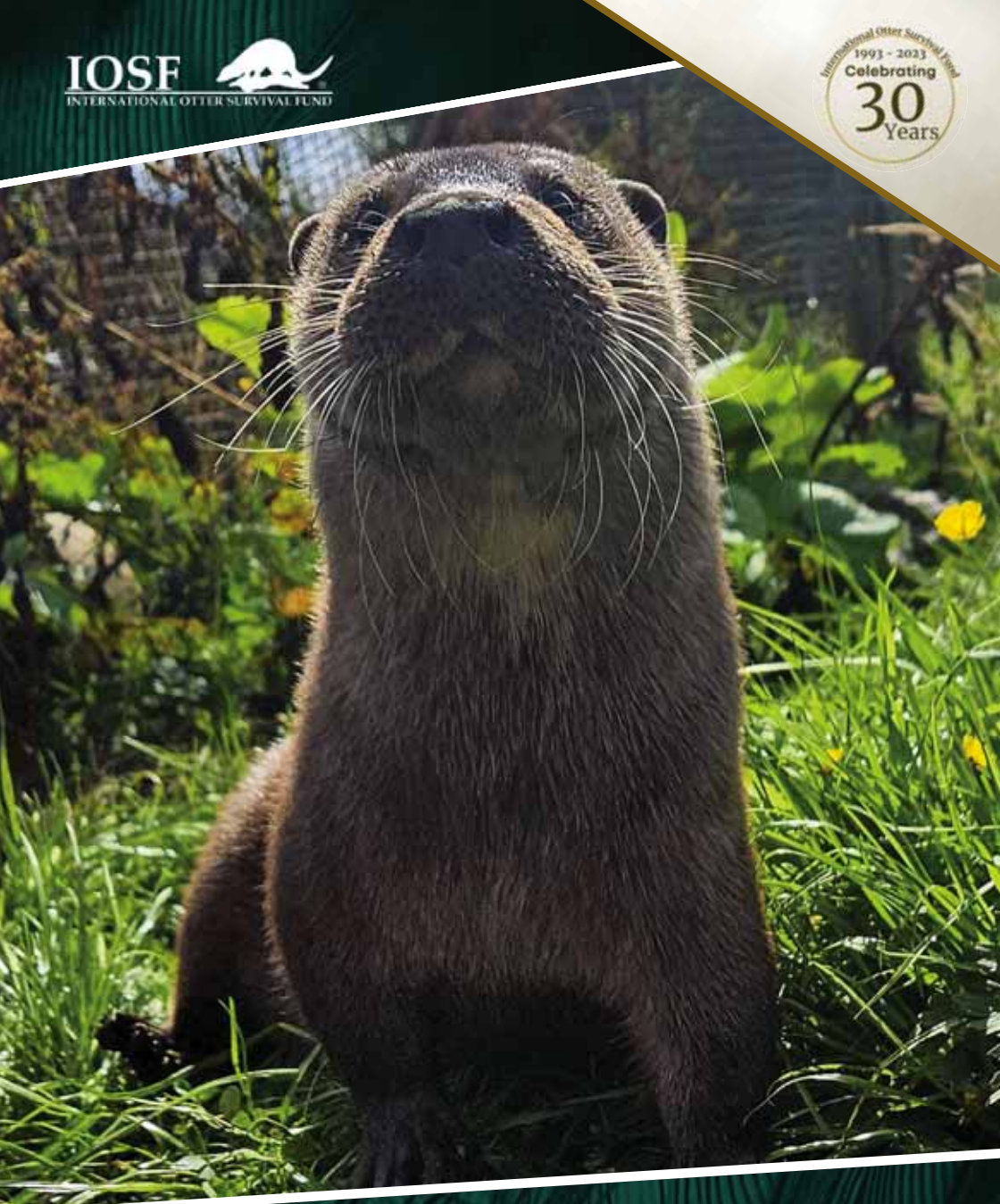


**IOSF**



INTERNATIONAL OTTER SURVIVAL FUND



# 2023 IMPACT REPORT

International Otter Survival Fund

[www.otter.org](http://www.otter.org)

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

# From Paul

The International Otter Survival Fund was inspired by observing otters in their true natural environment in the Hebrides. Because otters live on land and in water, and are at the peak of the food chain, they are an ambassador species to a first-class environment. IOSF was set up to protect and help the 13 species of otter worldwide, through a combination of compassion and science. We support projects to protect otters, which ensures a healthy environment for all species, including our own.

16th November 1993 saw the very beginnings of IOSF and since then, supported by you, it has grown into an internationally respected conservation body. However, our aim is unchanged – to conserve all the species of otter in the world and their habitat. This November, IOSF celebrates 30 years with approximately 160,000 supporters from 39 countries, and has supported projects in 98 countries. Our otter hospital has helped care for 245 otters and worldwide, we have helped 175 cubs.

We would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to everyone who has been involved with IOSF since the start:

The people who have worked with us: Helen, Janet, Jackie, Aodhan, Astrid, Ben and Callum; the various vets we have had the privilege to work with, particularly all those past and present at the Old School Veterinary Practice in Broadford and those who have helped with post mortems over the years – a big thank you.

To our Patron, Julian Pettifer, and Joint Presidents, Laurence Broderick and Dennis Furnell and the Patron of our campaign against the fur trade – HRH Princess Michael of Kent.

To our Board: Jackie West, Sarah Neill, Andrew Cameron, Andy Rothwell and Padma de Silva – a very big thank you for all the help and advice you give.

And a great big thank you to all of you who have supported our work and continue to do so.

But we need to go on into the next 30 years. The world's otters still need our help and we believe we are in the perfect position to do this; and with your continued support, let's go on for another 30 years.

