



Otter News No. 108, January 2020

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World Otter Day



It may still be a few months away but IOSF World Otter Day will be here before we know it - and we can't wait! IOSF launched World Otter Day to raise awareness and much needed support for otter conservation across the world.

In the past we have had individuals, organisations and groups engaging in a number of activities, which are all otter related - either with a view to raising awareness of otter conservation and IOSF, or to raise some funds to support the work we are doing. In 2019 we had events in over 30 countries!

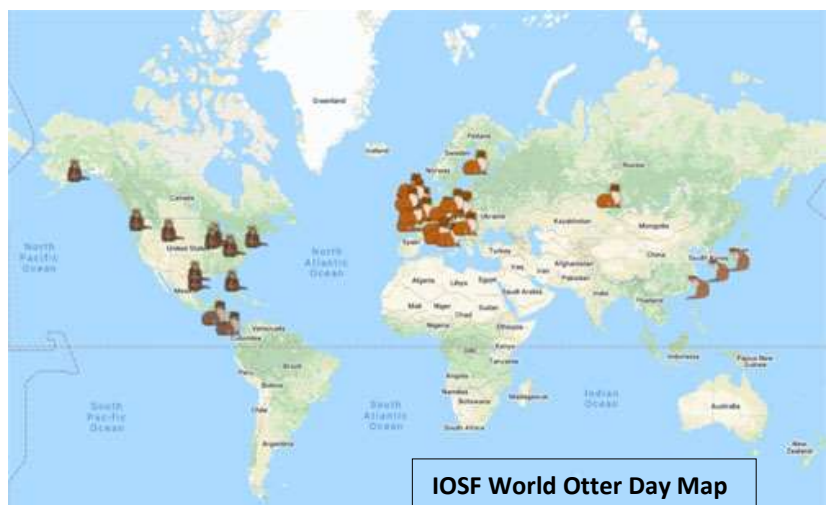
World Otter Day takes place annually on the last Wednesday in May, so for 2020, this will be the 27 May. We are aware that you may be busy on this day and therefore encourage you to hold an event on any day that suits you or that allows for the biggest crowds/effect, such as a weekend. In the past we have had events that have lasted a day, a week or a month, whatever suits you!

We would like you to be a part of World Otter Day in 2020. There are a number of ways in which you can do this and this is entirely up to yourselves and what you can achieve. We are always happy to help and offer you materials!

IOSF is again delighted to be offering three grants of £100 each towards the cost of putting on an event or carrying out some education work for **#WorldOtterDay**. Please submit your application here no later than Friday 27 March 2020 and the winning applicants will be announced on Friday 3 April 2020. If you wish to submit an application please visit https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfs_H1vRoec2_a0BkaQAzH00a-OpxdYNICFAoj1-7-iYsya8Q/viewform

Instead of receiving a grant, you may wish to sponsor an extra grant to ensure that more events are happening globally. Last year we offered four WOD grants, one up on the previous year, and they went to Laos, Brazil, Malaysia and the Gambia for community events based around otters.

If you already have an event planned, let us know and we can add it to our IOSF World Otter Day Map(right)! Email ben@otter.org with your plans!



25 Years Since The First Otters Were Reintroduced in Indiana

(photos from Salamonie River release ©Scott Johnson)

It is 25 years since the first North American river otters were released into Indiana, having been translocated from Louisiana. This took place on 17 January 1995 at Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge when 25 animals were released. The project continued from 1995-1999 and by the end 303 animals had been released at twelve locations. <https://wrbiradio.com/2020/01/17/otters-celebrate-25-years-of-release/>

In those early days, IOSF was kept in touch by one of our supporters, Mike Hater, who also organised an annual OtterFest. Each year they raised funds to support the programme and also donated to IOSF. They also gave funds to the Sycamore Land Trust to re-establish and preserve more otter-friendly habitats in the state.



School students were involved in the overall project helping to raise funds for the reintroductions and learning all about otters as part of their science work. 15 school groups were involved in the final release of 52 otters on 1 February 1999. One club, the Earth Savers from Corydon Central Junior High School, had been studying and monitoring the biological health of the Blue River near the school and found that it was one of the cleanest rivers in the six states along the Ohio

River. This information was used by the Department of Natural Resources to determine that otters should be released there.

