

# otterreview

the International Otter Survival Fund Impact Report

2022

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Eurasian otter underwater © Stéphanie Raimond



# From Paul...

Welcome to our latest Annual Review and Impact Report.

Unfortunately, times are so hard for everyone worldwide with war, floods, poverty, environmental problems, cost of living crisis, political unrest and much more. It really can look very depressing but we all have to be grateful for what we do have and support those who are facing real hardship. We also have to believe that we CAN make a difference to the world and do our best to do that.

For IOSF we have had another busy year and a really successful workshop in Malaysia in April 2022 - this had to be put off for two years because of Covid-19. Our old otter hospital has been demolished and we are waiting for the replacement which should have been ready early in the summer. However, we were badly let down by one particular builder who just walked off site after botching the new building. Fortunately, someone kindly stepped in to take over and things are starting to progress. We look forward to sharing with you more news and photos of the new facilities.

World Otter Day was a great success again and we had two IOSF webinar sessions bringing people together from all across the globe. You will read more about this further on and in our latest IOSF OTTER Journal which can be found online at [www.otter.org](http://www.otter.org). Team Otter, the IOSF education programme, is growing and helping to develop future conservationists worldwide. We know there is still much more to come in future years and IOSF is looking forward to helping more otter projects.

In 2022 we brought in our new Student Research Grant, which enabled two students to join an experienced otter surveyor and carry out a practical project learning field techniques and post-survey work, such as spraint analysis. The aim is to encourage future otter surveyors and conservationists in fieldwork. This year we were grateful to our Board Member, Andy Rothwell, who took two students to the Isle of Barra in June and a full report will be published in due course. We aim to continue this training project each year on a different Hebridean island and you will find more information in Volume 8 of the IOSF OTTER Journal, 2022.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who enables the work of IOSF to continue: to our Trustees and Board Members who provide such valuable advice; to the various researchers and otter workers who work tirelessly in otter conservation; to the various trusts and other organisations who help to fund our work; and to our many loyal supporters who give us such encouragement.

So I hope you all have a positive Christmas and New Year and we look forward to helping more otters in 2023. This marks 30 years of IOSF and what a celebratory year it will be.

Take care



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# The Year at a glance

## OCTOBER

IOSF otters DJ and Louis released back to the wild

## NOVEMBER

Team Otter Broadford beach clean at Camasunary Bay, Isle of Skye, removing 1.2 tonnes of litter

## DECEMBER

IOSF announces 2021 IOSF Otter Oscar awards

## JANUARY

Young otter in Singapore injured by discarded fishing hook raising concerns over litter and pollution

## FEBRUARY

IOSF supported education programme in India

## MARCH

William Mgomo in Tanzania continues community education and habitat restoration work

## APRIL

IOSF holds 8th international workshop in Malaysia with Malaysia Otter Network/Malaysian Nature Society

## MAY

IOSF hosts largest ever World Otter Day with events in 39 countries

## JUNE

Isle of Barra Student Research Project

## JULY

Albino Eurasian otter rescued in Iraq

## AUGUST

IOSF helps with pet otter rescued in Romania

## SEPTEMBER

IOSF OTTER Journal Volume 8 is published

# Asian Otter Conservation Network



This year has seen a lot of otter work taking place across Asia.

IOSF has a number of resources available in a variety of languages for conservationists and individuals involved in education in Asia – these are all available at [www.otter.org](http://www.otter.org). This includes the IOSF video which is available in Arabic, Japanese, Khmer, Lao, Nepalese and Sinhalese and we hope soon to have it available in Bangla.



information available in *Research section*). Hairy-nosed otters, one of the world's rarest otter species, have been identified in Malaysia and further research is being conducted to learn more. The fifth Asian species, the Sea otter continues its attempt to rebound from the brink of extinction and they are found off eastern Russia and sometimes down into northern Japan.

Unfortunately, illegal trade is still a serious threat to otters, particularly in Southeast Asia (*see Illegal Trade section*). There is considerable concern about the impact of otter cafes in Japan and IOSF is working with colleagues there on the problem. Asian small-clawed otters and Smooth-coated otters are still the most heavily involved in the pet trade, but Hairy-nosed and Eurasian otters have also been found. Sanctuaries in Southeast Asia do a great job in caring for animals rescued from the trade and IOSF continues to support this. However, we are also working with the sanctuaries to stop the pet trade altogether.

Eurasian otter sightings are still rare (as highlighted in our OTTER Journal Volume 5, 2019), but we now have records from Uzbekistan, Nepal and Myanmar (*More*

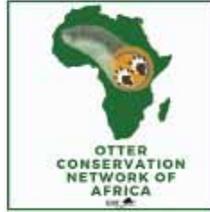
You will read more about the work in Asia across the entire Annual Review in all of IOSF's programmes (research, education, reducing trade and rehab).

# Otter Conservation Network of Africa

IOSF has been delighted to see how much work has been achieved across the continent this year with a growing understanding of otters and the need for their conservation.

Following years of fantastic work, we were pleased to name William Mgomo as IOSF's African Community Education Officer and you will read more in the *World Otter Day* and *Education* sections. He is also talking to others around Africa with a particular focus on conflicts with fishing communities.

There are still many concerns over otters in Africa and the threats they face. For example, in Democratic Republic of Congo recently 16 new "oil blocks" covering 145,000km<sup>2</sup> were auctioned for exploration. They are part of the region's largest tropical wetlands and



are likely to be home to the Congo clawless otter. These exploration sites are "carbon sinks" which help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels and other activities and together they hold around 30 billion tonnes of carbon, equivalent to 82% of global carbon emissions.

All three sub-Saharan otter species (Congo clawless, African clawless and Spotted-necked), face threats from conflicts with fishermen and habitat/wetland degradation caused by anthropogenic pressures on the land.

The Eurasian otter is found in northern Africa (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) but sightings are rare and populations are largely unknown. (More on Tunisia in *Research* section).



## Education

One of the biggest global threats faced by many species, and in particular, otters, is **LACK OF AWARENESS**. Otters often face false perceptions regarding their numbers and distribution and also their behaviour and threats to their survival. There is also little understanding of their benefits to the ecosystem which leads to a **LACK OF ACTION** to conserve their populations and wetland habitats.

IOSF is working on a number of different projects to change this.

### TEAM OTTER

IOSF's Team Otter programme is reconnecting children with nature, wildlife, and the environment and igniting a passion that will last their whole life. The impact we are having on our environment







Education Officer, is very active. Having previously been focussed on Broadford Primary School, the club has expanded into two groups, spanning four schools: a younger group from Broadford and Sleat Primary Schools and an older group from Portree and Plockton High Schools.

