



Otter News No. 131, May 2022

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IOSF #WorldOtterDay 2022

(photos provided/credited to those involved in the organisation of these events)

In total, there were events held in 39 countries, including Spain, Germany, Costa Rica, Australia, Taiwan and Japan. Here we will tell you about just some of them:

Social Media

Social media is becoming a more powerful tool as the days go by to get messages across to the masses. We are delighted to have had so many people interacting with IOSF online and also using the #WorldOtterDay. So

much so that #WorldOtterDay was trending worldwide! So, thank you to all of you who joined us on social media.

Grants



Bangladesh

Md Arafat Rahaman, Bangladesh Biodiversity Conservation Federation, Bangladesh

Little is known about the status of the Smooth-coated otter which has been sighted in a wetland habitat in the west of Bangladesh. This project is to address the pressures on such an area regionally and nationally and raise awareness and educate people about otters in their area and encourage coexistence. It is including government agencies, the Forest Department and local policy makers.

At the time of writing, this event is still to be complete.



Mexico

Miguel Angel Torres Maldonado, Okapia conservación A.C.

This event was held in a very special location, Tetecala, a little town located in Morelos state, Mexico. This beautiful town has an important river that runs by it and thanks to field work and other investigations evidence of the presence of the Neotropical river otter (*Lontra longicaudis*) was found. Unfortunately, it was also found that the river is polluted and has heavy human pressure on it. Their mission is to prevent this from happening and to maintain an ideal habitat for the otters to live and thrive.

With the intention of making people aware of the presence of otters in their community and the importance of the species for the environment, they visited elementary schools in Tetecala

two weeks before "World Otter Day" and provided the students with information to relay to their community.



**WORLD
OTTER
DAY**

MEXICO



For the big day they celebrated in Benito Juárez school and this time they didn't just give them important information about otters of the world but also gave printed paper masks for the children to colour and personalise. Finally, a costume and drawing contest was held in which more than 150 kids participated and won some incredible prizes.

Miguel Torres, Okapia, who ran the event said, *"we know that for a conservation project to be successful we must include the population so that they can take action and become allies. This is why World Otter Day was the perfect day to start raising awareness and for the inhabitants of Tetecala to know the importance of our conservation project for the Neotropical Otter."*



Nigeria

Salami Olalekan Michael, Netlink Environmental Conservation Organization

You will read more about Salami Olalekan Michael's work in the IOSF OTTER journal in the African Otter Conservation Report and his own paper. Michael and his team also conducted a World Otter Day event in Ondo State, Nigeria.

The programme was focussed on three main parts:

- Visiting the Araromi seaside to work alongside fishing communities, farmers, boat/canoe transporters using education materials on otters and their conservation, both in English and the local dialect Yoruba.
- Otter awareness campaign and conservation education programme with pupils of Ilaje High School, Royal Achievers School and Pure Wisdom College.
- Leaflets with information about otters, threats, conflict and the importance of otter conservation, available in both English and Yoruba.



There were many great achievements during this programme thanks to the passion of Michael Olalekan and his work. Firstly, local community members offered invaluable information on otter populations in the area. Education isn't just education, it's about inclusion, and the local communities have much knowledge that we can use by working alongside them. Salami worked with the local community to increase knowledge of the ecological, and potentially economic, benefits of otters in the area, raising awareness for habitat management and initiatives such as ecotourism. Furthermore, he worked alongside fishing communities to increase awareness on proper fishing practices during a 2-day event for sustainable management in riverine areas. Finally, through his work with schools, increased knowledge on otters was gained. Furthermore, a Team Otter club for the area was established among the students to increase teenagers/youth involvement in otter conservation in the area.

Michael stated that poor otter perceptions were one issue but hopefully this work will raise the perceptions and more work is planned moving forward. He concluded by thanking IOSF for their contribution and believes that significant steps had been taken for otter conservation moving forward.