Thank you again



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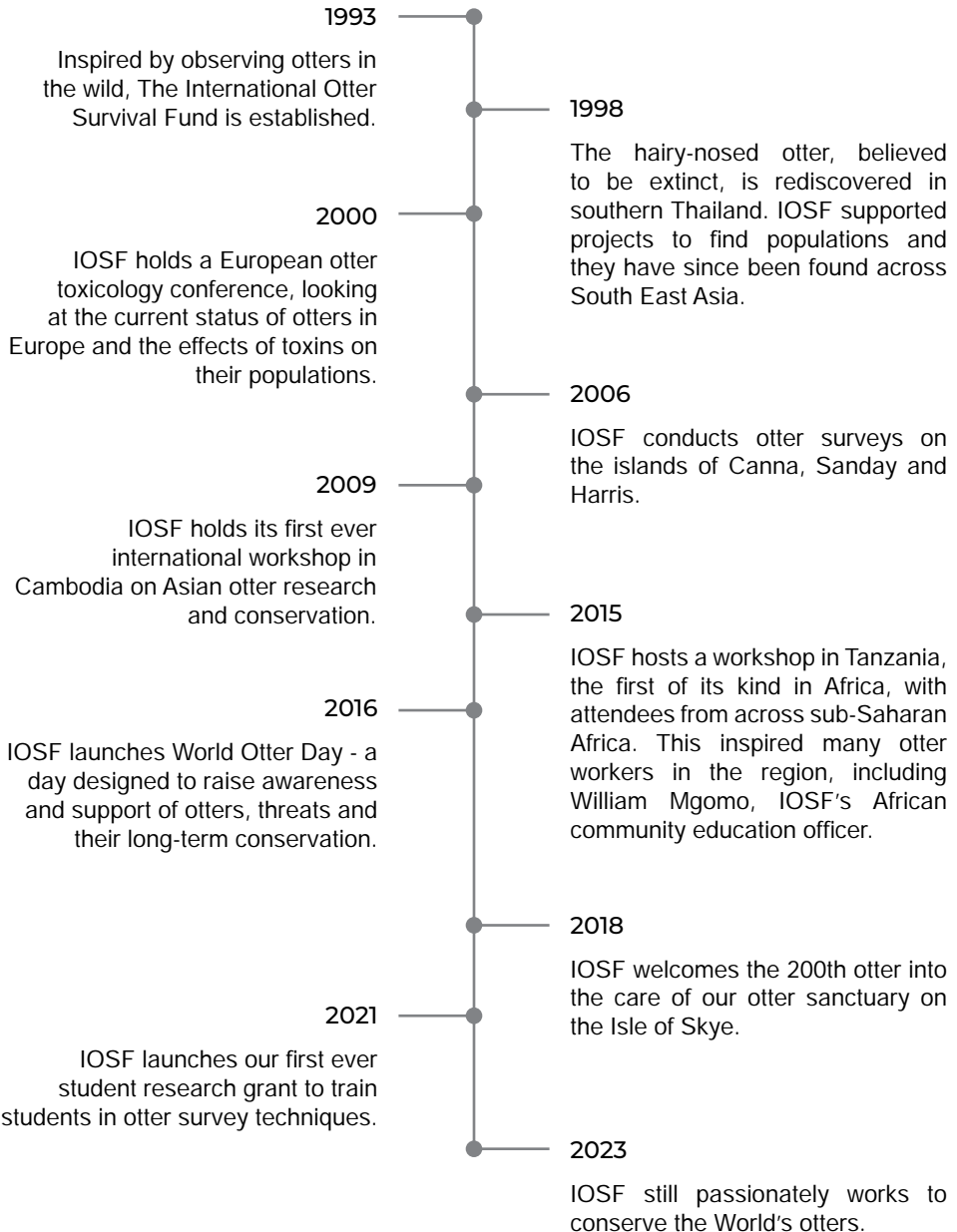
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# IOSF TIMELINE





**IMPACT 1 - EDUCATION**

## EDUCATION

Otters often face false perceptions regarding their numbers, distribution, behaviours and threats to their survival. There is a **LACK OF AWARENESS** regarding their benefits to the ecosystem and this leads to a **LACK OF ACTION** to conserve their populations and their wetland habitats.

IOSF has a number of projects to raise awareness of otters, the benefits of healthy populations and their conservation.

### TEAM OTTER PROGRAMME

IOSF's Team Otter programme is designed to reconnect children with nature, wildlife and the environment, igniting a passion that will last their whole life.

Here are some of our Team Otter programmes.

**Canada** - Team Otter Seaside Park in St. John, News Brunswick, is the newest part of Team Otter. The club has already met many times and helps children learn more about nature and being positive members of the community. They raised funds to support Eden, one of IOSF's otters, and held an otter fundraiser for IOSF World Otter Day. They have also joined Team Otter Broadford's 30 for 30 beach clean challenge!

**Costa Rica** - The Toucan Rescue Ranch works with children through their "Otter Ambassador Project" to highlight issues of wetland degradation and protecting otters.

**Guyana** - Yupukari Wildlife Club is run

by IOSF partners, Save the Giants. They meet regularly so the children can learn about their local wildlife and conservation from experienced and highly-skilled wildlife researcher, Oswin Ambrose, and his team.

**Nigeria** - Michael Salami Olalaken, at Netlink Environmental Conservation Organization, established a Team Otter club in Ondo State, which monitors otters in the area and the threats they face.

**Uganda** - Mutanda Community Conservation Organization runs a Team Otter club around Lake Mutanda raising awareness of otters, wetlands and wildlife, while teaching the children how to swim, a vital lifeline where they live.

**United Kingdom** - Team Otter Broadford has two parts, a primary school group and a high school group. The primary group learn about wildlife through fun and interactive materials and games. They also clean up our local village, build wildlife habitats such as bug hotels, and have many other wildlife and community-based projects. The high school group is much more campaign led and are currently working on a 30 for 30 beach clean in our local area, to celebrate IOSF's 30th birthday. They have made signs to go around our local area to discourage people from littering, helped set up a beach cleaning station and investigated other environmental issues around our area. During this, they are raising money to support clubs around the world, as one of the children said he wanted to "help other kids have what we have". What a great positive attitude.



## COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Education isn't purely about teaching, and education, it's about inclusion.

IOSF works on a number of community education programmes – but we have chosen to showcase the work of William Mgomo, our IOSF African Community Education Officer, and what he has achieved in Tanzania in the last year.



© William Mgomo

favourable conditions for people and otters to thrive.

William is a passionate otter conservation worker and his work has inspired others to follow suit, including Mrisho Mohamedi, Jimmy Chami and Ashura Talagimbudzah.

Mrisho visited two communities to find out how people in different watersheds have



© Mrisho Mohamedi

William attended the IOSF African otter training workshop in Tanzania in 2015 and has since become a real force in community education in his area. Through him, there is now a lot of community awareness and interaction taking place, which is reducing potential threats and helping communities gain a further understanding of the importance of maintaining otter populations and wetlands. Working alongside communities, he can discover the pressures on them, and provide

differing conflict levels. In Bagamoyo, a coastal area, there appeared to be no conflict with otters. Fishermen said they are unsure of the presence of otters and suggested that high noise levels/disturbance could be a reason for that. On the other hand, in the Makurunge area, a freshwater area, conflict with fishermen was substantially higher and otters are known to damage fishing equipment. They also believe that otters are far stronger and more powerful than



© William Mgomo

any other animals of their size, and that hunting for traditional medicines still happens. Mrisho discussed potential solutions to help both otters and people, while emphasising the benefits of having local otter populations. These fishermen are now looking at ways of reducing conflicts and perhaps by adapting their methods, they can peacefully co-exist with the otters.

Jimmy Chami visited Mindu Village in the Morogoro region of Tanzania interacting with the local community. They showed him otter signs and shared their knowledge on otters, how they indicate healthy environments, are important in ecological balance and can aid economic stability through eco-tourism.

Finally, William himself has been continuing his outreach work, with schools and local communities and through World Otter Day. He regularly visits different areas and works alongside the local people, including fishing communities. In this way he has managed to find mitigation to reduce threats/ conflicts with otters, increase local awareness and ensure a more peaceful co-existence between people and otters. In addition, William has been working on local and national media to help spread the word of otters further afield and has presented a radio show on otters and wetlands. William's work has inspired people to give more information and otter observations. This included a record of the African clawless otter, a rarer species in Tanzania, in the Morogoro region and there are plans to restore this habitat further.

All this community education work is tied in with Team Otter children's outreach. Throughout the last year, there has been a concerted, well-run effort to grow

the number of children that are taught about otters and why it is so important to look after their populations. Between William, Ashura, Jimmy and Mrisho over 20,000 children (*yes, you read that right*) have been visited across three regions and various schools. A truly astonishing number that should help keep otters in the mind, and at the forefront of efforts, for many years.

Tanzania is a hive of activity. William's passion is evident, and infectious, and has clearly inspired the next generation of otter conservation workers across Tanzania.

