



## Otter News No. 113, June 2020

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### Help Us Stop the Otter Café in Bali

Since the first cat café opened in Osaka in 2004, animal-themed cafés in Japan have diversified with increasingly unusual species, including exotic birds, reptiles and mammals. And of course, otter cafés have sprung up too, which are popular both with locals and international tourists. They can play with the “cute” animals and take selfies and then want one of their own, thus driving the pet trade. Some cafés also offer sales of otters and there has clearly been an increase in the sale of live otters as predicted by McMillan in her paper in the IOSF Journal in 2018.



The number of otter cafés in Japan has risen considerably and now they are planning one on Bali, which will undoubtedly be the first of many such facilities. Otters are already very popular pets in Indonesia, where there are over 800 people with pet otters in Jakarta alone, so this will just increase demand even more.

Many Japanese cafés claim the otters were legally bred and purchased, but there is no proof of this. They may be wild caught after their mother has been killed and cubs still with their eyes closed are taken. They may be captive-bred but then we do not know the conditions under which they are kept and whether females are treated like breeding machines as in the notorious “puppy mills”.

Many Japanese cafés claim the otters were legally bred and purchased,

All over the world otter populations are declining as a result of habitat loss, pollution, lack of prey, and poaching and this is just extra pressure on wild populations.

We are working with other organisations to stop the new otter café in Bali as this will start a new trend and the same will happen as in Japan, a chain of suffering otters inside cafés around the country.

IOSF is writing to the Ministry of Forestry who are responsible for all conservation in Indonesia.

**We also have a petition which we would ask you to sign and forward to your friends and family:**

<https://www.thepetitionsite.com/305/778/301/stop-the-development-of-otter-cafes-on-bali/?cid=headerClickC2>

*Thanks for helping us with this campaign.*

## World Otter Day



**As we mentioned in last month's e-update, World Otter Day was very different this year. Under normal circumstances we would have events all over the world to raise awareness and support for otters, wetland habitats and their conservation.** Unfortunately, due to the current circumstances regarding the virus, it was important for people to stay safe and so, such celebrations had to be postponed or cancelled.

For this reason, IOSF encouraged people to make **World Otter Day** an "Online Otter Takeover" and YOU responded amazingly. We were delighted to see so many people and organisations engage with their favourite species, facts or simply why they loved otters! **World Otter Day** was trending 14<sup>th</sup> during the day – which is very high when you consider all that was going on at that time. So, THANK YOU!

As usual, IOSF offered **World Otter Day** grants. Our usual three grants were increased to four, thanks to an anonymous donation! This year grants were awarded to Lesotho, Malaysia, Morocco and Nepal. Some of the events planned still have to be completed due to lockdown restrictions but here is a summary of what has been achieved so far:



In Lesotho, the Human Nature Projects Organization – Lesotho (HNPO – Lesotho) held an event at the Memorial Hall in Maseru, the country's capital. A variety of people were invited to attend, such as local communities, youth representatives and Lesotho's Environmental Ministry officials and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP GEF) also sent a representative. There were a number of presentations to tell them about the significance of conserving otters in Lesotho.



The event was also attended by a number of media outlets who publicised the IOSF World Otter Day event to the entire nation. This, therefore, raised awareness for our cause and the conservation of the species. Outlets such as Lesotho Times Magazine, Lesotho National Television, and Lesotho School Magazine, all attended.



This event was used to raise the profile of otters across the enclave and encourage more people to be aware of otters, their benefits and their conservation. The HNPO – Lesotho team delivered a day of learning about otters, conservation and wetland habitats – and encouraging a discussion with all of the attendees to increase the knowledge of the species across the area.

Looking into the future HNPO – Lesotho are excited to continue their work in otter

conservation within the area. A number of companies have agreed to partner them with regards to otter conservation and the Maseru City Council has offered the organisation free hall time to continue with the otter conservation and education programme.

The whole programme has been a massive success and has raised the profile of otters in the area. Lesotho is, historically, home to two species and the knowledge base is growing. The HNPO - Lesotho team has found evidence of the existence of otters across Lesotho but there are also human-otter conflicts, hence the need for more education. IOSF is looking forward to working closely with HNPO - Lesotho moving forward and was particularly delighted when one of their team stated **“this is just the beginning of our journey”**.

