

October 2022, Volume 1

UKWOT SUPPORTERS CLUB

BRINGING YOU THE LATEST NEWS FROM



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About Us

The UK Wild Otter Trust is dedicated to promoting a positive understanding of the Otter & Otter conservation in all areas to as many people as possible and to raise the awareness through education, involvement & information.



Contact Us

Main Email: otters@ukwot.org
Fundraising: ukwotfundraising@gmail.com
Website: ukwildottertrust.org

We are also able to advise on any Otters that you find injured but alive, or abandoned. Please call the UK Wild Otter Trust on 01769 540560 or 07866 462820 to seek help and advice on the next steps.



Welcome

to our brand new UK Wild Otter Trust magazine. We are so excited to finally have our magazine ready for you to read after months of hard work and planning. Our aim with this new venture is to share news from our charity, educate about otters and raise some funds for our otter rescue centre. Find out more about our new magazine and our plans for it on page 20.

The UKWOT Team



MEET THE TEAM

Every issue we'll be introducing you to a member of the UK Wild Otter Trust family. This issue we're meeting founder Dave Webb.



What inspired you to start UKWOT? I wanted to make a difference to the issues that I saw between the angling fraternity and otters, as these was persecution of the species with no one really trying to work with them to support. As a result of this, persecution has dropped.

What is your day-to-day role in the charity? Feeding, water changes, paperwork, pampering the volunteers and anything that's not important!

What's your favourite and least favourite job you do at UKWOT? The least favourite is getting cubs in as it's sad that they need help in the first place. Most favourite and satisfying is when we release them fit and healthy. That's a great feeling as it demonstrates that we all have done a good job for the cubs.

Why is it important to you to work with and not against the angling community? If you work with them, support them and listen and more so, understand their frustration at otter predation then the relationship can only get better, and they are far more likely to work towards a legal and humane option to remove problematic otters.

What do you think is the biggest threat to otters in the UK? Humans... We seem unable to accept our nature and wildlife. We build on as much as we can, we destroy habitat, we pollute water, and we should be ashamed of that!

What do you envision for the future of UKWOT? That's a difficult question as we have achieved so much in a reasonably short time... our rehabilitation centre is now the biggest in the UK and probably the biggest specialist centre in the world for the Eurasian otter rehabilitation work.

Whatever we achieve, it can only benefit otters and that's why we do what we do. There is nothing in otter rehab that should allow for egos as its most definitely not about people, its about doing the best we can for an animal that needs help to get back into the wild.

What are you most proud of achieving with UKWOT? Our work with the angling fraternity won us the IFAW conservation in action award in 2017 nominated by anglers... that's a nice feeling as it secures our relationship. Also, everything that we do with the orphaned cubs I am always proud of!

What's your favourite thing about otters? My favourite thing is that there is no such thing as an otter expert. You learn everyday from them. They are mysterious and charismatic creatures and you can learn far more from working with them than reading books!

You're stranded on a desert island and you can take just 3 items, what's coming with you? The volunteers, cider and "A Tangle of Otters" the otter book I was recently given by a very good friend. That book has a very special place in my heart now and I am proud to have been given it.

If you could compare yourself with any animal, what would it be and why? I guess the obvious answer would be an otter because I would like to say that I'm charismatic but I'm not so I would say a Lion as I speak my mind, don't suffer idiots very well at all and am not afraid to growl when I'm irritated!



UK WILD OTTER TRUST

EURASIAN OTTER CUB REHABILITATION

IT COSTS ABOUT **£3000** TO REHABILITATE
A SINGLE OTTER CUB, IN **2021** WE RESCUED **40**
CUBS AND RELEASED **26** BACK INTO THE WILD.
SO FAR IN 2022 WE HAVE RESCUED **18** OTTERS
AND RELEASED **16** WITH THE REMAINING
OTTERS BEING RELEASED NEXT YEAR.



