



Otter News June 2024

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IOSF #WorldOtterDay 2024 Report



Once again, IOSF World Otter Day was a massive success and we thank all of you for being a big part of that. Every year, we want World Otter Day to grow, as this means that there are more eyes on otters, and more people concerned for their conservation. Events across the world achieve this and help people to understand the threats they face, both locally and worldwide. This year we had events in 48 countries – making it the biggest event yet!

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

Grants

Cameroon - *Che Gilbert Ayunwi, International Organization for Animal Protection Cameroon*

The International Organization for Animal Protection (OIPA) Cameroon held a **World Otter Day** event to raise awareness of the presence of otters, their distribution and vulnerability status. The event was held in schools, communities, among the regional delegation of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife of the northwest region, Jato Sonita and the forest children and media.

OIPA's education programme visited Susana nursery and primary school and Rosy bilingual primary school to educate them about otters, their presence in Cameroon and their need for protection. Unfortunately, it was clear that not many of the children were aware of otters didn't know that they were in their country. This learning opportunity helped the children to understand why they are so important and increase knowledge of otters in the area. OIPA also used the opportunity to visit community members and educate them too. Of course, knowledge was higher among the community and they were told of a number of threats faced by otters including habitat degradation, traditional beliefs and use of their skin to make native drums.



The event also gave an opportunity to increase habitats by a joint effort to plant trees as a symbol of the importance of otter conservation and the need to protect habitats. During this great event OIPA managed to reach out to 280 school children and 478 community members. The group were thanked by the Ministry of Forestry for their efforts who have promised

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to take part in a similar event next **World Otter Day**. They also recognised the need for more efforts towards otter conservation.

Guatemala - *Jacob Alvarez Requena, Museo de Historia Natural USAC*

Jacob’s event focused on children and educating them on Neotropical otters and their conservation needs. During the event children from Guatemaltecos Somos public school had the opportunity to learn all about otters, make otter masks and learn from the newly designed otter colouring book. The group delivered an interactive workshop on otters which helped children think about different aspects in relation to otters, such as holding their breath. The school were also gifted a number of the books for use in their school and display in their school library. Furthermore, the story book will be available for download online soon!



The museum also set up a stall on behalf of otters for the day which allowed visitors the opportunity to gain more information on otters.

The event was a resounding success with children engaged from start to finish.

India - *Giridhar Malla, Godavari Fishing Cat Project, India*

Giridhar Malla and his team focused on communities around the Krishna River in Andhra Pradesh. During their event they visited schools and met individuals with potential conflict with their local Smooth-coated otter population. The project worked with children and fishing communities to encourage a better understanding of the benefits of otter populations and a better sense of stewardship to protect them. Pictured, is the local fishing communities with the new “Save the Otters” posters.



The project worked on helping shift attitude and producing a healthier relationship between the local communities and otter populations, encouraging a better use of wetland habitats.

México - *Miguel Torres, Okapia*

This year, for **World Otter Day**, Okapia managed to expand their celebration to two additional municipalities in the state of Morelos. Okapia held drawing contests in three elementary schools, reaching around 120 children where prizes were awarded to the top places in each category (first to third grade, and fourth to sixth grade). Furthermore, Miguel and his team visited a couple of schools to present on otters and their conservation.



When they went to present the awards, it gave a further opportunity to talk to the children about the importance of otters. In the schools that had not yet received the full presentation, the group did so and helped to increase the children's knowledge of otters.

This event was of great importance as it has allowed Okapia to establish contact with these schools, learn about the community's perception of these animals, and we are sure that they will remember the day with great pleasure. Capturing otters in a drawing and adding their own creative touch and perception is something that is very valuable.



There were also plans to host a river cleaning day but due to high rains and therefore increased river flow, it was decided to postpone until it was safer and there would probably be a higher turnout of helpers.

