



Otter News No. 112, May 2020

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Click on this link: <http://tinurl.com/b3lrsmx>

Thanks to Our Local Heroes

We have all been saying thank you to all of the magnificent people who have been helping us through this situation with the virus.

And we would also like to say a huge thank you to our own local heroes – those people who have made sure that our otters are fed.

We have been getting our fish supplies from Andy Race Fish Merchants in Mallaig since we first started caring for animals and they always go to great lengths to make sure we have what we need. Last week we received a supply which had to come via Fort William as the ferry to Skye is not running – that is a round trip of 250 miles!

We would also like to thank many of our local fishermen who have been giving us octopus and fish for the otters – thank you DL, Graeme, Justin, Craig and Martin. The otters love your octopus!

And we can't forget 9-year-old Archie Law. He is a member of Ben's Broadford Team Otter club and he has put out a creel to catch crabs for the otters.

So thank you all – our special otter heroes.



#World Otter Day

We knew that World Otter Day this year would be very different due to the difficult conditions resulting from the pandemic. But we are grateful to everyone who still made it a huge success.



As we expected social media played a huge part and at one point we were trending 14th on Twitter. When you consider all the other issues being shared on that date, it was a great achievement. So thanks, to everyone.

IOSF was involved in several webinars in Russia, Tunisia, Morocco, Nepal and USA and we will also be presenting at a webinar for World Environment Day, which is being organised by Climate Action North.

Information is still coming in on the various activities which have taken place and so will tell you more next month.

Last Chance to Enter the IOSF Raffle

You've still got a few days left to enter the IOSF raffle. You can not only win one of the great prizes but have the satisfaction of knowing that this will also help us to raise funds for the otters.

Here are just some of the prizes:

- An IOSF Otter Watching Day
- An adorable, polymer clay Otter family hand-sculpted by our friend over at Earth & Air Jewellery.
- A bottle of IOSF World Otter Day Malt Whisky!
- Sea Otter Artwork print by Wendy Payne!
- An IOSF aromatic Hamper
- A unique, cuddly, fuzzy soft otter toy

Buy yourself a ticket at our Just Giving Page :

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/grace-yoxon-wod2020>

The raffle closes on Friday 12th June and will be drawn on Monday 15th June – Don't miss out!

Good luck everybody!

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

News from The Sanctuary

Our four otters continue to thrive and grow.

The youngest, Bealltann, is becoming more shy and elusive every day. Upon her arrival she was very hungry and comfortable to come up to us for her food. Now, after regaining her strength and weight, she rarely comes to get her food. She does love the sun and we often find her sun-bathing in her pen, especially in the recent bout of sunshine here on Skye.



Bealltinn enjoying a sun-soaked snooze

Sparky, as we always say “Sparky by name, Sparky by nature” continues his progression as an elusive and grumpy little otter. He is growing quickly and starting to enjoy the octopus – despite early reservations. He is eating well, growing and never wants anything to do with us!



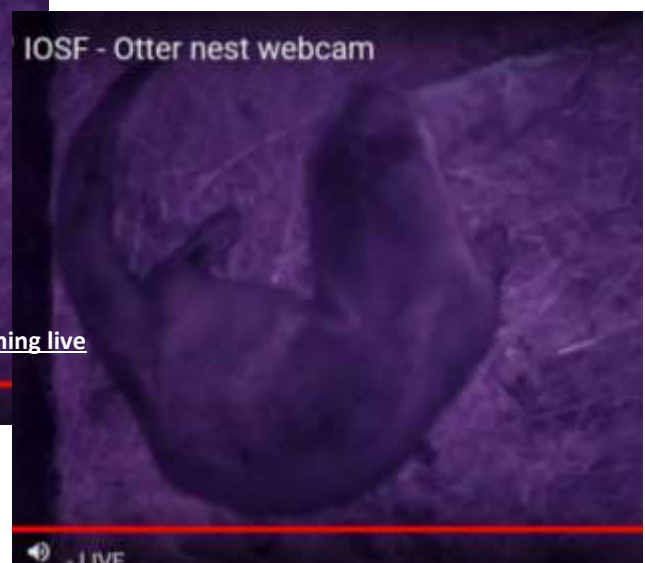
Sparky in his nest box

Our other two otters, Harrie and Otto, continue in their cheeky and charismatic manner. One day last week we went to feed them and could only see one otter. This is not a rarity as we don't want to interact with them but we do always check to make sure both are ok. So we had a little look around the pen – nothing to be seen and there was nothing in the sleeping box – very odd. When we had looked at our [online webcam](#) a short while before, they were both there so, we decided to give Harrie time to come out of her hiding place. Later on, we found that cheeky Harrie was there of course and she had also been busy destroying the little repairs that we had done only minutes before.