### **Malaysia**

Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) celebrated their first World Otter Day after receiving an IOSF World Otter Day grant 2020 for an event themed “Born to be WILD; Not caged; Live WILDLY”.

During their event, MNS established the Malaysia Otter Network (MON), the very first, long-term, national effort focusing on the protection of the four species of otter in Malaysia. It aims to bring together a group of like-minded experts from different regions across the nation to share data on otter research, identify priorities and strengthen conservation actions for Malaysian otters. On 15 June MNS held the first MON virtual meeting and nine experts joined. The meeting identified the group’s objectives, set up priority conservation actions and established plans for further meetings. MON will ensure the continuation of conservation efforts and stories about otters; encourage more research to fill the gap in ecological knowledge and education activities, such as celebrating World Otter Day annually in Malaysia.

In addition, on 21 May Mr Woo Chee Yoong and Mr Balu Perumal from MNS attended a meeting at the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (KLCH) with the city council, which administers the city, and representatives from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks for Peninsular

Malaysia (PERHILITAN). Woo presented on the conservation of the urban otters around Kuala Lumpur, given their increased presence. The meeting was successful and there is now a proposed partnership formed between the three agencies in initiating the first ever urban otter conservation project in Malaysia.



In response to these terrible times, they turned their public celebration into a virtual one through the MNS Facebook and Instagram platforms. A press release on MNS's World Otter Day celebration was published (<https://www.mns.my/2020/06/18/getting-otterly-involved-for-world-otter-day/>)

Additionally, MNS has organised five OTTER themed contests (<https://www.mns.my/2020/05/27/world-otter-day-2020-contest/>) with the aim to raise awareness amongst the public on protecting, conserving and caring for otters.

### **Morocco**

In Morocco, Nature Solutions held an online webinar inviting individuals from all over the area to attend and learn more about otters, conservation and wetland habitats. IOSF's Education Officer, Ben Yoxon, was also invited to attend and raise awareness for otters in a global context. The webinar was a huge success with over 150 people attending, including attendees from neighbouring Tunisia and Algeria. Furthermore, the recorded video has now been watched over 7,000 times, so really spreading the word.

Following the webinar there is now much interest across the three countries to move forward and work together to conserve the Eurasian otter populations in the area through the new North African Otter Network. We are delighted to hear this and look forward to working together moving forward.

### **Nepal**

Aarati Basnet and a group of otter conservationists in Nepal put together a webinar to raise awareness of otters and the delicate ecosystem of which they are a vital part. The webinar invited around 200 people to take part and provided a wider understanding of various issues in regards to otter, wildlife and conservation. Aarati was one of the speakers and spoke of the current status of otters in the country.

Due to lockdown restrictions, Aarati has been unable to visit Shuklaphanta National Park to deliver her community education but when allowed and safe to do so, she will conduct this part of her event. She is very excited to visit the area and is keen to start a Team Otter club in one of Nepal's main otter strongholds.

### **Other World Otter Day Events**

As with many events around the world, we were delighted to be part of a number of sessions "online" and webinars to raise awareness.

### **South Korea**

IOSF's Paul Yoxon, was delighted to be invited to give a short introduction to the World Otter Day celebrations being held by Samsung in South Korea. He sent a video to Kyung Min Lee which they released on World Otter Day via Samsung Electronics Newsroom YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2C-970d2o-YGLPqsG6FcWQ>).

They also asked for suggestions on improving the environment around their site and creating more awareness.

Kyung Min Lee said *"With your help, I truly believe that the awareness for the necessity to protect otters and preserve the environment will be highly raised among Korean people."*

## **Tunisia**

Zakher Bouragaoui from the Association Tunisienne De La Vie Sauvage" wrote a paper for our latest Journal on a rare sighting of the Eurasian otter in Tunisia. When he heard about World Otter Day he asked if Paul would be willing to give an online presentation on the work of IOSF and the importance of otter conservation around the world. This was followed by a

presentation by Dr Mohsen Kalboussi on the Eurasian otter in Tunisia and North Africa.



## **Italy**

Lorenzo Quaglietta used his social media platform to deliver a talk on otters. He focused this on Eurasian otters and his experience in rearing young otters and releasing them back to the wild.

## **Montenegro**

Long-time partner of IOSF, Nino Djurovic, and NGO Living Green continued their tradition of holding an IOSF World Otter Day event. Unfortunately, as with many plans, this could not be held face to face, and instead they ran two separate events.