***Should you be interested in joining our education programme then please contact our education officer at [Ben@otter.org](mailto:Ben@otter.org)***

been



© Mrisho Mohamedi



© William Mgomo



© Mrisho Mohamedi



## WORLD OTTER DAY

IOSF World Otter Day 2023 was a huge success and we want to start by saying a massive thank you to all of you for taking part and spreading the word about otters globally. This year, we had events in 40 different countries, across all continents, bar Antarctica – so truly a ‘WORLD’ Otter Day again!

### IOSF World Otter Day Grants

IOSF were delighted to offer four World Otter Day grants to the following projects.

#### *Earth Crusaders Organisation, India*

Earth Crusaders Organisation ran an education event for local students. During which, the students were delivered presentations on otters of the local area, including current projects, distribution and the challenges otters face. Each participant joined in making pledges on how they can help with the long-term survival of otters in the region.

#### *Cork Nature Network, Ireland*

This grant helped develop a number of promotions and actions online to promote and celebrate the day. This ensured there was a much higher engagement from people from around Cork, and Ireland, on otters, their importance, highlighting their presence and the conservation issues they face.

#### *Subarna Ghimire, Nepal*

Subarna Ghimire held an event in Kathmandu, involving 35 individuals, including 25 students. The objective of the event was to educate university students about otters, their importance, habitats, challenges they face and encourage



more work to be done across Nepal. The event focussed on dissemination of awareness material and an education workshop raised awareness of otters and the current work being conducted helping to inspire the attendees to be part of otter research and conservation across Nepal.

#### *Placide Nkusi, Rwanda*

Placide Nkusi's event had three elements: an awareness meeting with a variety of different stakeholders; community outreach activities; and an online seminar, with students and university individuals, involving IOSF's Dr. Paul Yoxon. Furthermore, Placide created banners, leaflets and t-shirts and translated

IOSF's video into their local language, Kinyarwanda -

<https://youtu.be/MfzWu46Hmks>

### Other Events

IOSF was delighted to see events in 40 countries around the world. Please read below for more information of some of the events that took place.

#### *Canada*

Team Otter – Seaside Park Elementary raised awareness of otters and sold ‘popsicles’ to raise funds for otters and their conservation. They delivered them around their area and managed to raise a massive \$244.79CAD for IOSF. There was a soap box derby which some kids were involved in – and they remembered otters with an otter themed cart!

#### *Germany*

Heidy Davis, of the German Otter Protection Network, delivered three World Otter Day events: an “otter-walk”, with otter spotter Markus Heines,

along the River Schwalm; an information stand at Duisburg Zoo; and a talk on the importance of otters to the Friends of the Zoo Association at Duisburg Zoo. During Heidi's talk, she chose to raise funds for Caroline Leuchtenberger's giant otter project 'Projecto Airanhas' in Brazil.

### **Malaysia**

Our friends at the Malaysian Nature Society/Malaysia Otter Network (MSN/MON) joined World Otter Day again this year. They held human-otter conflict workshops across three districts in the Selangor state. The workshops were conducted in collaboration between MNS/MON, Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia and Department of Fisheries Malaysia to raise awareness about the importance of otters, mitigation measures and coexistence among aquaculture farmers.

MNS/MON also held an otter exhibition with Tapii Coffee, whose logo is an otter. This comprised of otter talks, documentary screening, merchandise booth and an otter-themed exhibition in the cafe! Tapii Coffee also decided to make the exhibition permanent to help educate and raise awareness of otters.

### **Pakistan**

The Mountain Society for Research & Development (MSRD Chitral) organised an event in Chitral to commemorate World Otter Day. The event raised awareness and sensitised local people and students to the importance of conserving otters and their freshwater habitats. As part of their celebration, they ran three different events: an awareness workshop, a radio



talk and school outreach.

### **Paraguay**

Para La Tierra celebrated World Otter Day with their eco-club. During the event, the children learned about the importance of otters and their role in the ecosystem, painted an otter poster and made some otter masks. They finished by going out to the nearby river to see if they could spot any otters!

### **Social Media**

Social media can be such an effective, powerful tool, to get thousands, if not millions, of people interacting with otters and understand their conservation needs and benefits. IOSF was inundated in otter posts, and for that we thank you. We were delighted to see how many people were interacting with otters and **#WorldOtterDay**. So much so that it was trending number 1 in the UK, and trending worldwide!

### **Webinar**

IOSF held its third IOSF World Otter Day Webinar, following two highly successful, informative and enjoyable events over the previous two years. As always, we held two webinars throughout the day to help reduce the impacts of time-zones and make it a worldwide event.

You can find out more, and watch the webinars at IOSF's YouTube channel (@internationalottersurvivalfund) – or scan the QR codes here.

***We are delighted with everyone's involvement and are already making plans for World Otter Day 2024.***

Morning Session



Evening Session



## 30 YEAR HIGHLIGHT

### Training Workshops

In the IUCN Red List, 12 of the 13 otter species are declining in number and only the North American river otter is regarded as “stable”. Otters need good water quality which is essential for all species, including our own, but they face many threats from habitat destruction, pollution and illegal trade.

A successful conservation programme must be founded on recent sound scientific data and must also work with local communities. In many areas there are few otter scientists so IOSF started a series of training workshops for local people who understand customs and traditions and can speak to communities in their own language.

The first Asian workshop was held in Cambodia in 2009 and this was followed by similar events in Indonesia (2013), Bangladesh (2014), China (2016), Laos (2018) and Malaysia (2022). Workshops have also been held in Tanzania (2015), Guyana (2019) and in November 2023 in Mexico. Recent workshops are more regional, involving people from neighbouring countries to extend the programme and encourage more transboundary co-operation.

Workshop participants include scientists,



university lecturers, forest rangers, members of NGOs and other similar stakeholders and also local government personnel to encourage better law enforcement and cross-border collaboration.

The workshops are a mix of classroom studies with discussion, and practical field work. In the classroom, participants learn about otter ecology and their role in the ecosystem, species identification and threats, particularly from trade. In the field they practice identifying field signs, data recording, etc.

During each workshop a network is formed to share experience, education material, and co-ordinate research amongst co-workers. This acts as a launchpad for collaboration, encouraging community work and co-operation in conservation and law enforcement. IOSF supports these networks but local workers are responsible for running them and identifying priorities.

It is hard to quantify changes in attitude but local field workers liaising with their own communities can see the change. For example, with regards to the pet trade more people are recognising the problem and reporting incidents. Without such co-operation between communities and trained project workers this would not happen.





**IMPACT 2 - RESCUE & CARE**

## UNITED KINGDOM

This year we have cared for 13 otters, 2 adults and 11 cubs. Six otters (Baird, Döbhran, Marina, Mist, Storm and Wally) have been released and three remain in care and two will hopefully be released next spring.

Bealltinn, came to us as an older cub from Mull in May 2020 and is still here. Originally, she showed no wariness of people but in her more remote enclosure she now very much keeps herself private. The big problem for any potential release of Bealltinn is that she does not appear to like water and therefore could never hunt in the wild.

The other two in our care are the inseparable Winston and Eden, who are very reclusive. They now have two sleeping quarters, firstly, the sleeping box

which IOSF provides, and then, under the pond, where they have dug out a safe haven during cleaning/feeding. These two are still a considerable time off becoming adults and, all being well, are aimed to be released in the Spring of 2024.

It is a sad fact that not all otters which come into our care survive but we always have a post mortem examination carried out to try and find out the cause of death. Of the four animals which died, one adult had severe bite wounds and was very emaciated, two cubs died of pneumonia and one of a suspected myocardial infarction.

As usual we have also cared for various other species including hedgehogs, bats and various birds.