In order to protect the otters there was a fine for killing an otter of up to \$5,000 plus \$1,460 for restitution and possibly even a prison sentence. This seemed to be a substantial punishment. However, out of the 251 otters released up to the end of 1998, eleven were killed on the road, nine were trapped “accidentally” and one was shot. The person who shot the otter received a fine of \$259, plus restitution costs, and a 30 day “in-home detention period.” Nothing like the potential punishment quoted.



These releases proved successful and in 2005 they were removed from the state endangered list. However in January 2015 the state gave the go ahead for trapping to be brought back with a state quota of 600 per season. In that first season 400 had been killed by 1 January 2016 – averaging about 10 per day! It has just been announced that the latest season has closed with another 600 animals killed.

It seems they have learnt nothing from past experience. We are all aware that it was largely the hunting pressure which caused the otters to become extinct in many parts of America. By 1942 otters were hardly ever seen in Indiana but it wasn't until 1969 that they were put on the state endangered list and they were officially declared extinct in the state in 1986. Just sixteen years after the last reintroductions to restore populations the state saw fit to allow trapping once again!

IOSF is constantly asking for population figures for otters throughout the US but each time we are told that there are "healthy populations" – no figures. Trapping is currently allowed in 38 states including 15 of the 20 states where otters have been reintroduced and the argument is that it is "sustainable". If something is sustainable it means that the population can afford to lose those numbers but if you don't know how many you have then you cannot argue that.

Of course, IOSF is totally against any trapping and will continue to campaign for proper protection of otters in North America

More Otters Rescued Abroad

Indonesia: IOSF has been helping with a Eurasian otter and Asian short-clawed otter that were rescued from the pet trade in Indonesia.

SUMECO, an NGO based in the country, are currently looking after the two otters which are in a specially-built enclosure. After initial hostilities between the pair, resulting in brief separation, they are now back together until their hopeful release.



Sam, the Eurasian otter, is a rare record of the species on Sumatra as they haven't been recorded there in about 80 years. Kiki, the Asian small-clawed otter, is visited daily by wild otters that are clearly aware of a "new kid on the block".

SUMECO are doing an excellent job in caring for the otters and we would like to take this opportunity to thank them.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rita is busy again, but this time she was brought two very young spotted-necked otter cubs, still with their eyes closed. They came from the next river valley from Kikongo and had been without food for two days.

Sadly the smaller one, a female, developed pneumonia and died a few days after arrival, but the other one, a male is thriving. Rita said "Here,



we have one little chirpy, chittery otter baby who has survived two weeks! (Sounds much like a sparrow!). He is still feeding every 2-4 hours around the clock."

Rita sent some photos and you can see that his eyes have now opened. Apparently he "loves to get things in a vice grip in his mouth, tearing at it with clawed paws." Soon he will need roomier quarters.

Rita is very experienced in caring for Congo clawless otters but she says that the spotted necked are very different. They have white milk mouths and spotted throats, but also have white spots on their under bellies where they urinate.

Cameroon: A few days ago we received an email from Ape Action Africa, a primate sanctuary, who had been brought a baby Congo clawless otter two months ago. They don't know how he became separated from his mother but they have done a great job rearing this little one, called Beni, especially as they specialise in primates and have never had an otter before.

They are now looking to find somewhere for him to go for the rest of the time of his rehabilitation, so obviously we turned to Rita. Logistically getting him to Kikongo is a very difficult problem so she has asked her son and daughter-in-law to help as they both worked in Cameroon and have good contacts.



We'll keep you up to date with progress on all these otters.

If you would like to support these otters you can send a cheque marked "Indonesia", "Congo" or "Cameroon" on the back or make a donation online at www.ottershop.co.uk

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GIFT AID IS A SIMPLE WAY TO INCREASE THE VALUE OF YOUR GIFT TO IOSF - at no extra cost to you. If you pay tax in the UK, IOSF can reclaim the basic rate tax (25%) on your gift. So, if you donate £10, it is worth £12.50 to IOSF.