SCAN ME

DONATE VIA PAYPAL

WE RELY TOTALLY ON DONATIONS AND
INCOME FROM OUR SHOP

UKWILDOTTERTRUST.ORG

UKWILDOTTERTRUST.TEEMILL.COM

UKWILDOTTERTRUST.ORG/DONATE

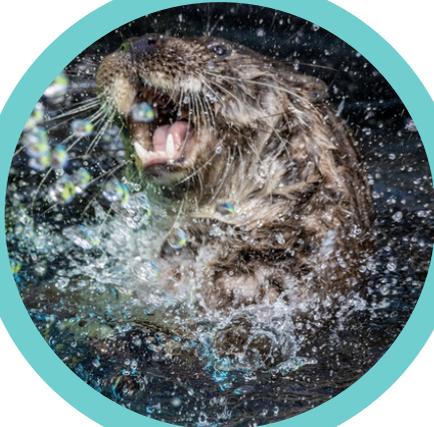


SCAN ME

VISIT OUR SHOP

Ask The Experts

UKWOT Founder Dave Webb is here to answer your questions



Are the river otters in Germany really the same species as the otters in the North Sea around the UK? So they can handle fresh and sea water? Or are they an otter subspecies.

- Michael Hif

Germany otters are the same species as the UK, the Eurasian, *Lutra lutra* and they can happily use sea water. However, they still need access to fresh water for washing the coats and keeping the fur in tip top condition.

Do otters eat insects?

- Robert White

Yes, they are known to eat various prey including insects, fruit etc. Fish is the primary food source, but they adapt well as a species.



Is there any post release monitoring that takes place for individuals following rehab?

- Keira Washtell

Yes, all releases are post monitored with trail cameras and weekly visits to the site. This ensures that they are exploring, feeding, and living in the wild correctly.



How did you become a Eurasian otter specialist?

- Ian Chewie Gardiner

I have worked and studied with otters for many many years so have always had a keen interest in the species. I learnt much from simply watching them and working with them especially in the rehabilitation centre we run.



What does the future look like for them? Especially in the UK.

- Ian Chewie Gardiner

My personal view is that they are doing well ... many surveys will dispute this however, we should not be complacent. Certain areas in the UK have been and still are, strongholds for this mammal.

What is their lifespan, and do they vary in different locations, and in captivity etc.?

- Jo Bill

In the wild, they can live between 5 & 7 years .. I guess it will depend on its territory and how busy it is. In captivity they can live beyond 15 years with the oldest to date reaching 19 yrs of age.



NEWS FROM THE RESCUE CENTRE

SUCCESSFUL OTTER PAIRINGS

One key thing we do to aid otter cub rehabilitation is create pairs. Otters may be solitary in the wild, but a partner in rehabilitation gives the young cubs someone to learn with, play with and eventually be released with. Recently we have successfully paired Teilo and Fi. The pairing went very well and the two are now happy in each others company.



BETHANIE'S FUNDRAISING

One of our Rummors Placement Scheme participants (see pages 14 & 15), Bethanie Hackett has been going above and beyond for our charity. In August she organised and hosted a quiz night in aid of UKWOT. A great night was had by all and Bethanie managed to raise an amazing £1,300! Check out page 10 for an interview with Bethanie about her dissertation.

Photo credit: @justdavepictures on Instagram



THUNDER AND LIGHTNING



On the 8th August founder Dave Webb and Roger Hulks made a 528 mile round trip to Essex, to collect two little otter cubs. After a day of horrific weather they finally made it back to Devon at 8.30pm. Given the crazy weather the two little cubs have been called Thunder and Lightning. Luckily the two little cubs seem to be in good health.

We estimate them to be around 8-14 weeks old. One is definitely female and the other is currently a mystery. We will be microchipping them in the next couple of days, when we should be able to get a definite sex for the other. You can adopt Thunder and Lightning to help with their rehabilitation and release back into the wild. Send us an email via ukwotfundraising@gmail.com for more information.

WILD AGAIN!



Many otters tell us when it's time to be released back into the wild, which is just what Paloma did earlier this year. She kept trying to escape from her rehabilitation pen, which was a key sign she was ready to be wild once again. So that is what she now is... wild again, in a specially selected wild location perfect for sustaining a wild otter.

We first met Paloma in March 2022, when she walked across a busy road and took refuge in Paloma Lily flower shop in Wilton. Paloma had an injury on her face, which luckily reacted well to antibiotics.

A talented artist called Bridget MacKeith did an amazing drawing of Paloma which Bridget kindly let us use on some merchandise. There are still Paloma items available on our TeeMill shop - ukwildottertrust.teemill.com You can find Bridget on social media using [@bridgetmackeith](https://www.instagram.com/bridgetmackeith)

OTTER RESEARCH

Bethanie Hackett has been carrying out research for her dissertation at our rehabilitation centre. Let's find out more about her work.