Winston And Eden



Döbhran



Storm's release

© Donna Suzanne Hopkin

## WORLDWIDE

IOSF has always supported people rescuing and caring for otters worldwide. Many of these are otters rescued from the pet trade which are taken to centres particularly in Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia.

In addition to the 21 otters already in care, in May 2023 Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT) received two male otters. They had been kept as pets for six years, but their owner now felt that they needed a better home. The unusual thing is that they are different species and yet they are inseparable - Oreo is a hairy-nosed otter (believed to be only 1 of 2 individuals of this species currently in care, the other in Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Center, Cambodia) and Bacon is an Asian small-clawed otter. With funding donated through IOSF, WFFT have built Oreo and Bacon a special new enclosure. As well as in Thailand, as mentioned, the centres in Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia are still caring for otters rescued from the trade.

Dijla, the albino Eurasian otter found in Iraq, is still in care at Baghdad Zoo. Because of the unique colour of her coat she can never be released as it would be too easy for hunters to spot her. So the Iraqi Ministry of Environment and the Iraqi Green Climate Organization arranged for her to go to the zoo. She had been found by a fisherman who turned down offers of \$50,000-\$100,000 preferring to give her to a reputable place. This man definitely saved Dijla's life and has also drawn more attention to the threat of the pet trade and its financial power.

IOSF has also offered advice for the care of otters around the world and will always be sure to help an otter in need.



Oreo



Bacon



Oreo

## 30 YEAR HIGHLIGHT



Over the 30 years we have cared for 245 otters. Su was the very first in 1993 - upon release the following year, within 15 minutes she was diving, hunting and coming up with her own fish. Winston, is our most recent cub, and he will be released next spring.

In 2009, we held a workshop in Cambodia and soon after a fisherman found a hairy-nosed otter caught in his fishing hooks. The fisherman could have sold the otter for about \$200, a huge amount, but, instead he knew about the Cambodian otter project and the otter was taken to the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre. This otter became known as Dara, meaning 'star' in the local Khmer language, and he became an ambassador to the local people for otter conservation. IOSF raised funds for a new enclosure for Dara and when he moved in, the Buddhist monks blessed his new home, as is customary for



Su



Winston

people when they move house.

Mazu really has to be one of the biggest highlights of our 30 years. On 11 February 2010, we received an email saying "I just got word from the Congo that hunters brought a dead female Congo clawless otter from the forest. Outlook is bleak." But the outlook was far from 'bleak'. The dedicated care of Rita and Glen Chapman, and their trusted Congolese helpers, Delphin and Sico, meant that not only did she survive but she was returned to the wild. Mazu was also more than just a 'rescued otter', Mazu was the face of change and hope for otters, becoming something of a figurehead for otters, and wildlife. They were no longer seen as pests, or a threat – they were seen as individuals. People came from far and wide to visit Mazu, who was the catalyst for change. Since then, they have cared for many more otters, both Congo clawless and spotted-necked, and set up the Kikongo Otter Sanctuary.