Otto & Harrie streaming live

They never cease to amaze and surprise – and their cheeky, destructive ways keep us on our toes!



They are all doing well and we are delighted to see this.

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

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



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

UK taxpayers:

Increase the value
of your gift to IOSF:
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Vietnamese Otters Released to the Wild

We recently received the following good news from Save Vietnam's Wildlife:

"I am really happy to inform you that we have completed the rescue and rehab process for 3 pairs of otters, and they have been released back to the wild a few days ago. Two of them were pair that were separated from the previous three which I asked you for help. The area they were relocated to was quite deep in the forest and we made sure the streams had plenty of food. This was also a strictly protected area, with regular patrol by our Anti-poaching team.



The other 6-month-old is being trained and paired with the 8-month-old male, and fortunately, they are getting along very well. We will continue to proceed slowly and carefully, hoping that everything will be fine.

Thanks again for everything!

*Best regards,
Yen*

There are two video links. The first show the otters as they progressed from arrival up to the time when they are exploring their new enclosure:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQPKIGZnjBs&feature=youtu.be&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=svw_mar_2020_newsletter_coping_with_social_distancing_situation_of_covid_19&utm_term=2020-04-09

This second video shows their release deep in the Vietnamese forest:
<https://www.facebook.com/SVWpage/videos/288135912221116/>

Different Attitudes to Otters in Singapore

The famous otters of Singapore are a great success story. For many years now the smooth-coated otter families and people have co-existed peacefully. But sadly for every success story in wildlife there are always contradicting beliefs.

On the one hand, there is an individual who is suggesting the use of "air horns and rubber bullets" to keep otters away from urban areas! On the other hand, you have former actress

Jazreel Low, who had a number of otters eat up to 100 of her fish collection. Jazreel probably had some right to be furious but instead she said that she wasn't angry with the otters and instead believed it is important to find a way to co-exist peacefully.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/forum/forum-time-to-rein-in-singapores-otter-population> -

<https://www.todayonline.com/8days/sceneandheard/celebrities/former-actress-jazreel-low-doesnt-want-otters-ate-over-100-her>

There was also a wonderful message on Facebook from the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong:

“Took this picture of otters frolicking on a #jalanjalan at the Singapore Botanic Gardens in March. Our otters have been in the news recently, venturing beyond their usual haunts with lower human traffic during the circuit breaker. In the face of climate change and urbanisation, we will continue to expand and enhance our green spaces, and protect our native biodiversity. Rather than being focused on protecting “territory”, we must find ways to coexist and thrive with our local flora and fauna. – LHL (Photo by me)”



©Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong

This is such an important comment from the Prime Minister and will hopefully lead to more people being aware of how they need to coexist with wildlife.

It is important to remember that although these otters are more comfortable with human interaction than most, they will always revert back to their wild nature should they feel threatened. People should always maintain a safe distance to ensure the safety of both themselves and the otters.

And this leads on to the next item ...

Don't Feed the Otters

We have been hearing that in some locations otters are spotted quite regularly and some people are starting to feed them. Whilst this may seem a great idea as it gives the otter extra food and allows people to see them this can cause major problems.

The otters can get used to this regular supply and if for some reason the person isn't able to come on one occasion, then the otter may approach someone else for food. They probably won't have anything to give and this could result in the otter coming even closer or someone could even get bitten.

People may also give them food which is quite unsuitable for an otter. Yes, they will eat a fairly varied diet of fish, crabs, birds, etc, but there are certain things which they should not be given. In the past we have heard of seals being offered chips – because they like fish!

Depending on where the site is, it may encourage the otter to cross roads with the obvious risks.

So if you know where an otter is appearing, please do not feed it. You can report it to us and we will get someone to investigate to see if there is a possible problem for the otter.

REMEMBER THESE ARE WILD ANIMALS AND NEED TO HAVE THE RESPECT THEY DESERVE

Social Distancing From Otters Too!

