



## Otter News No. 124, July 2021

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

Please share our news

### Good News for Otters in Argentina

Giant otters are classified as “extinct” in Argentina but there have been some positive signs of their return in recent months.

The Ibera wetlands lie in the Corrientes region and are one of the world’s largest freshwater ecosystems. Rewilding Argentina is attempting to return the country’s rich biodiversity to the area with species such as jaguars, macaws and marsh deer. They have also been working to bring back giant otters and there have been some small successes and three cubs have recently been born as offspring of two otters that were reintroduced there.



Giant river otter ©Save The Giants

And there is more good news for the largest otter species. In May there was the first sighting of “wild” giant otters in Argentina for 40 years!

Furthermore, there have been other success stories for otters across the south American nation. Tierra del Fuego, Argentina’s southern-most province, has banned all open-net salmon farming. This ban will help protect the areas fragile marine ecosystems, which is home to half of Argentina’s kelp forests which support species such as the southern river otter. This also makes Argentina the first nation in the world to ban such farming practices.

With so many problems for otter species it is encouraging to see some steps forward in their protection in Argentina.

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/rewilding-argentina-project>

### News of Otters Rescued from the Pet Trade

#### URGENT help needed for Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand

**A couple of weeks ago we received an email from Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT) saying** “We just received word about a zoo closing down in Koh Samui and three otters (amongst other animals) are in need of rescue. We are hoping to get them to WFFT as soon as possible but we need to urgently renovate a couple of old enclosures as well as find the funds to carry out the rescue and of course, for their ongoing care. Do you think International Otter Survival Fund can help with funds for the rescue, renovations and care, in any way? We know there are three otters, but we don't know their ages or where they originally came from.”

Of course we had to say yes to their appeal for help and we sent some initial funding to help with the rescue.

This morning we heard that the otters are now safe in their care: “The three new arrivals are safe and well now at WFFT. We were also just contacted about another otter who is believed to be an escaped or discarded pet about six hours south of WFFT who we will need to rescue very soon too. Very busy time!”



**Before**



**During**



**and After rescue**

Yes, it is clearly a very busy time for them and they still have another 17 otters to look after, including Ozzie (below) who also came from the tourist island of Koh Samui. A local person found her with severe injuries on her neck and it would appear that she was an abandoned pet who was attacked by a dog. Thankfully, she recovered and Ozzie now lives in the largest enclosure with a beautiful pool for her and her fellow otters to live a more natural life.



**Ozzie on arrival with terrible neck wound**



**Ozzie now in her large enclosure**

The food bills for these 17 otters already amount to \$4,500 per year. Although Asian small-clawed otters do live in groups it is not always possible to introduce new otters to a stable group and so they need several enclosures. With the extra four they urgently need to build at least one more enclosure

As with Save Vietnam's Wildlife, WFFT is also very involved in illegal wildlife trade investigation. However, it seems that in Thailand the number of otters for sale online has actually significantly reduced over the past 12 months. They believe this may be partly due to their active campaigning and working with the authorities to catch traffickers but of course, it is almost certain that the trade continues underground. This is why their continued involvement as illegal wildlife trade investigators is critical to the future of the species in Thailand and south-east Asia.

***IOSF is committed to helping all rescued pet otters as far as possible and so we want to support WFFT in their care of all 21 of these otters. You can help by making a donation at <https://ottershop.co.uk/products/donate-to-iosf?variant=40608764100767> . It doesn't matter how little you can spare – every penny counts for these otters. And please, pass this appeal on to your friends and family.***

### **Good News – Wildlife trafficker sentenced in Vietnam**

**We recently came across an article which said that a man had been sentenced to six years in prison for illegally trading six Asian small-clawed otters** through social media. He was also fined 4.5 million VND (£140/US\$195) for each of the six otters making a total of 27 million VND (£850).

In December 2020 The Nature Education Centre worked with the Police to arrest 24 year old Dang Hoang Phuc and the otters were then transferred to Saigon Zoo and Botanical Garden, which has a good reputation for animal welfare.

This is not the first time Dang Hoang Phuc has used Facebook to advertise the sale of many endangered species, including otters and tigers. And he is not alone as more and more wildlife traders are using social media to advertise. In May 2021 alone the Nature Education Centre dealt with over 200 cases on the Internet.

Of course, The Nature Education Centre are not the only organisation in Vietnam working to stop illegal trade and we are all aware of the great job being done by Save Vietnam's Wildlife. They were not involved in this case as it was in the south of the country, a long way from them. However they are also very active in trying to prevent such trade and in November 2020 intercepted a truck carrying 19 Asian small-clawed otters.  
<https://baotintuc.vn/chong-buon-lau-hang-gia/phan-6-nam-tu-cho-doi-tuong-buon-ban-rai-ca-trai-phep-tren-mang-xa-hoi-20210617182414038.htm>

### Update from SUMECO in Indonesia (photos ©SUMECO)

**We have a short update from our friends at the Sumatra Ecoproject (SUMECO) in Indonesia.**

Remember George, the hairy-nosed otter that came into their care towards the end of 2020? Well, he has now grown into a strong otter and has been released back to the wild.

