



Otter News No. 121, March 2021

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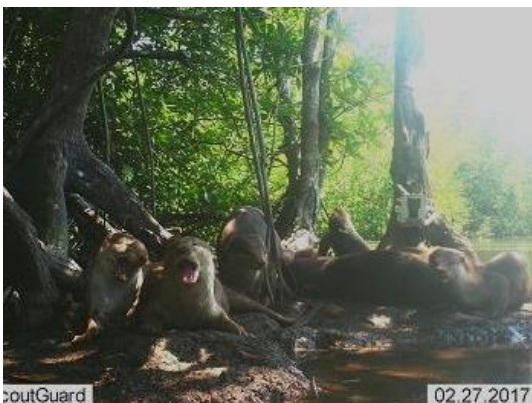
There has been so much hardship and suffering in the world that we want to celebrate some uplifting otter stories. We always like to share good news stories as well as threats to otters and our environment, and each month we will feature one that is especially encouraging. We start with a positive story from Cambodia.

Fisherman Releases His Pet Otter (All photos taken by Horn Heanh) **In March the Cambodian Fishing Cat Project put a post on Facebook about the rescue of a baby smooth-coated otter in Kratie province.**

On 16 March, a 61 year old fisherman, called Horn Chhorn, saw a family of smooth-coated otters – one female and three cubs. One of the cubs tried to steal some fish out of his net and got stuck, so Chhorn decided to take it home for a pet.

Sophat Reaksmeay, a researcher with the Fishing Cat Project, heard about this a few days later from his father-in-law, Horn Heanh, who lives in the same village as Chhorn. Sophat immediately contacted the fisherman to persuade him to release it and explained that wildlife should never be kept as pets. At first the fisherman was reluctant to let it go but eventually on 21 March the cub was released. Ideally Sophat would have been there to help but as he was in quarantine he gave instructions over the phone to his father-in-law, who could be there to make sure all went well.

For a while the baby otter called out for his family and in the end his calls were answered and the group of six otters came to take him back.



The Kla Trey team from the project gave Chhorn some money to compensate him for the cage he had built and the fish he had fed the cub.

Unfortunately they weren't able to get a photo of the reunited family but the Fishing Cat Project sent this camera trap image of a family group together in the shade.

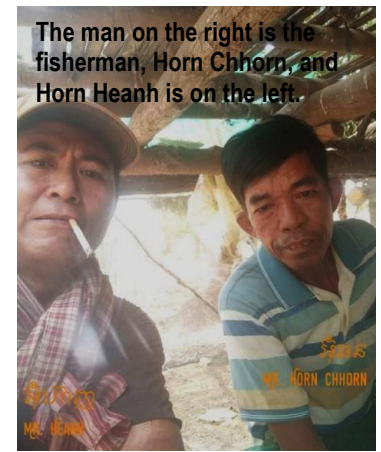
Horn Heanh said that there are many conflicts between people and otters in the area, and otters break nets to get at the fish. Apparently a few days earlier a villager had eaten a large adult

otter which had been killed with a tool used for electro-fishing. It is possible that this may have been from the same family as the released cub.

This story has many positives. Chhorn now understands that wildlife should be left in nature and not taken as a pet and he will be able to advise others not to do this. Horn Heanh was very important in the release and the Fishing Cat Project have described him as *"the hero who tried to talk the fishermen into releasing the otter back to the wild."* The Kla Trey team will soon be working in the area to help mitigate human-otter conflict – this is often a driver in trade in otters for pets or furs.

IOSF has worked with Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Team in Cambodia for many years. They are part of Wildlife Alliance and work with all species, not just otters. The Wildlife Rapid Rescue Team, also a part of Wildlife Alliance, is an animal police unit that investigates and cracks down on the transnational illegal wildlife trade. Many of the animals they confiscate are rescued from the pet trade, and so it is important to spread the word that wildlife should not be taken as pets. By involving local people, as in this case in Kratie province, it has a much bigger impact on communities.

You can see more about the work of the Fishing Cat Project at <https://www.facebook.com/fishingcatcambodia/> or at www.fishingcatcambodia.org



The man on the right is the fisherman, Horn Chhorn, and Horn Heanh is on the left.

Help Us to Build IOSF's New Otter Hospital

IOSF was founded in 1993 and since then we have cared for more than 220 otters in our specialist facilities on the Isle of Skye. We also provide help and advice to people involved in wildlife rescue in other parts of the UK, such as the PACT animal sanctuary in Norfolk. Each year, IOSF receives between 10-14 otters and currently we have 8 in our care, including Holly who arrived weighing under 500g.



Holly on arrival in January 2021



*Holly in March 2021
weighing just under 2kg*

As you know, we also have help people caring for otters worldwide.