Who are you? I'm a 3rd year zoology student, who was looking to gain experience in an animal related field. I was also on the lookout for ideas, as I was approaching my third year in university, we were told we needed to start thinking about a dissertation question. I wanted to collect data that would actually mean something and be important, rather than doing something to just get me through my degree that would get looked at once and never again.

Why UKWOT? Well in all honestly, Dave Webb was one of the only people that actually got back to me. I was emailing and calling around different animal organisations and wasn't really getting much response. When Dave got back to me, I then researched more into UKWOT and the amazing things that they do. I then replied very quickly to Dave to express how much I would love to volunteer at UKWOT. Dave has been so incredible and really open, at the start when I was coming up with dissertation ideas, I must have asked Dave about 10 different ideas, and he was happy for me to do all of them.

What is your dissertation about? My dissertation question is, Does enrichment affect weight gain and body mass index in rehabilitated otters for release. It's a bit of a mouthful but essentially is just asking whether otters that have to engage more with their food gain weight any faster than those who receive their food normally. So once a week I create an enrichment task such as cored out oranges and fill that with fish skin and give it to the otters. Whilst also weighing them weekly to monitor any weight changes.

Why is weight so important? Some research on other otter species have shown that otters with a higher body mass were four times more likely to survive translocation (change in location). Weight is the last thing Dave checks before a release, if they've lost or aren't a healthy weight then they won't be released. Just recently an otter had lost a small amount of weight over a period of time and her release was delayed until that weight went back up.

Why is enrichment so important? It benefits the animal's welfare majorly. The otters already have really great environmental enrichment as the enclosures are allowed to grow naturally, so there's lots of different plants and grass which an otter would interact with in their normal environment as well as lots of hides for the otter. But food enrichment is always great to encourage natural foraging behaviours. So, although an otter is never going to encounter an orange in the wild, it has to work for its food. This is encouraging those natural behaviours; food isn't just going to be handed to them in the wild so by making them work for their food before being released it hopefully makes the transition from the rehabilitation centre to the wild easier.

What are you taking away from UKWOT? How to communicate with people who don't have any knowledge of otters or have a different view of them. I have a great lecturer in university who always tells us that if we want people to be on our side and understand our thinking, then we can't get angry at them. Which I've seen in practice here, Dave having to keep level headed communicating calmly with people or groups because getting angry will only mean an otter will be harmed in doing so. It would be so easy to just get angry and frustrated at them for not thinking about the otters in the way that we do, but this will get us nowhere. By angering them you're only severing any chance of them coming round to your ideas and thinking. But overall, it's been one of the greatest experiences of my life and I'm not looking forward to going back to university and leaving UKWOT behind. Although I will volunteer and help out whenever I can.

Photo credit: @justdavepictures on Instagram



1ST ANNIVERSARY OF OUR REHABILITATION CENTRE



On the 1st of September 2021 we moved the first otters into our brand new rehabilitation centre in North Devon, one year on and we can finally say that our centre is complete! This last year has been a busy one and we couldn't have done it without the hundreds of hours our dedicated volunteers have put in! Our centre now has 19 enclosures, including enclosures for pairing cubs together and enclosures for our resident otters that cannot be released back into the wild. We also have a specially designed cub hospital. Photos of the centre taken by Dave Webb and otter photos taken by Nigel Childs.



VOLUNTEER CENTRAL

One of our dedicated volunteers David Thomas answers questions about volunteering at our rehabilitation centre.

What Inspired you to join the UKWOT? I have been volunteering for most of my adult life, working with a myriad of organisations and charities all within environmental conservation. Ranging from the Canal and Rivers Trust to Council Voluntary groups to large wildlife parks and so forth. So, when there was chance to work on the forefront of a specialist species conservation charity I jumped at the opportunity.

My favourite and least favourite job? My favourite job is using my camera gear to photograph and film aspects of an Otter's rehab, its a unique filming perspective with a fresh set of challenges. This also includes volunteers and fundraising days. I am grateful for the freedom for which I have been given with this.

My least favourite job is digging any large (enclosure poles etc.) holes in the ground on site, due to the stony soil and historical use of the site means there are large stones and thick bits of broken concrete all over making any digging very energy consuming and slow (all volunteers will attest to this).