Firstly, they held a children's artwork competition, which helps the children in the country engage with otters and express their creativity. IOSF was delighted to get a number of entries to our own artwork competition, thanks to Nino and his seven Team Otter clubs.

They also used their social media platforms to raise awareness for otters across their followers. They posted videos and pictures to showcase how awesome a species they are!

## **Singapore**

Sivasothi, dubbed OtterMan in Singapore, was part of a group that held an online talk about otters within the city state.

## **Sri Lanka**

Our own Padma de Silva, knew it would not be possible to take part in World Otter Day at its usual time and so she did things early. She went to her village and took a whole heap of otter story books for distribution to the children.

She also managed to meet most of the girls who made otter bags for our Chinese workshop participants. Padma told us:

*"They were very happy to meet me and talk to me mostly about otters. They were impressed by this cute animal and I explained about its behavior, feeding habits etc. just as we were talking together. Not an official meeting. We had a cup of tea together and to my surprise, they donated a fair number of small bags, and purses etc. that they had done in their homes as part of a small industries scheme. They want these to be sold to help IOSF and otters."*

Unfortunately we haven't managed to get these yet but they will be available through the Ottershop.

In addition, Padma gave her sister another parcel of books to be donated to the priest residing in the temple at Galagedera. These will be stored in the library to be used in the English classes held every Sunday!! The priest was very impressed and called Padma to say a big "Thank you" as there aren't enough funds to buy English books for light reading

Chaminda Jayasekara, of Jetwing Vil Uyuna and IOSF Otter Oscar winner, has been observing and recording the wildlife alongside the hotel for some time, including the otters. He has done much to conserve the Eurasian otters (*Lutra lutra*) within their area and is constantly monitoring their progress.

Using his social media, Chaminda delivered an extensive insight into the Eurasian otter and the need for its conservation in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, he was also part of a feature in Sri Lankan media and this helped to spread the word about otters across the island nation.



IOSF's education officer, Ben, was invited by Akron Zoo to deliver a message on otters and their conservation to a large audience. The zoo had planned a big event on their premises but the times had put a stop to that. They had decided to invite otter enthusiasts to a 2-hour meeting about otters and the environments. Ben delivered a presentation on otters of the world, their conservation and their benefits. He was followed by a more extensive talk on the North American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*) and where you can see them around Akron, Ohio.

The event was well received and there is no talks to start a Team Otter programme in Akron – watch this space!



Sharon Lashley of Climate Change North arranged a webinar as part of World Environment Day on 5 June. Although, not part of IOSF's World Otter Day it gave us an opportunity to tell people the importance of otters to our Environment. The theme of the day was "Time for Nature" and IOSF's Grace Yoxon gave a presentation on the importance of making time for otters as so many of them are at severe risk from loss of habitat, hunting, disturbance, etc. There was a lot of interest from the audience and several people are interested in the education side and possibly setting up their own local Team Otter clubs.

**In addition to these activities from World Otter Day** there were various posters, etc shared. Here are a few:

## Japan



## Mexico



## Germany

## When Otters the Size of Wolves Roamed South Africa

(Images © Valenciano A & Govender R (2020))

**Researchers at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Iziko Museums of South Africa have identified fossils of a giant otter which lived on the west coast of the country about 5 million years ago. The otter (*Sivaonyx hendeyi*) was the size of a wolf and lived alongside another giant mustelid, a species of wolverine which was the size of a leopard (*Plesiogulo aff. monspesulanus*).**

We contacted Dr Alberto Valenciano, a postdoctoral research fellow at Iziko and UCT, to find out more and he has kindly given us permission to use the photos in this article.

The fossils were found about 120km north of Cape Town at the internationally renowned site of Langebaanweg, which is part of the West Coast Fossil Park. At this site scientists have unearthed some of the richest and best-preserved collections of vertebrate fossils of the Neogene (approx. 23 million to 2.5 million) in Africa. At that time the climate was 2-3° warmer than at present and sea level was about 30m higher. The habitat was very varied and as well as the otter, other mammal remains found include 20 species of mustelids, bears, seals, jackals, hyenas, sabretooth cats, giant civets and mongoose.