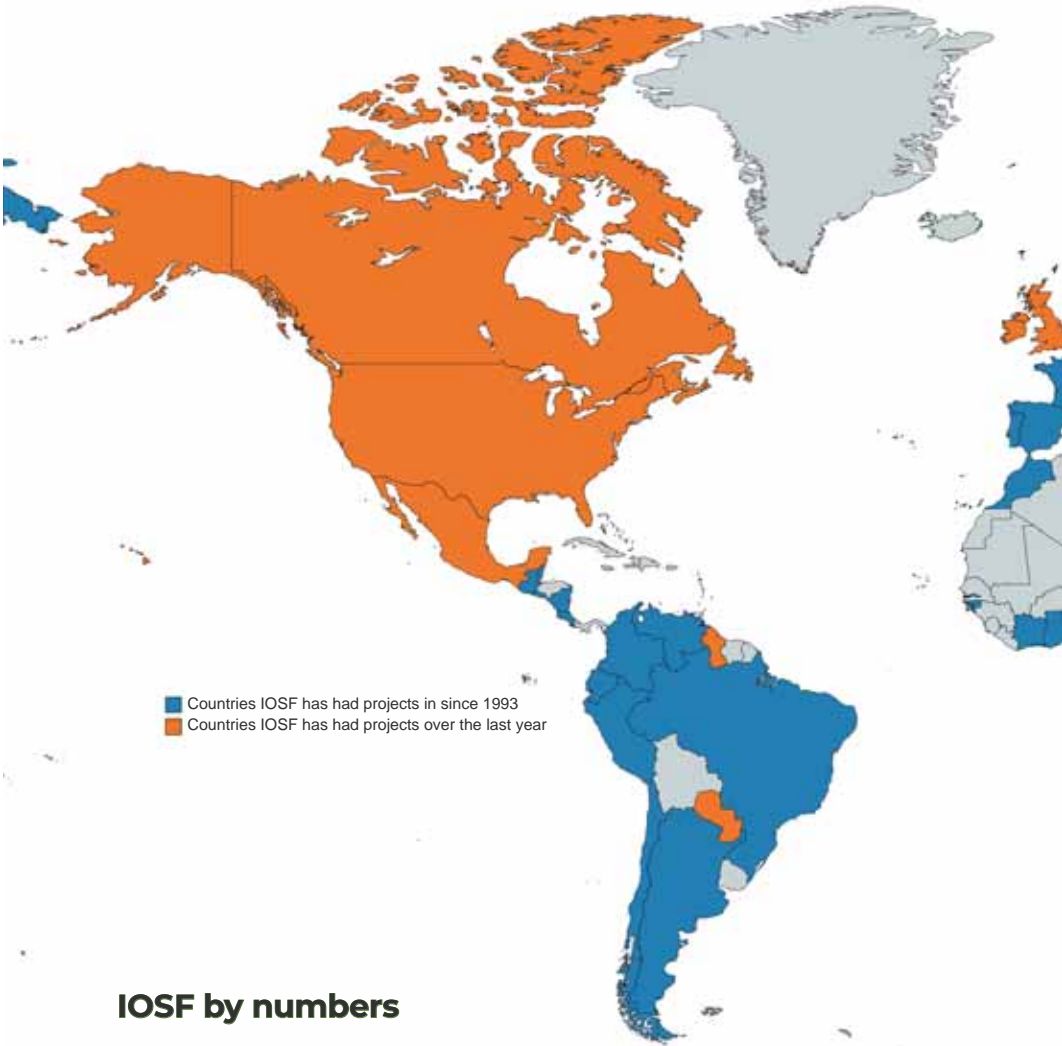
Dara and the monks

© Annette Olsson



Mazu

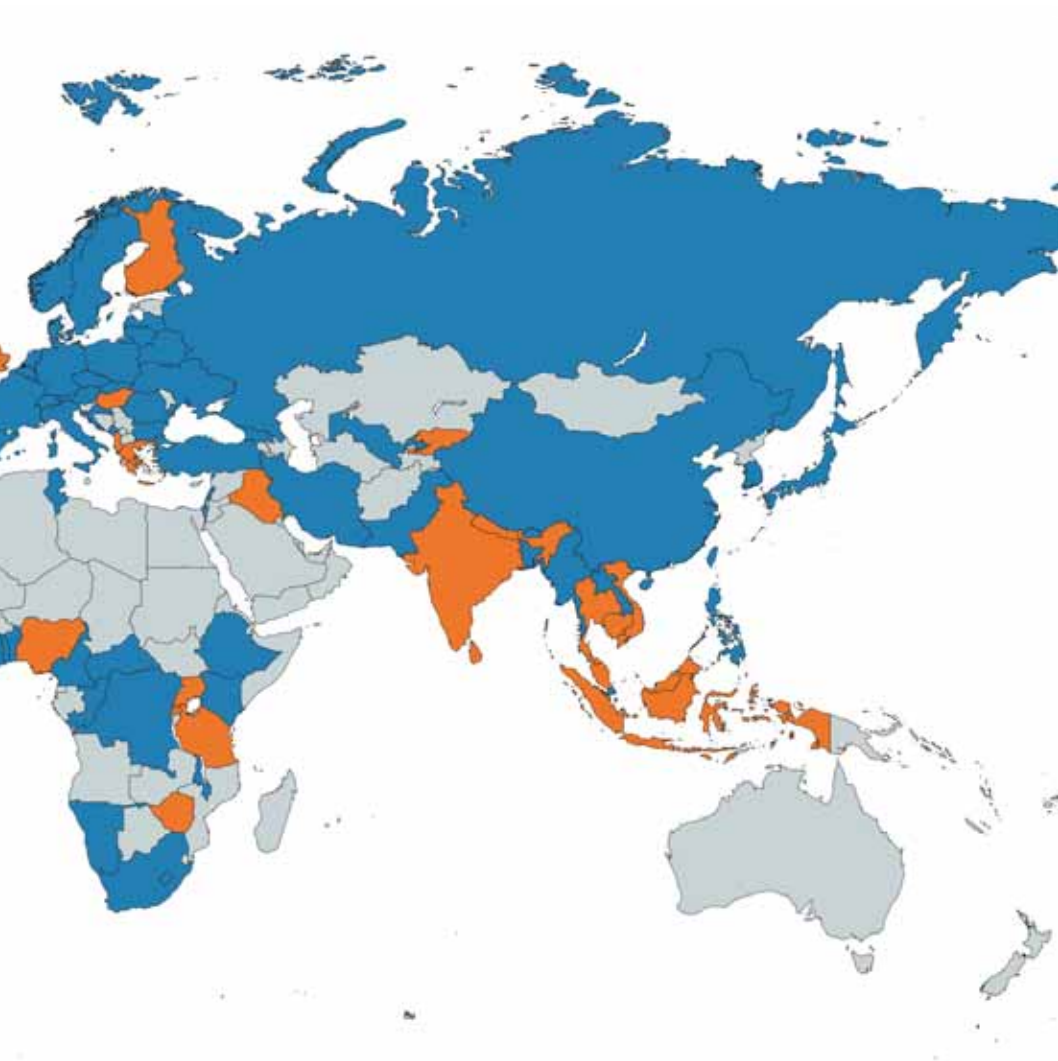
© Glen and Rita Chapman



## IOSF by numbers

- 19 Languages available for the IOSF video
- 21 Number of countries represented at IOSF workshops
- 30 Years of helping otters worldwide
- 40 Countries held a World Otter Day event
- 50 Number of countries where we have helped cubs or injured otters
- 64 Number of countries we have supporters
- 98 Number of countries where we have supported projects
- 175 Number of cubs or injured otters abroad that we have helped
- 200+ People signed up for the IOSF Webinar for World Otter Day
- 245 Number of cubs and injured otters we have treated at our Skye hospital
- 160,000+ Supporters worldwide





## **Otter News PDF – Reduce waste and our costs.**

Help reduce our printing and postage costs and put more money into otter conservation by reading your Otter Review and newsletters as PDFs online. Together, we will cut waste and protect our environment. If you would like to do this please email us at [enquiries@otter.org](mailto:enquiries@otter.org) quoting your sponsorship number. However, if you prefer, we are still happy to send out a printed copy to you.



# IMPACT 3 - RESEARCH

## RESEARCH

### UK

#### *Isle of Skye Otter Monitoring*

During 2023, IOSF conducted its 10th year of monitoring otter populations across the island where we are based. The study showed that some holts can be found inactive for a while but the otter population appears to have remained constant throughout the 10 years.

#### *IOSF Student Grant – Isle of Benbecula*

In 2022, IOSF launched its first student grant to train students in otter survey field techniques on the Isle of Barra. This included identification of otter signs, spraint recognition and analysis, and



©Andy Rothwell

observations of wild otters. This was so successful that we ran it again this year – this time, on the Isle of Benbecula. Two students joined Andy Rothwell, IOSF board member and experienced ecological surveyor, to gain experience on otters and survey techniques.



©Andy Rothwell

### International

#### *Algeria*

In 2023 Seddiki et al conducted a study into the Eurasian otter around Lake Jorf Torba in SW Algeria. They confirmed the presence of otters but numbers are extremely limited and a serious conservation effort will be necessary for their long-term survival.

#### *Bangladesh*

A report by Akash and Charma documented an incident that took place near the Kassalong Reserve Forest, Chattogram Hill Tracts, SE Bangladesh. Unfortunately, the otter was dead but it was confirmed as a Eurasian otter. This provided the first evidence of the



©Andy Rothwell

presence of this species in Bangladesh after more than 50 years as well as in the western cusp of the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot.

### *Iran*

IOSF's Middle Eastern Co-ordinator, Omar Al-Sheikhly, and co-researcher, SB Mousavi, obtained the first breeding record of Maxwell's otter (sub-species of the smooth-coated otter) in Hoor Ol-Azim Wetland in SW Iran.

### *Kyrgyzstan*

Very little is known about otters in Kyrgyzstan and documented research has never been conducted on numbers and ecology. Eurasian otters are believed to have isolated populations, but their range appears to have contracted considerably. Learning more about these otters and exerting efforts toward their conservation is more important than ever, as pressures on this population are increasing, and extinction of otters in Kyrgyzstan is definitely possible.

A survey project has just begun in the Chong-Alay area to provide base-line data on distribution, diet, threats, etc. and identify reasons as to why otters have declined and are confined to certain areas.

### *Malaysia*

Following the workshop in Malaysia in April 2022, work has continued with new information on hairy-nosed otters in Selangor and in the north of the country. Malaysian Nature Society and Malaysia Otter Network are continuing their extensive research into otter populations, with a focus on the Selangor region.

### *Rwanda*

Placide Nkusi is currently researching the spotted-necked otter on Lake Kivu, Rwanda, one of the first studies of the species in the country. Placide is also planning to write a paper for submission to the IOSF OTTER Journal in 2024.



© John Williams

## Otter Conservation Network of Africa

It is always great to see how much work is being done across Africa in regards to otters and there is more about this elsewhere in this report.

Like many species, there are concerns about the long-term survival of otters across the continent with threats such as persecution, habitat loss, climate change and traditional beliefs.

Africa is home to four species of otter. Three in the sub-Saharan region, Congo clawless otter (*Aonyx congicus*), African clawless otter (*Aonyx capensis*) and spotted-necked otter (*Hydrictis*



*macullicolis*). The Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) lives in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia but sightings are rare.

IOSF has resources that are available for use across the region, including the IOSF Children's pack, available in English, French and Swahili – and the IOSF Video which has been translated in to Arabic, English, French, Kinyarwanda and Swahili. We also have an identification card, which helps distinguish the difference between otter species, and species that are regularly confused with otters.

## Asian Otter Conservation Network

Asia has also been active in otter conservation, and like Africa, there is more about this work throughout the Impact Report.