The Primary group spends much of their time learning about wildlife through fun and interactive materials, cleaning up our local village and other similar programmes. This helps them to learn more about local and global wildlife and natural world issues, as well as taking simple steps to reduce their impact.

The High School group is more issue-based and has taken part in many campaigns over the last year. Before Christmas, they created posters and online campaigns, and then processed crisp packets to be sent to “the Iron Man”. These were then converted into survival blankets for the homeless and helping in Ukraine. This helped those less fortunate and also reduced the environmental impact on the area.

More recently, they have been supporting Team Seas, an organisation that uses every US \$1 they receive to take about 0.5kg of rubbish out of the ocean. The group created a poster and online video and

liaised with the local supermarket about a fundraiser. They managed to raise £754.10 for Team Seas and take around 340kg of litter out of the ocean.

Both groups have also been cleaning up our local environment and particular problem areas for ocean plastic. They helped to organise a clean-up at Camasunary Bay, one of our most beautiful but worst beaches for ocean litter, and removed around 3.4 tonnes of litter from the bay. They plan to go back and complete the task and also visit other problem areas.

The children in Team Otter Broadford are so enthusiastic and the clubs will continue to grow and help conserve their local environment.

## Uganda

The Team Otter club led by Mutanda Community Conservation Organization (MUCCO) is still run by Asimwe Davis and took part in a World Otter Day event.

## Other Clubs

Clubs in Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Montenegro and South Africa have already joined the network and more Team Otter clubs are planned in other countries.

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Education isn't just education - it's about inclusion, and local communities have much knowledge that we can use by working alongside them.

## Sri Lanka

IOSF's Padma de Silva, Chair of our Asian Otter Conservation Network, has continued her outreach work in Kandy, giving friends and visitors a set of her otter story books to give to schools. Many children had been working online due to Covid-19 restrictions

and she is keen to encourage them to learn more about this little-known animal of Sri Lanka. The books are in English giving the children good practice in the language and also teaching them about otters and encouraging them to report any otter signs they find.

## Tanzania

William Mgomo is still working hard on community outreach and over the last twelve months he visited more local fishing communities to raise otter awareness. He has encouraged fellow university student Ashura Talagimbudzah who has started her own otter education programme in the Ruvuma region.

William is always thinking of innovative ways to get more people engaging with otters and recently used one of Tanzania's main passions, football, to do this by creating an otter football competition for students. The participants and community had the opportunity to take part in a fun, football competition and at the same time through William and Professor Ndibalema they learned about otters, habitat preservation and conservation.



©William Mgomo

William using football to help otters

## Uganda

MUCCO is passionate about maintaining wetland ecosystems and has had positive

talks with communities regarding otter conservation. Working alongside local government, they have managed to encourage local communities to leave a buffer zone along the banks of Lake Mutanda to increase biodiversity.

## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES Education Pack



We are delighted that our IOSF children's education pack has been translated into Spanish, thanks to our friend and colleague, Dr Pablo Hernández. This is also available in English, French, Montenegrin and Swahili and can be downloaded free with other educational resources for children at [https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources\\_Resources\\_ForChildren.aspx](https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources_Resources_ForChildren.aspx)

There are also videos and other resources at [https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources\\_Resources\\_OtherEducationalResources.aspx](https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources_Resources_OtherEducationalResources.aspx)

## Online Education

IOSF has been involved in online education programmes to raise awareness for otters in countries such as Iraq, Zimbabwe and Ireland.

## TRAINING WORKSHOP Malaysia

IOSF was delighted to return to our capacity building workshops following a 3-year absence due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. These workshops train conservationists, government officials and other similar stakeholders to engage with

otters, demonstrate techniques in education, research, dealing with threats and other similar conservation issues. The Malaysia 2022 workshop was our sixth Asian workshop and our eighth in total, following events in Cambodia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, China, Lao PDR, Tanzania and in 2019 in Guyana.

The workshop was held jointly with the Malaysia Nature Society (MNS) and Malaysian Otter Network (MON). It was held at Kuala Selangor Nature Park, a protected area in the Selangor region of Peninsula Malaysia, which has three of the four species of otter in the region. This enabled practical



©Woon Chee Young

Malaysia workshop group photo

field sessions on otter signs and potentially spotting otters in the wild.

The aim was to increase awareness of otters across the region, encourage more research and education, and ensure more cross-region co-operation in the area, particularly related to trade. We were joined by 71 participants, either in person or virtually through Zoom sessions, from a variety of countries across both Southeast Asia and worldwide.

Classroom sessions had presentations from experts on otters of the world, a focus on Asian species, different survey techniques (spraint analysis, camera trapping, genetics, footprint analysis etc.) and community/children's education. During field sessions

we were able to put some of the newly learned skills into practice, such as spraint collection and analysis and footprint recognition. We were also fortunate to see wild Smooth-coated otters.

The last day involved a discussion on what had been learned and plans moving forward. This focussed on three main topics - education, threats and research - which will lead to a 'road map' for otter conservation across the region.

The workshop was a massive success with all attendees, both virtual and in person, really engaging with the project. Indeed, on the last day one attendee spoke to some visitors to the Park independently so that he could teach them about the otters – so an immediate success. They now plan to take part in World Otter Day, increase education and make a difference moving forward. They plan to create an Asian Otter Conservation Network sub-group focussing on Southeast Asia, with representatives

from each nation that has wild otter populations. IOSF and MNS/MON are already in discussions for both the road map and the network sub-group plans.



Malaysia workshop field trip

# World Otter Day – 25 May 2022



Following two years of heavily restricted World Otter Days, 2022 saw the return of some resemblance of normality. This year was the biggest we have had with events in 39 countries across the world – this means that 20% of the world's countries were celebrating IOSF World Otter Day! Social media again proved to be a huge success, and thanks to all of you #WorldOtterDay was trending worldwide.

## GRANTS

IOSF was once again delighted to be able to offer four World Otter Day Grants, thanks to another anonymous donation.

## Bangladesh

**Md Arafat Rahaman,**  
Bangladesh Biodiversity  
Conservation Federation

This event actually took place after World Otter Day in a community with nearby Smooth-coated

otters, a species rarely seen in Bangladesh. On 24 July, the Bangladesh Biodiversity Conservation Federation and Kichir-Michir organised a conservation programme with presentations, talks and games in the Old Kushtia High School. The school authority, teachers, students and leaders of some other local volunteer organisations all took part and the Forest Department was also invited. The event was covered in local and national newspapers to highlight otters and their habitat to a larger audience.