Our caring programme on Skye has three stages:

1. Cub pens – When a cub arrives they are usually 8-12 weeks old and so they need small indoor pens where they are warm and can be monitored on a regular basis.
2. Nursery pens – These are small outside pens with a pool and a sleeping area which can be heated if necessary. Cubs are moved here when they are 4-6 months old depending on the weather.
3. Larger pre-release pens – These are large pens with a natural pool where the otters are prepared for release.

In November 2017 IOSF entered its 25th year and as part of our 25 year celebrations, we set up a special campaign to raise funds to upgrade our facilities. Maintenance is a constant task, especially after an otter is released, as they can be very destructive to enclosures!

There are two phases to the upgrade:

Phase 1: Build new nursery pens opening into larger enclosures as the animals grow. This included a building for equipment, freezers, food preparation, etc. This was completed in 2019 and we are now able to maintain a smooth and favourable transition for cubs all the way to release.



Amongst the first otters to enjoy these new facilities were Harrie and Otto (above – entering their sleeping box, looking out, and in their pool).

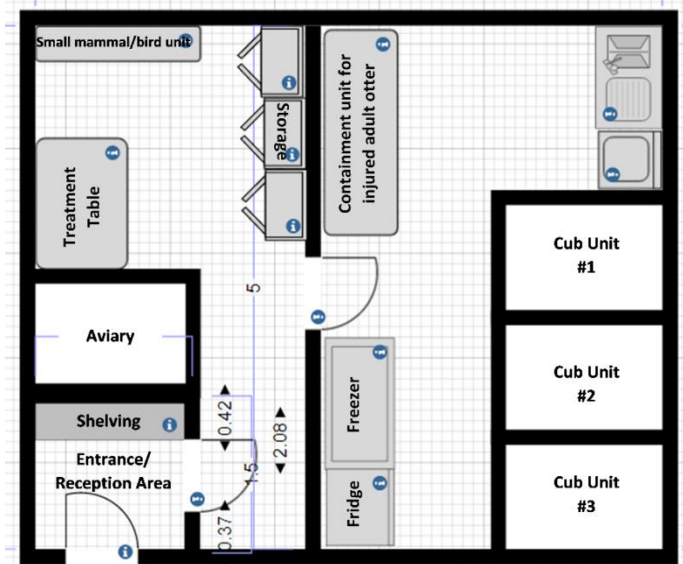
So now we need to work on Phase 2: replacing the hospital itself

This was built out of wood in 1988 and is showing signs of its age and so we urgently need to replace it. Since 1988 we have taken all orphaned and injured wildlife, including hedgehogs, bats, pine martens, seals and various birds. So we not only need facilities for the otters but also small mammal boxes and indoor aviaries.

Building Design:

Dimensions:

- Length: 6m
- Width: 5m
- Height: 2.5m



The new hospital is designed to provide easily maintained facilities making maximum use of space for storage, etc. As shown in the above plan there are three main areas:

1. **Entrance hall/reception**, which allows people to deliver donations of bedding, etc, and also bring casualties without having to enter the hospital itself. This prevents the possibility of introducing any infection such as Covid-19.
2. **“Dry area”** with treatment table for initial examination and small mammal and bird units and indoor aviary.
3. **“Wet area”** with food preparation area, sink, freezer, fridge. The cub units will be interconnecting to allow unrelated cubs to be introduced to each other easily by simply opening a door. There will also be a containment unit for the indoor care of an injured adult otter.

There will also be plenty of storage space for bedding, feeding equipment, etc.

The total cost of replacing the hospital is £25,650

You can help to support this appeal and there are several ways to donate:

1. The Ottershop - <https://ottershop.co.uk/products/iosf-new-hospital-appeal>
2. Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/donate/2906953809583806>

3. JustGiving – www.justgiving.com/campaign/iosfotterhospital
4. By cheque – please make it payable to IOSF and mark “Otter Hospital” on the back. Send to IOSF, 7 Black Park, Broadford, Isle of Skye, IV49 9DE, Scotland

We know it is hard for everyone in the current circumstances but, no matter how small the amount you can give, rest assured that it will help to care for otters for many years to come.

Thank you

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

We have eight otters in care at the moment.

Bealltinn, from the Isle of Mull, has been with us the longest. There are still a few concerns over her ability to return to the wild although she is starting to show us her "true wild" side by 'swearing' at us as when we give her fresh bedding. We call it a "swear" but it's more of a snarl and warning to leave her alone. We have also noticed sticks and other bedding materials appearing in her sleeping box. Both of these things are great signs!

Effie and Reva are doing really well and will hopefully be released back to the wild in a few months' time. Cleaning time is mostly met with initial animosity and then happiness as the new hay gives them an opportunity to carefully reassemble their bed to just the way they like it!