Asia is home to five species of otter. The sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*), lives on the Pacific coasts of Russia and northern Japan. Previously, it was believed that the otters seen off Japan, were from Russian populations, but recent evidence has shown that there is a small breeding population off Hokkaido, with four pairs of mother and cubs seen during 2023.

Eurasian otter sightings are still rare across the region but research work is revealing more information. Studies in Nepal and Bangladesh have found Eurasian otters present in small areas (both reported in IOSF OTTER Journal Volume 9, 2023). Research is also being conducted in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and further sightings have been made in Iran.



The illegal trade is still a serious threat to otters, particularly in SE Asia (see Campaign section). Rescue centres are regularly receiving Asian small-clawed otters (*Aonyx cinereus*) and smooth-coated otters (*Lutrogale perspicillata*), as well as the extremely rare hairy-nosed otter (*Lutra sumatrana*).

IOSF has numerous resources available for use across Asia – all of which are available at [www.otter.org](http://www.otter.org). This includes ID cards specific to particular regions and the IOSF video available in various languages.

### PASS IT ON

Recycle your otter news by passing it on to friends and family, your local library or school; doctor's surgery or hospital, vet's waiting room, etc. Don't waste it, spread the word.

## 30 YEARS HIGHLIGHT

It is clearly impossible to cover all the projects which have been carried out in the 98 countries over the past 30 years. So, we will take just a couple of examples:

### *Otter post-mortems*

IOSF works with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and Cardiff University's Otter Project (CUOP) to provide otters for post-mortem and gain more information on the health of otters across the UK. Although most otter deaths are the result of road collisions, these studies look at other aspects such as health at death, age etc, and help to identify any issues that may need to be acted upon. For example, there have been a few cases of otters being confirmed with Avian Influenza, although it was unknown if this was the cause of death.

We thank SRUC and CUOP for their continued work.



### *Nepal*

Researchers in Nepal are particularly active with recent studies in many parts of the country; a survey by Purna Man Shrestha on Eurasian otters in Myagdi River and Thuli Bheri River and another record of this species by Mohan Shrestha; Jyoti Bhandari has looked at the status of smooth-coated otters in Bardia National Park and also done awareness work in communities. We are grateful to all of the positive otter workers in Nepal.

Many research projects are published in the IOSF OTTER Journal and in issue 9 (2023) there have been papers on sea otters in USA, Eurasian in UK and Nepal, smooth-coated otters in Pakistan, India and Nepal, the sub-species of Maxwell's otter in Iran, and the first evidence of Eurasian otters in Bangladesh in over 50 years.





# IMPACT 4 - CAMPAIGNS

Most of you are aware of the impact that illegal trade is having on otters across the world. Otters are being taken from the wild which is clearly having a drastic effect on otter populations, not to mention, the major psychological and physical affects it has on these individuals.

Otters are traded for three main reasons: as pets, for their fur, and/or for traditional beliefs.

## Pet Trade

Otters are wild animals, and forcing them into a life of captivity is cruel. Mothers attempt to protect their young from capture, and are often killed in the process, while the cubs, sometimes only days old, are transported to inhumane and unhygienic conditions within markets. These conditions are no place to raise

young animals and quite often these otters will die, and be 'replaced', having a further impact on otter populations.

### *SE Asia*

The biggest issue, in terms of the pet trade, comes from SE Asia, where Asian small-clawed otters are regularly trafficked into markets. Although we emphasise that this species faces the biggest threat from the pet trade, smooth-coated otters are often rescued in seizures. Even hairy-nosed and Eurasian otters have also been found, two species that are extremely rare across the region.

Rescue centres are regularly rescuing otters from the pet trade. Centres in Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand all have a number of otters within their care – including the rare hairy-nosed otter, one of which was rescued recently





in Thailand. It is also worth noting, that the substantial number of otters that are in care is only the otters that are rescued, and many “slip-through” checkpoints and into a life of captivity.

### *Other areas*

IOSF often says that the trade is worldwide, and, although SE Asia is a particular problem, it is important to understand that such trade can happen anywhere. We have recently been made aware of two cases of pet otters in India and also a neotropical otter rescued in Ecuador, which probably cannot be released back to the wild.

We must remain vigilant to the fact that trade can happen anywhere!

But, the question remains, what is driving the trade?

### *Social Media*

Social media is now the biggest factor driving the pet trade. While writing this report, we did a quick search of ‘otter’ on one of these platforms. Of the first 50 posts, 44 (88%) of the posts were of pet otters. People are seeing these platforms and thinking that otters are acceptable pets, but it is so important that we emphasise that they are not.

Otters are cute, that we cannot deny, but too many of these posts are glorifying otters as pets. They show cute photos and videos of otters ‘performing’ as though they are the perfect pet. What you don’t see are the conditions, the impact on wild populations and the psychological issues that are forced on these otters as a result, and many of these ‘cute’ otter performances are often stress-related actions.

Furthermore, social media sites are acting as a market place. Despite their own rules stating that animal sales are not allowed, it isn’t difficult to find otters for sale for nominal prices.

Despite multiple attempts to reach out to many social media sites, IOSF is still

to receive a reply. Social media has to become stronger in enforcing their own rules, stop glorifying a cruel trade and be responsible for making a difference for otters, and all other illegally trafficked animals.

### *Indonesia*

A few years ago, the Indonesian Government upgraded the protective status of the smooth-coated otter, thanks to pressure from various organisations, including IOSF. We have also been campaigning for similar protection to be given to the Asian small-clawed otter and during 2023, we sent another letter, signed by multiple other organisations, to the Indonesian Government about this.

We know that often these laws are “on paper” but they can still deter some individuals from taking part. We are still to get a reply but hope that this will be acted upon which will help this species in Indonesia.

## **Fur Trade**

Otters have such luxurious fur, the thickest of any mammal in the world. So they were hunted ferociously at the height of the fur trade putting extreme pressure on populations.

IOSF is totally opposed to any exploitation of otters, or any other animal, for fur and has been actively campaigning against this since 2006. In Asia otter fur is highly regarded and China remains a big market.

But how many people know that thousands of North American river otters are killed for fur LEGALLY each year in North America. In some states trapping drove otters to local extinction and so they were reintroduced. Populations are showing signs of recovery but lessons have not been learnt, and legal trapping takes place across much of the species’ range, including in states where they were reintroduced! Across both Canada and USA there are now only eight regions

that do not trap otters, out of a total of 61!

IUCN state that hunting of a species can be allowed if it is “sustainable”. For that to be the case you must know how many you have and how many are killed each year. Yes, we know the numbers killed but there is NO DATA on population numbers. Whenever IOSF has asked for actual scientific figures we have been told “there are lots”, “numbers are healthy”. This is NOT scientific data and so trapping cannot be considered “sustainable”.

In the IOSF OTTER Journal Volume 7 (2021) we published “A review of trapping of North American river otters) with “harvest” numbers obtained through the official body for each state, such as the Department for Fish and Wildlife. The most recent data for that time was from 2018/2019 during which time 24,039 otters were killed for fur.

It is true that numbers of otters killed has

gone down but this is largely because demand has dropped and so did prices but this can go back up at any time.

In addition to legal trapping, Wildlife Services in USA are responsible for “killing/euthanising” hundreds more otters under their programme to “resolve wildlife conflicts to allow people and wildlife to coexist”. The number killed is steadily increasing and 766 otters were killed in 2022 ([https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/sa\\_reports/sa\\_pdrs/pdr-reports-2022](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/sa_reports/sa_pdrs/pdr-reports-2022))

IOSF will continue to campaign to stop trade in otters for fur in all countries, including North America.