Pictured, left below, is Sam, the Eurasian otter, who is doing very well. Also below right is a small Asian short-clawed otter which has just arrived and we understand there are more otters which will arrive soon.

SUMECO has invited IOSF supporters to help name this latest otter. So we have decided to hold a draw for the name and help to raise funds to care for this otter at the same time. If you would like to submit a name please go to <https://ottershop.co.uk/products/donate-to-iosf> to make your £5 donation to SUMECO and put your suggested name for the otter in "Add a note to your order" during checkout.



We are grateful to all who have donated to support the care of these otters. SUMECO rescue and care for many species of bird, snake and mammal (including monkeys, pangolins, bears and tigers). Much of their work can be dangerous as people involved in illegal

wildlife smuggling can be violent.

**If you would like to donate towards the costs of feeding these otters you can do so at the Otter Shop at <https://ottershop.co.uk/collections/donate/products/donate-to-iosf?variant=32787581862026>**

### IOSF Otter Oscars

**It's that time of year again and here at IOSF we are excited to be opening submissions for the IOSF Otter Oscar awards 2021.**

Despite the current pandemic over the last 18 months, much superb otter work has been achieved and once again we wish to highlight the efforts by some outstanding people. We are accepting nominations for the following categories: Young Person (under 18); Community Achievement; Group or Organisation;

Research; Photography or Artwork and, Special Award.



We will accept nominations until Friday 26 November 2021, with the results being announced during the week commencing Monday 6 December 2021.

If you wish to nominate someone, including yourself, for any of the categories, please use the form here.  
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScpBO7orWI\\_7ncmaYitPL8EFnd1bEYUvzy2qM-YQixiYD-LvA/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScpBO7orWI_7ncmaYitPL8EFnd1bEYUvzy2qM-YQixiYD-LvA/viewform?usp=sf_link)

Please note, you can nominate someone for more than one category but only one nomination per category please.

	<p>Please support IOSF and help to ensure that important conservation and awareness work continues.</p>	<p>UK taxpayers:</p>	<p>Increase the value of your gift to IOSF: <i>giftaid it</i></p>
---	---	----------------------	---

## News from The Sanctuary

It has been a time of change for the otters at the sanctuary.



Firstly, Reva was released back to the wild and she was really ready for it. We took her down to the shore and opened the door of her release box. She hesitated for a moment and then dropped quickly into the water. For the next 5-10 minutes she swam around to explore the expanse of water now available to her. She even made an attempt at catching a seagull as it flew over. A release is a moment we all love as it is what we are working towards and to see her so comfortable in her new environment was wonderful.

You can watch Reva's release video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvRa9iFvous>



Holly –  
looking great



DJ and Louis – pretending not to be there!

Holly now has neighbours, as DJ and Louis have moved into Reva's old enclosure. Initially they only had access to the smaller area so that they could get used to it but now they have the run of the full enclosure and its pool. They are very curious about this young thing next door!

As it has become a bit cooler, all three of them are starting to take some grass bedding into their sleeping box.

Bealltinn is certainly far more private and quite often we don't actually see her amongst all the long vegetation. She only seems to go in her sleeping box when it is raining or if it gets a bit cooler. For an otter, she doesn't seem to be that keen on water and she doesn't seem to use her pool very much. This of course means that she couldn't hunt in the wild and so until she starts to show more aquatic behaviour we cannot consider release.

*If you would like to support our cubs in the Sanctuary you can send a cheque marked "Hospital" on the back or make a donation online at [www.ottershop.co.uk](http://www.ottershop.co.uk)*

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



Bealltinn in her sleeping box

## Otter Shop Product of the Month

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



We have a new style adoption box waiting for you at the [Otter Shop](http://www.ottershop.co.uk).

What's different?

Well, we've made it so that the box can be delivered through your letterbox. It is all basically the same, but obviously we could not include the larger otter toy, so there is a cute, wee fluffy otter keyring in its place.

Get your NEW IOSF Letterbox Otter Adoption now

<https://ottershop.co.uk/collections/adopt-an-otter-and-other-ways-to-support-iosf/products/new-letterbox-iosf-otter-adoption>

## IOSF New Otter Hospital Appeal

**Thanks to your generosity we have reached 51% of our target, that's over £13,000.** This is great news but there is still a way to go and we would appreciate if you can share this with friends and family and help to get that total.

As most of you are aware, we launched this appeal due to the original hospital building, built in the 1980's, now showing its age and requiring a replacement. The new building will allow for better handling of all wildlife received through the doors.