## Mexico

**Miguel Torres,**  
Okapia  
Conservación  
A.C.

This event was held in Tetecala, Morelos state, which has an important river with Neotropical otters. Unfortunately, the river is polluted and has heavy human pressure so they need to reduce this and maintain an ideal habitat for the otters. The aim was to make 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 gave students information to relay to their community. For the big day they celebrated in Benito Juárez school and gave the children printed paper masks to colour and personalise and there was a costume and drawing contest for more than 150 kids.



Miguel Torres 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**

Michael and his team conducted a World Otter Day event in Ondo State focussed on three main parts: an otter awareness and conservation education programme with pupils of Ilaje High School, Royal Achievers School and Pure Wisdom College and formation of a Team Otter club; distribution of leaflets on otters, threats, conflict and the importance of otter conservation, in both English and the local dialect Yoruba; visiting the Araromi communities of fishermen, farmers, boat/canoe transporters to raise awareness for habitat management, initiatives such as ecotourism, and increasing awareness on proper fishing practices for sustainable management in riverine areas.

Local community members

offered invaluable information on otters but many have poor perceptions of the effect of the animals (more in the *Research* section and Michael also has a paper in Volume 8 of the

IOSF OTTER Journal, 2022).

## Togo

**Patrice Delagnon Assou,**  
**University of Lomé**

World Otter Day was celebrated for the first time in Togo through a scientific talk and debate with 28 PhD, Master and Bachelor students at the Laboratory of Ecology and Ecotoxicology. The objective was to highlight otters and invite students/researchers to produce the first rigorous data on their distribution and conservation status in Togo. There are two otter species recorded (African clawless and Spotted-necked) but they are increasingly threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, and hunting. Currently, nothing is known about the conservation status and distribution of otters and therefore developing scientific knowledge and accurate data is of paramount importance. The

debate created much interest which will hopefully lead to more of an understanding across Togo.

## WEBINAR

Following the success of the first World Otter Day webinar, IOSF held another on World Otter Day 2022. As last year, the webinar was split into a morning session on Asian and European otters and an afternoon session on otters from the Americas and Africa:

### *Morning:*

Dr Paul Yoxon, IOSF –  
*“Otter spraint surveys and spraint analysis - and limitations”*

Dr Eleanor Kean,  
[www.eleanorkean.com/](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 Bikram Shrestha, Otter Researcher, Nepal –  
*“Eurasian otter in Nepal - unveiling the presence after three decades”*

Klaudja Koci/Bledi Hoxha, Protection and preservation of the natural environment

in 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 – *“The distribution of Neotropical otters and the climate crisis: A case study in northern Argentina”*

Ana Maria Montes Ferro – *“Giant otter conservation and community involvement”*

We were delighted to be joined by more than 200 attendees from over 40 nations worldwide and more have watched the webinar online. We would like to say a massive thank you to all our speakers for sharing their expertise on the various otter species.

## **OTHER EVENTS**

As mentioned, there were events in 39 countries worldwide, including

Austria, Belgium, France, Guyana, Malaysia, Paraguay, Spain and Uganda. Here is a short summary of a few of these:

### **Benin**

Human Nature Projects Benin held an event involving local communities. A presentation was given on the importance of otters in our environment, the species found, as well as threats to otters and possible solutions for safeguarding them. This was followed by an open discussion on what further steps could be taken, such as children’s education.

### **India**

Dr Eswar Narayana followed up last year’s event with a visit to various villages along the River Godavari in Andhra Pradesh to create awareness about otter conservation among children, fishing communities and village leaders.

Elsewhere, in Odisha, Eco Earth Crusaders, IOSF Otter Oscar 2021 winners, ran an awareness campaign in the area focusing on local school children and the community as a whole.

### **Singapore**

Singapore is well known for its urban otters and the problems associated with human/otter interactions. Sivasothi, dubbed “The Otter Man”, was part of a group that held an online talk about otters within the city state for World Otter Day.

### **Mexico**

In Mexico, friend of IOSF, Pablo Hernandez partnered with Animal Karma Fundacion for an online presentation on the Neotropical otter in Mexico.

### **Republic of Ireland**

Cork Nature Network held an awareness campaign online for their local Eurasian otters. This included encouraging people to use the new Cork Otter Trail and also an art competition for children, and IOSF gladly offered a prize for the winner.

### **Uganda**

MUCCO held their event at Chameleon Hill Lodge Bay around Lake Mutanda, Kisoro District. The participants for the event were school children, community members, lodge staff and some tourists visiting the lodge and they learned about otters and celebrated their conservation.