Togo

Patrice Delagnon Assou, University of Lomé

On 28 May 2022, World Otter Day was celebrated for the first time Togo through a scientific debate with PhD, Master and Bachelor students at the Laboratory of Ecology and Ecotoxicology (LaEE) about otter distribution and conservation status. The event took place at the Department of Zoology, University of Lomé. The main objective of the event was to highlight otters and invite students/researchers to produce the first ever rigorous data on their distribution and conservation status in Togo. We were delighted to see 28 attendees from the Laboratory.



WORLD
OTTER
DAY



TOGO



From the 13 extant otter species known in the world, two (*Aonyx capensis* and *Hydriectis maculicollis*) have been historically recorded in Togo. However, these species are increasingly threatened by habitat degradation, loss and fragmentation, and unsustainable hunting throughout its geographic range. Currently, nothing is known on the conservation status and distribution of otters in the country. Developing scientific knowledge and producing rigorous data on the distribution and conservation status of otters in Togo would be of paramount importance. The talk captivated the attention of the attendees who asked a lot of questions, bringing about an interesting debate. Some of the questions were: How can we get started with otter conservation and research actions in Togo? What is the possible distribution range of the species in Togo? Where to seek funding to support research and conservation actions of the species in Togo?

It is great to see so many individuals passionate about otters and gaining more of an understanding across Togo.

Other Events



India

2021 Grant winner Dr Eswar Narayana followed up last year's event with another, this time visiting the villages of Penikeru, Kapileswaram, Kotipalli, Pillanka, and Ramannapalem along the River Godavari in Andhra Pradesh, India. The objective was to create awareness among different stakeholders, including children, fishing communities and village leaders about the conservation of otters. When working alongside fishing communities it becomes an interaction and sharing of knowledge between the groups.



WORLD
OTTER
DAY



INDIA



Elsewhere, in Odisha, Eco Earth Crusaders, IOSF Otter Oscar 2021 winners, ran an awareness campaign for otters in the area. Their event was in two-parts, one focusing on children in a local school, and the other focusing on the community as a whole.





Lebanon

Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI) joined IOSF World Otter Day for the first time this year and invited members of the public to come and learn about Eurasian otters. They used a board game, "Help the Otters" created by Samara P.El-Haddad, Wildlife Conservation Specialist and designed by Palig Haroutunian (LRI). The board game, similar to the traditional snakes and ladders, helps children learn about otters and answer questions about them.

They also used their activity booklet "Ruby the Otter" for children and various arts and crafts focusing on otters and their habitats. During the event they managed to attract a number of families to join in, focusing on children aged 3-12 years old. The feedback was all positive and helped children learn about an animal they knew nothing about. LRI will continue to celebrate World Otter Day in the coming years and plan to visit schools across the country using their "Help the Otters" game!



**WORLD
OTTER
DAY**

LEBANON



Montenegro

The National Park of Montenegro held a World Otter Day event at Skadar Lake National Park. They held educational workshops for two schools within the area using some materials provided by Nino Djurovic, friend of IOSF and part of NGO Living Green. Otter monitoring in Skadar Lake National Park has been carried out since 2014 and its presence and potential habitats are monitored.



Paraguay

At Para La Tierra, they celebrated World Otter Day with the kids from the eco-club programme Voces de la Naturaleza. They held an otter-themed Eco-Club event, where they educated the children about otters and their conservation in general and the otter species of Paraguay in particular. They then talked about World Otter Day and its relevance before making otter masks, as you can see in the pictures!



**WORLD
OTTER
DAY**

PARAGUAY



Peru



Parque de Las Leyendas, Lima, Peru had a large World Otter Day event to raise awareness of otter conservation and focus on one of Peru's most famous species, the Giant otter.

On World Otter Day itself they used social media to draw attention to the species and its importance and its ecological role. Their "on-site" event took part on 27 May, with two sessions. The first session involved about 100 people and was focussed around their Giant otter exhibit with specialised talks on characteristics, behaviour, conservation status and threats to the species. In the afternoon, the focus was on children using education materials including an activity called "Elaborate your own otter craft", when the kids made their otter with paper bags. During both activities, they shared information about the characteristics of the Giant otter and the importance of protecting them in the wild.

