



Otter News No. 140, **March 2023**

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Please share our news

Thailand Otter Rescues - Latest News (photo credit: Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand) We are in touch with various rescue centres in SE Asia who take in otters rescued from the pet trade.

The Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand currently have 21 Asian small-clawed otters in care, including Tua Lek, Auto and Harriete, who were all rescued from the pet trade. Harriette is about 9 years old and was rescued in 2018, Auto is about 6 years old and rescued in 2018 and Tua Lek is around 8 years old, rescued in 2020. Below are photos of Harriete and Auto together, and of Tua Lek.



If you would like to support these rescued otter in Thailand you can send a cheque marked "Thailand" on the back or make a donation online at https://ottershop.co.uk/products/donate-toiosf?variant=40608764100767

Disturbance Becoming a Growing Issue for Otters Globally

Disturbance of otters can have major implications on their health and this seems to be a growing issue across the globe. Otters are charming, playful and often elusive and more and more people are breaking the boundaries of what is an acceptable distance to be near to otters.

In the link below, you can see concerns over this in California with a particular focus on sea otters. The Marine Mammal Center, in California, is a rehabilitation centre that rescues up to 800 animals per year – a guarter of which have been directly harassed by people, resulting in them needing to be rescued. This isn't only about otters, but seals and sea lions, and of the 160+ animals that have been harassed, 35% of these cases involve actual physical contact including dragging and poking with sticks – this is a staggering, and frankly, really upsetting number.

Although physical disturbance is obviously a major issue, crowding and getting too close is just as intrusive and detrimental to the otters, and other wildlife, and this can make them alter their natural behaviours. Here in Scotland, we have similar issues with the Eurasian otters. Otters are one of our nation's most loved animals and as a result, spotting them is a popular past-time for nature lovers. In areas where otters are well-















known, such as the Isle of Skye and the Isle of Mull, incidents of otter disturbance are on the rise. People are after the perfect photographic 'shot' of an otter and get too close to the animals in order to achieve this.

The fact of the matter is that everything an otter (or other wildlife) does is for a reason. If a sea otter is resting on the water, there is a reason for that; if a Eurasian otter comes to land, it is in order to eat its catch, or have a rest. Otters have an exceedingly high metabolic rate in order to keep warm, and if you force them to lose their catch, then they have to use more energy to eat – which is obviously detrimental to their survival.

By disturbing the otters, we change their natural behaviour which could mean they leave their territory altogether. This can increase the likelihood of fighting or road accidents; reduce the ecological balance within that area and mean that people who enjoy watching otters respectfully, lose the opportunity to do that.

Mull Otter Group has produced the poster below to make more people aware:



When you are watching otters, or any other wildlife, please ensure that their safety and well-being is your immediate thought. We want to enjoy observing amazing species in the wild, and only be doing so in a responsible manner, can we ensure this continues for a long time.

https://www.kcbx.org/environment-and-energy/2023-03-28/marine-mammal-center-reports-disturbing-increase-inharassment-of-seals-sea-lions-and-otters-in-san-luis-obispo-county

River Otters as an Indicator of Pollution

The Green-Duwamish River ends its 150km course in Seattle and the Puget Sound, and the last 8km is so polluted it has been designated a 'Superfund' by the US Environmental Protection Agency. Superfund is effectively an area that has been so heavily polluted that it has been designated funds to clean it up. After years of neglect and pollution, mainly from the aviation and manufacturing industry dumping waste chemicals such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) into the water, the 'lower' Duwamish has been granted this status.

Despite this pollution, which is clearly evident by looking and smelling the water, otters seem to be doing okay – but is this true? Biologist Michelle Wainstein has taken time to collect North American river otter spraint from this area – and also higher up the Duwamish River to understand the differences in it, and any noticeable impact that this may have on otters. The results probably come as no surprise:

"The poop from otters in the lower Duwamish contained nearly 26 times more PCBs and 10 times more PAHs













than poop from their cousins in cleaner water upstream. PCBs disrupt hormonal and neurological processes and affect reproduction in mammals. Both PCBs and PAHs are human carcinogens."



But this then asks the question about how the presence of otters shows that waterways are healthy? Yes, the presence of otters shows that there is prey, and it shows that there is a relative health to the waterway but the question being asked is, how healthy are the animals themselves? Previous studies have found that a high PCB exposure can have major health implications on the otters, including bone, reproductive. immunological, organ, and hormonal issues.