A recent study into the effects of disturbance on sea otters has thrown up some interesting information. Sea otters in California are one of the area's most iconic species and tourists regularly spend time on trips to watch the animals. Unfortunately, not all of these tourists are particularly thoughtful towards the otters and often get too close. As the summer approaches, this can be particularly stressful and threatening for the otters.



The study shows that if a boat or kayak gets within 30 feet of an otter, then 50% of the time they will swim off; within 100 feet that drops to 15%. If we lean on the conservative side, the calories burnt by the otters if they were to do this six times would mean that they would need to eat 11 more clams. This may not seem like a lot, but it does all add up. Furthermore, this study didn't include extra loss of energy from staying alert constantly, and loss of energy by not napping, as is part of their daily cycle.

Otter populations have recovered after nearly becoming extinct but are nowhere near the levels they once were. They are threatened by other things such as shark bites and parasites, but human disturbance is causing them to lose valuable energy that they don't need to. Instead this could be used to heal bites or fight off parasites.

It is incredibly important not just for sea otters, but for all otters, and all wildlife, that we are respectful to them and allow them the necessary space. Disturbance can be potentially catastrophic to them and there is no reason to do it intentionally just so that we can get the best view. Please ensure you are always at a safe distance, both for your and their safety.

<https://baynature.org/2020/05/19/people-should-physically-distance-from-sea-otters-too/>

Otter Tartan

You can now get your hands on the newly designed "Otter Tartan" for your kilts. It is especially designed by Al Geiner and JustKiltMe to celebrate the species and raise support for otter conservation.

The combination of colours green, blue and brown pay respect to the species and the

habitats. The otter is a legend among many different cultures of the area – more of which can be read at the JustKiltMe website <https://www.justkiltme.com/>

We would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their continued support.



Team Otter

IOSF was delighted by the number of entries we had to the children's IOSF otter artwork competition this year. We were pleased to see entries from all over the world including the UK, Russia, Montenegro, South Africa and Chile.

Picking the winning entries proved to be a very difficult task for the IOSF team but eventually we narrowed it down to two winners after some heavy discussions.

So, we are happy to announce the following winners:



In the under 10s category, Milana from Novosibirsk, Russia (*left*)



And in the 11-16 category, Sydney from Cape Town, South Africa (*above*)

All of the entries were of such a high standard that we also decided to award Highly Commended certificates.

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

Otter Shop @www.ottershop.co.uk

Wish your Dad a 'Happy Father's Day' on June 21st with our donation e-card.

Find it at <https://ottershop.co.uk/>



Otter, The IOSF Journal

The latest issue No 6 of our annual Journal, OTTER, was published on World Otter Day.



As usual there is a great variety of reports, papers and short communications. Reports from Asia, Africa, the Guyana workshop and Team Otter. There are papers on new sightings of Eurasian otters in Tunisia and India, smooth-coated otters in Rajshahi, Bangladesh, and confirmation of Maxwell's otter in Iran. There are studies of otter distribution on Anglesey, Wales, links between the rivers Dee, Don and Spey catchments in Scotland and urban otters in the Water of Leith, Edinburgh. Other potential tools for use in otter conservation include artwork for Iraq's population of Maxwell's otters, social media in the Indian Himalayan Biodiversity Hotspot, participatory monitoring committees of local communities in Mexico and public perception of otters in South Korea.

The Journal can be downloaded at

<https://www.otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources/Resources/Journal.aspx> or you can buy a paper copy at The Ottershop (www.ottershop.co.uk)

Documentary on Operation Otter, Tunisia

Tounsi 2.0 Productions have produced a new documentary on otters with the help of the Tunisian Association of Wildlife (ATVS). The description of the video is as follows:

*"This is my first documentary, with the Tunisian Association of wildlife (ATVS). The focus of this experimental doc is on the Eurasian otter *Lutra lutra*, which is classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as a Near Threatened species. The species has a wide distribution which covers Europe, most of Asia and North Africa.*

Although its populations are fairly well studied in Europe where they seem to be recovering, the North African populations are poorly investigated. In fact, over the last six decades only five scientific studies were carried out in three countries Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. In Tunisia, Macdonald and Mason (1983) explained that the otter is common in the Northwest of the country and is quite abundant in the rivers of Oued Medjerda. Nevertheless, between 1983 and 2019, significant changes directly affected the streams in Northern Tunisia such as pollution and dam construction sighting of the species became scares since. But also we explore the field work that this group of young scientists embark on with minimal resources. It's marvelous the amount of research and work they have achieved in such a limited time with limited resources. Their love for science and biodiversity is infectious and inspiring.