You can find out more on our **JustGiving** page <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/iosfotterhospital> where we also update the total with off-line donations received and you can also make donations online at:

### Ottershop

<https://ottershop.co.uk/products/iosf-new-hospital-appeal>

### Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/donate/2906953809583806/>

## Thank You...

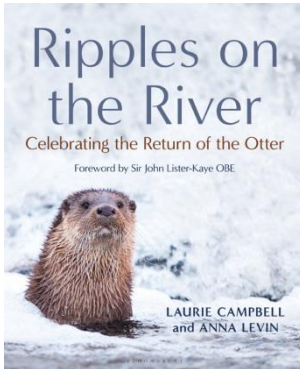
Thank you all for your continued support for the many projects we are involved in. It is inspiring.

Also, thanks to Nurtured by Nature, Big Wild Thought, Walker 597 Trust and Zoo Montana.

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

## W'otter' Treat

**There's a new book on its way. "Ripples on the River", is a collaboration between wildlife journalist and writer Anna Levin and renowned natural history photographer Laurie Campbell...**



Laurie has been making a photographic record of otters on his local river, the Tweed, for more than 20 years, since their return to it and *"Together they weave a wealth of information into the stories that the pictures tell. While extracts from Anna's notebooks offer a vivid glimpse of the photographer at work and the otters that enchant them both."*

Available from 19<sup>th</sup> August, Bloomsbury publishing house are giving IOSF supporters the opportunity of an **exclusive 25% discount** on this hardback version only at [www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com) using discount code **OTTER25 (UK only)**. Also available to use when you pre-order. Offer ends 30<sup>th</sup> September.

## More on World Otter Day

### Assessing the impact

After World Otter Day we received a link to a paper by Chua et al entitled *"Species awareness days: Do people care or are we preaching to the choir?"* This was published in Biological Conservation in March 2021.



The aims of the paper were to see:

1. If such species days led to more people looking for information,
2. If some awareness days were more effective than others and why?
3. If these days lead to positive conservation action.

This is clearly important to consider with regard to our own annual World Otter Days as we need to make them as effective as possible. So we were pleased to help the authors with data for their study. In all 16 awareness days were examined for species including pangolin, polar bear, turtle, tiger and of course otter. All showed an increase in Google searches for the species and/or increase in Wikipedia page views so that showed that people were at least seeking more information. In the case of otters, the searches on Wikipedia were higher than on Google. We also looked at the web hits for otter.org and found that hits increased steadily in the build-up to World Otter Day and on the day itself, 26 May, these were up by over 2,000% on the daily average. The day after was still about 900% up and on 28 May it was still higher by nearly 300%. So this is certainly encouraging especially as in the study they found that the effect of online articles, campaign hashtags and social media can last up to 40 hours after the event. However if people are asked to re-tweet or share posts the effect was longer-lasting as the message spread and this certainly seems to have worked for our otters.



In the paper it said that for some reason if species are in the media a lot the effect of the awareness day was less and this is put down to *"fatigue from information overload or the lack of novelty, since these species are often featured regularly in other conservation campaigns or by the media."* This means that people are more

familiar with threatened species like elephants, rhinos and leopards and so for some reason react less to the actual awareness day.

There are various factors which influence the effectiveness of any such campaign such as if they are led by celebrities and if any other big news item happens at the same time. For example, in 2018 #World Otter Day was tweeted over 66,000 times and it was trending No 1 until it was knocked off top spot by Britain's Got Talent! Of course, in 2021 the Covid-19 pandemic was on everyone's mind and in much of the media.

The authors looked at "assessing awareness impact for conservation fundraising" in the form of increased donations to support practical conservation. Yes, maybe people may know more about otters but how much do they act on this knowledge. Again 2020 and 2021 have been different to other years as usually people take more of an active role in fundraising to support our otter conservation work. But people have also been very generous to IOSF in the form of donations through birthday fundraisers on Facebook, etc. We obviously can't thank everyone who did this but we are grateful to each and everyone one of you and to those who donated in this way.

It is important that we take the lessons from this paper into our general efforts to spread the word about the need to care for otters and their environments.

- **And so we would like to take this opportunity to ask you not just to share our social media posts around World Otter Day but share them regularly.**
- **Share your weekly Mailchimp emails and your monthly e-updates and encourage others to sign up to receive them at [https://otter.org/Public/News\\_MailingList.aspx](https://otter.org/Public/News_MailingList.aspx)**
- **And when you receive your Annual Review share that too. If you receive a paper copy pass it on or ask your doctor's or dentist's surgery if you can leave it there.**

**We can all play our part in drawing attention to otters and even if you don't feel you are in a position to donate, such simple acts like sharing information can make a huge difference.**

**THANK YOU.**

### **IOSF World Otter Day Webinar**

One of the special events for IOSF World Otter Day 2021 was the Webinar and also our participation in other similar events around the world. All in all, more than 300 people joined us live from over 60 countries to hear presentations from speakers in nine countries. In addition, over 250 people have watched the recordings on YouTube.



IOSF also took part in other webinars in India, Malaysia, Zimbabwe and Bangladesh. Following the Bangladesh webinar many zoology students from the Nature Study and Conservation Club at Jagannath University, are following IOSF on Facebook and are keen to learn more about otters. Our friend, Bisharga Das, who attended our workshop there in 2014, is also going to translate our video into Bengali so that it can be used not just in Bangladesh but also in many parts of India.