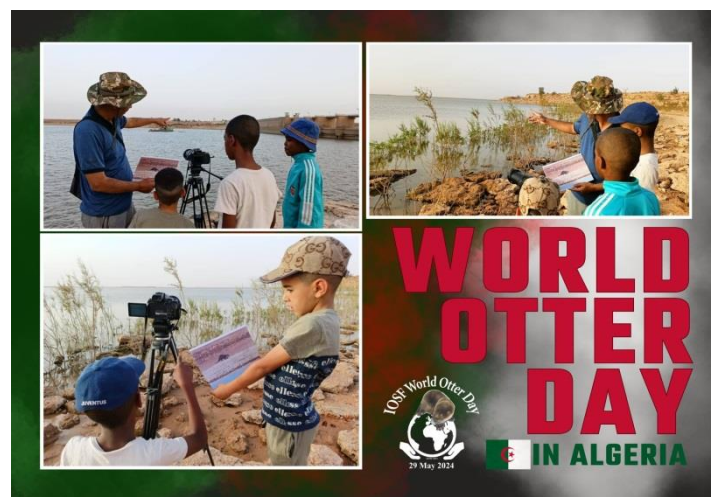
Okapia now plan to use their newly formed partnerships with schools to help encourage a sense of stewardship among the children to protect their local otters, wetlands and environment. They plan to disseminate leaflets and posters to further their message.

Other Events

As mentioned, above, there were events in 48 countries across the world, in all continents bar Antarctica, with events in countries such as Ireland, Belize, Thailand and the UK. Unfortunately, we can't mention every single event that happened, or every country, but here is an overview of some exciting things. Nevertheless, we want to take this opportunity to thank all people and organisations for their efforts.

Algeria

Seddiki Lamia, and the team, held the first event in Algeria, hosted by the Algerian Association of Wild Word Documentation. This helped the children who attended to learn more about the Eurasian otters in one of their last known strongholds in the country, with a focus on the Jorf Torba Lake at Bechar region.



Argentina

Patagonia Program of Aves Argentinas celebrated **World Otter Day 2024** in the city of Esquel, Province of Chubut, an area known to have populations of the southern river otter. The activities were organised together with the Department of Fauna and Flora of the Province of Chubut, and also biologists from Los Alerces National Park.

An exhibition was set up with activities for schools and around 200 children aged about 9/10 attended. Activities included:

- A documentary
- An informative talk about the general characteristics of the Huillín (or southern river otter) with illustrated giant panels on the life cycle and ecological requirements.
- Adapted "Game of the Goose" featuring the Huillín and native fauna of Patagonia.
- Demonstration of the use of camera traps to investigate the species.
- The group was also invited to a radio program, where they talked for an hour about the Huillín, its habitats, and the conservation issues it faces.



Benin

Naben-ONG carried out an awareness-raising activity with school pupils at CEG Damè-Wogon to help them understand the need for the conservation of otters and their habitats. This started with a presentation on otters and focused on various topics: otters worldwide, in Africa and Benin; natural habitat of otters; otter behaviour and diet; threats to otters and conflicts between man and otters. This was followed by an interactive discussion in which children proposed solutions for protecting otters.

The session was very well received and the students showed great interest and actively participated in the discussions. This helped to raise their ecological awareness and motivate them to get involved in protecting otters and their habitat. It represents an important step towards better otter conservation in the Oueme Low Valley.



Belgium

At Pakawi Park, visitors received a specially designed flyer for **World Otter Day**. This included details about their activities, fun games for children, and their special catering options (featuring 'otterburgers', kibbeling, calamari, and otter cupcakes).

Throughout the Park, they mapped out an 'Otter Walk', featuring educational signage at the habitats of the otter's natural predators. This signage provides fascinating



insights into these creatures and their relationship with otters.

In the afternoon, children had the opportunity to make otter masks, adding to the fun and educational experience.

DR Congo

Luzolo Benhamin organised an event in Uvira city, South Kivu province, to raise public awareness about the conservation and protection of otters and their habitat among various local stakeholders. For fishermen, they used sensitisation techniques to urge them not to kill, or create conflict with otters as fishermen had mentioned that they had conflicts due to the otters destroying nets and also attacking local people. Luzolo also met with local women to discuss the programme of otter conservation. The local community members were delighted to learn about otter conservation and promised to help play a part in it.