Special thanks to Zakher Bouraguaoui, Wael ben Aba, Olfa Sehli, Faouz Kileni and all of the ATVS members who are just awesome people to be with and learn from. We have since

*collaborated on various productions and others are still in the editing room. Connect with them: <https://www.facebook.com/ATVSTUNISIE/>
Email: tounsi2.0production@gmail.com”*

It was during the making of this documentary that they came across a dead otter on the road and a paper on the project is included in the latest issue of OTTER, the IOSF Journal.

You can watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIYP2-XSX3g&feature=youtu.be>

News in Brief

New species of otter found in the Philippines

Smooth-coated otters have been spotted in the Philippines for the first time ever. The archipelago nation has Asian short-clawed otters on Palawan but this is the first time that its larger cousin has been found in the country.

At first it was thought that it was the smaller species but upon closer inspection it was clear that it was in fact smooth-coated otters which had been seen on Tawi Tawi. The islands of Tawi Tawi are found in the south of the country and close to the Sabah region of Malaysia.

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/30/new-otter-species-in-ph-seen-in-tawi-tawi/>



Smooth-coated otters ©David Emmet

We were particularly delighted to see that the local government have vowed to protect and care for the otters. “While the otters are in Taganak we will ensure they will be protected,” the Turtle Islands Mayor, Moh. Faizal Jamalul said.

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/06/01/tawi-tawi-municipal-govt-vows-to-protect-otters-found-in-taganak-island/>

Otters in Hyderabad

Smooth-coated otters have been spotted around Hyderabad in India, at the Himayat Sagar lake in Rangareddy district. The otters have never been spotted in this area before and it is believed that the lack of human interference due to the current global pandemic has led to the otters coming out more.

<https://telanganatoday.com/birders-spot-smooth-coated-otter-at-himayat-sagar-lake>

Otters in Thailand

Please note, that this was not a Sea otter

Phuket is one of Thailand’s most famous and popular tourist destinations and its beaches are usually packed with people enjoying its beauty. However, since the pandemic has caused

problems across the world, the beaches have been closed allowing one visitor to return. An otter, possibly a smooth-coated otter, was found on a beach that is usually busy with holiday-makers. Half an hour later, the otter was gone.

<https://www.onenewspage.com/video/20200410/12976383/Sea-otter-plays-on-deserted-Thailand-beach.htm>

Return of trapping to South Dakota

South Dakota, one of the few states which DOES NOT allow trapping in the U.S. has now changed that, removing the North American River Otter from its protected list and allowing a trapping season to begin soon. The season will allow the legal trapping of up to 15 individuals.

The North American River Otter was reintroduced into South Dakota and populations have increased thanks to conservation efforts and an improvement in water quality. At IOSF we believe that reintroducing a species in order to trap it, which was one of the reasons the species declined in the first place, is unreasonable and should not be allowed.

Otters are vital to their habitats and without recent and sound data relating to population growth, distribution, threats etc. it is impossible to determine that the trapping is sustainable in any way. This is always the justification for allowing trapping of otters and it is not based on any population data.

<https://kfgo.com/2020/05/17/update-from-south-dakota-game-fish-and-parks/>



Return of river otters in Toronto

The return of river otters to areas such as Toronto Harbour have led to prospects and hope that they might continue to grow their range and return to other areas across the region. River otter populations declined due to trapping, loss of habitat and pollution but have since started to return slowly. Reintroduction efforts in various American states such as Ohio have led to the otters starting to reclaim their range once again and conservation efforts have continued that.

After a near 80-year absence, the otters have now once again been found on the western shores of Lake Erie. On Lake Ontario is Canada's biggest city, Toronto. In the 1980s it was recognised that this city had a major problem and was a pollution hotspot – something had to be done, and it was. Major conservation and cleaning efforts were put in place to “clean up” Toronto and its surrounding habitats. Vegetation, amphibians and birds began to return, and other species too, including the North American river otter. After a hundred-year

absence, river otters can now be seen along much of the Toronto waterfront – a huge success story!