DJ and Louis, our local Broadford otters, always keep us amused. Feeding time is met with an argument over who gets the best fish, the occasional tug of war which splits the fish and then the contentment of victory as they both eat their respective halves! Recently we had some really cold weather with snow and biting winds. For some reason they had taken to removing the turf from part of their enclosure and then decided to pile this up in front of the entrance to their sleeping box to form as sort of "draught excluder"!



Bealltinn



Effie and Reva



DJ and Louis

Holly is one of triplets that were found under a container near the Highland capital of Inverness, but sadly her two sisters died of genetic disorders. Holly is a right madam. She is a fussy little animal and is only happy with her favourite food, which is trout. She has grown from under 500g (and one of the smallest otters we have ever received) to a relatively massive 2kg in our care. Long may she continue like this!

Laurie was not a young cub but arrived underfed and struggling to feed himself. We are taking the time to "feed him up" in the hope of being able to return him back to the wild later in the year.

Buddy, our most recent arrival came from Fort William. He is a reserved 'hot-head' of a character, spending a lot of time under his favourite blanket, only emerging to get his food. At the moment he loves salmon, but is also partial to a bit of trout too. Cleaning time is met by the usual grunt, snarl and mad-dash for cover. Hopefully in time he can be introduced to Holly - the perfect pairing of Buddy and Holly!!



Holly



Laurie



Buddy

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



IOSF World Otter Day 2021 is just under two months away. IOSF, for one, can't wait to celebrate! IOSF launched **World Otter Day** to help raise awareness for otters, their conservation and the protection of their habitats.

This year, we invite you to take part once again! We understand that the current situation can alter or affect plans so please make sure you are safe and following local guidelines! But there are still a lot of things you can do, such as:

- Run an awareness event increasing knowledge of otters, conservation and wetland habitats.
- Hold a fundraising event for otter conservation. This could be a Facebook Fundraiser, sponsored event or anything you think you will enjoy! Make sure you have fun doing it.
- Post on social media using **#WorldOtterDay**. IOSF Social Media handles are as follows:

Facebook - @InternationalOtterSurvivalFund

Twitter - @IOSF

Instagram - @IOSF_Otters

You can do anything that helps otters! If you're struggling for ideas, why not visit the IOSF "**Otters Need Your Help**" pack for some inspiration. <https://www.otter.org/documents/How%20to%20help%20otters%20toolkit.pdf>

There are already lots of events planned all over the world and we are delighted to see so many people, organisations etc., wanting to celebrate otters. We know that it's been a strange and tough year, but what better

way to raise hopes than otters!

Our IOSF **World Otter Day** Map shows you all the events planned so far!



<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1jY0IkVbvUEnrAfpS23rzhiWTF76tmey7&ll=14.43847101769755%2C16.962738450000074&z=2>

If you have an event planned, we would love to showcase it on the **World Otter Day** map! Email ben@otter.org and tell him what will be going on so it can be added to our impressive map!

SOCIAL MEDIA

We also understand that not everyone can hold an event so we invite you to help make the world of social media go OTTER CRAZY this year! We want you to post about anything otter related.

Here are some ideas:

- Post a picture of your favourite otter species
- Post amazing facts about otters
- Post why you love otters!
- Hold a Facebook Fundraiser!
- TAG IOSF IN ALL YOUR POSTS AND WE WILL TRY AND SHARE THEM

If you are struggling for what to post, visit the IOSF Social media pack for some inspiration!

<https://www.otter.org/images/WorldOtterDayPDFs/214.pdf>

We are always happy to help with ideas, materials and much more.

If you need any assistance, or have an event planned, we would love to hear more about it. Please contact ben@otter.org

Let's make this World Otter Day the biggest yet!

Grants

Once again, IOSF was delighted and overwhelmed with the number of applications we received for this year's IOSF World Otter Day grants. All the proposals were excellent and it was hard for the panel to decide. But after much discussion and deliberation, we picked our eventual winners. This year, and for the third year running, we have been able to offer a fourth World Otter Day grant thanks to a generous donor, who wished to remain

anonymous!

The grants were awarded to the following projects:

- **Adriana Belen Vallejos, Estación Biológica Corrientes, Argentina**
In the Corrientes región, home to the Neotropical otter, Adriana and her team will focus on three main sub-projects within the event: visiting three local schools to raise awareness of otters and wetlands; creating wider awareness with a radio programme; research into the species on the Riachuelo River. The programme will increase awareness and knowledge of otters in the area and continue the work that has already been conducted by Adriana and the rest of the Estación Biológica Corrientes team.
- **Coffi Donald Dossou, Human Nature Projects Benin**
This project will raise awareness of otters, wetlands and their conservation in the Ouémé Valley in Benin. This is an area that is known to have otter populations and raising their profile and their benefits to the ecosystem, will help with their long-term survival. Threats to both otters and wetland habitats will also be highlighted which will help both the otters and local communities.
- **Eswar Narayana, Janya Foundation, India**
This project is focusing on children, local communities and other concerned individuals and organisations near the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh, India. During the event there will be an artwork competition, online quiz and a field site visit to the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary. The sanctuary is a wetland habitat famous for species such as smooth-coated otters and fishing cats. Participants will be taught vital monitoring techniques, such as camera trapping, and will be provided with education and other materials to continue raising awareness after the project.
- **Sujita Dhakal, Global Youth Biodiversity Network, Nepal**
This project will be a one-day sensitisation project focusing on fishing communities. It will include presentations regarding otter identification, conservation in the local area, and identifying secondary signs such as spraints, tracks in order to continue monitoring. The area was chosen as it is known to have otters but recent studies have not been conducted. Therefore, it will inspire local communities to help conserve and monitor THEIR local otter populations and be at the forefront of otter and wetland conservation for their area.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the applicants for taking their time to work on otter conservation in their respective areas.

Webinar

This year, to celebrate **IOSF World Otter Day**, IOSF will be hosting **TWO “Otters of the World” webinars**, one in the morning and one in the evening (UK time). This will enable us to accommodate for all time zones and encourage as many people from different countries to join us! We are delighted to have speakers from across the world to really enhance our **Otters of the World** Webinar and show you some of the amazing work that they are all doing!

As mentioned, our webinars will take place across two times during the day. The first will be at 09.00am – 11.30am and the second from 17.00pm – 19.30pm. All of these times are based on UK times so if you are joining us from different parts of the world please check your times accordingly.

Each session will have five different speakers and so far, we are pleased to announce the following:

For the first session:

- The work of IOSF
- William Mgomo, on his work in relation to otters and fishing communities in Tanzania
- Save Vietnam’s Wildlife, on their work in the rescue and rehab of Asian otters and reducing illegal trade
- Omar Al-Sheikhly, IOSF’s Middle Eastern Co-ordinator, will talk on Maxwell’s Otter, the sub species of Smooth-coated Otters native only to this region

For the second session:

- The work of IOSF
- Megan Isadore of the River Otter Ecology Project, discussing North American River Otters and the Otter Spotter project
- Pablo Hernandez from Mexico, a close friend of IOSF and Neotropical Otter expert, telling us more about the species.
- Bridgette Adams San Marco from Save The Giants, on their Giant Otter conservation project in Guyana

If you would like to register to join our webinar please fill in the form at <https://forms.gle/Yt2zHtjKtTog86Zy5> There are limited places available so will be given on a 'first come first, first served' basis.

The webinar will be free of charge so that as many people as possible can attend, but we would welcome any donations to support **IOSF's World Otter Day!**

So join with us to make this World Otter Day the biggest yet!

Update on Northumberland Otter



RSPCA Stapeley Grange
18 March at 12:29

Last month we told you about the huge effort which went into rescuing a female otter which had fishing line tight around her waist. It had taken a long time to catch the otter as she moved about in her large home range but on 26 February she was eventually caught and taken to a vet. Following treatment for a deep wound she was sent to Stapeley Grange Wildlife Centre to recover from her ordeal. Her wound healed well and although the fur hadn't yet grown back to cover the scar, she was declared fit to go back into the wild.

So, on 17 March we received the great news that the RSPCA and Vets4Pets had released the otter back into her home territory and a video of the release was posted at <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=283636953125922> Hopefully now she will be able to live a long and safe life in her home environment.

IOSF was pleased to be able to work with the Otter Network, UKWOT, RSPCA and Vets4Pets Bedlington in this rescue.

Stunning Photo of Otters and Tiger Harsha Narasimhamurthy is a photographer from Bangalore in India who is a photography mentor at Toehold.in. He has taken the most amazing photos of tigers but on 16 March he posted this incredible photo of an encounter between a tiger and a group of otters.

Harsha has kindly given us permission to reproduce the photo here together with his account:

"Tiger and the Otter story

On a hot afternoon as this sub-adult sat in the water cooling off himself, a bevy of otters swam towards him unaware and as he sensed them, he quickly moved out of his pool. The otters were bold enough to stand up and look at the boy before he went back to rest



Tiger and otter (c) Harsha Narasimhamurthy

on the river bank and this bevy got on to the bank and moved into the forest.”

What an experience and to have a camera ready as well. You can see more of Harsha’s photos on his Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/harsha.narasimhamurthy.5>).

PayPal Checkout Donations

Give at Checkout with PayPal is a seamless way to donate to the charity of your choice via everyday transactions. All you need to do is set IOSF as your favourite and choose to add a £1 donation to purchases when at checkout. You can do this at our PayPal Giving Fund page



<https://www.paypal.com/gb/fundraiser/charity/10063> or log in to your PayPal account.