© Dr. Eswar Narayana

India



© Dossou Donald

Benin



© Argonauta Academy

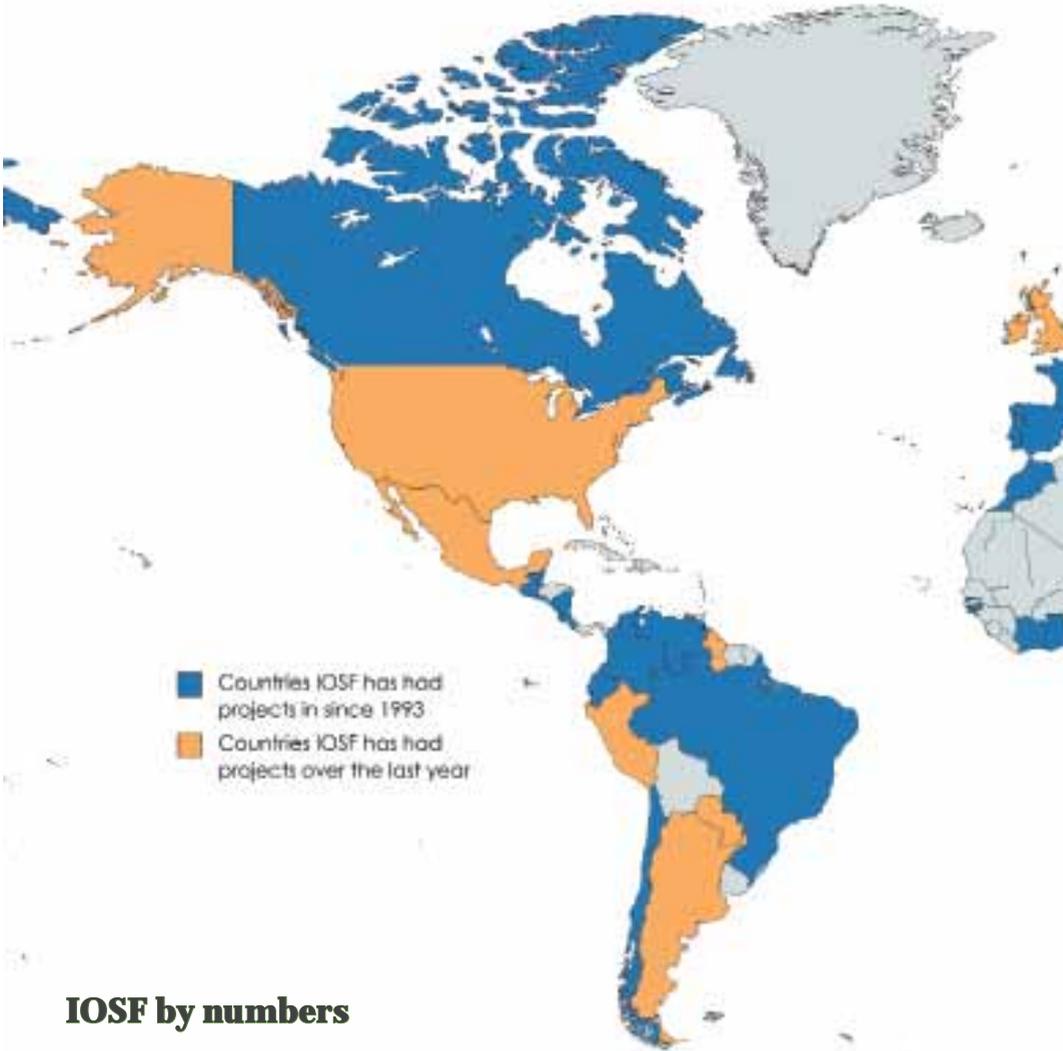
USA: Pink eared otter



© Para la Tierra

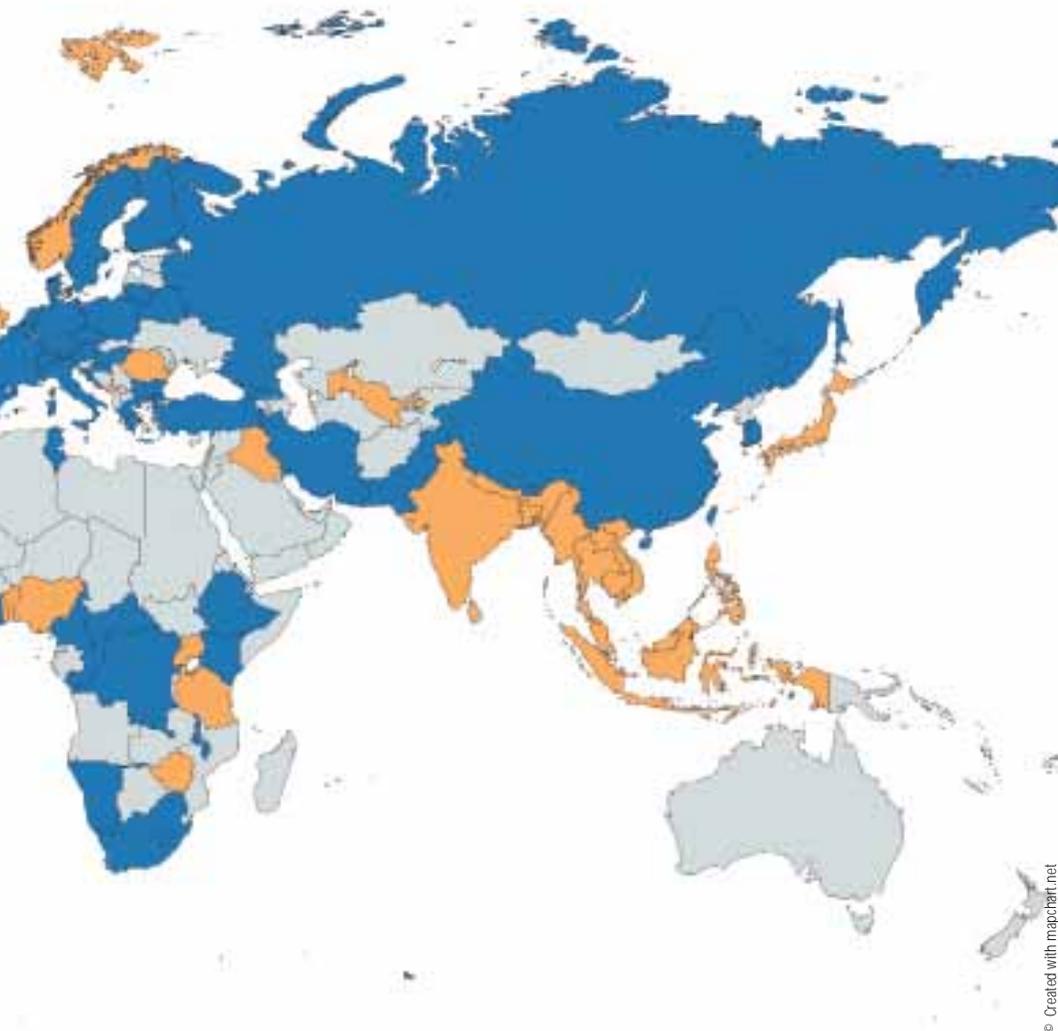
Paraguay

**2023 IOSF World Otter Day will be Wednesday 31 May**



## **IOSF by numbers**

- 18 Languages available for the IOSF video
- 21 Number of countries represented at IOSF workshops
- 29 Years of helping otters worldwide
- 39 Countries held a World Otter Day event
- 47 Number of countries where we have helped cubs or injured otters
- 64 Number of countries we have supporters
- 91 Number of countries where we have supported projects
- 167 Number of cubs or injured otters abroad that we have helped
- 200+ People signed up for the IOSF Webinar for World Otter Day
- 238 Number of cubs and injured otters we have treated at our Skye hospital
- 139,000+ Supporters worldwide



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Help reduce our printing and postage costs and put more money into otter conservation by reading your Otter Review and newsletters as PDFs online. Together, we will cut waste and protect our environment. If you would like to do this please email us at [enquiries@otter.org](mailto:enquiries@otter.org) quoting your sponsorship number, but if you prefer, we are still happy to send out a printed copy to you.



# Otter Oscars

*Nominations received for our 2021 Otter Oscars brought another broad range of projects and work being done for the world's otters.*

*It is always interesting to find out about what people are involved with in other countries and we weren't disappointed, although this brings a challenge for us in deciding the winners.*

## Special Award: Rita Chapman, Democratic Republic of Congo/USA

In 2010 Rita and her husband Glen received a tiny Congo clawless otter cub which they named Mazu. Mazu rose to stardom and even Government officials came just to see this fascinating creature. Her name and face became a catalyst for change - people no longer saw otters as bush meat or for poaching, and started to care and protect them.