What are you most proud of working with UKWOT? When I started at the new site it was just an empty field and I have been getting stuck in painting building, digging, fencing in the rain or shine. To be able help to get the site functional to then it becoming a growing spearhead for the European Otter rehabilitation and not just nationally too!

Favourite things about being volunteer at UKWOT? I have an academic conservation background specifically in native species so to be able help an incredible species such as the Otter is genuinely wonderful opportunity, which I consider great experience in my pursuit of a career in field of native species conservation. My second favourite things is the food at lunchtime specifically the trifle that Kath makes 10/10 every time just what you need after spending an umpteen amount of time digging out large lumps of concrete.



We have an amazing family of volunteers, from those that work tirelessly at our rehabilitation centre to those working remotely to raise important funds for our charity. We are always in need of new volunteers in different parts of our charity, if you want to get involved send us an email on otters@ukwot.org



Summer to winter, it's all water off an otter's back inside this super-dry range!

Forget where the Rain in Spain stays; with Adventure's deliciously dry kids' waterproof jackets, dungarees, puddle suits and trousers, every drop is banished to the outside! Tried and tested wet-weather winners, we've topped the Bluesign® approved Ottertext® 15000 waterproof and windproof outer shell with a technical water-repellent (C6) finish, so rain 'beads' and runs off, instead of soaking into the weave.

Cleverly-designed mesh lining ensures no clamminess, either! The smooth Polyamide lining slips on easily over light summer clothes or fleecy thermals (or wriggly otter cubs), offering year round flexibility and protection. And because it's breathable, there's no clamminess with these tried and tested wet weather winners, just delicious dryness for wet day fun!

Windproof, breathable and waterproof collection of Children's Jackets, Trousers, Splashsuits and Dungarees. Clever details include detachable peaked hood, taped seams and water repellent zips. Smooth Polyamide lining means no bulk, so layer them up over chunky winter knits or base layers, or slip them on to combat summer showers; all year round, the Adventure range has got you covered!

spottyotter.co.uk/collections/adventure

When you purchase from Spotty Otter's Adventure range, you'll adopt one of 6 adorable otters, you'll get a certificate and information sheet as well as a picture of your Otter plus 5% of all Adventure sales will go straight to UKWOT.



Your Wild Otter Encounters

Thank you to everyone who submitted their wild otter stories and photos.

Sarah Solfley

My first sighting of an otter was in a traffic jam. The kind you only get on a single track Hebridean road. "Otter" "otter" I yelled as I spotted one emerging from the Loch with its catch. My companion was happy to stop but the queue of cars following us had other ideas. By the time we found a place to turn around and head back the otter was long gone.

Since that day I have had many wonderful sightings. I live in the countryside but have never seen an otter on home territory. Instead each moment observing these amazing creatures has been on the coastal shores of the inner and outer Hebrides.

Sows and cubs, dog otters, sleeping in the sun, preening their thick fur, fishing for all number of delicacies - crab, octopus, spiny fish and most memorable of all at Otternish, yes Otternish on North Uist a raft of four otters fishing and playing together. Spotted from the road we crept a little closer down the field beside the Loch and spent one of the happiest hours and a half of my life watching the family go about their day oblivious to the joy they were giving to the two humans watching from above.

Head to Otternish!

Thank you Sarah for sending us these amazing photos.



Chris Hicks



There are defining moments in life where you find your happy place, the place that gives you a feeling like no other you may have experienced in life. Expectation and anticipation of what you might see or witness, each time you have a new encounter that was different from the last, you once again find all you thought you knew stood for nothing yet it still brings an adrenaline rush like no other, it still gives you that feel good moment that nothing else compares to. Each time you stand and watch in amazement as this inquisitive, shy yet endearing little animal goes about its busy day to day life with stealth and finesse, at that moment you realise once again you are smiling to yourself for no apparent reason other than total content and knowing how lucky you are to have these intimate moments with a friend you'll never really know whether it be 30 seconds or 30 minutes, for me that's *lutra lutra* the Eurasian Otter. Unpredictable, unreliable but also unmistakable bundle of pure delight, I have watched a family blossom for the last 10 months with a good friend who took the risk and the time to introduce me to this wonderful world (you know who you are), we have debated, guessed, disagreed, agreed and still we know very little about these fantastic beasts and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Thank you Chris for sending us the amazing photo.

Your Wild Otter Encounters

Thank you to everyone who submitted their wild otter stories and photos.