Estonia

Eesti Terioloogia Selts recently named otters as Estonia’s “Animal of the Year” and took the opportunity on **World Otter Day** to launch their citizen science project of getting otter sightings from across the country. They are now asking for the rest of the year, for any sightings, alive or dead, or secondary signs (such as spraint and footprints). They are going to collate all the information over the next few months and we look forward to hearing more.

Germany

Heidy Davis continued her involvement with **World Otter Day** with another event hosted by Duisburg Zoo. During the event, Heidy set up an otter information stand with many exhibits. She also managed to raise money for IOSF, some of which has been sent to Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand for their work on rehabilitating otters rescued from the pet trade.

A massive thank you to Heidy for all her hard work.

Malaysia

The Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) and Malaysia Otter Network (MON) celebrated IOSF’s **World Otter Day** 2024 for the 5th year in a row. This year the theme was “Be An Otter Explorer”. To spread awareness across the whole nation, MON created a series of online posters to introduce the four species of otters in Malaysia and the importance of research in otter conservation. They also showcased photos from the research conducted by Cheeyoong, Woo, one of the Explorers Club Rolex Explorers of the Year of 2022 on the otters along the Selangor coastline and subcoastal areas, and Affendi Yang Amri, one of the members of MON at South Johor. This activity was funded by Rolex and The Explorers Club.

For the first time, a **World Otter Day** event was celebrated in an urban residential area situated at Selangor, the most developed state in Malaysia. It was a joint celebration between MNS, MON, the



Department of Wildlife and National Parks (PERHILITAN) Peninsular Malaysia and Gamuda Land.

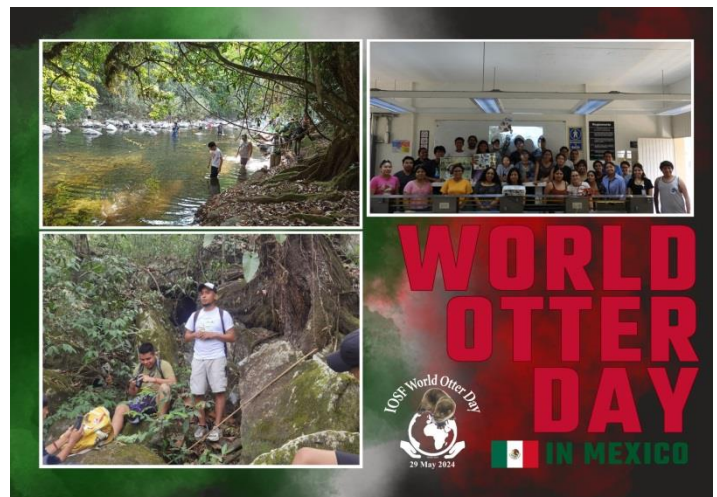
Recently, conflict with the otters has escalated in this residential area where the otters are eating the Koi fish in their houses. Hence there is a need to raise awareness about human-otter coexistence with the residents. The event activities included awareness talks by experts, panel discussion, cookie workshop for kids and exhibition booths. Around 30 residents joined the event.

Lastly, MNS organised The Wetland-Otter School Camp funded by MSIG Holdings (Asia) and Conservation International Asia Pacific. The two day and one night camp took place on 11th and 12th May in Kuala Selangor Nature Park, Selangor with a total of 60 Standard 2 Primary School students from SK Bandar Baru Kuala Selangor and SK Bukit Belimbing. The camp focused on introducing students to otters and the wetland habitats and promoting environmental awareness and conservation efforts. The students were engaged in activities such as observing otter spraints and footprints, water monitoring, and games related to wetland habitats.



Mexico

You will have already read about Okapia's project in Mexico but it was not the only event that took place in the country. Luis David Gracida, who attended the Central America workshop in November 2023, also hosted a fantastic event. He invited 30 participants from the Faculty of Biological and Agricultural Services at Universidad Veracruzana to learn about threats and conservation plans for otters across the area. Once the classroom session was done, Luis lead a field trip where they learned about footprints, spraint and even managed to capture a Neotropical otter on their trail camera in an area used by skunk, racoons and many other species!