Now, there is hope that they will return to the Detroit River. In years gone by species such as bald eagles, falcons, osprey and beavers disappeared– they are all back. Who is to say that otters won't be next?

<https://www.greatlakesnow.org/2020/05/river-otters-western-lake-erie/>

Artwork in Sidney, Canada

A number of first-nations arts have been painted onto utility boxes in Sidney on Vancouver Island. The aim of the project was to raise awareness of the amazing art of the First Nations and also to celebrate some of the favourite species around the area, including otters. Otters were often seen on traditional houses and other areas and are believed to bring messages of good tidings.

<https://www.oakbaynews.com/news/public-art-pieces-beautify-sidney-as-coast-salish-art-continues-resurgence/>

Minnesota river restoration

Major efforts are underway to restore the Minnesota river back to its natural state by removing dams. The removal of dams will help many different species. Fish species rely on different areas to survive and spawn and the dams caused fragmentation so that they could not travel to their historic areas. By opening up these waterways fish should be able to regain their range and complete their migration once again.

In turn this will help other species such as birds and otters to thrive and restore the natural movement and biodiversity of the river.

<https://www.dl-online.com/news/science-and-nature/6489022-Dams-disappear-as-DNR-moves-ahead-with-free-flowing-rivers>

Sea otter genome now available

Monterey Bay Aquarium's famous sea otter, Gidget, has become the focus of a study into otter genomes.



Sea otters were hunted to the brink of extinction due to the fur trade but they have since started to recover albeit nowhere near to their previous levels previously. A study into Gidget's genome, or her genetic code, has shown that sea otters have a low level of genetic diversity, which is fairly common among threatened species.

Beichmann, who headed the investigation said “While low diversity isn’t necessarily dangerous by itself, we also found elevated levels of potentially harmful variation within genes, possibly due to a history of population declines -- which could impact the population going forward,”

The genome study allows conservationists and scientists to understand the conservation needs of separate species, in this case, sea otters.

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-05/uoc-gob051220.php

Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve, China

In 1975 the Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve, China, was made a nature reserve to allow the return of many species as it had become a desolate wasteland.



In 1965, a major logging operation began in the area. Throughout the following years thousands of hectares of forest were removed and the animals simply “ran away” according to local elders. They decided that enough was enough and designated the area a nature reserve to help its rare animals to return. Over the following three years, major efforts of restoration were put in place and logging stopped.

Species such as giant pandas returned and this became a hotspot to study them. In 2014, the first picture of wild otters seen in the country since 2000 appeared.

It goes to show that although we often have a negative impact on habitats and wildlife, we are capable of making amazing changes!

<http://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202005/26/WS5ecc6210a310a8b241158614.html>

Otters help to catch thieves!

Police in India were grateful to otters for helping them to catch two bike thieves. The men, fleeing from the police, chose to swim across the Meenachilar river to escape the law. As they rested in the water some local people let them know that there are otters in the river. The Thieves were so afraid of the otters, that they swam back to land and into custody.

<https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/crime-beat/fear-of-otter-attack-helps-police-arrest-bike-thieves-who-jumped-into-river-1.4745846>

Thank You to...

all our supporters old and new for staying with us through these difficult times. Otters still need our help.

We also want to thank the West Surrey Natural History Society, Fondation Ensemble, Barry Green Memorial Fund and Nurtured by Nature.

Events

Visit our website to find out what might be happening in the otter world near you, including: There's still time...

IOSF #World Otter Day Raffle (ends 12 June 2020)

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>



©Helen Whittle

This wonderful piece of felted otter art is for sale. Artist Helen Whittle is selling it during June and will donate 25% of the sale price to IOSF. Click through to Helen's Facebook page to find out more: <https://www.facebook.com/208469005951513/posts/1927728990692164/>

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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.

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP - WHETHER YOU OWN A BUSINESS OR ARE EMPLOYED, does the company have a green policy/ support conservation? Then perhaps the company would like to consider becoming a Corporate Member with IOSF and supporting our work with otters. You can find out more information on our website http://otter.org/Public/HelpUs_CorporateSponsorship.aspx

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

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

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

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

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

You can follow us on:



Annual Supporters' Rates

UK and EEC Countries:

Adult: £24.00 per year

Child: £13.00 per year

Family: £34.00 per year

All other countries:

Adult: £30.00 per year

Child: £15.00 per year

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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

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Working to Save the Worlds Otters