By taking part, throughout April you could help us win up to £6,000 with PayPal Giving Fund UK. Visit our profile [<https://tinyurl.com/2ha75yc5>]. Competition ends April 30th. #OneTapBigImpact

Austrian Otters Saved from the Cull Moved to The Netherlands

In early 2017 it was proposed that 40 otters should be culled in Lower Austria, in spite of legal protection. The purpose was to appease fishermen who claim that otters are responsible for decreases in fish stocks. The matter was referred to the European parliament but the cull went ahead in 2018 in spite of all the opposition and the fact that it was declared illegal by the justice court in Lower Austria. Permission was granted to kill 40 otters but in the end 20 otters were killed and then it was suspended. Proceedings are still pending against Austria at the European Court.

Otters are now being saved from another cull by moving them to the Netherlands to boost the reintroduced population there. The South Holland commissioner who deals with nature, Berend Potjer (GroenLinks), is positive, although of course there must be checks to make sure that it is ecologically sound.

Addy de Jongh is a Dutch otter expert and he was involved in the original reintroduction. Addy said “*We can save otters that die. Plus, the conditions in the Biesbosch have improved so much that this area is now almost completely suitable for the otters. So why wait for the otter to settle there spontaneously?*”

Addy has been working with Andreas Kranz from Graz in Austria and they now have the necessary permits to enable them to catch and transport the otters. So far 20 otters have been moved from Austria and the Czech Republic, where there are also problems with owners of fish ponds. These animals were released in areas such as Arnhem, Zwolle and in the De Oude Venen National Park in Friesland.



Eurasian otter ©Andy Coventry

As yet there are no otters in the Biesbosch, although some had got close. It was hoped that they would move in naturally but this provides the perfect site for the new translocation. The Biesbosch is a large wetland reserve of about 10,000 hectares and beavers were reintroduced from East Germany between 1988 and 1992. Unfortunately the area became heavily polluted with heavy metals, pesticides, PCBs and dioxins, which were discharged from large scale industry and waste incinerators until the 1980s. However, regular surveys have shown that pollutant levels are clearly declining and so it now becomes possible for otters to live there.

As well as adding to the population of otters already living in the Netherlands, the incoming otters will also provide new genetic variation which is important for a healthy population.

https://www.ad.nl/alphen/deze-bioloog-heeft-al-twintig-otters-uit-oostenrijk-en-tschie-gered-van-wisse-dood-prachtige-dieren~a7a9cc47/?fbclid=IwAR2xrP5K9YrciUZ2xLVNXscr-KlszR084G311IWxwpwuaOu8J_6UnM5RmQ

Thanks to Piet van Barneveld for translating the original text.

More Fishery Issues

An article recently appeared in the Angling Times entitled “Otters – are we over the worst?” To be honest, this is a strange title for an article on one of our native species which is recovering from a disastrous decline caused by man’s pollution. One of the problems is that, as in many other European countries, such as Austria and Czech, many fisheries have been set up when the otters had almost disappeared. As a result, many have not put in any form of protection from predation and the otters are just helping themselves to this food source.

So back to the article, it mentions the many reports of otters in more urban areas and videos of otters taking birds which they think may increase as fish stocks decline. Steve Pope, the Barbel Society chairman



Barbel fish

believes we have reached a tipping point on our river systems. He said “*Nobody really knows how many are out there, and I fear that the natural predator-prey balance on our rivers is now out of sync.*” It is true that accurate otter numbers are very difficult to obtain but isn’t it the human impact on our rivers which is making the natural balance “out of sync”? He went on to say that there is a petition to the government requesting a review of protection for otters – shouldn’t that be a review of the way fishermen are protecting their stocks? However Steve also said that barbel stocks are now largely restricted to small localised populations and this could lead to the end of barbel fishing. He also said “*It’s time for us to act, as this is a man-made problem, not the fault of the otter.*” So true.

Ecologist, Daniel Wood, believes that the decline in barbel populations may not be due to otters but what is needed is to improve river habitat and spawning grounds.

On the positive side, some people believe that the balance in our rivers is improving. Another barbel fisherman, Pete Reading said that he has fished the Avon and Stour in Hampshire for 40 years “*and the otters have had little impact. They are often blamed for declines of certain species, when there are many other contributing factors.*”

Another fisherman, Jamie Cartwright agreed saying “*I see quite a lot of otters while fishing, but not a lot of evidence of large kills.*” He has also seen a decline in signal crayfish which are also threatening fish stocks, and so it may be that otters are helping to control this invasive species allowing smaller fish to survive. Indeed in



Signal Crayfish

some areas otter spraint has been found to be almost entirely made up of crayfish. It may well be that these crayfish have replaced the otter’s favourite prey, the eel, which has suffered drastic declines in numbers.