These are obvious concerns for river otters in the area, but this isn't the first time that otters, and particular rivers otters, have managed to survive in

areas that seem uninhabitable. During the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska in 1989, river otters also hung around highly contaminated areas which actually aided in the efforts to 'clean up' the area of oil. With the otters sticking about, it was possible to monitor effectiveness of the clean-up!

So now, what next for the lower part of the Green-Duwamish River? Concerted efforts are being made to clean it up and let it thrive once again. Perhaps all these efforts will mean a return of rich biodiversity to the river. perhaps not – but it is thought that the otter inhabitants hold the key to monitoring that. https://hakaimagazine.com/news/dont-read-too-much-into-river-otters-return/

News from The Sanctuary

It has been a busy month again and the best news is that **Baird and Marina** are back in the wild (photos below). Baird had been found further up the west coast and Marina was found in Troon but they were now inseparable and so they went back together. Donna, who had transferred him to us, had found a lovely quiet release site. The two otters travelled together in the carrier box and we hardly heard a sound from them.





When we arrived, Baird was the first one out and Marina followed him a short while afterwards. Both were soon exploring this huge expanse of water compared to the pool in the enclosures. First they were dipping in and out of the seaweed and then they investigated the deeper water. Time to back off, and leave them to their new lives.

Thanks, as ever, to Donna for her help in getting Baird to us and for helping with his release.















Dòbhran didn't seem too upset by the fact that his neighbours had gone and continued to wait impatiently for his fish. He gets very vocal when he realises it is actually "that time"!

Bealltainn is her usual self, just enjoying her sleeping box and having a quiet wander around when we aren't

there.



when we checked on him, but now he is coming out a bit more. He has also created little outdoor resting places by taking some of his hay outside and laying it on top of a small tunnel he has made.

Eden has now moved to an outside enclosure with a small pool. Initially we saw nothing but a pile of hay which moved



Sadly it isn't always a happy ending for the otters in our care. A few weeks ago we had a call from Sleat on Skye about an otter which seemed to have injuries on its head and neck. A friend of ours, wildlife photographer and guide, Stewart Dawber, immediately went to check on the otter and it was decided to bring him in. It turned out that he had been in a fight with another otter and had certainly come off the worst. His injuries meant that he had clearly not been able to hunt and he was very thin. Initially he seemed to be making a recovery but a few days later he died. This can happen when the body has become so emaciated that the organs can no longer cope even though there seemed to be some hope at the beginning.

People sometimes ask if we are sad to see otters like Baird and Marina go, but these occasions are the rewards. We want to release good strong wild animals which have the best chance of surviving in the wild. The sad moments come when we lose one and no matter how much you try you cannot save them all.

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



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

UK taxpayers...















Green Match Fund

BigGive`

IOSF has been selected to participate in this year's **Big Give Green Match Fund** and we will be using this opportunity to raise money for our **Otter Conservation and Training Workshop in Mexico**, which takes place later this year. Through the **Big Give Green Match Fund**, donations to this project will be matched for seven days from **20th-27th April 2023** (£5 = £10, £15 = £30, £50 = £100 etc.)

One donation, twice the impact – we hope you can support our campaign. Find out more here: https://donate.biggive.org/campaign/a056900002PolfyAAB



It's coming and is only just under 2 months away!

The number of events happening around the world and countries involved, continue to grow. World Otter Day always makes us realise how many people care and want to make a difference. Your enthusiasm and passion never drops and for this we thank you!

If you plan to run an event and want to get it highlighted on our World Otter Day events map, you can do so by contacting ben@otter.org.

You can see all the events so far on the **World Otter Day** map here https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1zB14UOhRHDVeJ0OtNhKgCV45xE3nL5o&usp=sharing

Webinar

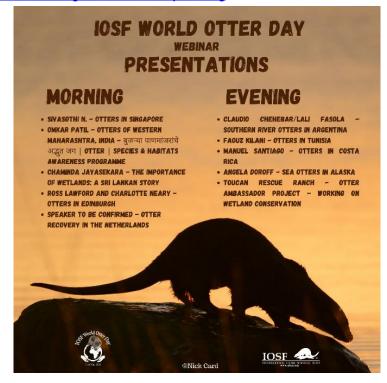
We are also hosting our third World Otter Day webinar

The webinar will be hosted on World Otter Day itself, Wednesday 31st May, and will run with a similar schedule to the previous two years, so two sessions, at the following times:

Morning Session - 09.00 - 11.30am (UK Time) Evening Session - 17.00 - 19.30pm (UK Time)

Speakers and their presentation titles can all be found on the poster (right)...

If you're interested in the World Otter Day webinar, then please visit -



https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAlpQLSciyLpYHZnzWbgg1dJhNpCPB6ExiLQloh1u2PvQg0lR0kcjiA/viewform?usp=sf_link - for more information and to sign up!