There have been fossil finds of other ancient large otter species in Africa, including *Sivaonyx* and *Enhydriodon*, all of which are now extinct. Fossil otters have also been found in India, Germany, Greece and Turkey, and the study of these ancient species enables scientists to work out the biology and evolutionary line of otters and how fauna has changed over time. It would seem our modern otters are not direct descendants of *Sivaonyx* but that they were more like cousins with a common ancestor. The new study has revealed a lot more information on the diet and locomotion of this ancient otter species, which would have been about 40kg.

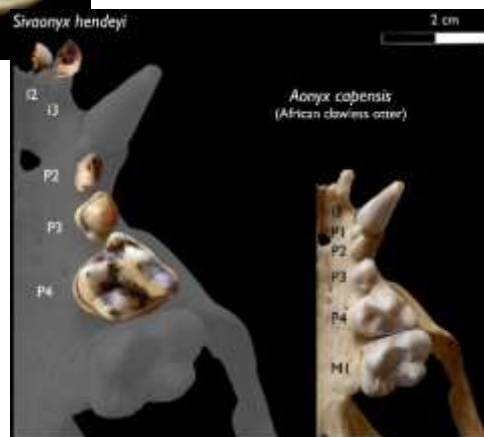
If we compare the upper jaw bones of the fossil otter (left) and the living African clawless otter (*Aonyx capensis*, right) we can see the huge difference in size. The fossil jaw was described in 1978 and originally assigned to the species *Enhydriodon africanus*. This was later changed and a new species was created, *Enhydriodon hendeyi*, and later this was changed again into a different genus, *Sivaonyx*. This often happens in taxonomy and it can cause confusion. In fact, the spotted-necked otter was changed from *Lutra maculicollis* to



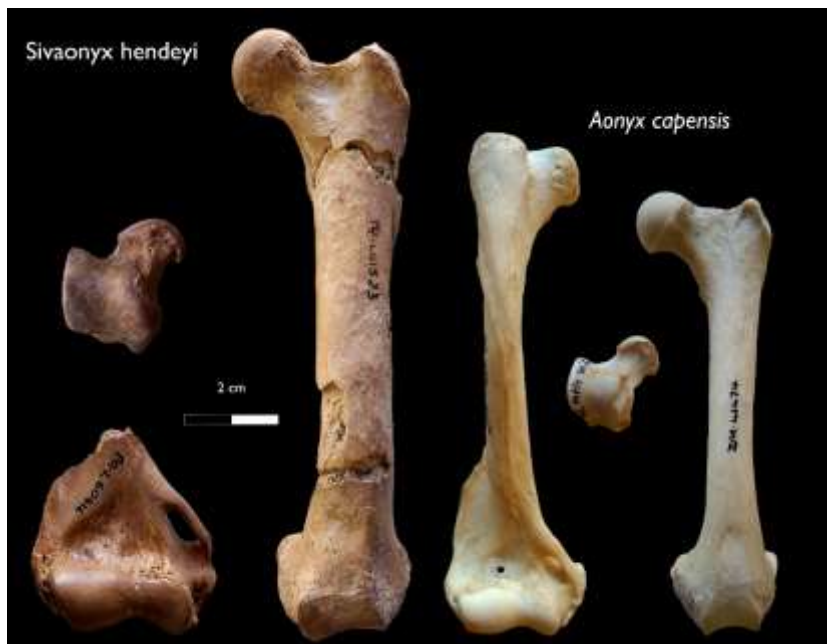
*Hydrictis maculicollis* and the Asian small-clawed otter has had many different names before its present name

of *Aonyx cinereus*.

The fossil remains of the otter jaw bones are not complete but the teeth do have a similarity to the modern sea otter and so suggest that they fed on hard prey such as armoured catfish, molluscs and crustaceans. The living African clawless otters eat mainly fish, but being opportunistic carnivores like all otters, they will also take crabs, molluscs, amphibians, birds and small mammals.







By looking at the leg bones (above) it would suggest that this new species, *Sivaonyx hendeyi*, was more semi-aquatic and moved differently on land and in water than older ancestral *Sivaonyx* species.

There is a geological boundary between the Miocene and Pliocene at about 5.33 million years and at that time there was a big change in carnivore fauna in Eurasia and Africa. Several groups died out and some migrated to Africa, including *Sivaonyx*.

The fossils in this study had been excavated in the 1990s and 2000s

and were being stored in the Cenozoic Collections at the Iziko South African Museum. The study shows that as well as investigating new fossil locations it is important to examine collections being held in museums and universities.