We'd like to say thank you to those of you that took the time to fill in our Webinar review form. This is important as we are always keen to improve what we do for the

otters and so your input is so valuable. It is great to hear your thoughts and also that so many people enjoyed and engaged with our wonderful set of presenters.

To summarise the points:

### What did you like most about the webinar?

- Hearing about work from a variety of countries, including those which often receive a negative press
- Gaining more information on what needs to be done to help otter survival
- The diverse backgrounds from all of the presenters and range of species
- How the otter's situation is different in other parts of the world
- To get to know how IOSF is working in different places in the world

### What did you get out of the webinar?

- Knowing how things are with otter populations in other countries.
- A lot of action is being taken for otter conservation worldwide, sometimes from organisations we don't hear of.
- There is a need for grassroots approach doing educational and awareness campaigns
- Inspiration to continue our activities to popularise otters through the creation of an attractive media
- I find the world so complex and being violated in so many ways that it was brilliant to hear from people concentrating on otters

### Possible future topics

- Best ways to identify otters and field survey methods
- More international work
- How scientists work with communities to progress their research and enhance otter conservation
- Habitat restoration.
- Fossil history of otters
- Otter rehab and rescue

### Possible improvements

- There was a comment about it being in only one language. This is difficult to change but we are looking into the possibility of having captions available in other languages. Then recordings can be used in classrooms for future education projects.
- Some commented on the audio quality. However, we have asked various people who attended about this and most had no problem. We certainly heard everything clearly on Skye. So we think it may be more of a problem at the receiving end rather than the transmitting side. However, we will look into speakers using headphones with a microphone if possible to reduce background noise.

### General comments

- Most people considered the length of the webinar to be perfect
- It was suggested for all attendees should share their experiences but with the number of people attending that would be impossible. Sorry.
- All those who responded said they would attend again

**So thanks to everyone who responded.** We have taken many of your suggestions on for next year and look forward to hosting the next webinar for IOSF World Otter Day 2022.

## In Search of Maxwell's Otter





## Water shortages threaten otters in Iraq

Many of you will be aware of Omar Al-Sheikly's work on the Iraqi marshlands, either through our e-updates, his papers in our OTTER Journal, following his work directly or through his excellent presentation during IOSF's World Otter Day webinar. Omar, and his team at Iraqi Green Climate Organization, are working to monitor and conserve the Iraqi marshes and the Maxwell's otter that resides there. Maxwell's otter, a sub-species of the smooth-coated otter, is named after Gavin Maxwell, a famous writer and otter enthusiast.

This sub-species only lives in the Mesopotamian marshes of Iraq and Iran and there are growing concerns that Iraq's marshes are going to face one of their toughest years ever. With record lows of rainfall, and Turkish dam projects on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, river levels are expected to be as low as half that of previous years.

Omar continues to monitor otters in their area. Once a common sight along the marshes of Iraq, and neighbouring Iran, their populations have slowly dropped. Communities are seeing otters less - is this down to a reduction in numbers, or the fact that otters are smart, and see people as a threat?

At first, threats were largely from hunting for their furs but that has declined. New threats are now facing the otters such as climate change, which has been emphasised in recent weeks with issues in neighbouring Turkey. There is also habitat loss and different fishing techniques such as electric pulse fishing, which can paralyse and kill otters.

What is undeniable, is that the main issue otters face in this landscape is lack of water. Water levels are decreasing and entire channels vanish for months on end. The UN estimates that 250 km<sup>2</sup> of fertile land PER YEAR is lost to desertification in Iraq. Iraq blames the construction of Turkish dams for this lack of water and has asked for more to be released to flow down the rivers but Turkey are yet to act on this. Whether it be the damming projects in neighbouring Turkey, or climate change, what we do know is that without reversing this trend, the future isn't bright for Maxwell's otter, or the other species that live within this fantastic habitat.



Figure 2. Two Mesopotamian otters in the Hoor Al-Azim wetland taken during February 2019. © Amir Momtaz (left) and otters basking on land at Hoor Al-Azim wetland © Mohammed Saki (right).

We cannot praise Omar, and his team, enough for their tireless commitment to this important and vulnerable wetland habitat which supports so many diverse species. <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/science/in-iraqs-iconic-marshlands-a-quest-for-endangered-otters/>

## More otter sightings in Iran

In Issue 7 of the IOSF OTTER Journal, published in May 2021, there was a paper by Birgani et al on the

"Distribution of the Mesopotamian otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli*) in Iran." This gave 16 records of the species (also known as Maxwell's otter) recorded at the Hoor Al-Azim wetlands between 2009-2021.