*If you have any concerns of otter trade or cruelty – either online or in person, then please let IOSF know. We appreciate you may want to remain anonymous but please do send any concerns to [enquiries@otter.org](mailto:enquiries@otter.org)*

## 30 YEAR HIGHLIGHT

IOSF has been working with various conservation organisations to get a complete ban on snares in the UK for many years. These barbaric devices have been used for so-called “pests” for so long but obviously they do not discriminate which animals they will catch. We have had many otters with terrible injuries and people’s pets have also suffered in this way.

The law was changed so that only free-running snares could be used – that means that if the animal doesn’t pull the wire will not tighten and will loosen until they pull again. Of course, we all know that any animal trapped in this way will keep pulling to try and get free and so there is little difference between these and the self-locking snares.

So, the only way to stop this cruelty was a complete ban.

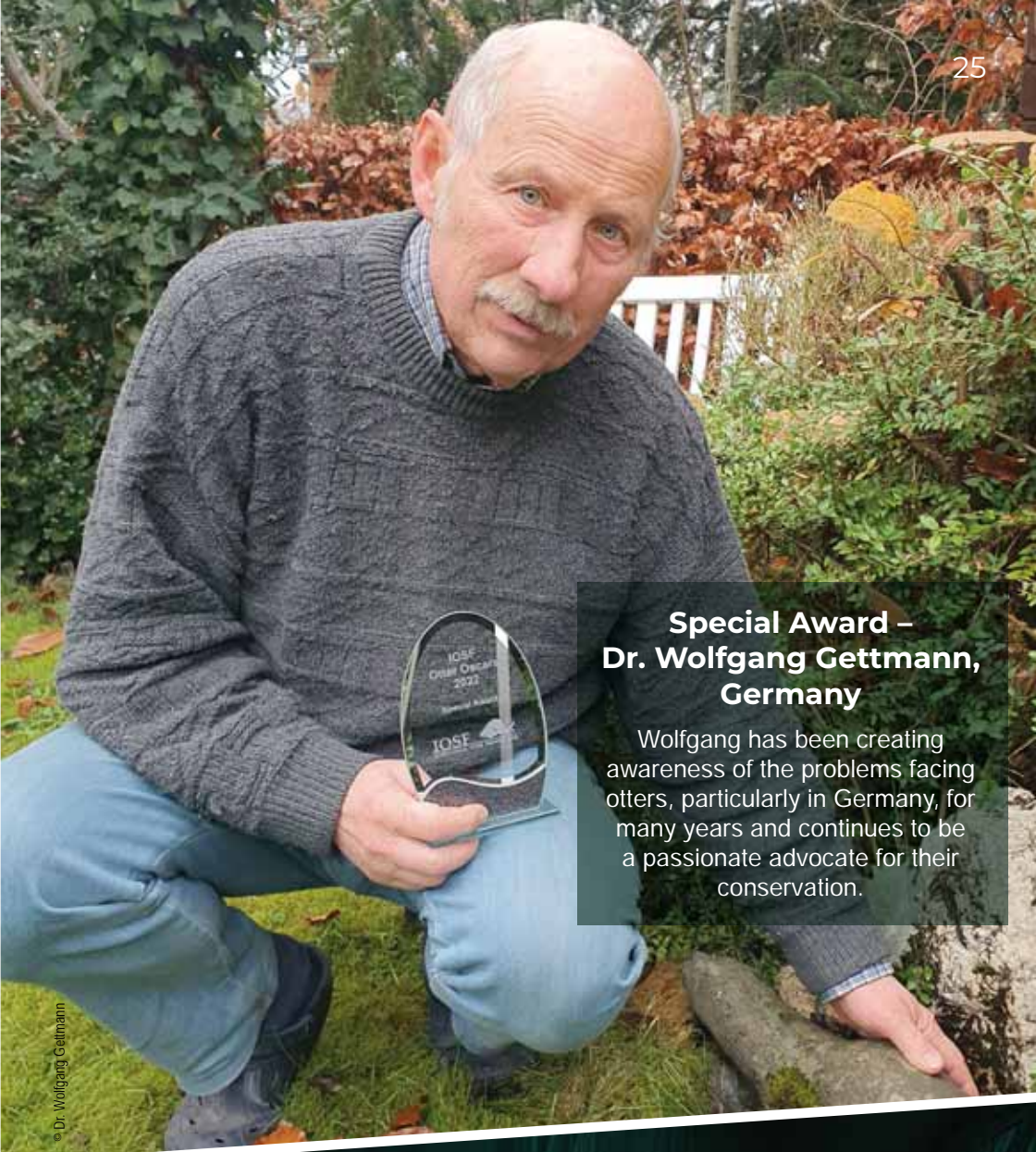


After years of campaigning, we finally have started to see success. Wales has become the first country in the UK to bring in such a ban and the law should come into effect in 2023, once it has been granted Royal Assent.

Now we are hopeful that Scotland will also bring in a ban on snares as the Scottish Government has published a consultation on the use of snares. It is so important that we tell the Scottish Government that these horrific devices MUST be banned completely and the Scottish SPCA should have greater powers to stop illegal killing and suffering of our wild animals.

Then we also have to ensure that pressure is put on England and Northern Ireland to do the same.

It shows that hard-work, commitment and passion to making a change can work.



© Dr. Wolfgang Gettmann

### Special Award – Dr. Wolfgang Gettmann, Germany

Wolfgang has been creating awareness of the problems facing otters, particularly in Germany, for many years and continues to be a passionate advocate for their conservation.

## IOSF OTTER OSCARS

Our seventh IOSF Otter Oscars took place in 2022. We received a variety of submissions from four continents, covering some fascinating projects which were considered with interest by the Panel. The range of the work carried out by participants demonstrates their dedication to conservation and so to the future for otters, which we appreciate and thank everyone for their great efforts.

The remaining winners for 2022 are:

**Research – Frederick Kistner, Larissa Slaney (and co-contributors Asaf Ben David, Zoe Jewell and Sky Alibhair), WildTrack**

For the development of non-invasive technology to survey the distribution of wild otter populations using otter footprints. This system could contribute in the gathering of vital information about elusive and declining populations of otter species around the world.



© Dr. Larissa Slaney

**Group or Organisation – Chesapeake Bay Otter Alliance: Smithsonian Environmental Research Centre, USA**

This group has set up the East Coast's first organisation for monitoring the North American River Otter's on Chesapeake Bay, USA.



© Chesapeake Bay Otter Alliance



© Krunal Trivedi

**Community Achievement – Krunal Trivedi, Nature Club Surat, India**

Due to human/otter conflict between otters and the fishing community in Surat City, Krunal brought together stakeholders to develop ways to reduce conflict through outreach and mitigation methods.



© Woo Chee Young

**Young Person Award – Lim Wei Hang and Haizan anak Kamarul Zaman, Malaysia Nature Society (MNS), Malaysia**

For their incredible knowledge, passion and help during the IOSF/MNS Workshop in April.

**Photography/Artwork – Talia Rose, USA**

Having spent a decade photographing and documenting otters on a stretch of the South Fork Eel River, California (for her own interest), Talia became involved in HSU River Otter Citizen Science Project. She has shared hundreds of her photographs and data with the Project, as well as using them to raise awareness about otters.