<https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2020-06-01-when-giant-mustelids-roamed-south-africa>  
<https://theconversation.com/gigantic-wolverines-otters-the-size-of-wolves-fossils-offer-fresh-insights-into-the-past-140752>

The full paper is **Valenciano A & Govender R (2020)**. New insights into the giant mustelids (Mammalia, Carnivora, Mustelidae) from Langebaanweg fossil site (West Coast Fossil Park, South Africa, early Pliocene). It can be found at <https://peerj.com/articles/9221/>

## News from The Sanctuary

**Our otters seem to be getting cheekier every day. One morning we managed to spot Otto and Harrie playing in their pool.** At first they didn't see us as they had fun diving and splashing in the water, but once they knew we were there they were far more wary, which is good to see.



Later in the week, we went to feed them but couldn't see them anywhere. They weren't in the sleeping box and we couldn't find them in the enclosure. But we knew they were there from the webcam. Where could they be? It turns out they have made themselves a little holt beside their pool and were hiding there!

Their next-door neighbour, Sparky, is just

as mischievous and continues to live up to his name. He rarely comes out when we go to feed but if he does we are met with a series of grunts and hisses, which is perfect behaviour for a wild otter.

We regularly have to top up the water in the pools with a hose, which can take quite a while. So we put the hose on and go back later to see progress and turn it off. The other day we went back up and Sparky had not only taken the hose out of the pool but he had decided to chew the end too! Otters are such pesky creatures!

Bealltainn, our newest arrival, continues to grow and develop well although she is still not as shy as we would like to see in a wild otter – hopefully that will come. As you can see each of the otters have their own special characters and Bealltainn is a real sun worshipper! We often find her lying on her back as if she was a holidaymaker on a beach! She also has a special taste for octopus.



Bealltainn is turning into a beautiful otter

We are fortunate to be able to give our otters a good varied diet: Andy Race Fish Merchants at Mallaig supply us with haddock and the local fisherman give us mixed fish and octopus – Sparky loves the fishermen’s rocklings. And even the young kids in our village are helping out - young Archie (aged 9) is catching crabs for us and we recently had a “special delivery” of four pollock that young Ryan (aged 7) had caught with his dad. Thanks everyone.

And look at these gorgeous little creatures – very strange looking otters!



Of course, our focus is on otters but we are the general wildlife rescue centre for the area and take in any animal or bird needing help.

Recently we received a message from someone in Sleat, in the south of the island, as he had found these two tiny animals. At first, they thought they were pine martens but when we collected them it was clear that they were in fact stoats. They are doing well and eating by themselves and enjoying sleeping in the safety of their blanket! They are incredibly fast, especially when their box is being cleaned.

Stoats are another member of the mustelid family and

are therefore closely related to otters!

***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)***

**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.

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



## Team Otter

**Today we would like to introduce you to Chloe Shanks, from Farnham in Surrey. Chloe, aged 11, is going to run a half marathon to raise money for otters and their conservation through IOSF – focusing on rehab of otters both here in the UK and abroad.**

Chloe loves otters as they hold a special place in her family. Her

Granny used to be called 'Otter' by her Grandfather. She passed away last year so it's partly in her memory that Chloe is doing this.

Chloe was given a toy by her father, who had in turn been given it by her Granny, and so it is now with its third generation in the family!

Chloe also recently found a love for running and has since decided to put her two passions together! Before her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday, Chloe plans to run a half marathon and raise at least £250 for injured and orphaned otters! She has already met her target but hopes to get much more!



© The Shanks Family

Chloe says "I just want to help otters. I've seen them swimming in the wild on the West Coast of Scotland and I want to help those who are hurt or in need. They are such happy creatures and I want them all to be safe and looked after."