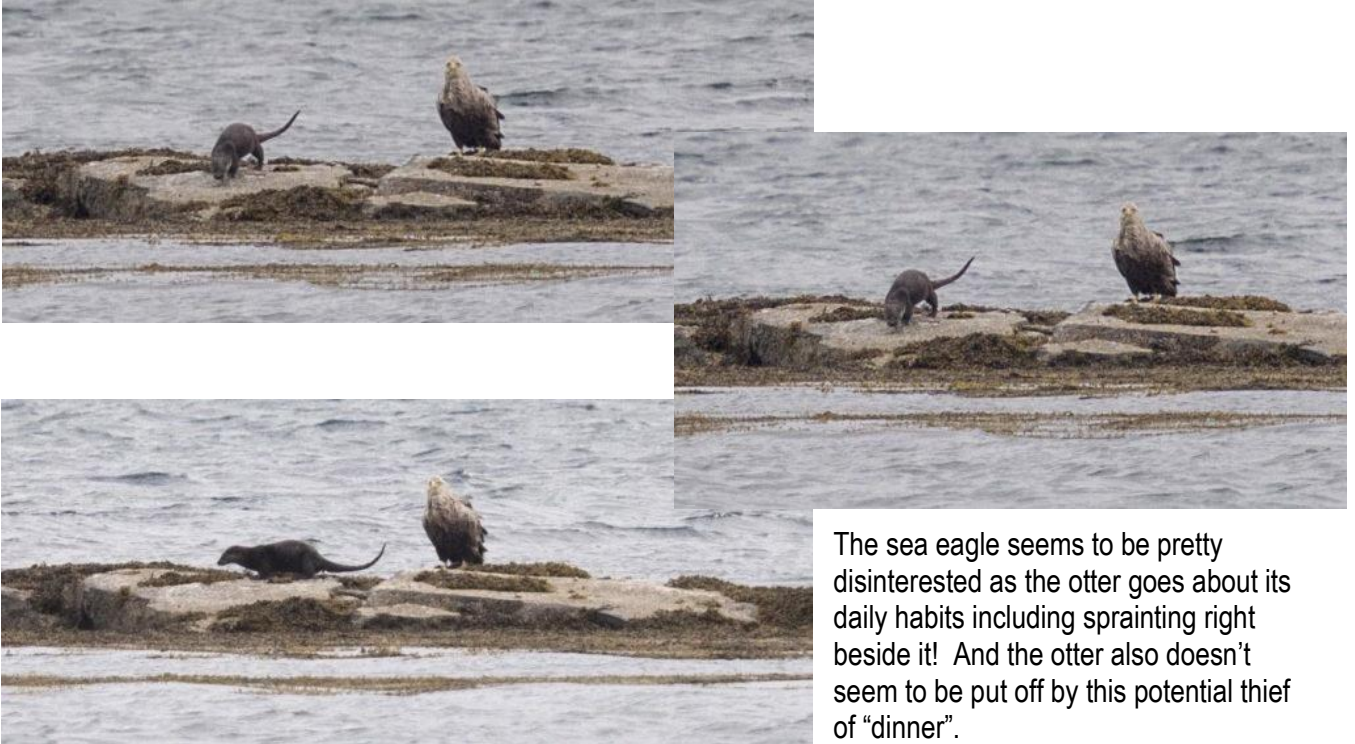
Since then Keramat Birgani of the Mammal Records Group of Iran sent us a link to video footage of an otter which was taken at Hoor Al-Azim on 29 June 2021 by Nowruz Khoramdel. It is great to see such rare footage and you can watch it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzGi3yj368E>

## SEA EAGLES AND OTTERS

Sea eagles are majestic birds but they suffered a great deal of persecution and the last survivor in the UK was shot on Skye in 1916. A reintroduction programme began in the 1970s and they are no longer a rare

sight in the Highlands. However, this has been quite controversial as they do clearly take livestock and many crofters on Skye are suffering heavy losses.

There have been many reports and videos of sea eagles harassing otters, trying to steal their prey, and Dave Sexton, the RSPB officer for Mull is quite familiar with this. But a series of photos taken on the island by Dave Miller from Northumberland seemed to show a more comfortable relationship.



The sea eagle seems to be pretty disinterested as the otter goes about its daily habits including sprainting right beside it! And the otter also doesn't seem to be put off by this potential thief of "dinner".

Thanks to Dave Miller for permission to use these fantastic photos.

<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/highlands/3248527/sea-eagles-normally-try-to-steal-food-from-otters-but-these-two-islanders-appear-to-be-the-best-of-friends/>



### Team Otter

IOSF is delighted to announce the winner of the children's artwork competition – Koen Cramer. We particularly liked Koen's use of actual rubbish to emphasise the issue (picture right). Well done Koen!

Second place went to Isla Powell with her picture entitled "Rubbish is rubbish" and we couldn't agree with her more.

At IOSF we want to make Team Otter and all of our educational resources available to everyone and this includes having material in other languages. Our education pack was already available in English, French and Montenegrin but now it is also available in Swahili, thanks to our good friend William Mgomo. You can download any of these versions free at <https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources/Resources/ForChildren.aspx>



We would also be happy to hear from anyone who can translate it into other languages.