So, as usual there is a big debate amongst the fisheries about the role of otters in the freshwater ecosystem and there are many social media posts from fishermen who are also against the anti-otter lobby. You will have read in previous e-updates the many positive stories of fishermen who enjoy sharing their day with an otter going about its natural business. For many of them it makes their day. They fully understand how important otters are as indicators of clean waters, which is clearly important to the fish they seek, and of course, to people.

Rob Britton is Professor of Invasion and Fish Ecology at Bournemouth University and he said “*Whenever I’ve studied otter diets, the proportion of angler target species is low. This is not to trivialise the loss of large fish and is of little consolation to anglers or fishery owners if high-value fish are taken. For this reason, the use of otter fencing is still a good preventative measure.*” We agree – of course, it can be a big financial loss when otters take expensive fish and for those who keep the fish as pets it is very upsetting. But it is the responsibility of the owner to protect their stock – whether it is fish, jewellery, or anything that is valued in the end. And equally, it is the responsibility of our government and industry to ensure that our waters are clean and unpolluted with industrial effluent.

Otters and fish have clearly co-existed for generations, since the first otter appeared over 20 million years ago. Wildlife and people, including otters and fishermen, can live together but it is largely the actions of man which has upset this balance.

<https://www.anglingtimes.co.uk/news/stories/otters-are-we-over-the-worst/>

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

Isle of Skye Otter Population Monitoring Project

This project started in 2014 but we have data going back to the late 1980s which was supported by PhD research from 1990 to 1996. 15 coastal sections with a total of 35 holts were selected for monitoring from the seven different geological coastal zones as shown in the map.

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 restrictions, field work was restricted but now all areas have been checked and found to be positive.

The table below shows the percentage of active holts in each year. Over the seven year period over 70% of the 35 holts have been active with 80% active last year. Otters use several holts within their home range and so holt use can vary from year to year. There are various factors which can influence holt use, such as flooding due to heavy rain, disturbance, etc,

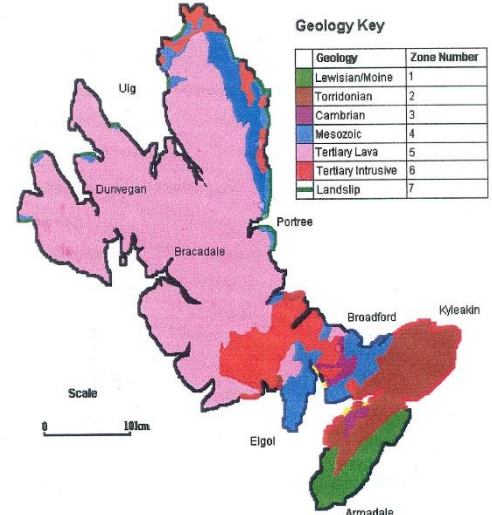


Table 1. Percentage of holts active

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
% active	71.4	82.8	88.6	77.1	85.7	71.4	80.0



The kids in Team Otter Broadford have been busy working towards their goal to reduce litter around the Broadford and Strath area. They have been litter picking each week (when weather allows) and cleaning up their village.

They are also in the process of making posters to put around popular walks and problem areas to encourage other locals and visitors to take their litter with them!

They would like you to join them and clean up your own respective areas. Make your home area look cleaner and help the wildlife at the same time! Win, win!

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.



'No to Pet Otters' Video

It was great for IOSF to be invited by Heidy Davis and Lukasz Feluks to brainstorm over their plans to help draw attention to the pet trade. In 2019 Heidy and the Otter Patschel Team, were awarded an IOSF Otter Oscar.

Heidy and Lukasz are long advocates of otters being in the wild and not to be considered as a pet. They have worked tirelessly to help educate people about this and now want to do more. We, along with a team of others including Lukasz and Heidy, are now looking at ways to produce a short education video to help draw attention to the reality of the pet trade and what is really behind those "cute" pet otters online.

Together with Heidy and Lukasz, IOSF firmly believes that **Wild Means Wild** and otters should be left where they belong, in the wild.



IOSF has signed up with Doodle-doo.co.uk to bring you fantastic personalised charity greeting cards online. DoodleDoo support UK charities and you can select us as your chosen charity to support - <https://www.doodle-doo.co.uk/charity/international-otter-survival-fund>

There is a great selection of quality art and photographic images for you to choose from for your card, to suit any occasion and a top quality card will be sent out to your recipient, from just £3.99 including first class post. Plus, when you register you can keep an address book and important dates to remember.

We are also planning an image gallery of otters, and will let you know when this is available on the DoodleDoo web site.