It is great to see them working with both adults and children to focus on one of their species of otter.



**WORLD
OTTER
DAY**



PERU



Tanzania

IOSF African Education Co-ordinator William Mgomo has always been very active in otter awareness and this year he gave a talk on otters to his fellow students, using pictures to raise awareness of the species. The students, a total of 103, were able to see videos on otters and they were also asked questions about the species.

Furthermore, the group were assisted by Professor Ndibalema, Department of Wildlife, in planting trees to emphasise the importance of protecting the environment.

The students really engaged with the programme and now want to assist William with his otter work and become members of a group to help make a difference.



**WORLD
OTTER
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TANZANIA



United Kingdom

There were various World Otter Day events across the United Kingdom.

Fenn Bell Conservation Project

The Fenn Bell Conservation Project celebrated World Otter Day for the entire week! They posted on social media for a week and hosted their "Otter Weekend" to raise money for otter conservation through IOSF. This included extra postings; special otter talks, twice daily; as well as their mascot who collected donations. On Saturday they hosted a quiz night, and on Sunday there was a bingo night. Overall they managed to reach over 650 people and raise a massive £300 for otters! Thank you!



Marcia Rae, Easter Ross Ranger, High Life Highland

Marcia Rae held an otter walk around the Kessock Bridge area to draw attention to otters. During her walk, Marcia and the group managed to spot an otter and watch it as it fished in the Moray Firth.

Grace Onions event

Long-time IOSF supporter Grace Onions held an event to raise support otter conservation. The event was a simple social gathering offering “wine and nibbles” in exchange for a donation to otter conservation. A nice opportunity to get together with friends and help the otters.

Mull events



Another long-term supporter of IOSF and all things “otters”, Mary Heathcote was staying on the Isle of Mull on World Otter Day so she decided to take the opportunity to have a pop-up stall (photo left ©Mary Heathcote) where she could share IOSF information and raise some funds.

Also on Mull, Ruth Fleming raised funds from her various guests who had been on a successful otter detective walk.

There were various other events held across the UK including Woburn Safari Park and the Scottish Deer Centre.

Uganda

In Uganda, there were two World Otter Day events.

The first, held by the Mutanda Community Conservation Organization (MUCCO) at Kungugu on the shores of Lake Mutanda, Nyundo Sub County, Kisoro district. The focus was on fishing communities and growing awareness of the species among them, as well as inviting government officials and other relevant stakeholders. They emphasised how important otters are to the ecosystem and focussed on what could be done to reduce conflict with fishing communities, steps to alternative livelihoods and also reduction in trade.

Government officials have promised to help to try and increase fish stocks which will reduce much of the conflict between otters and the communities. There will also be an increased presence of wildlife officers to try and reduce otter trade for skins and meat.



**WORLD
OTTER
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UGANDA



Further east, on Koome Island, in Lake Victoria, another World Otter Day event was taking place by Hope for



Nature. This was also centred around fishing communities in the area at the Kissu Landing site where it is known that there are a number of otters. The project raised awareness of otters among fishing communities, the benefits of having them and how the people can participate in otter conservation in their area. The fisherfolks of this area suggested that it is important to have otter conservation committees in every community to raise awareness and educate communities on otters as many are unaware of the current situation.

 **United States of America** 

There were a number of events across the USA and we cannot include them all. For one of the teachers at Argonauta Academy, in Florida, the day started on a sad note. They were called to a road incident which had unfortunately taken a juvenile female otter.

The class still had their plans to celebrate World Otter Day and they used this sad event to help educate children and emphasise how our activities can affect otters. They discussed mitigation

opportunities such as wildlife corridors and how they can help prevent road strikes. The theme of the day allowed children to use recycled materials to create safe crossings for otters and see how they could help. Ten year old Helena, a pupil at the Academy, even created a new species of otter, the Pink Eared Otter, *pictured*. So if you are out and about in Florida, keeps your eyes peeled for this new, rare species!