**For more information on Team Otter, check out our website ([www.loveotters.org](http://www.loveotters.org)) or Facebook. If you are interested in forming your own Team Otter Club contact [Ben@otter.org](mailto:Ben@otter.org)**

## It's Otterly Madness

Many of you will no doubt have come across James William's delightful watercolour otter characters on Facebook. His [Otterly Madness page](#) also has a shop where you can purchase prints, cards and stickers of his amusing Otterly Madness characters. James very kindly donates a percentage of his sales to IOSF, so why not click on the link above and take a look. We'll soon be taking orders for a small selection of James' work at the Otter Shop, so keep looking!



**CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP - WHETHER YOU OWN A BUSINESS OR ARE EMPLOYED, does the company have a green policy/ support conservation? Then perhaps the company would like to consider becoming a Corporate Member with IOSF and supporting our work with otters.**

You can find out more information on our website [http://otter.org/Public/HelpUs\\_CorporateSponsorship.aspx](http://otter.org/Public/HelpUs_CorporateSponsorship.aspx)

## News in Brief

### Sea otters

#### How do sea otters stay warm?

As we know, otters are semi-aquatic and therefore have no blubber layer like many other marine mammals. Sea otters spend less time on land but even they do not have a fat layer, so how do they stay warm, particularly in colder climates?



Well, firstly the sea otter has the thickest fur of any species in the world. The world's heaviest otter boasts up to 150,000 hairs per cm<sup>2</sup> of skin, that's 150,000 hairs in an area the size of your finger nail - that's a lot of thick hair!

There is another secret to their survival and that is "leaky mitochondria". Sea otters resting metabolic rate is believed to be about three times greater than other mammals their size. Most marine mammals, like seals and whales, also have a higher metabolic rate and they also have a thick insulating blubber layer. Sea otters have thick fur but this alone isn't enough to keep them warm.

This is where things get a little technical and scientific. A recent report showed that Mitochondria - the energy producing part of the cell – generate extra heat and help add to the otter's metabolism. The report states "*Mitochondria pump protons across their inner membrane to store energy that can be used to power the cell. But if those protons leak back over the membrane before being used for work, that energy is lost as heat,*". The leaks in the protons occur in about 40% of the otter's cells and isn't necessary when the otters are active. They are therefore able to turn it "on and off" but exactly how they do that is still unknown.

Their high metabolic rate also means that sea otters have to eat a large amount to maintain this energy. It is believed that the species can eat up to 25% of their body weight per day.

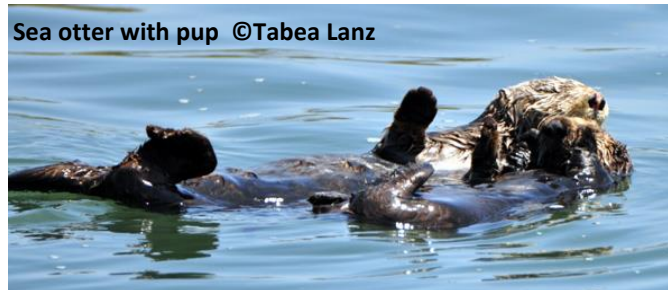
It's always amazing to find new knowledge about these species and the complexities of their survival.

<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/sea-otter-warmth-mitochondria-muscle-metabolism-biology>

## Story of a young sea otter in Japan

The early life of a female sea otter cub has been told in a photo-documented book published by local resident Yoshihiro Kataoka. The otter, named A-ko, was born in April 2020 off the east coast of Hokkaido, Japan, and the book uses many photos to record the first six months of her life until she became independent.

<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/05/3d69fcf01d36-young-life-of-wild-hokkaido-sea-otter-documented-in-crowdfunded-book.html>



Sea otter with pup ©Tabea Lanz

## Sea otter caught in illegal trap

A sea otter has been found dead in an illegal fishing trap and this is now being investigated further by the Californian and Federal Wildlife Authorities. The trap washed up on Zmudowski State Beach although its origins are largely unknown. These traps are used to catch crayfish and are commonly found in freshwater ecosystems but it is illegal to use them in coastal areas. It has been stated that this is “a really serious situation” and is being looked into by authorities. The penalty for killing a sea otter is up to a \$100,000 fine under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act and up to one year in jail.

Sea otters are endangered and threats such as this, are putting unnecessary pressures on their long-term survival.

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2021/06/04/endangered-california-sea-otter-found-dead-in-illegal-fishing-trap/>

## Sea otters face threat from oil industry

Sea otter population changes could put an end to ExxonMobil’s plans to start oil excavation off Santa Barbara in California. Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Fish and Wildlife Service is required to provide assessment reports for populations of a number of marine species, including Californian sea otters, but these have not been done of late. These reports help to determine population status as well as any anthropogenic pressures being put on these species. They also guide management actions for commercial fisheries, oil and gas activities, military activities, coastal development and other activities that may harm marine mammals. The Center for Biological Diversity has sued the Fish and Wildlife Service for their lack of reporting on a number of species and the neglect of their duties regarding this.