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

Otter Shop Product of the Month



We have a great selection of ottery gifts at the Otter Shop. Choose from quality soft toys (like this Living Nature Babies otter), to items for your home, such as clocks, key peg board, cushion covers and artwork.

www.ottershop.co.uk



Become an IOSF Life Supporter

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IOSF and partners Pledjar went live on Instagram on Thursday, 18 February. For anyone who missed it, you can watch it here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKRaWqq1xXo>



Simply download the Pledjar app - use code **OSF001** and select **IOSF** as your charity of choice. You can then choose to round up your card payments and donate those extra pennies to help otters.

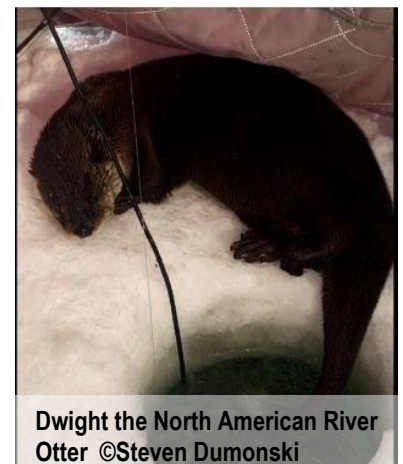
- **Android:** https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.pledjar.app&hl=en_GB
- **iOS:** <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/pledjar/id1504894760>

News In Brief Clever River Otter

They say “there is no such thing as a free lunch” but try telling that to Dwight, the North American River Otter in Ontario, Canada. Steven Dumonski has been fishing in his ice tent on Minnitaki Lake recently and was first visited by the otter, who he has named Dwight, when he stole a fish from just near him.

Since then, the cheeky otter is a regular visitor and helps himself to the fisherman’s catch. Dumonski is more than happy to accommodate for the otter’s hunger and allows him to have a share of his fish.

It’s great to see this positive story of two “fishermen” working together!
<https://www.tbnewswatch.com/local-news/video-dwight-the-otter-befriends-a-sioux-lookout-ice-fisherman-3-photos-3534492>



Dwight the North American River Otter ©Steven Dumonski

Wildlife returns to famous golf course

The Royal St George's Golf Club in Kent, England, is one of the world's greatest golf courses and recently they set themselves a challenge to 'modernise' the golf course, but not in the way that we might have thought. Rather than a technological modernisation, the golf course wanted to go back in time and help share its land with the local flora and fauna.

When Paul Larsen was promoted from Assistant to Head Greenkeeper, work started with Natural England to help to improve the land, both for golf and for the wildlife. Parts of the course are left uncut to allow for natural vegetation to grow and creatures such as birds to return and thrive. Furthermore, all this work has allowed the return of some mammals including beavers and otters. Larsen said that "he used to see it as a golf club with a sand dune on it, and now he sees it as a sand dune system with a golf course on it". This is an incredible change of perception and an important message on how they can co-exist together.

Although this a great success story there is more still to be done. Chemicals used to create perfect greens and ensure grass growth have been reduced in some courses, such as Nairn Dunbar. Furthermore, more courses are now banning the use of plastic tees which end up around the course, in waterways, or in landfill. Problems still exist across the world but as Larsen said "is perfection necessary at the expense of nature?"

All these steps taken by various courses and bodies are making a big difference in the world's fight to reduce our environmental impact.

<https://kvia.com/sports/2021/03/06/how-otters-and-beavers-returned-to-one-of-the-worlds-greatest-golf-courses/>

Otters in Inverness

This news in brief story comes from close to home for IOSF. Inverness, capital of the Highlands, is the closest city our HQ on the Isle of Skye. The video, shot by Skye-resident Chris MacLennan, shows three otters that were spotted playfully feeding in the river Ness, in the heart of the city.

<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/inverness/2952847/video-otters-spotted-seeking-feed-in-river-ness/>



Many years ago, we received two orphaned cubs from near the old Caledonian Hotel, right in the middle of the city – they were named Cally and Hector. It is nice to know that the otters in the River Ness are still doing well.

Podcast

Listen to this podcast and join wildlife photographer Jim Brown and professional story-teller Martin Maudsley as they walk along the River Axe, in Devon. They discuss otters, swans, folklore and farming of the area.

https://www.countryfile.com/uk-travel/south-west/river-axe-devon-wildlife-photographer/?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=Email&utm_content=&utm_campaign=Stay%20Safe%20Get%20Inspired%2029%20March_825582_Stay%20Home%20Newsletter_Newsletter_898674&utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_term=&utm_content=Read%20more&utm_campaign=Stay%20Safe%20Get%20Inspired%2029%20March

Warning for boat users in California

As the salmon season opens in California, conservation groups have urged fishermen to be watchful for sea otters. The otters often pop out of the water and are too preoccupied with their catch to notice any boats.

The salmon season is historically a period when otters are more at risk so boaters are being urged to slow down and try to avoid any collisions with the otters.