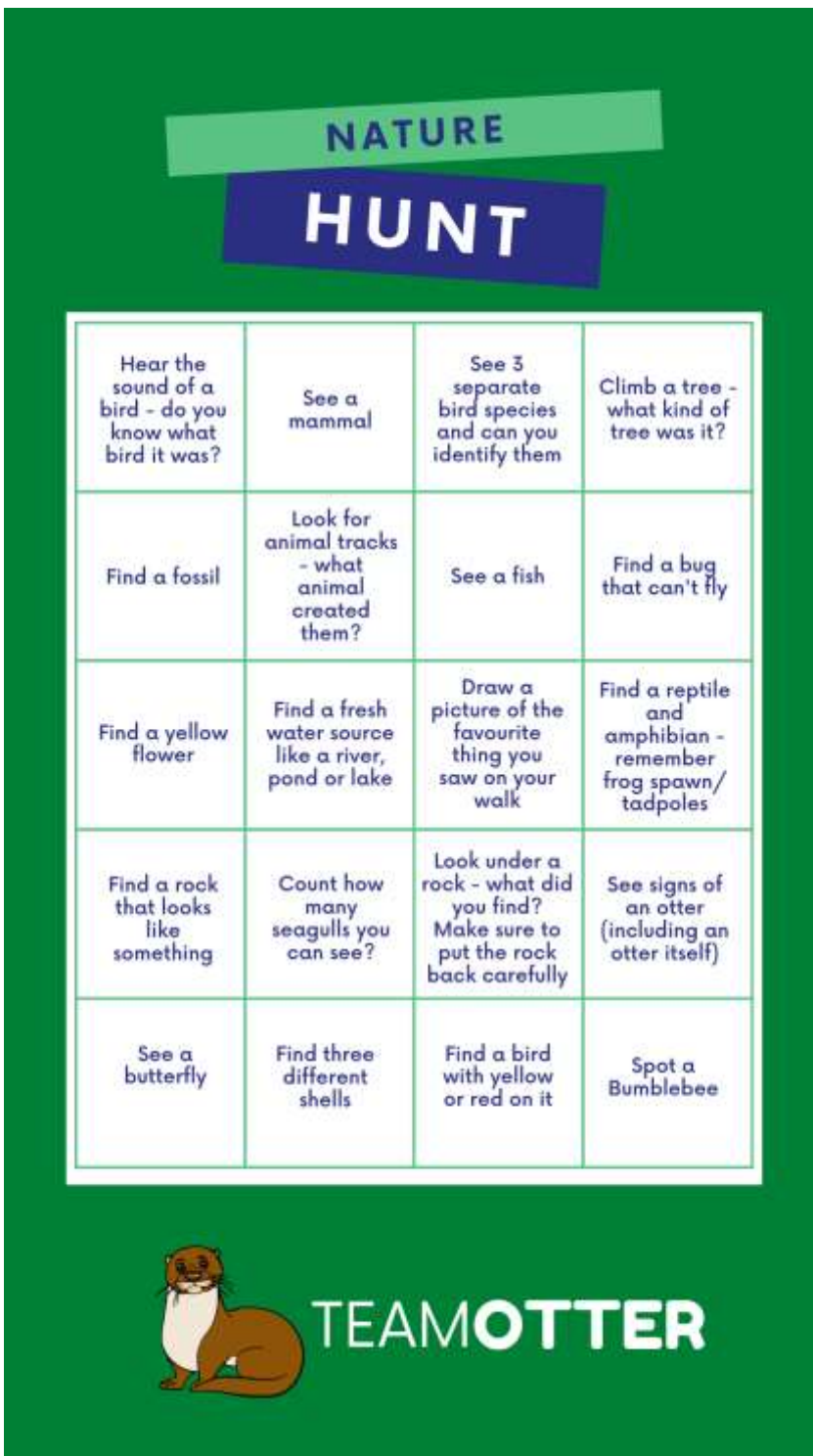
Thanks Chloe, from all of us at IOSF and the otters!

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/chloe-shanks>

## Nature Hunt


During the summer, why not get out and try the Team Otter Nature Hunt? See how many of the 15 tasks you can complete around your area. Make sure you adhere to your area's current restrictions though and stay safe!

Send us pictures of yourself completing the hunt. Can you get all 15?



**NATURE HUNT**

Hear the sound of a bird - do you know what bird it was?	See a mammal	See 3 separate bird species and can you identify them	Climb a tree - what kind of tree was it?
Find a fossil	Look for animal tracks - what animal created them?	See a fish	Find a bug that can't fly
Find a yellow flower	Find a fresh water source like a river, pond or lake	Draw a picture of the favourite thing you saw on your walk	Find a reptile and amphibian - remember frog spawn/tadpoles
Find a rock that looks like something	Count how many seagulls you can see?	Look under a rock - what did you find? Make sure to put the rock back carefully	See signs of an otter (including an otter itself)
See a butterfly	Find three different shells	Find a bird with yellow or red on it	Spot a Bumblebee

 **TEAMOTTER**

<http://www.loveotters.org/41111384>

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).