© Talia Rose



## Future Plans

So what does the future hold for IOSF? With the support of all of you caring people we are confident that we can continue to grow and make an even greater impact on the conservation of otters and their habitats.



about what is going on in the otter world. We love getting to know more about the various people across the world through our "Meet ..." series.

So what do we see for the future:

- More children involved in Team Otter clubs worldwide
  - More otter training workshops
  - More practical conservation
  - More otter works
- AND
- Less trade in otters for pets and fur

If we look back to our very first newsletter and compare it with what is being achieved now we can see how far we have come.

We hope you are enjoying our monthly e-updates and regular mailings telling you

**AND WE WOULD LOVE TO HAVE MORE INVOLVEMENT BY YOU, SPECIAL OTTER-CARING PEOPLE.**

## Thank You

As IOSF moves forward, working to expand its reach across the world, the support we receive from all of our supporters continues to provide us with assurance and conviction in the way ahead. Consequently, we want to send a big "Thank you" to everyone who has given support and assistance over the past year.

Paul and the IOSF Team

**To the organisations that have supported us financially, we also send thanks:**

Alice McCosh Trust, The Alice Noakes Memorial Charitable Trust, Bartlett Taylor Charitable Trust, The Big Give Trust, Big Wild Thought, The Carron Charitable Settlement, Mrs D M France-Hayhurst Foundation, Fondation Ensemble, Fondation Le Pal Nature, Foundation for International Aid to Animals, The Goldcrest Charitable Trust, Hawkins SCL, Hebridean Island Cruises, Ideawild, Jones Family Charitable Trust, Kinloch Lodge Hotel, Lebanon Reforestation Initiative, Les Amis de la Route Du Pal, Longleat Entertainment Ltd, Lush Retail Ltd, Magic Little Grants, Marjorie Coote Animal Charitable Trust, The Matthiesen Foundation, Sir Michael Barber, Mull Magic, Mowi, Old Macdonald's Farm, The RS Macdonald Charitable Trust, Rockhampton Zoo, Russell Trust, The Rufford Foundation, St. Mary's Charity, Sea Changers, Sonas Hospitality, Tesco Stronger Starts Scotland, Tierpark, Walker 597 Trust, Wm. Geoff Harvey's Discretionary Settlement No 2, Woburn Safari Park, Zoo Montana.

**Corporate Sponsors:** Andrew Poplett Enterprises Ltd, [holidaycottages.co.uk](http://holidaycottages.co.uk), Integrated Utility Services, Nurtured by Nature.

We are grateful for the bequest from Dr Malcolm Pines.

**And, we give a special mention to the following:**

Princess Michael of Kent (Patron), John Noorani, Judith Young, Wolfgang and Traudl Gettmann, Dennis Furnell, Gareth and his team at the Old School Vets, Andy Race Fish Merchants and Martin MacKinnon.

As ever, we are grateful to our Board for providing much support and advice, along the way.

## What can you do?

Anything that you can do to help makes a big difference and we are so grateful to you for that support. Whether you choose to run an event, talk to your friends about otters, or share our social media posts and website – we are very grateful to you, and all this makes a difference.

### Follow us on social media



@InternationalOtterSurvivalFund



@IOSF



@IOSF\_Otters

Visit our website at [www.otter.org](http://www.otter.org) where you will find lots of ideas and tips on what you can do to help, this includes our downloadable fundraising pack. There are lots of ideas on there to help you with your planning.

### Become a regular giver to help otter conservation

You can set up a standing order with IOSF. Please email [enquiries@otter.org](mailto:enquiries@otter.org) if this is something you'd like to do.

You can also use our partners at:



<https://justgiving.com/iosf>

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

If you are a UK tax-payer you can make regular donations to IOSF on a tax-free basis through Payroll Giving. For more information go to [www.givingonline.org.uk/InternationalOtter-Survival-Fund\\_2623/index.html](http://www.givingonline.org.uk/InternationalOtter-Survival-Fund_2623/index.html)

### Other ways you can help

- Keep up to date with otter-related news
- Forward your e-update to friends and family
- Download and print the IOSF leaflet on

our website (also available in French and German) and put it in shops, libraries etc.

- Help to translate our leaflets and videos into other languages
- Speak or do a project about otters in your school
- Enter a picture, poem or photo for various general competitions to tell others about otters
- Donate something through our  Amazon Wish List: <https://amzn.to/3C5lofA>
- Turn your old car into a donation for otters through [www.charitycar.co.uk/international-otter-survival-fund](http://www.charitycar.co.uk/international-otter-survival-fund) OR <https://giveacar.co.uk/charities/international-otter-survival-fund/>
- Earn FREE donations for IOSF when shopping online: [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk), [www.thegivingmachine.co.uk](http://www.thegivingmachine.co.uk)
- Evergreen Insurance Services donate up to 25% of their commission at no cost to you. [evergreeninsuranceservices.co.uk/international-otter-survival-fund](http://evergreeninsuranceservices.co.uk/international-otter-survival-fund).
- Are you in America? Contact us at [enquiries@otter.org](mailto:enquiries@otter.org) to donate through CAF America 

### Keep in touch



[enquiries@otter.org](mailto:enquiries@otter.org)



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[www.otter.org](http://www.otter.org)

All photographs © IOSF unless otherwise stated

# ABOUT IOSF

IOSF is one of the world's leading otter conservation organisations and is the only UK charity solely dedicated to the protection and care of all 13 species of otter, based on 30 years of scientific research in the UK and around the world.

Registered address: 7 Black Park, Broadford, Isle of Skye, IV49 9DE, Scotland  
Company Reg. No. 109031

Tel/ Fax: +44(0) 1471 822 487

IOSF is regulated by The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), Charity number SC003875.

IOSF has been vetted and approved to receive grants from CAF America; if you are a US donor wishing to make a tax-deductible contribution to support us, you may give to CAF America and recommend that the grant be made to IOSF.

## Who's who at IOSF

Patron: Julian Pettifer | Presidents: Dennis Furnell, Laurence Broderick

Trustees/Advisory Board: Andrew Cameron, Padma de Silva, Andy Rothwell,  
Sarah Neill, Jackie West, Grace Yoxon

Head of Operations: Dr Paul Yoxon | Education & Research Officer: Ben Yoxon  
Development Officer: Helen Stephenson | Data & Communications: Callum Browett  
Journal copy-editor: Dr Samantha Holland

Asian Co-ordinator: Prof Padma da Silva

Asian Regional Co-ordinators:

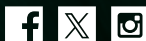
SE Asia: Aad Adrean, Indonesia | South Asia: Jyoti Bhandari, Nepal

Middle East: Omar Al-Sheikhly, Iraq

African Community Education Officer: William Mgomo

## A NOTE WHEN WRITING:

Whenever you contact us, please provide your sponsorship number as it does help us to find your records more quickly. Thanks.



# IOSF Otter Shop

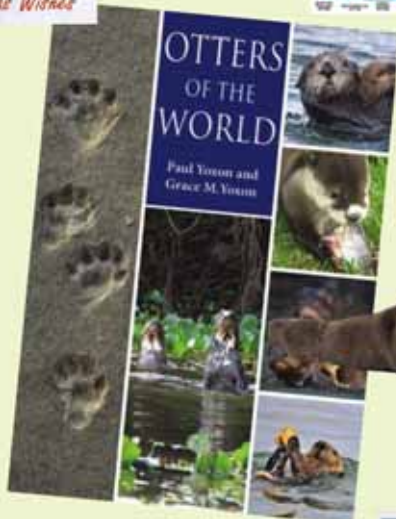
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