<https://www.publicnewsservice.org/2021-03->



[29/endangered-species-and-wildlife/otters-at-risk-for-boat-strikes-as-ca-salmon-season-opens/a73697-1](#)

otters in China

This article shows an amazing rare video of a Eurasian otter fishing on the Nujiang River, Yunnan Province, China. We can see the otter swimming and successfully catching a fish before devouring it on a rock! Otters are protected by Chinese governmental law and major conservation efforts in the area have meant that otters are now slowly recovering there.

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2021-03-26/Rare-footage-shows-otter-feasting-on-prey-in-SW-China-YWkpBiHpHa/index.html?fbclid=IwAR3yYc1naWMyiMaGmBQu5dwfJjSiXFB0Bizfk5hRjSRmVpck8TZGK9iajk0>

Southern River Otter concerns

The Southern River Otter is one of the world's rarest species of otter and inhabits the Patagonia region of Argentina and Chile. The species faces a number of threats to its long-term survival including human activity (such as pollution and disturbance), habitat degradation, wild dogs and competition with non-native, invasive species such as the American mink. It is believed that they are also being killed by fish farmers because they take the fish.

Dr Alejandro Valenzuela is a biologist and researcher at CONICET (the National Scientific and Technical Research Council), and a professor at the National University of Tierra del Fuego. He is working on their conservation and says that this species "has the most restricted distribution in the world, with only two populations in Argentina". Despite a ban on hunting for fur, it is believed that there are only 200 individuals left in the Nahuel Huapi National Park and 50 on the marine coast of Tierra del Fuego. This is a very worrying situation and Alejandro is currently preparing a paper on the population in Tierra del Fuego which should be published in the IOSF OTTER Journal in May.



Southern River otters or Hallin
© Jose Luis Bartheld

<https://www.thefloridastar.com/articles/video-scientists-battle-to-save-critically-endangered-argie-otter-with-only-250-of-the-species-left/>

River Otter Mural Wins National Championship

"A river otter mural on a water tank in Winston-Salem has won the Knope National Championship, a March Madness-style competition for municipal water facilities hosted online by Engaging Local Government Leaders.



The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Utilities Sides Road Water Tank was one of 85 nominees. Buoyed by the Arts Council of Winston-Salem & Forsyth County, global otter protection groups and local media encouraging the public to vote, the tank won every weekly bracket over the past month. In the final round, the colorful critter beat a wastewater reclamation facility in Athens, Georgia with 3,036 votes to 2,615.

Local ELGL city and utilities staffers Heather Curry and Ricky Ruvio, entered "Daybreak Along the River" featuring an indigenous American River Otter that was designed and painted by Daas in 2018. They describe it as "absolutely adorable – not a fact, but a very, very strong opinion."

"The large participation in voting from the community really shows how much public art can make a positive,

meaningful impact and serve as an example to encourage creative use for these types of municipal water facilities around the country," Daas said.

The mural is visible to thousands of southbound drivers every day on Peters Creek Parkway just south of Clemmonsville Road. It helps bring attention to our water resources, our native flora and fauna, and how important they are for our community.

Otters are native to the Yadkin River which serves as the main source of water for the region. The mural was created through a public/private partnership with the Lidl grocery chain, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Utilities and the Winston-Salem Public Art Commission.

Each year, ELGL hosts the Knope Award to shine a light on essential local government services. "This year, by focusing on water, wastewater and stormwater facilities, we wanted to showcase how critical these services are to thriving and livable communities," Wyatt said. "It's an added bonus that this year's National Champion is also simply adorable and reminds local government of the powerful connection between public services and public art."

Learn about the artist's inspiration in this video <https://youtu.be/2gmPQvZDtNk> and watch the time-lapse of the actual painting <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8yNR4gogGE>

Thank You...

for all your contributions in March. Your continued support in these difficult times is great encouragement to us in our work.

We also want to thank the William Haddon Charitable Trust, Alpkit Foundation, Goldcrest Charitable Trust and Big Wild Thought.

We can't do it without you.

Events

19/6/21 - Ross Lawford is fundraising for International Otter Survival Fund (justgiving.com) with a 24 hour walk along the Water of Leith in Edinburgh to raise funds and awareness of otters by talking to people he meets on the way. Please do support Ross and our otters:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ross-lawford-otter1?fbclid=IwAR3SUQEsqjmqnOPwsnNEXICaWZQ9lj4-ZF7CTzq5KTcfNSVF-poWrOKRXU>

26/5/21 - Have you given a thought to what you might do for #WorldOtterDay this May?

https://www.otter.org/Public/Events_OurCurrentEvent.aspx
<https://www.otter.org/Public/HelpUs.aspx>

IOSF World Otter Day Webinar – see information earlier in this newsletter.



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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**.

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Charity Number SC003875

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

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