Webinar

Following the success of the webinar in 2021 and really positive feedback, we decided to hold our second World Otter Day webinar. We invited the following speakers to take part in the event and are grateful for their invaluable contribution to the success of the webinar:

Morning:

Dr Paul Yoxon, International Otter Survival Fund – “Otter spraint surveys and spraint analysis – uses and limitations”

Dr Eleanor Kean, <http://www.eleanorkean.com/> - "Unexpected results from a nationwide otter survey of Wales"

Frederick Kistner, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) and Wildtracks – "What you can learn by looking at otter footprints — an introduction to the Footprint Identification Technology (FIT) for otters."

Mohan Birkam Shrestha, Otter Researcher, Nepal - "Eurasian otters in Nepal - unveiling the presence after three decades"

Klaudja Koci/Bledi Hoxha, Protection and Preservation of the Natural Environment, Albania - "An overview of European otter research and monitoring in the Prespa Lakes, Albania"

Evening:

Claire Taylor, Two Oceans Aquarium – “Urban wildlife conflict: *Aonyx capensis*, our biggest challenge yet”

Heather Barrett, Sea Otter Savvy - "Being Sea Otter Savvy"

Javier Trivelli and Valentina Diaz Savaria, OBC Chinchimen - "Chungungo: re-ottering Chile"

Adriana Belen Vallejos, Ranger with Provincial Parks Direction from Corrientes Government, Argentina - "The distribution of Neotropical otters and the climate crisis: a case study in northern Argentina"

Ana Maria Montes Ferro, Colombia - “Giant otter conservation and community involvement”

We were delighted to be joined on the day by over 200 attendees from over 40 nations worldwide.



You can also watch the webinars on IOSF's YouTube channel. The links are as follows:

Morning Session - https://youtu.be/09jUAqf0_GU

Evening Session - <https://youtu.be/MTAuzKS6ufw>

As you know, IOSF has put this webinar on free of charge as we want to engage and celebrate with as many people as possible from across the world. We were delighted to have attendees from so many countries which made this a truly global event. Should you wish to donate to support the running of the webinar, then you can do so at the following link - <https://ottershop.co.uk/products/donate-to-iosf-world-otter-day-webinar>

IOSF Otter Workshop in Malaysia (Photo credit: Woo Chee Yoong/Malaysian Nature Society)

As many of you will know, at the end of April IOSF held its eighth international training workshop in partnership with Malaysian Nature Society and Malaysia Otter Network in Kuala Selangor Nature Park, Malaysia. This had been postponed from September 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions and when it did finally take place people were able to join us in person and also by Zoom.



The workshop was a great success and there were over 70 registered attendees from 10 different countries: Malaysia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Singapore, Canada, Germany, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. This multi-national workshop aimed to increase the knowledge on otter populations across the region, identify and reduce illegal trade and increase environmental education with a focus on wetland habitats.

As at previous workshops there was a mix of classroom sessions and then an opportunity to put what we had learned into practice in the field. During the field sessions we were also fortunate to be able to observe groups of wild Smooth-coated otters.

You can read the full report of what was achieved here -

https://www.otter.org/documents/InternationalWorkshops/InternationalWorkshop_Malaysia.pdf

We were delighted with how the workshop went; the positive nature of it and the plans moving forward.

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 from The Sanctuary

There have been a number of developments over the last short while in the sanctuary. Firstly, work is continuing on the building of the new hospital. Once the exterior has been completed, we can get to work on the interior!



Storm – after a quick run and dive through his pool

On the otter front, our three otters have now become five! We will start our update with the older ones, who we are all familiar with.

Storm is growing well and now eating up to five fish a day. He is beautiful and loves spending time in his pool – especially during the nice weather we are now having on Skye. Storm's fur condition is great and it is especially evident when he leaves the pool as after one quick shake he immediately looks dry. This is very encouraging and stands him in good stead for when he eventually gets released. He is almost at full size and we are already making plans about where and when we can release him. Wally, Storm's little next-door neighbour, is also doing well and although he looks small beside Storm, he is growing really nicely. Wally is now eating three fish a day and becoming more confident in his surroundings since we opened his access to the larger pen, although he is still very wary

if he thinks we are watching.