You can see the video of the otter here – https://www.instagram.com/p/C7jZqpnut5A/?img_index=1

Mongolia

The administration of Numrug SPA, Mongolia, has celebrated **World Otter Day** since 2021 and this year celebrated under the slogan "Haliugaa-Khairlaya Hamgaalya (Save Otters)". The group held their celebration alongside the NGO "Great Gobi's Animals", the WWF Mongolia Program Office, the "Haliuhan" Eco-Club of Khalkhgol Sum Secondary School, the Office of the Governor of Khalkhgol Sum, and the NGO "We Help Them To Survive Mongolia"

During the event, the group achieved the following:



- Visited habitats of the native Eurasian otter and also the eastern moose, a very rare species in Mongolia. During this visit, they learned about otters, their conservation and gave their thoughts on suggestions and initiatives to help the species.
- 28 students from Khalkhgol Sum Secondary School took part in a quiz competition, with B. Otgonsuvd, a grade 7b student, emerging as the winner.
- A video appeal and presentation on Eurasian otters was posted online and reached over 10,000 people
- Students of the 'Otter' Eco Club helped by doing a litter pick along otter habitats.



This was a great event to raise awareness for otters in the area and the importance of looking after the environment!

Nigeria

Michael Salami Olalaken continued his **World Otter Day** events programme by visiting Our Lady of Rosary Nursery and Primary School in Abuja, Nigeria. Around 50 pupils and 12 teachers took part in the day and Michael delivered information on otters and environmental conservation covering several topics such as ecology, diet, where they can be found in northern Nigeria, threats, conflicts and their conservation needs. He also conducted an otter quiz and offered materials such as books, pens and pencils to the school.

At the end of the day, Michael handed over a bin to help encourage the children to dispose of litter in the school better.



Panama

Panama Wildlife Conservation completed a number of activities with students of 'Quebrolandia', including:

- Beach clean-up at 'Plaza Beach', collecting nearly 30kg of litter.
- A workshop focussed on otters
- Film night with a movie on planet earth, its species and a reflection about the challenges we are putting on it.

Panama Wildlife said *"It was great to share with the students and teachers about otters,*



their characteristics, importance and the different species of the World. They now know that the species we have in Panama is the neotropical otter and there are 13 species in the World, plus how to identify them!!!”

Tanzania

IOSF African Community Education Officer, William Mgomo, held a fantastic **World Otter Day** event. William visited students of Bukongo Primary School in Nansio Ukerewe who were excited to learn about otters, their conservation and showing their artistic flair by drawing pictures of otters.

The best picture was Godluck Cossam, who was awarded a book and a pen as an award.



USA

Otter-holic, Bradley Miller, along with school friend Laila, worked together on an otter presentation at his local school. He delivered his well-informed presentation to his school and also managed to inspire some other otter-fanatics in his school. Bradley sent his to IOSF for verification and we gave it a big thumbs up. Bradley also distributed IOSF’s Children’s Education Pack to further improve people’s knowledge of otters in the area.

Furthermore, in Oregon, Elakha Alliance hosted an otter-themed quiz night at Pelican Brewing Company. The **World Otter Day** Trivia consisted of three categories: Otters Around the World, Sea Otter Fans Unite! and Oregon Coast and Elakha. The Oregon Coast Aquarium's entire Marine Mammal Department came out to participate, which was a great team bonding experience.



Vietnam

Save Vietnam’s Wildlife (SVW), who care for rescued pet otters, used the occasion of **World Otter Day** to release some of their rehabilitated otters, something we know is a very special occasion after lots of hard work. They released three adult Asian small-clawed otters that had come to the end of their rehabilitation process and were ready for life in the wild.

SVW used a soft release process to release the otters in an area carefully selected to contain suitable habitat for the otters, as well as keeping them away from any potential conflict that may occur.

Once the doors were opened, the otters were monitored closely to see how they returned to the wild. For the first few days, they would return to the release site for comfort but quickly re-adapted to their wild life and have been seen enjoying their freedom. Camera trap footage has managed to



capture two of the three otters and they have been seen along rivers, but never engaging with humans. The third is the more reclusive, but possibly confident, of the three and has yet to be seen again. The rangers in the area will continue to monitor the otters and we wish them all the best in their return to the wild!