It is a simple process to sign up to Gift Aid - all you have to do is make a Gift Aid declaration. If you are donating online, just select the "Yes" option on the Gift Aid box on the donation form. Alternatively you can download and print out the Gift Aid Declaration on page 13 of our Fundraising Pack which can be found at:

http://www.otter.org/documents/IOSF_Fundraising_Pack.pdf

Coronavirus

We are all aware of the developing problem of coronavirus which originated in China and our sympathies go to all those affected.

Of course, we are not fully aware of all the facts yet, but it seems as if the virus started in markets trading in live wild animals in the city of Wuhan. This is not the first time that major

risks to human health have originated at such markets. In 2002-2003 the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic is believed to have come from wild mammals in markets. In West and Central Africa the Ebola virus also seems to have spread from wild animals in markets there.

The Chinese government has put a temporary ban on such markets and is considering closing them permanently. As we know otters are often sold in markets, so if a ban is imposed it will not only help otters and wildlife, but hopefully it can help to reduce the risk to humans from various diseases.

As always, people, otters and other wildlife need the same basic things: clean food, clean water and a safe place to live and rear young. If we care for our environment it helps us all.

News From The Sanctuary

Last month we told you about the arrival of Harrie and our aristocratic Otto van Crask. At that time they were still being kept separately but they were introduced a short time later. At first Harrie was wary of Otto and sat in the opposite corner from him. But that didn't last long and they were soon curled up together under a blanket.



Harrie and Otto

They are both eating very well and growing quickly. About two weeks ago they were moved to one of the new enclosures on the croft and they are enjoying the outside space. At the moment they just have the smaller area which is partly concrete but in time they will be able to use the whole enclosure.

We haven't noticed any reaction from Karma but any interaction with her neighbours would happen at night. However, she seems her normal secret self.



Karma

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

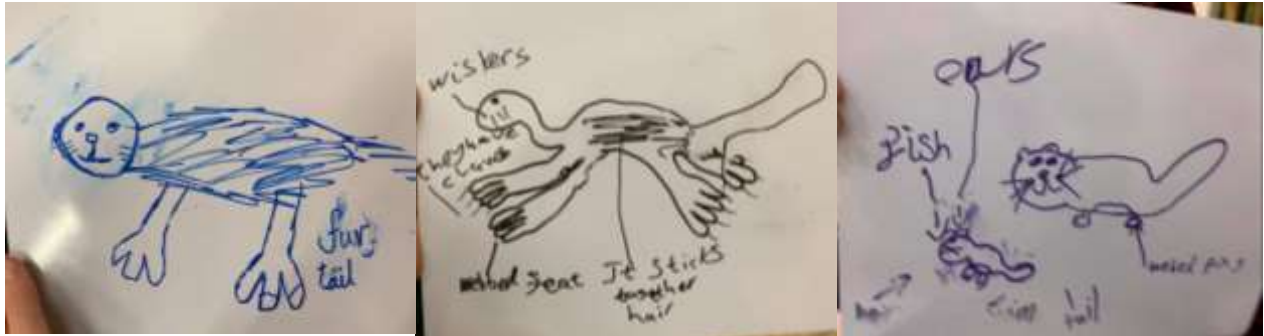
We are excited to be able to bring you our new **live 'otter' cam** from the cubs' (Harrie and Otto) nest box, here at the Sanctuary. Click on this link to watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MvHn6bOijc&feature=youtu.be> Thanks to Aodhan and Doug for their work in getting this set up.



There is a new Team Otter club in Broadford on the Isle of Skye, home of IOSF! The club, which met for the first time on Monday 3 February, has many amazing ideas that they are planning to do over the next few months.

On the first day, the children, aged between 8 and 11, learned about the basics of wildlife before having a recap on otters and testing their knowledge.

Check out the labelled pictures below!



The kids plan to do an "Otter News" each week so keep an eye on IOSF's Facebook page!

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.

