the Chicago River, he looked down and there was an otter feeding in the river. The hundreds of other people crossing the river were oblivious to the otter's presence but Anchor's wildlife knowledge told him to look. For many years it has been assumed that the Chicago River was just too polluted to support the species but this sighting has suggested otherwise.



North American river otter ©Karen James

North American River Otters (NARO) were nearly extinct in Illinois but major restoration programmes have since seen their populations recover. Chicago is around 150 miles from the nearest spot where otters were reintroduced which shows how the species have expanded across the region.

A project has now been launched to monitor the otters within the area. This will help to identify different aspects in relation to these “urban” otters using close monitoring, research and also citizen science.

<https://news.wttw.com/2022/02/22/river-otters-are-back-chicago-new-research-project-aims-find-out-how-they-re-adapting>

Police stop traffic to allow otters to cross

A video has gone viral showing police officers outside Singapore's Presidential Palace, the Istana, stopping the traffic to allow 16, yes 16, smooth-coated otters to cross safely! The officers are used to handling traffic outside the main gate when convoys enter and leave the building but this time it was a convoy of otters.

Otters have become a familiar sight in the city as the habitat has been improved and eco-corridors have been created to allow animals to go between fragmented habitats. As a result of this work the number of otters is estimated to be about 150, roughly twice the number as recently as 2017.

Even the Singapore's President, Lee Hsien Loong, was impressed and wrote “Our local otters have been dropping in on the Istana. Appreciate the care by Istana staff, and members of the public to help them.”

<https://www.timesnownews.com/viral/otterly-wholesome-traffic-stops-as-singapore-police-escort-16-otters-crossing-road-watch-viral-video-article-90182942>

Otter explores new plans for leisure area in Rotherham

Rotherham Council is creating a feature called “Riverside Gardens” by the River Don as part of a masterplan for the town centre. And during the preparation work an otter was spotted inspecting the area. The Council tweeted “It's reassuring to know our river is clean enough for such a mix of ‘otterly’ beautiful wildlife.” This is certainly true and we hope the otter will not be scared away by human disturbance.

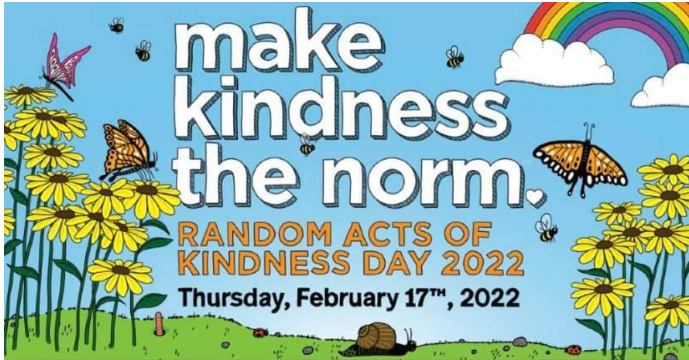
https://www.rotherhamadvertiser.co.uk/news/view,otter-takes-opportunity-to-explore-rotherham-town-centre-masterplan-progres_41153.htm



Joshua Smelser

Joshua Smelser left our world on 5 September 2020 through a senseless act of violence but his legacy will live on forever with the help of others. He had a passion for all living things and was dedicated to helping everyone that he met.

Joshua had a particular love of otters and always supported IOSF and our work. It has clearly been devastating for his family but to continue his memory a memorial fund was set up at <https://www.facebook.com/otterfreaksangelfund>. This is to support the causes he loved including otters, music, animals, and the arts.



Given the person he was it was very fitting that this was posted on his birthday this year.

Thank You... everyone, for your continued support via many channels (direct donations, Facebook Fundraisers, sponsored challenges). Your generosity is inspiring.

And to Trusts and organisations:
The Janelaw Trust and Kilpatrick Fraser Charitable Trust.

We can't do it without you.

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 will take you to our dedicated web page concerning making a Legacy.



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

You can follow us on:



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/>

OR, scan and add our charity code
62575



Annual Supporters' 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** 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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Charity Number SC003875

Join our IOSF mailing list. Click on this link:
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The International Otter Survival Fund
Working to Save the Worlds Otters