On a side note, there are calls for the federal government to put a stop to all oil excavation in the Arctic to protect the polar bear populations which are still declining.

<https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/federal-report-acknowledges-low-polar-bear-numbers-2021-06-24/>

## Neotropical otter

### Neotropical otter’s rich vocabulary

The Neotropical otter, native to central and south America, is largely solitary and only comes together once a year to mate. Despite spending much of their time alone, they have a rich “vocabulary”, according to a recent report. The vocalisations vary from surprise, to excitement, to a threatening tone. The study, which focused on otters in Brazil, showed the variation in noises from this largely solitary creature.

[https://www.upi.com/Science\\_News/2021/05/26/brazil-neotropical-otter-vocalizations/5871621953986/](https://www.upi.com/Science_News/2021/05/26/brazil-neotropical-otter-vocalizations/5871621953986/)

## Eurasian Otters

### Orcas v Otter

Sometimes the hunter becomes the hunted. Generally, Eurasian otters are unharmed by predators in the UK,

but sometimes, some of the more notorious animals will take a chance. This photo by Karen Munro shows two Orca whales off the north coast of mainland Scotland attempting to catch an otter. The otter is believed to have escaped!



### Otter in car rescued in Scotland

An otter in Scotland's capital got itself into a spot of bother by getting stuck in a car bonnet! The otter had been spooked by residents while crossing over a residential area and sought refuge in the car. Thankfully, when the rescuers "popped the bonnet", the otter freed itself and ran off.

<https://www.edinburghlive.co.uk/news/edinburgh-news/edinburgh-otter-found-stuck-under-20801610>

Yet another incident like the otter in the engine of a car on the Skye Bridge, many years ago.

### Otters in South Korea

The Ministry of Environment in South Korea was delighted to find sightings of three rare animals on their camera traps in the South Jeolla Province, all within a month of each other: a wildcat, a fairy pitta bird and a Eurasian otter! The area is where a river meets a reservoir and is rich in biodiversity providing the perfect home for a variety of species, including the Level 1 endangered Eurasian otter. A more extensive study is now planned for the area to help maintain and improve the ecology of the park.

[https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2021/07/371\\_312381.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2021/07/371_312381.html)



### Otters try to upstage Wally!

Wally, the Walrus, who has become something of a legend on the Pembrokeshire coast in Wales, is at risk of being upstaged.

Locals, and visitors, who are visiting Tenby's coastline have become more accustomed to the non-native Walrus than most species in the area. So, when two otters made an appearance, it was a pleasant surprise for people in the area. One person commented how they visit the area regularly and have never seen any otters so it was a very pleasant sight to watch the two otters duck and dive around in the sea.

[https://www.tivysideadvertiser.co.uk/news/pembrokeshire\\_news/19290923.eurasian-otter-duo-join-wally-walrus-tenby-aquatic-attractions/](https://www.tivysideadvertiser.co.uk/news/pembrokeshire_news/19290923.eurasian-otter-duo-join-wally-walrus-tenby-aquatic-attractions/)

### Animal areas in new road development

The new duelling development of the A30 is to have many "animal crossings" to help reduce the impact of road collisions with the wildlife of the area. The new dual-carriageway will include 11 under-bridges, two over-bridges, five drainage culverts and two dry tunnels – all allowing for the safe passage of animals.

<https://www.cornwalllive.com/news/new-a30-dualling-project-include-5434766>

## **North American River otter Trapping in the US**

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is considering opening a river otter trapping season for 2021. The quote states “*The goal of the plan would be to maintain resilient, healthy and socially acceptable river otter populations that are in balance with available habitat and other wildlife species*” but until we stop interfering this will never be the case and STILL there is no data on population size to say it is sustainable.

[https://norfolkdailynews.com/news/commissioners-to-consider-mountain-lion-river-otter-seasons/article\\_972e169c-c79b-11eb-84a5-7310cd7ccfad.html](https://norfolkdailynews.com/news/commissioners-to-consider-mountain-lion-river-otter-seasons/article_972e169c-c79b-11eb-84a5-7310cd7ccfad.html)

In South Dakota, where there is a trapping season, they are going to start monitoring the otter populations of certain rivers within the state. Interesting that they start working on populations only AFTER they approve the legal trapping of up to 20 individuals. You'd argue doing it the other way round is more sustainable?

<https://eu.aberdeennews.com/story/opinion/columns/2021/07/22/gfp-column-river-otter-survey/8012793002/>

IOSF has long contested the river otter trapping seasons that occur across much of USA and Canada and you can read our latest report on this in IOSF's Otter Journal – Volume 7 ([https://otter.org/documents/journals/IOSF\\_Journal\\_Vol7\\_2021.pdf](https://otter.org/documents/journals/IOSF_Journal_Vol7_2021.pdf)).



North American River Otter ©Karen James

## **Utah launches citizen science project**

Utah State Fish and Game Commission has launched a citizen science project to try and help them monitor otter populations across the state. They are encouraging people to send any otter sightings, including spraint or footprints, to them and help them understand the populations more.