Donate to IOSF <https://www.ottershop.co.uk/donate-to-iosf-c2x11601155>



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

UK taxpayers:

Increase the value
of your gift to IOSF.
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Otter Oscar Winners 2019

Here are our 2019 Winners with their awards. You can find more about what they did and where on our web page <https://www.otter.org/Public/News/OtterOscars.aspx>



Hans Kruuk



Chaminda Jayasekara



Heidy Davis & Otter Patschel Team



Akshit Suthar



NGO Living Green



Grace MacLean



Left to right-Lula, Clara, Annie and Sky

Our Special Award for 2019 went to Dr. Hans Kruuk originally from the Netherlands. Hans is a renowned otter scientist who has written many papers and books on otters and other carnivores. He was probably the first to really study coastal Eurasian otters and has done a lot of work in Shetland. He was also Paul's supervisor for his PhD and proved to be a great help to him during his studies.

Hans Kruuk's latest book, published in 2019 and entitled *The Call of Carnivores* (Pelagic Press), has several chapters on otters. <https://pelagicpublishing.com/products/the-call-of-carnivores-pelagic-hans-kruuk-9781784271633>

News In Brief

Otters in Caerlaverock

A family of otters have been causing quite a stir at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust reserve in Caerlaverock near the Scottish Borders. Although otters are known to visit the reserve it is very rare for them to be seen quite as frequently and so close. It is a great opportunity for visitors to the reserve to see one of the UK's most charming and elusive animals and will help to grow their profile in the area. <https://www.dng24.co.uk/w-otters-that>



Water of Leith otter
© Charlotte Neary

Edinburgh otters

An otter and her three cubs are being monitored in the Water of Leith in Edinburgh and Stuart Maxwell's pictures have been a cause of much admiration for the family.

<https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/amazing-pictures-show-female-otter-and-her-cubs-enjoying-water-leith-1365053>

A video was also posted showing two otters by the Union canal in the Fountainbridge area of the city. It is not known if these are the same animals. You will enjoy this footage and we won't spoil it for you!

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-scotland-51332701/otters-spotted-in-edinburgh-city-centre>

IOSF is helping Barbara Macfarlane, a student at Edinburgh University, who is carrying out

her dissertation on the otters on the Water of Leith. Volunteers from the Water of Leith Conservation Trust are helping with collecting spraint. She will be submitting an article on her work for the IOSF Journal due out in May.

It is great to see otters thriving so close to the centre of Scotland's capital showing the health of the environment, which benefits us all.

Otter named UK's favourite freshwater species

(Artwork ©Lyn Wells)



At the end of Biology Week organised by the Royal Society of Biology (RSB) they held a poll of nearly 5,000 people to choose the UK's favourite freshwater species.

There was a great variety of species proposed including newt and dragonfly

but the otter won easily with the water vole second and the Atlantic salmon third.



Unfortunately the illustration used by RSB in the link below and in their species factsheet is an Asian small-clawed otter – not a UK freshwater species at all!

<https://www.rsb.org.uk/news/14-news/2238-otter-favourite-species>

Otter says hello to dive team in South Africa

A friendly otter shocked a diving team as it appeared on their boat out at sea. The African clawless otter spent time inspecting the boat and the team took the opportunity for a photoshoot before it disappeared back in to the ocean. The team were glad to see the animal but were also concerned that it appeared to be so tame and they hoped that others would be as understanding of its playful antics.

<https://www.capetownetc.com/cape-town/friendly-otter-hops-aboard-in-cape-town/>

It is important to remember that any otter, despite how tame it may seem to be, is a wild animal and can act unpredictably. So always maintain a safe distance between it and yourself.

Sea Otter Tax Fund

Many people, who visit California, particularly around the central coast, will have a fairly high chance of spotting the heaviest species of otter in the world, the sea otter. The sea otter population has increased somewhat since its near-extinction and has now plateaued at around the 3,000 region. Sea otters face a number of threats such as prey availability, predators and disease but California's tax check off fund is helping to conserve their populations.