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

Discover some beautiful otter art at the Otter Shop

Find it at

<https://ottershop.co.uk/collections/otter-art>



## Otter Conservation in Uganda



(photos ©MUCCO)



IOSF has recently been in contact with Turyagenda Louis of the Mutanda Community Conservation Organization (MUCCO). Louis and his organisation are nature lovers and passionate about protecting the native species and environments around Lake Mutanda in Uganda, close to the borders with Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In 2010, Louis found a number of people that shared his passion for wetland habitats and set up MUCCO with a view to working closely within the local community and helping the wildlife and the community to co-exist. Although MUCCO is passionate about all wildlife they have really pushed to protect otters and their habitats along Lake Mutanda and surrounding wetlands.

Here are some of their great achievements so far:

- They worked closely with local officials and communities to raise awareness of the hunting of otters and encourage communities to cease this practice. In this photo, you can see local individuals handing their hunting spears over in an agreement to stop. Furthermore, he is also working to prevent furs from entering the illegal trade and, along with government officials, is confiscating otter skins from poachers in the area. More recently MUCCO has managed to persuade three poachers to stop poaching otters!



- MUCCO worked with local farmers to educate them about the problems caused by using poor farming practices such as increased water pollution (less fish) and other environment issues.



- MUCCO is encouraging alternative livelihoods such as crafts and souvenirs that can be bought by tourists. This helps with economic stability within the area.



- MUCCO is educating the local communities about the importance of otter conservation and the benefits of having otter populations near to them.



- They are also very aware of the importance of working with children in the area and helping to provide a better future for all species. This photo was taken after Louis and a group of children, spent some time observing otters on Lake Mutanda.

Moving forward Louis and the MUCCO organisation are interested in a number of aspects in relation to otter conservation. They are planning to start a Team Otter club, continuing to reduce trade, raise awareness of otter importance within local communities and carry out research. They are also looking at encouraging otters as an ecotourism project and therefore maintaining the economic stability of the area.

MUCCO have some ambitious and great plans moving forward and we are looking forward to seeing more about the great work they are doing!



 **Democratic Republic of Congo** 



© Rita Chapman

**Remember Mbu - the adorable, young spotted-necked otter cub from the Democratic Republic of Congo, being cared for by the Kikongo Otter Sanctuary?**

Well – look how he has grown!

Mbu is now around 6 months old and recently caught his first fish in the river near the sanctuary.

He is quite a hit among the locals too, who gaze in amazement at his charismatic charm. Here is a wonderful brief conversation between Rita, who is caring for Mbu, and the local children!

Kids: “Mama, what kind of animal is that?”  
Rita: “It’s a duck.”  
Kids: “Ahh! No, it’s not!”  
Rita: “It’s a goat.”  
Kids: *\*Laughter\** “No, it’s not a goat!”  
Rita: “Maybe it’s a rat!”  
Some kid to the others: “No, it’s an otter. See, I told you it was an otter!”

Mbu has also taken a bit of a shine to the migrating butterflies and is often curious about their flitting flying technique.

It is interesting to see Rita’s comments about the main differences between the Congo Clawless otter, which they are used to, and the Spotted-necked otter, of which Mbu is their first.

- Mbu is a fraction of the size our other otters were. Tiny and petit in comparison.
- He is much more at home around the water and stays close to his water source. The Congo Clawless had much more of a tendency to spend the day digging up their enclosures.

- The Congo Clawless made dark, cool sleeping areas under logs scattered around the enclosure whereas Mbu seems happy to curl himself into a ball on top of his wooden house near his pond
- Mbu also has little interest in worms for food – something that was a Congo Clawless favourite. He much prefers the fish with the odd snake and frog thrown into his diet.
- Mbu is an easier otter to care for. The Congo Clawless Otters were far more destructive. He keeps his pond pristine. With our other otters, the water had to be changed every 3-5 days. In all the time Mbu has been with us, it has not had to be changed once yet, although we have to run a net through it to catch pieces of shredded water hyacinth he plays with.

It is fascinating to see the little differences between these two species that share a habitat.