Since then Rita has cared for many otters including more Congo clawless and a Spotted-necked otter. The impact of Rita's work in D.R. Congo and Kikongo will be timeless and her actions have helped otters to be seen in a new light across the nation. The Kikongo Otter Sanctuary was formed with her loyal Congolese helpers, Delphin and Sico. Now that she has retired back to USA, Rita is leaving these beautiful otters behind, safe in the knowledge that the local people truly care about them now.



© Rita Chapman



© Blair Cunningham

Young People's Award:  
Prentice Cunningham  
(Scotland)



© Aurobindo Samal

Community Achievement Award:  
ECO-Earth Crusaders  
Organisation (India)



© CNN

Group or Organisation Award:  
Cork Nature Network (Ireland)



© Stephane Raimond

Photography/Art Award:  
Stephane Raimond (France)  
- see front cover.



© Omar Al-Sheikhly

Research Award:  
Omar Al-Sheikhly (Iraq)

The next Otter Oscars are now open for nominations and you can find more information at [https://otter.org/Public/News\\_OtterOscars.aspx](https://otter.org/Public/News_OtterOscars.aspx). Nominations can be for yourself or someone else; young or old; amateur or professional; anyone who has done a lot for otters.

**Your nominations must be received by Friday 25th November 2022 and the results will be announced on Monday 5th December 2022.**

# Otter Rescue & Rehabilitation

## UK

As always, IOSF's sanctuary has been incredibly busy throughout the last twelve months with 13 otters in our care - three adults and eight cubs. Five otters have been released (DJ, Louis, Oliver, Cass and Holly), two unfortunately have died and at the time of writing six are still with us, although Storm is due to be released soon.

The remaining otters are all doing well. Many of you will know Bealltainn, who has been with IOSF since May 2020 after arriving aged about eight months acting tame. She has developed into a beautiful adult otter and has created her own holt in her enclosure where she uses the long vegetation as protective cover and rarely uses her sleeping box. However, unfortunately she still shows little signs of being able to adapt to life back in the wild and doesn't like water!



Bealltainn

Wally, who was found near Dingwall and resides next to Storm is growing well. He is a very secretive animal and really dislikes any disturbance.



Wally



Storm

Baird, the youngest of the IOSF otters was rescued in Wester Ross. He is growing well and has since been joined by his new housemate, Marina. Initial meetings were frosty but they are now inseparable. Marina was one of two otters from the SSPCA who asked IOSF for help while their otter rehabilitation facility underwent some renovation/construction work. Worryingly, when Marina arrived at SSPCA they found plastic and polystyrene in her spraints,

although this disappeared quickly when fed properly. We don't know if she was eating these out of desperation or if she ingested them with her food but either way, it shows the risks these materials pose to our wildlife.



Baird



Marina

Mist, the second of the SSPCA otters, is doing really well and shows the perfect wild temperament that we like.



Mist

As always, the IOSF ‘Otter’ Sanctuary is a local wildlife refuge with animals of all kinds coming into our care including birds, hedgehogs and bats.

## International

**Iraq:** An incredibly rare albino Eurasian otter cub was found in the River Tigris in June 2022 and IOSF’s Middle Eastern Co-ordination Omar, Al-Sheikhly, contacted us for advice. The otter was ‘caught’ by a fisherman who turned down offers of \$50,000-\$100,000 preferring to give it to a reputable place.

The Iraqi Ministry of Environment with the Iraqi Green Climate Organization arranged for the cub, now called Dijla, to go to Baghdad Zoo. Unfortunately, due to the colour, she cannot be released as it would be far too easy for hunters to

spot her. IOSF remains in regular contact with Baghdad Zoo, who are currently preparing a brand new enclosure for Dijla and she is available to ‘adopt’ at the Otter Shop.



© Nazek Photography and Thanks to Dr Halder

Dijla – Albino Eurasian otter cub

It is also worth noting our gratitude to the fisherman who found Dijla for acting in the best way possible. However, this really

highlights the work we have to do on the pet trade.

**Peru:** Last year we told you of the albino Neotropical otter rescued in the Peruvian Amazon. Like Dijla, this otter couldn’t be released and now has a large expansive enclosure, where it has been joined by another “normal-coloured” Neotropical otter.

## Southeast Asia:

IOSF is working with four organisations who are rescuing otters from the pet trade: Cikananga (Indonesia), Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre (Cambodia), Save Vietnam’s Wildlife and Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand.

Between them they have over 100 rescued otters, most of which are Asian small-clawed, but there are also Smooth-coated, Eurasian and one Hairy-nosed (more in our *Illegal Trade* section).

## Supporter Renewal Rates

**UK and EEC Countries:**      **All other countries:**

Adult: £24.00 per year

Child: £13.00 per year

Family: £34.00 per year

Adult: £30.00 per year

Child: £15.00 per year

Family: £40.00 per year

*Increase the value of your gift to IOSF: giftaid it*

**Life Membership  
(all countries):**

£350.00

*If you are paying by standing order, please ensure you are paying the correct amount.*

# Research and Conservation

It is vital that we have as much up to date data as possible. Therefore, research work is imperative for long-term conservation strategies.

## UK

### *IOSF Student grant – Barra survey*

The IOSF Student Research Grant was launched in 2022 to help students carry out an otter field survey under the guidance of a trained and experienced ecological surveyor, Andrew Rothwell. Two students (Ron Pasiczna from Sheffield University, and Rachel Wick from Brighton University) were selected for the project on the Isle of Barra with the aim of learning the various techniques involved, including post-survey work such as diet analysis.

The training survey took place in June 2022 and accommodation was provided so that the students just had to arrange their travel to the island and food. They arrived on Barra in beautiful weather – “that surreal tropical island feel” and watched “a multitude of common dolphin pods, eight minke whales and five basking sharks” during the ferry crossing.

In the first few good days, they observed otters in their natural habitat; grooming, swimming and mothers bringing fish to their cubs. Unfortunately, the weather changed reducing opportunities to look for otters directly, but the field survey work continued, finding and mapping signs of otter activity within several habitat types found on the Island.

With an average of nine hour days, over 12 days this approximated to 108 hours of field time. The team were able to complete approximately 25km of coastline (about 30% of the Island’s coastline), and a further 5km of inland freshwater lochs. Over 550 data points were recorded and 442 spraints were collected for further analysis. In total, eight otters were observed and two more were caught on a camera trap.

A full report on the training programme will be produced in due course.