You can support our Webinar, whether attending or not, by simply clicking on this link to make a donation https://ottershop.co.uk/products/donate-to-iosf-world-otter-day-webinar
Thank you













Our World Otter Day Raffle has got off to a great start, thanks to you.



We have super prizes waiting for you, including a fantastic skincare collection from Guy Morgan, a limited edition fine art print from Lyn Wells and an IOSF Otter Watching Day for two.

• **Please remember** – if you want to enter the raffle, <u>do not</u> gift aid your donation, but provide your email contact so that we can get in touch with your numbers – we can't enter you in the raffle if we have no contact.

• If anyone has marked their donation as anonymous and wants to enter the raffle, please email admin@otter.org with your JustGiving donation receipt and name so that we can assign numbers to you and enter you in the raffle.

Tickets are £5 each and you will find all information on our JustGiving page: https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/IOSFWorldOtterDayRaffle

Otter Shop Product of the Month

www.ottershop.co.uk

Don't leave it too late to get your World Otter Day t-shirts and hoodies from our print-on-demand online store fronts. There is a choice a colours and sizes, plus mugs and tote bags. https://iosf-otter-shop-shirts.creator-spring.com/







This year we also have a #worldotterday design – just follow the link to find out more. We think you'll like it.

https://international-otter-survival-fund.teemill.com/collection/worldotterday/

Collaborations

IOSF firmly believes that we can achieve a lot more when we work with people or organisations with the same values and aims in terms of conservation. So recently we have linked up with two organisations:

International Conservation & Biodiversity Team (ICBT)

IOSF recently became a partner in ICBT, which is a link between conservation, community inclusion and animal welfare. The aim is to facilitate contacts between the various stakeholders in the preservation of biodiversity at the international level and to promote both scientific knowledge and field action in favour of this preservation to the public by organising events and by distributing a magazine, Biodiversity MAG (https://biodiversity-mag.com/).















The organisation is concerned with all issues relating to nature conservation, with particular emphasis on the protection of biotopes, the inclusion of local communities, the mitigation of human-wildlife conflicts, human-animal interconnection, respect for human rights and animal welfare. They also want to bridge the gap that sometimes exists between field conservation and more academic approaches, one never excluding the other, insuring that we are strongly inclusive.

A short while ago IOSF's Grace Yoxon, had an interview with Dr Laurent Dingli of ICBT, and this has been written up in the latest issue of Biodiversity MAG - https://online.flipbuilder.com/LaurentDingli/gpwi/

The Green Brand Collective

IOSF has also joined with The Green Brand Collective run by Victor and Maria. This is a podcast where they engage in captivating interviews with animal and nature-related non-profit organisations dedicated to helping our planet. Each week, they release a new interview with inspiring non-profit leaders, delving into their daily work and personal journeys. You can see the video with IOSF's Grace Yoxon at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDT62kJtwNc

Through their conversations with organisations like IOSF, they have had the privilege of connecting with inspiring individuals who share our passion for our animals and planet.

With each video, they aim to ignite a fire within the viewers and inspire action towards a brighter, greener future. You can see the latest episodes of <u>The Green Brand Collective</u> and subscribe to their <u>Youtube channel</u> and join them in our journey to inspire change towards a better world.

IOSF on the Road

You will already have read that last week we released Baird and Marina back to the wild. This worked out really well as we had been invited to give two talks on Otter Ecology and Conservation and the work of IOSF, one to

the Loch Broom Field Club and the other to the Assynt Field Club.

The Loch Broom talk was held in the upstairs Departure Lounge of the Caledonian MacBrayne ferry office in Ullapool, which was an excellent venue with perfect black-out blinds, a huge screen and a great sound system for our video. The Field Club is undergoing a resurgence after a bit of a quiet period and it was great to see the turn out and the level of interest in otters.

You may remember that the Assynt Field Club was also involved in the release of Storm last August. He came from



slightly further north so it was good to be able to meet with our friends from the area again. The talk was held at the village hall in Stoer but it was also available on Zoom so people were able to join us from all over. Again there was a lot of interest in otters and our work and many people shared their otter encounters with us. They recorded the talk which is now available on the Club's website (https://www.assyntwildlife.org.uk/2023/04/recording-otters-ecology-and-conservation/) so you can watch it there. As it is a very big file they had to divide it into two parts and there was no room for the chat and questions.

First the Good News ...

Recently there have been too cases of poachers being caught with wildlife products.