<https://kslnnewsradio.com/1951889/utah-river-otter/>

## **Otter reintroduction in New Mexico**

Plans to reintroduce river otters to the Gila river basin are causing concerns about the sensitive fish populations. These fish species and otters did once co-exist and it is believed that they can do so once again but one question that needs to be answered first is whether the ecosystem, as it is now, can support both.

Previous reintroduction programmes in New Mexico, in the Rio Grande, will provide worthwhile information and help gain an understanding of the best practices for this. It is thought that the river otters could, in fact, help native and endangered fish species by eating their major predators like crayfish and bull frogs. However, unlike the Rio Grande, the Gila River is not home to as many invasive species so it is likely that the otters will also take native species. So before they reintroduce the otters they need to look into whether the positives of returning otters, such as eating invasive species that also eat native species, outweigh the negatives of otters eating the same native species.

<https://nmpoliticalreport.com/2021/06/28/nm-department-of-game-and-fish-considers-river-otter-reintroduction-into-the-gila-river/>

## **Otter sightings**

We always love to hear stories of otters popping up in places and the joy it brings to locals. The five news stories below show otters across the UK and USA in areas they aren't often seen.

- Wigan - <https://www.wigantoday.net/news/people/otter-spotted-on-stretch-of-river-in-wigan-3277241>
- Rutland – <https://youtu.be/NxLgRLRh1uQ>
- Glasgow – <https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk/news/19402905.playful-otter-spotted-swimming-white-cart-water-glasgow/>
- Cleveland - <https://www.cleveland19.com/2021/06/21/family-river-otters-is-living-cleveland-metroparks/>
- Washington D.C. - <https://wjla.com/news/local/a-rare-sight-north-american-river-otter-spotted-at-the-national-mall>

## Stop Sea Blasts

**Of course, our focus is always on otters but there are certain issues which are important and which we have to support.** It is a terrible fact that there are over 350,000 items of unexploded ordnance from the First and Second World Wars still in UK waters. Of course when companies are looking to build offshore wind farms they have to make sure that the site is safe. However, at present this is done by simply blowing them up and this is obviously very destructive to marine habitats. It also poses a serious threat to whales and dolphins as the extreme noise can damage their hearing, sometimes permanently. This can lead to mass strandings as occurred in 2011 at Kyle of Durness in NW Scotland when 39 long-finned pilot whales beached just after such explosions. In 2015 they found that over 1,200 harbour porpoises had suffered permanent hearing loss following 88 explosions in the North Sea.

And yet there is an alternative called low-order deflagration which causes the explosive to burn out from the inside of the bomb or mine. This technology has been found to be up to 100 times quieter than normal detonation and has been used in military operations since 2005 by the Royal Navy and other global militaries.

Of course, we all agree that we need to use more renewable sources of energy but we cannot allow this threat to our marine wildlife to continue. The technology exists to remove the explosives safely and so the government should be ensuring that wind farm developers use it.

**Stop Sea Blasts** are campaigning for change and you can find out more and sign the petition at <https://www.stopseablasts.org/>

### Become an IOSF Life Supporter

Our supporters are always valued by us as a crucial source of support for the work that we are doing, and those of you that become life supporters are highly appreciated.

For a one-off payment of £350 you can become a Life Supporter and give your long-term commitment to help secure a better future for otters in the UK and around the world.

We will send you a certificate showing your life supporter status and you will continue to receive full updates in our newsletters, on all of the work that we are doing.

<https://www.ottershop.co.uk/become-a-life-supporter-c2x9466694>

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

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

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

This link [http://otter.org/Public/HelpUs\\_Legacy.aspx](http://otter.org/Public/HelpUs_Legacy.aspx) will take you to our dedicated web page concerning making a Legacy.

*giftaid it*



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

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

[http://www.otter.org/documents/IOSF\\_Fundraising\\_Pack.pdf](http://www.otter.org/documents/IOSF_Fundraising_Pack.pdf)

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/>

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.

### Annual Supporters' Rates

#### UK and EEC Countries:

Adult: £24.00 per year  
Child: £13.00 per year  
Family: £34.00 per year

#### All other countries:

Adult: £30.00 per year  
Child: £15.00 per year  
Family: £40.00 per year

Life Membership (all countries): £350.00

Have you enjoyed reading this e-newsletter? Then please forward it to someone else and spread the word.

If you are reading this for the first time and would like to receive all IOSF mailings, click [here](#) to sign up. Please be assured that we will never pass on your details to any other party and you will only ever receive emails from us.

### Discover Ways You Can Help

There are many ways in which you can raise money and awareness to help the otters in our **Fundraising Pack** or find out what some of our supporters have done over the years in the online **newsletters**.

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

Email: [enquiries@otter.org](mailto:enquiries@otter.org)  
Tel/Fax: ++(0)1471 822487



Charity Number SC003875

Join our IOSF mailing list. Click on this link:  
<http://tinyurl.com/p3lrsmx>

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

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