We are grateful to the Alice McCosh Trust and Thriplow Charitable Trust for funding this project.



Rachel & Ron (left) examining a spraint site



Barra students spotting otters

## ***Otter monitoring on the Isle of Skye:***



The project monitoring the otters along the Skye coastline continues but due to various factors not all sites have yet been visited. However, so far all have been positive

except one. An otter was hit on the road not far from this site and we believe this is the reason for the negative result. It is hoped that the monitoring project will be completed in the near future.

## ***Otter Post Mortems***

IOSF works with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and Cardiff University Otter Project who conduct otter post mortems to gain information on cause of death, toxins and other aspects related to the long-term survival and health of wild otters.

For example, many of you will be aware of the Avian Influenza (or bird flu) that is having major impacts on wild bird populations. We recently collected an otter found among a number of birds washed up on Skye and our initial thoughts, naturally, were that the otter could have died from this infection. However, the post mortem revealed that the otter had not been infected with Avian Influenza but had succumbed to injuries.

We also had an incident on Skye where an otter was discovered in suspicious circumstances and we suspected possible poisoning, but this was ruled out in the post mortem and the cause of death was an infection.

Post mortems, such as these, are essential

to determine cause of death, particularly if there is a possible long-lasting problem, and help IOSF, and other similar bodies, act accordingly. Without this important work of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and Cardiff University Otter Project we would lose much information which is essential to monitor the health of our otters.

## ***International***

***Argentina:*** Adriana Belen Vallejos has been studying Neotropical otters in the Corrientes region which have shown a variation in otter behaviour particularly in connection to climate change issues, such as major drought and excessive flooding.

***Bhutan:*** Eurasian otters had previously been the only confirmed species, but in 2022 the Asian small-clawed otter was found in the Thrumshingla National Park and this is now being closely monitored.

***Burundi:*** Association Burundaise pour la protection de la Nature did a study involving local communities in the Rweru Lake region. At first, they were unsure if otters existed in the area but local communities confirmed they are present, particularly around the Cohoha Lake. There are sometimes conflicts when otters are caught in traps. More work needs to be done to understand otters in the area and reduce conflict.

***Nepal:*** In January 2022, IOSF supported researcher Mohan Bikram Shrestha in his study of Eurasian otters and using camera traps he produced the first photographic evidence of Eurasian otters in the country for three decades. In Volume 8 of the IOSF OTTER Journal, 2022, Mohan has published further information on the "Presence of evidence, and factors affecting

distribution of Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) in the Pelma river, Rukum East, Nepal.”

Purna Man Shrestha completed an otter survey in three rivers in Mugu district, supported by IOSF. Some local people reported seeing them and seemed to support them. However, wild animals are killed for pelts to trade to Tibet and this may include otters. Purna intends to carry out more work in this area.

**Nigeria:** Salami Olalekan Michael, Netlink Environmental Conservation Organisation, carried out a study of the perceptions of fishermen towards Spotted-necked otter conservation and conflicts in the riverine area of Ondo State. He held focus group discussions among fishermen in 17 communities where Spotted-necked otters are widely distributed. Most fishermen have seen otters and they all agreed that the main cause of conflict is stealing fish and damaging nets. This is reported in Volume 8 of the IOSF OTTER Journal, 2022.

**Lebanon:** The Eurasian otter is listed as Critically Endangered in Lebanon and there is no locally applied research specifically for their conservation. The Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI) is broadening its research to carry out a thorough study of remaining otter populations, funded by the Disney Conservation Fund, U.S. Forest Service International Programs (USFS IP), and Idea Wild.

**Myanmar:** Myint Myint Soe, Conservation Officer, Nature Conservation Society, and IOSF Malaysia otter workshop attendee, has been collecting otter records from throughout the country. She used interviews and questionnaires with local people, direct sightings, camera

traps and preserved skins to identify 13 sites where otters have been recorded. This is reported in Volume 8 of the IOSF OTTER Journal, 2022.

**Tunisia:** Faouz Kilani, together with the Tunisian Association for Wildlife (ATVS), has been researching Eurasian otters since 2017. In May 2021, they captured the first image of the species in its natural habitat with a camera trap in Northern Tunisia. Currently, they are working on mammals (including Eurasian otter) of Northern Tunisia in a project called “COBIOM”, funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). The aim is to increase the knowledge of the species leading to a scientific report.

**Uzbekistan:** The Central Asian otter (*Lutra lutra seistanica*) is an endangered species listed in the Red Data Book of Uzbekistan as 1(EN). Formerly it inhabited all major rivers but numbers declined largely due to reduction in prey availability, disturbance and poaching. However, in desert areas suitable habitat has increased with a growing network of canals and reservoirs. Bykova, Esipov and Aromov studied the current status in the western portion of the Hissar Range where one of the main subpopulations is found within and outside the protected area. This is reported in Volume 8 of the IOSF OTTER Journal, 2022.

## Illegal Trade

As we have mentioned in previous Annual Reviews, the illegal trade is a considerable concern to us and otters are traded for furs, pets and traditional medicine. More recently, the pet trade is the biggest worry with young otter cubs “stolen” from their mother and forced into a life of cruelty and

neglect. Naturally mother otters are protective of their young and they are killed in the process. Young otters are very difficult to rear and should they die, they are simply replaced, causing more stress to wild populations.

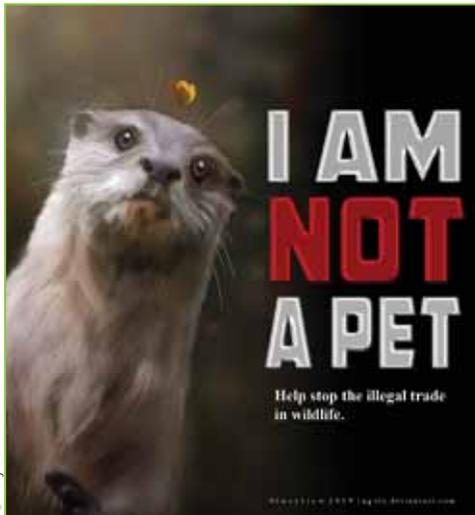
The pet trade is a particular issue for Asian small-clawed otters, but Smooth-coated otters are also traded and even Hairy-nosed and Eurasian otters, have been rescued from the trade.

The scale of the trade is highlighted by the number of otters being rescued. It is worth noting that these are only the otters seized and many will slip through checkpoints for onward sale. IOSF is helping to support rescue centres in Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand (See *Rescue and Rehabilitation* section).