Since its creation, the California Sea Otter Fund has helped to support important work such as disease monitoring, research on populations and much more. Given the otters' slow rate of recovery, it is essential that such research continues to understand the threats that limit population growth.

Californian residents can donate their tax to the Sea Otter Conservation Fund. Since its establishment California has donated \$3.6 million to the conservation of one of their most

iconic species and in 2021 plans have been made to extend this to 2028.

<https://www.newtimeslo.com/sanluisobispo/sea-otter-tax-check-off/Content?oid=9166181>



Sea otters and golf balls

The impact we are having on the environment and wildlife is well known. The video in the link below shows how something as simple, and seemingly innocent, as golf can have a major impact on the world's wildlife. In the film the cameraman says that 50,000 golf balls have been collected from the seabed there in five years. As these break down they give off microplastics and we are all aware of the danger from those.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2703692716352266>

River otter v Alligator

A North American river otter in Georgia, USA, has made light work of a baby alligator. The video, in the link below shows how the otter drags the young alligator around before returning to the water with it. Although not usually part of the otters' diet, otters are opportunistic predators and this otter obviously felt an alligator was no match!

This isn't the first case of otters eating members of the Crocodylia family as we were told how giant otters eat black caiman in Guyana. The black caiman is the largest of the alligators! <https://www.macon.com/living/article239606438.html>

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

Product of the Month

Get romantic for Valentine's Day and show just how much you care.

Check out what's available at the Otter Shop

<https://www.ottershop.co.uk/PBSCCatalog.asp?CatID=1563130>



Thank You to...

The Matthieson Foundation and Judith Young for their continued support. Also Merlin SEALIFE at Weymouth for their donation from their annual Conservation Open Evening event during 2019.

John Noorani continues to create donations from the photo discs he offers to fellow travellers, and of course, we appreciate all donations received over the past month.

Events

Visit our website to find out what might be happening in the otter world near you, including:

11 February 2020



Paul Yoxon is presenting a talk - "*Eurasian otters in the UK and the work of the International Otter Survival Fund*" for the Bute Museum & Natural History Society
Venue: the library of Bute Museum, Stuart Street, Rothesay, commencing at 7.30pm.

11 October 2019 – 30 March 2020

Exhibition on "*Lutra lutra, the Otter*" by Dr Wolfgang Gettmann, former Director of Dusseldorf Aquazoo and owner of Nemo the Otter. He will consider environmental problems by focussing on the otter.

Museum Mensch und Jagd in der Burg Bruggen, Germany
Entrance fee - Pay what you like.

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Don't forget, if you are aware of any otter-related events taking place, send us the details (Title, time, date, place and cost (if applicable), and we will post it on our Events page.

<http://otter.org/Public/Events.aspx>



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<https://www.everyclick.com/iosf>



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



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



Regular and secure giving to IOSF and otter conservation... at your fingertips. Text OTTER 10 to 70085 to donate £10 (or change the amount to however much you wish to give)

You can donate monthly via our partners at the DONR giving platform that allows an easy and safe way method to give. This can be as little or as much as you can afford. Visit <https://www.donr.com/iosf> to find out more.

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

LEGACY - A LEGACY IS A GREAT WAY OF GIVING TO SOMETHING close to your heart and every gift will make a difference. After your family, have you ever thought of leaving something in your will to charity? Please consider remembering the International Otter Survival Fund in your will and help our work, protecting otters, to continue.

Including a legacy in your will ensures that your wishes are carried out, so it is important to discuss this with your solicitor. You can stipulate a specific restriction for its use, but remember that without restriction your legacy can be directed to where it is required most urgently.

Should you choose to provide a legacy for the International Otter Survival Fund in your will, we thank you and appreciate your support in this way.

This link http://otter.org/Public/HelpUs_Legacy.aspx will take you to our dedicated web page concerning making a Legacy.

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

You can follow us on:



Annual Supporters' Rates

UK and EEC Countries:

Adult: £24.00 per year

Child: £13.00 per year

Family: £34.00 per year

All other countries:

Adult: £30.00 per year

Child: £15.00 per year

Family: £40.00 per year

Life Membership (all countries): £350.00

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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

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