Many of you know Bealltinn, the oldest of our otters, who just loves this new sunny weather that we are having. During May, which was one of the worst we have ever had, she spent a lot of time inside but since then with the sunnier time she has disappeared into her self-made "holt" amongst the grass.

Now this brings us on to the two new arrivals. Firstly Baird, from Wester Ross. As mentioned, May was a particularly bad month and at the start we were contacted about a young otter found running sluggishly on his own along the roads in North West Scotland near the village of Laide. Baird was transferred here thanks to our trusted volunteer Donna, who subsequently gave him his name. We were initially warned that he was a lethargic otter but since he arrived at the IOSF Sanctuary, Baird has been anything but that. He is eating really well, hiding from us at every given opportunity and has a lovely fiery nature – which is exactly what we want. He has continued with those wild instincts and is eating about two whole fish a day! We plan to move him outside very soon to continue his rehabilitation.



Baird – peeking out from under his blanket

Unfortunately since then, Donna has broken her leg badly in a fall. We wish you a very speedy recovery Donna.

The second of our new otters arrived very recently from a neighbour in Broadford. We received a call over concerns of an otter in their shed and they were worried it would harm itself amongst all the things in there. We checked it out and it needed to come in to care as it is very thin, although clearly not a young one. The otter has only been with IOSF a short while and is being assessed to decide on the next necessary steps.

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 <http://www.ottershop.co.uk>





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Team Otter

On Friday 3 June, the High School Team Otter club took a trip to the beautiful Isle of Canna. The sun was shining and the seas were nice and calm as we left Elgol on the AquaExplore RIB. The boat trip started under the gaze of the Cuillins and we headed out through the sound of Soay. The AquaExplore crew explained about the Isle of Soay and its history. Soay had been the site of a failed basking shark fishery set up by Gavin Maxwell.



Then we headed into the open sea and up the west coast of Skye.

This is where the wildlife started to arrive and we were greeted by a small pod of Common Dolphins. After that, we went on to the cliffs of Canna where we were met by an array of seabirds; Puffins, Guillemots, Shags, Razorbills, Gannets, Fulmars and Bonxies (Great Skua), to name a few. The group loved seeing all the wildlife around us.

We landed on Canna where we got some snacks from the shop and headed to the beach. Some of the kids headed up towards Coroghon Castle before we went back to the RIB.

On our return journey we passed Soay again and then on to the Isle of Rum to check out the famous shipwreck, Jack Abery II, as well as the red deer and feral goats. We had one quick stop at Kilmory Bay before heading back towards Elgol and were joined by another pod of Common Dolphin. This pod was a lot more engaging and approached the boat and played in the wake. It was amazing to see and the kids, and other guests, were all in awe as the animals played alongside the boat.



The trip was amazing, the weather too, and we want to say a massive thanks to AquaExplore, Bella Jane, for accommodating us and offering such an unforgettable trip! Finally, thanks to Nick and Roddy for "volunteering" for the day.



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

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https://ottershop.co.uk/products/fathers-day-e-card?_pos=2&_sid=ff12527c9&_ss=r&variant=42244058906783



New Team Member at IOSF



Welcome to Callum, our new member of staff at IOSF who joined us following Astrid's departure earlier this year. We wish her well in the future. Callum, a very keen mountain biker and footballer, has had his eyes on otters for many years and is enthusiastic about working with us, learning more about otters and helping to take IOSF forward.

Used Stamps

Unfortunately, due to the fall in prices and rise in costs, we are no longer able to convert to cash, the used stamps that you have kindly collected and sent to us over the years. **Consequently, we are unable to accept these anymore, so we have to ask that you do not send them.**

Thank you for your past support with this.





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GiveACar - turn your old car/bike/van/caravan into cash for IOSF. With free collection, your vehicle will be auctioned or sold for scrap, depending on its condition, and the proceeds (minus service fees) raised going to support our work in otter conservation.

Find out more at <https://giveacar.co.uk> or call 020 7736 4242

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

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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.

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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.



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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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