© Aaron Cekoski and World Animal Protection

Asian small-clawed otter in 'otter café'



Pet trade poster

If you suspect a wildlife trade incident – either online or in person – please let IOSF know as soon as possible. We do appreciate that you may wish to be anonymous but please do send any information to [enquiries@otter.org](mailto:enquiries@otter.org)

### **Social Media**

Social media has helped to fuel the desire for exotic pets as owners strive to make their otter pets 'social media stars'. Although the behaviour of otters is seen as endearing this is often stress-related.

Unfortunately, problems with social media persist and they continue to offer the perfect platform to drive demand and buy/sell otters and other wild animals. This is despite the fact that most social media platforms, such as Facebook, clearly state

that “Listings may not promote the buying or selling of animals” and this includes domestic animals. Nevertheless, it is easy to find otters being offered for sale online.

Social media platforms have a duty to do more to enforce these rules and reduce wildlife trade. On numerous occasions, IOSF has reached out to these platforms for their support on this problem but, as yet, we have had no reply. We will continue to work on this and come up with new ways to reduce it.

### **Japan**

As many of you know, Japan has a growing demand for pet otters. A change in legislation made the owning of otters more difficult but that hasn't stopped it completely and the “Otter Café” trend shows no signs of decreasing. For example, Takechiyo, one of the more famous pet otters on Instagram has amassed 224,000 followers. There is regular content showing the otter, which looks overweight and therefore not in optimum condition.

We would point out that it is not just on Japanese media that “cute” otters are being showcased and it can be found in other countries including the United Kingdom. We would underline the fact that otters are not suitable pets.

### **Southeast Asia**

Across Southeast Asia we are working with organisations who are rescuing otters from the pet trade (more in our *Rehab* section). Over the last year we have helped with the care of Asian small-clawed otters, Smooth-coated otters, Eurasian otters and one Hairy-nosed otter all rescued from the trade.

During our Malaysian workshop, (See *Education* section) we were joined by Chris Shepherd of Monitor Conservation Research Society. He gave a talk to representatives from countries which are part of the trade and IOSF is in touch regarding working more closely together.

In Thailand, Worata Klinsawat and the Conservation Ecology team of King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi are researching how to use genetics to determine the origins of otters in the illegal trade. Using these methods, hopefully they will be able to determine problem areas and use this information to alert authorities to act accordingly.

### **Rest of the World**

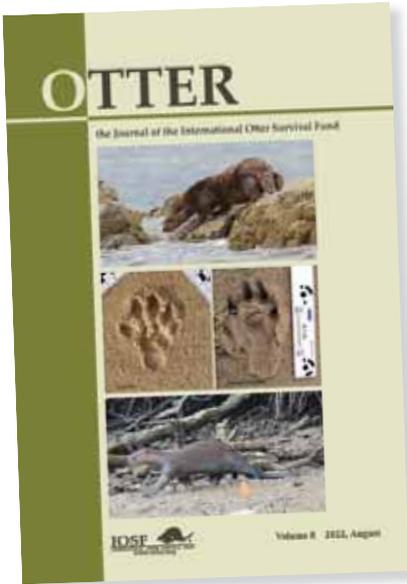
It is important to remember that this trade is not occurring purely in Asia and illegal trade and persecution of otters takes place across the world.

For example, we were contacted by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) about concerns over Austin Aquarium (USA). Although not officially registered under his name, Austin Aquarium is run by a convicted animal trafficker and PETA have launched an investigation into the aquarium's treatment of various species, including Asian small-clawed otters. PETA are working on getting all the animals confiscated and moved to facilities who can provide better care for them.

In August 2022 we were asked for advice for a three month old cub in Romania which had been kept as a pet. Presumably as it grew the “owners” found it more difficult to deal with and so wanted to get rid of it.

# OTTER

## Journal of the International Otter Survival Fund



Volume 8 was published in September 2022 and contains the usual mix of reports, short communications and papers:

### Reports:

Asian Otter Conservation Network; African Otters; Team Otter; Malaysian workshop; IOSF World Otter Day 2021 and 2022; Otter Oscars 2021; IOSF Student Research Grant.

### Short Communications:

- Otter survey of the island of Corfu 2021
- Otter records in Myanmar
- Malaysia Nature Society Otter Project: Safeguarding the Malaysian otters
- The current status of the management of captive Asian small-clawed otters within the European region

### Papers:

- Only south of the Ganges? On recent occurrences and distribution of Smooth-coated otters in Bangladesh
- Presence of evidence, and factors affecting distribution of Eurasian otter in the Pelma river, Rukum East, Nepal
- The Central Asian otter in the western part of the Hissar Range in Uzbekistan
- The perceptions of fishermen towards the conservation of Spotted-necked otters and conflicts in riverine area of Ondo State, Nigeria
- It's otterly confusing: distinguishing between footprints of three of the four sympatric Asian otter species using morphometrics and machine learning.

OTTER is available to download [https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources\\_Resources\\_Journal.aspx](https://otter.org/Public/MediaAndResources_Resources_Journal.aspx) or purchase from the Otter Shop (<http://www.ottershop.co.uk>).

Journal publication funded by Kilpatrick Fraser Charitable Trust.

*Anyone wishing to submit a paper for Volume 9 should contact [enquiries@otter.org](mailto:enquiries@otter.org) for a copy of the journal guidelines for authors.*

*The deadline for the receipt of papers is 1 February 2023.*

## PASS IT ON

Recycle your otter news by passing it on to friends and family, your local library or school; doctor's surgery or hospital, vet's waiting room, etc.  
*Don't waste it, spread the word.*



# Help IOSF

## What can YOU do?

We all have much more freedom now and although it is still important to continue to plan safely and follow any guidance, organising fundraising events is back on the cards. Develop something local and get as many people involved or you can create your own fundraising page with JustGiving or GiveAsYouLive and get friends and family to sponsor your personal challenge.

The innovative use of virtual events, including swims and marathons as well as quizzes, auctions, challenges and talent shows, continues to be popular. The choice is yours, so get creative and enjoy fundraising for otters.

As always, the simplest things you can do is using social media - create information posters to display and post there - and share our posts on Facebook @InternationalOtterSurvivalFund; Twitter @IOSF and Instagram @IOSF\_Otters.

Follow us:   

Click on the Help Us tab at [www.otter.org](http://www.otter.org) to download our fundraising pack. If you want to organise a raffle, please contact [enquiries@otter.org](mailto:enquiries@otter.org) for details of IOSF's licence.