In India there was a large anti-poaching operation across the country and the Tamil Nadu Wildlife Crime











Control Bureau (WCCB) and Wildlife SOS caught six people with 10-foot-long tiger skin, one tiger skeleton, and one leopard skeleton. They were intercepted on their way to Niligiri biosphere reserve for

tigers and upon questioning they revealed where their equipment and traps were so that they could be removed. They are now in custody facing charges under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. https://www.onegreenplanet.org/animals/poaching-gang-busted-tiger-skins-skeletons/

In Thailand the authorities had spent many years working to apprehend Bach "Boonchai" Mai, who is the alleged leader of a major international wildlife trafficking network, called Hydra. This network is involved in the trafficking of many animal products including ivory, rhino horns, pangolin scales and tiger and lion parts.

He is still at large with an arrest warrant but the Thai Supreme Court has sentenced him to five years in prison and they are confident that he will soon be brought to justice. This decision shows that even though it may

take a long time such wildlife criminals can be brought held accountable despite their networks and money.



Although neither of these cases are reported to involve otters, the international illegal wildlife trade is still a severe threat to them. As we were told some time ago when they find tigers and leopards in a haul, there are often otters there too. This trade is estimated to b worth billions of dollars annually and is so intertwined with other criminal activities such as money laundering and corruption.

IOSF has been working with various other organisations to help clamp down on all wildlife trafficking and will always continue to do so. We would urge anyone who comes across the sale of wildlife products online or in open markets to report it to us so that we can bring more of these people to justice. https://www.onegreenplanet.org/animals/thai-poaching-kingpin-sentenced-to-prison/

And Now for the Not So Good ...

We don't need to explain how awful trophy hunting is – it is simply disgusting and we have all seen the sickening smiling photos of hunters gloating over their kill.

In February the Humane Society of the United States and Humane Society International carried out an undercover investigation at the annual Safari Club International (SCI) convention in Nashville Tennessee. The scale of this convention is huge –with 850 exhibitors from over 140 countries and bringing \$6million into the pockets of SCI. This is used to push back laws and regulations to limit trophy hunting.

Hunts are offered in at least 65 countries including South Africa, Canada, Namibia, Zimbabwe and New Zealand! Elephant, leopard, lion, giraffe, hippo and rhino are all offered both "wild" and "captive". Bait is often laid to entice the animals in to be shot. Nothing appears to be off limits providing you are prepared to pay for it: for example £100,000 will buy you a hunt for either a white rhino or a polar bear! https://www.onegreenplanet.org/animals/undercover-investigation-safari-club-international-conventions-cruel-trophy-hunting/

Another report quotes "One Animal Killed Every Three Minutes: Trophy Hunting Is Out Of Control!" And they seem to invent more and more sadistic ways of killing the animals. One of the latest crazes is to kill pigs from a low-flying helicopter. https://bantrophyhunting.org/one-animal-killed-every-three-minutes-trophy-hunting-is-out-of-control/

One excuse often stated in support of trophy hunting is that it sustains communities in Africa. But they fail to mention that the economic gain is often for the select few rather than the actual local people.















The positive side of the trophy hunting issue is that the UK Government is working on a bill to ban the import of hunting trophies. This will prevent British hunters from bringing the body parts of lions, elephants, giraffes and many other species into the country. The bill was supported by MPs from all parties and was passed by the House of Commons. It is now waiting debate in the House of Lords and hopefully this will come into force in the not too distant future.

You may wonder why we are making such a comment on this as it isn't directly related to otters, although I'm sure they may also suffer from hunting.

The reason is that it explains why we are not a member of IUCN, the World Conservation Union. This group has members such as the Dallas Safari Club and Safari Club International – yes the World CONSERVATION Union is happy to work with these trophy hunters. We cannot and will not be a part of an organisation like that. Some people have said that they want to work for change "from within" but this simply doesn't work.

We remain dedicated to conservation, particularly of otters, but for all species, and we will not compromise this by being a part of IUCN.

Thank You...

for all the kind donations we have received from our supporters over the past month, and to The Alice McCosh Trust, The RS MacDonald Trust, International Aid for Animals Foundation and Tierpark.

And to our Corporate Sponsors: Andrew Poplett Enterprises Ltd, Nurtured by Nature, holidaycottages.co.uk.

Together, we are putting otters first



We have a winner for this year's IOSF Children's artwork competition 2023! The winner, Caitlin Morley, aged 11 from Virginia, USA for her digital otter drawing! (right)

Caitlin's amazing creation beat some tough competition to win this year's prize - so thanks to you all for sending your artwork in!