Thanks Rita

## Cameroon

Back in January we learned that a young Congo Clawless Otter had been received at Ape Action Africa, (a primate sanctuary) in Cameroon. Sadly, his mother had been hunted for bush meat.

They called him Beni and he was their first ever otter in care. Naturally it was a big learning curve, but with good advice from those in the know, including of course Rita, they have stepped up and done a super job.

The people at Ape Action Africa want to provide a bigger enclosure for Beni and have launched an appeal to help get this done. Follow this link to donate <https://www.apeactionafrica.org/Appeal/otter-enclosure-appeal>



The great news is that Beni is thriving and, he is very active and growing well. See their video [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=6&v=1t1NfMTQH\\_Q&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=6&v=1t1NfMTQH_Q&feature=emb_logo)

## Indonesia

Our friends at SUMECO who are looking after a Eurasian and Asian short-clawed otter have recently rescued another Asian short-clawed from the pet trade. The new otter, named Ben, is currently in isolation due to his condition but will slowly be introduced to Kiki when the time allows.

## New Records of Maxwell's Otter in Iran

In our latest OTTER Journal there is a paper by Omar Al Sheikhly et al. who gave a preliminary population estimate of Maxwell's otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli*) in Iraq. They also reported that these otters had been confirmed in Hoor ol-Azim Wetland in southwest Iran on the border with Iraq and a video was taken by Seyed Baqir Mosavi (co-author of the paper) in April 2019

(<https://www.facebook.com/IraqiWildlifeCenter/videos/310085259684526/>) along with the photo



below. This is the first confirmation of their presence in Iran since 1990s.



Omar's work on the Iraq otters was concentrated in Hawizeh Marsh in southeast Iraq but here otters face persecution from Marsh Arabs who see them as competition for the fish. It therefore seems likely that the otters are crossing the border to Iran where they are apparently safer.

Recently we received an email from Keramat Hafezi with a video of otters taken by Mohammed Saki, again in Hoor ol-Azim Wetland in March 2019. He was seeking confirmation that they were indeed Maxwell's otters. And they were!

Keramat then sent the following photo taken at Hoor ol-Azim by Amir Momtaz and Ruhollah Ghasemi in February 2019.



© Keramat Hafezi

Naturally we passed the information on to Omar and his colleagues who were as thrilled as we were: *"These are lovely SCotters indeed, I was astonished by the deep black fur of the adult individual. It seems now the species is doing well at Hoorol-Azim in SW Iran and came in agreement to what we indicated in our latest paper. Well done to the observer Mohammed Saki."*

Well done indeed

## News in Brief

### Otter cameras helping children learn

A lot has changed since the beginning of the pandemic. Our ability to enjoy our natural world outside is different and one school has set up a unique way for children to continue their environmental studies.

Kids who signed up for Environmental studies at Yakama Nation Tribal School in Toppenish, Washington, are encouraged to learn about the natural world in the field. However, the recent pandemic meant that this wouldn't be possible and so a series of online webcams helped the children study the animals.

The webcams focused in particular on a wetland habitat that used to be home to species such as beavers, which had since left, or had they? The webcam revealed that the beavers were, in fact, still there and it was also home to the North American river otter.

It is amazing and encouraging that otters, and other species, can still be studied remotely during this uncertain time.

<https://www.spokanepublicradio.org/post/toppenish-trail-cam-zooms-unique-learning-opportunity-yakama-nation-students>

### Sea otters in Japan

The sea otter population in Japan is on the rise! Sea otters range from the Pacific coasts of northern Mexico and California, all the way to Russia and Japan. Over the last few years, the numbers of otters off the Hobomai Islands, Hokkaido prefecture, has slowly been increasing and there are now believed to be over 200 individuals.

The reason for this is believed to be the fishing quotas that have been put in place by the Japanese government meaning that there is more prey for the otters and other fish-eating species.

<https://www.thetelegraph.com/news/article/Sea-otter-population-on-the-rise-in-Hokkaido-15348903.php>

### Events

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

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>

### Thank You

For your continued support and donations, all of which help IOSF continue in its work. We also want to thank The Shirley Pugh Foundation for their kind support.

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

## 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:



**Regular and secure giving to IOSF and otter conservation... at your fingertips. Text **donr**  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.

**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

*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**.

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<http://tinyurl.com/p3lrsmx>

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

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