## Become a regular giver to help otter conservation

<https://donr.com/iosf>



<https://justgiving.com/iosf>



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



If you are a UK taxpayer you can make regular donations to IOSF on a tax-free basis through Payroll Giving. For more information go to [www.givingonline.org.uk/InternationalOtter-Survival-Fund\\_2623/index.html](http://www.givingonline.org.uk/InternationalOtter-Survival-Fund_2623/index.html)



## Other ways you can help

- **Keep us up to date with otter-related news**
- **Forward your e-updates to friends and family**
- **Download and print the IOSF leaflet on our website (also available in German and French) and put it in shops, libraries, etc.**
- **Help to translate our leaflets and videos into other languages**
- **Speak about otters in your school's "Show and Tell"**
- **Enter a picture, photo or poem for various general competitions to tell others about otters**
- **Donate something through our Amazon Wish List <https://amzn.to/3C5IofA>**
- **Turn your old car into a donation for otters through [www.charitycar.co.uk/international-otter-survival-fund](http://www.charitycar.co.uk/international-otter-survival-fund)**
- **Earn FREE donations for IOSF when shopping online: [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) , [www.thegivingmachine.co.uk](http://www.thegivingmachine.co.uk)**
- **Evergreen Insurance Services [evergreeninsuranceservices.co.uk/international-otter-survival-fund](http://evergreeninsuranceservices.co.uk/international-otter-survival-fund). Evergreen donate up to 25% of their commission at no cost to you.**
- **Are you in America? Contact us through [enquiries@otter.org](mailto:enquiries@otter.org) to donate through CAF America**



# Thank You

We all continue to experience difficult times, but your continued support of IOSF and this gives us confidence and inspiration as we move forward. So, a big “Thank you”, to all of our supporters, otter adopters, donors and corporate sponsors including those on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Quora.

**Paul and the IOSF team.**

**We also send our thanks and appreciation to those organisations whose financial support we have received:**

The ABC Foundation, Action for the Wild, The Alice McCosh Trust, Alice Noakes Memorial Charitable Trust, The Animal Defence Trust, Animal Friends Insurance, Arnold Clark, Barry Green Memorial Fund, The Beryl Evetts & Robert Luff Animal Welfare Trust Ltd., Big Wild Thought, The Body Shop, The Broadford & Strath Men’s Shed, Craignish Trust, Dierenpark Amersfoort WP, The Grocers Charity, Henry C Hoare Charitable Trust, The Humane Society, Ian Mactaggart Trust, J & JR Wilson Trust, The Janelaw Trust, Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust, Kilpatrick Fraser Charitable Trust, The Marjorie Coote Animal Charity Trust, Marsh Christian Trust, The Matthiesen Foundation, The Michael & Shirley Hunt Charitable Trust, Monteith Solicitors, Old MacDonald’s Farm, Neil and Pauline Pettefar Charitable Trust, PJF Storrs Charitable Trust, The Russell Trust, The Sea Change Trust, Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust, Skye Films, Thriplow Charitable Trust, The Walker 597 Trust, The William Dean Countryside and Educational Trust, William Haddon Charitable Trust.

Corporate Sponsors: Andrew Poplett Enterprises Ltd, The Fenn Bell Conservation Project, holidaycottages.co.uk, Nurtured by Nature.

We are also grateful to Mrs. Patricia Harwood and Sheila Thompson for remembering us in their wills; and, to Mrs Barnstijn in memory of her husband and long-time supporter of IOSF.

**And we have to give a special mention to the following:**

Princess Michael of Kent (Patron), John Noorani, Judith Young, Wolfgang and Traudl Gettmann, Dennis Furnell, Gareth and his team at the Old School Vets and, of course, Andy Race Fish Merchants.

Finally, as ever, we are grateful to our Board who provide much support and advice. Thank you to Jackie West, Andrew Cameron, Andy Rothwell, Sarah Neill and Padma de Silva. Padma is also our Asian coordinator/Chair of the Asian Otter Conservation Network and works with our four Asian regional coordinators: Aad Adrean, Ling-Ling Lee, Jyoti Bhandari and Omar Al-Sheikhly. Thanks to William Mgomo our African Community Education Officer and Samantha Holland our Journal copy-editor, who always does such a great job.

All photographs ©IOSF unless otherwise stated



# ABOUT IOSF

**IOSF is one of the world's leading otter conservation organisations and is the only UK charity solely dedicated to the protection and care of all 13 species of otter, based on nearly 30 years of scientific research in the UK and around the world.**

**Registered address: 7 Black Park, Broadford, Isle of Skye, IV49 9DE, Scotland  
Company Reg. No. 109031  
Tel/ Fax: +44(0) 1471 822 487**

**IOSF is regulated by The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR),  
Charity number SC003875.**

**IOSF has been vetted and approved to receive grants from CAF America; if you are a US donor wishing to make a tax-deductible contribution to support us, you may give to CAF America and recommend that the grant be made to IOSF.**

## Who's who at IOSF

**Patron: Julian Pettifer | Presidents: Dennis Furnell, Laurence Broderick  
Advisory Board/Trustees: Andrew Cameron, Padma de Silva, Andy Rothwell,  
Sarah Neill, Jackie West, Grace Yoxon  
Head of Operations: Dr Paul Yoxon | Education & Research Officer: Ben Yoxon  
Development Officer: Helen Stephenson | Data & Communications: Callum Browett  
Journal copy-editor: Dr Samantha Holland  
Asian Co-ordinator: Prof Padma da Silva**

## Asian Regional Co-ordinators:

**SE Asia: Aad Adrean, Indonesia | South Asia: Jyoti Bhandari, Nepal  
East Asia: Ling-Ling Lee, Taiwan | Middle East: Omar Al-Sheikhly, Iraq**

**African Community Education Officer: William Mgomo**

## A NOTE WHEN WRITING:

**Whenever you contact us, please provide your sponsorship number as it does help us to find your records more quickly. Thanks.**

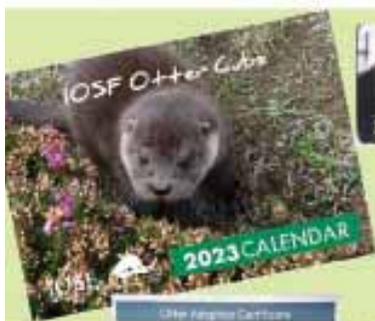


# IOSF Otter Shop

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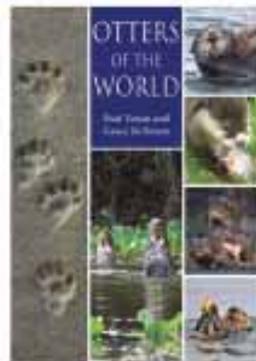
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Otter Fridge Magnets



Letterbox adoption giftbox

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