Webinar

The **IOSF World Otter Day** Webinar was once again a massive success with attendees registered from around 25 countries who all enjoyed the talks on a variety of different topics. We want to take this opportunity to thank our speakers once again for their invaluable insight into their work and the different aspects of otter conservation.

The topic of each talk was as follows:

Morning:

Lizzy Humphries, Battersea Park: Social media and its role in the pet trade.

Aurobindo Samal, Eco-earth Crusaders: Otter conservation - a challenge in Odisha's landscape (an Indian aspect).

Aleksey Oleynikov, Otters in Kazakhstan: current status, challenges, and conservation prospects.

Dr Sarah du Plessis, Cardiff University Otter Project: What can we learn using conservation genomics?

Tom Taylor, Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand: The illegal trade in Thailand and the rehab of rescued otters.

Evening:

Louise Wilson, K9 Conservancy: The benefits of working with dogs in otter and wildlife conservation.

Miguel Maldonado, Okapia: Otters and their conservation in Morelos, Mexico

Caroline Leuchtenberger, Projeto Ariranhas: Their work with giant otters in Brazil

Benjamin Bureau, Fondation Lékédi Biodiversité: The presence of the spotted-necked otter in the Lékédi park and through Gabon.

If you missed the webinars, or simply want to rewatch, then please use the following links.

Morning Session - https://youtu.be/1RrypDSrUsA?si=_WiwTbLitMiuCyzM

Evening Session - <https://youtu.be/b2UPAH1LLuw?si=Os4i9FXh-P2zwAr>

Social Media

Social media is such a great tool to help spread the word and you did not disappoint again. By sharing your favourite species, otter pictures and much more, you elevated raising awareness of conservation and our affection of the species.

Thank you to everyone who made **World Otter Day** an otter takeover online by using **#WorldOtterDay!**

Fundraising

Raffle

We had great support for this year's IOSF **World Otter Day** Raffle on our JustGiving page, which ended on 3rd June and raised **over £1400**. The draw was made later that week and announced on our social media... congratulations to the winners!



A big THANKS to everyone who supported and took part, including the prize donators, who all helped to make this event the success it was.

There was also some fundraising happening and we have been thrilled to receive donations from **World Otter Day** events. These include the students at Kendal College Wildlife Rescue Centre, Zoo Montana and Lush Retail Ltd. Thank you to everyone who has been involved and, of course, to those of you who donated to support this special day for otters.


Conclusion

Well, what can we say?! **48** countries celebrating the world of otters, a truly remarkable feat and something we are so happy about and immensely proud of. The benefits of all these events can only go on and having all these individuals and organisations caring about otters and their conservation will provide massive gains in the short and long term.

We want to say a huge thank you to all those involved, those who helped on social media, were involved in amazing events and presented and joined in the webinar.

Who's ready to make World Otter Day 2025 EVEN BIGGER?!





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

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You can find out more information on our website <https://www.otter.org/take-action-corporate?rq=corporate>

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

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

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

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

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

This link <https://www.otter.org/take-action-legacy> will take you to our dedicated web page concerning making a Legacy.

Otter Shop Product of the Month

www.ottershop.co.uk

Visit the Otter Shop and discover a great range of soft toy otters to suit every age... Yes, even you 😊 They also make great gift ideas across a great range of prices. Get yours today!

<https://ottershop.co.uk/search?q=toys>



Image of the Month

©Graham W Hughes

Graham captured this image of a Eurasian otter he watches (and has named 'Ripples') bringing its crab catch to shore. We think you will agree that it is a fascinating photograph.





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




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





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

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UK and EEC Countries:	
Adult:	£24.00 per year
Child:	£13.00 per year
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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](#).

<p>International Otter Survival Fund 7 Black Park Broadford Isle of Skye IV49 9DE Scotland</p> <p>Email: enquiries@otter.org Tel: ++(0)1471 822487</p>	 <p>Charity Number SC003875</p>	<p>Join our IOSF mailing list. Click on this link: http://tinyurl.com/p3lrsmx</p> <p>www.otter.org</p> <p>The International Otter Survival Fund Working to Save the World's Otters</p>
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