You can still send any children's (or adults, for that matter) artwork in to ben@otter.org for a chance to have it showcased on IOSF's social media channels! We love to see your amazing artwork.



For more information on Team Otter, check out our website (<u>www.loveotters.org</u>) or Facebook. If you are interested in forming your own Team Otter Club contact Ben@otter.org

Events

- 20th 27th April 2023 The Big Give Green Match Fund double your donation to support our 2023 Workshop in Mexico.
- World Otter Day 31st May 2023 https://www.otter.org/Public/Events_OurCurrentEvent.aspx_including IOSF Webinar.
- Monday 5th June 2023 last day for World Otter Day Raffle entries.















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

News in Brief

Otter sighting inspires clean up

A sighting of an otter in a waterway in Carlisle, UK, has inspired locals to clean it up to help preserve their wildlife, including the otter.

Otters have been seen using the local stream and it alerted the Peter Tyson company, a local electronics dealer, to the state of the waterway. Peter Tyson, and staff, were determined to clean up the area and with Dalston Cubs and Scouts – decided to do just that. The group spent the day cleaning up the waterway making it a safer place for animals such as otters to thrive.

We always enjoy seeing the difference people are making. First and foremost, we believe that they shouldn't have to do this in the first place. It is our responsibility to stop litter entering our habitats but the fact that they



recognised the problem, decided to do something and made a difference is always inspiring.

A massive well done to Peter Tyson, his staff and Dalston Cubs and Scouts. Let us hope that their efforts will mean they continue to observe otters in their area. https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23421528.cubs-scouts-clean-polluted-stream-otter-sighting-carlisle/

Northumberland wildlife camera throws up surprise

Wildlife cameras in Northumberland, UK, have found a variety of wildlife including otters and badgers, and interactions between them.

After we showed you footage last week of a Bald eagle stealing food from an otter, it's been another month of otters having their hard-earned dinner stolen from them. This footage appears to show a badger stealing a fish from an otter and running away, 'proud as punch', with his achievement!

https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/northumberland-wildlife-badgers-otters-footage-26489849

Concerns for Sea Otters

A recent study has found that four seemingly healthy, sea otters have died as a result of toxoplasmosis. Toxoplasmosis is a disease that is caused by a microscopic parasite called *Toxoplasma gondii* and is carried by cats and shed in the faeces. It is spread by the careless disposal of cat litter.

This current strain is exceptionally rare and this case is the first on the Californian coast. The otters were all found between 2020 and 2022 after heavy rains that can cause the parasite to 'wash' in to the ocean. Otters are particularly susceptible due to the fact that they live by the coast.

















There are also concerns of the parasite and its public health risks to ourselves, so more studies are to be done to identify the long-term risks for otters (and us).

https://www.ucdavis.edu/health/news/sea-otters-killed-unusual-parasite-strain

Photo of The Month

A penny for the otter's thoughts at this exact moment!

Two of the UK's top predators, came face to face in Shetland. It is believed that the otter dived away and escaped, as there was no blood or splashing around, and the orca carried on in the opposite direction!



©John Moncrieff Photography - https://johnmoncrieffphotography.zenfolio.com/contact.html
If you would like to submit a photo for our Photo of the Month please send it to Ben@otter.org together with the credit for the photographer.

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

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 makes 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.















You can follow us on:











Give a Little Extra Help

YOU can raise FREE donations when you shop online...

It's simple and costs no more than what you spend:



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



https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/iosfund



https://www.thegivingmachine .co.uk/causes/internationalotter-survival-fund/ OR, scan and add our charity code 62575



Donate – one-off or regular







https://donate.justgiving.com/donationamount?uri=aHR0cHM6Ly9kb25hdGUtYXBpL mp1c3RnaXZpbmcuY29tL2FwaS9kb25hdGlvbn MvZjZiMjlxODlyYzE5NGZkZjhlMGM4YWYzMD

QzODYyYzU=





https://giveacar.co.uk/charities/international-otter-survival-fund/





https://www.charitycar.co.uk/international-otter-survival-fund

Vehicle Disposal – yes, even your old vehicle can earn great donations whether it's scrap or auction (fees apply)

Annual Adoption Renewal Rates

UK and EEC Countries:

Adult:£24.00 per yearAdult:£30.00 per yearChild:£13.00 per yearChild:£15.00 per yearFamily:£34.00 per yearFamily:£40.00 per year

Life Membership (all countries): £350.00

Have you enjoyed reading this? Then please SHARE 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

All other countries:

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 Tel/Fax: ++(0)1471 822487



Charity Number SC003875

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

www.otter.org

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