Dave Penton



On my way home from work one Friday afternoon I decided to look at the fish from the bridge which is something I'd generally do if coming home this way. This day was to change my life. As I got to the centre of the bridge the heavens opened. Just as I was about to make a run back to the van an otter launched itself into the river from the island and swam to directly below me where it fished for the next 45 minutes. Talk about being in the right place at the right time, 30 seconds later I wouldn't have seen it. This event changed everything, and has shaped my life for the next two years. The following morning, I went back to the bridge at 4.30 am, but nothing, so I decided to go upstream about a mile as it was still very early and only just getting light. As I started walking this stretch I came across the same otter, and again it fished for nearly an hour directly in front of me. The following day I went back and saw a female otter, followed about 50 metres behind by the the same dog otter, over the next few months this scenario was a regular occurrence until the August when they finally got together in one of the most amazing scenes that I don't think I will ever experience again. At first I thought they were fighting, the noise and thrashing about in the water looked scary, they then came over to my bank and proceeded to get out next to me and then run down the bank. This scene although not as violent was repeated a few days later but on this occasion, it was a bit gentler and they swam along rolling in the water before getting out and going into the rushes where I think the deed was done judging by the noise and commotion. The dog otter was rarely seen after this, but in the following January the mum had one cub, albeit, I didn't get to see them until the cub was around 6 months old.

Thank you Dave for sending us these amazing photos.

Jeff Chard

Having heard Iolo Williams on television discuss the "return of the Eurasian Otter" I set out one freezing morning in January 2011, with no idea what to look for, hoping to spot my first. After four hours exploring local waterways, I turned to head for home and heard a splash midstream. I was stunned to see an otter hunting in shallow water. I moved away from the bank, sat on a log in front of some scrub and watched quietly for twenty minutes or so, as it went about its business. It was fascinating to watch the otter eat its prey as it continued to swim against the current and eventually it swam to the far bank, crept out, groomed a little and then curled up under the only ray of sunlight falling through the trees above and fell asleep, facing me. With a tear or two trickling down my cheeks, it was one of the most emotional and spiritual moments of my life. I was hooked on otters from that moment. Over the 11 years since, I've had 103 individual sightings, presented over a hundred talks/events and still, each sighting is as thrilling as the first. Thank you Jeff for sending us the amazing photo.



RUMMERS PLACEMENT SCHEME

This scheme was designed to provide an important insight to the work of orphaned otter cub rehabilitation which is a very specialist area.

To apply for a placement or to request more information send us an email on otters@ukwot.org attached your CV and a cover letter detailing why you should be chosen to join us, along with the dates you are available.

We launched our Rummers Placement Scheme in April this year. We designed the scheme with the aim of providing those individuals that are interested in furthering their knowledge and experience with rehabilitating otters, a way to gain hands on experience from specialists.

These placements are aimed at wildlife conservation students veterinary students and individuals that are interested in joining the conservation sector.

At the end of the placement, the participants take part in practical and written assessments , and receive a certificate of completion.

The duties that participants will have the chance to take part include;

- weighing otters
- record keeping
- cleaning out enclosures
- enclosure maintenance
- pond emptying and refilling
- feeding otters
- providing medication where required



Our Rummers Placement Scheme was named after two important people within the UKWOT family, Special Ambassadors Amy Rummer and the late Steve Rummer.

RUMMERS PLACEMENT SCHEME ALUMNI

Since its launch we've had many amazing people take part in our Rummers Placement Scheme, below we hear about the experience from Louise and Bethanie.

Bethanie Hackett

The Rummers placement scheme is one of the best things I've done. As soon as I arrived it was hands on and practical, which is exactly the sort of experience I wanted to gain. Dave the founder of UKWOT immediately starts to share all his wisdom and knowledge of otters. Since starting the Rummers placement scheme, I have been able to go on otter releases, give enrichment and help aid towards their rehabilitation. It's a really rewarding experience knowing you've helped an otter get one step closer to release. I would highly recommend the Rummer placement scheme to any student wanting to broaden their horizons whether it's their field of study or not.



Louise

During my time at UKWOT, I had the pleasure to watch and learn so much about otters and conservation. Those adorable animals are a wonder to observe and care for. I've had the chance to help with feeding, care and one amazing release! Dave and his wife have been absolutely lovely, taking time to teach me and show me around different places such as the otter and butterfly sanctuary. I've absolutely loved my time there and can't wait to come back!"

OTTER NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

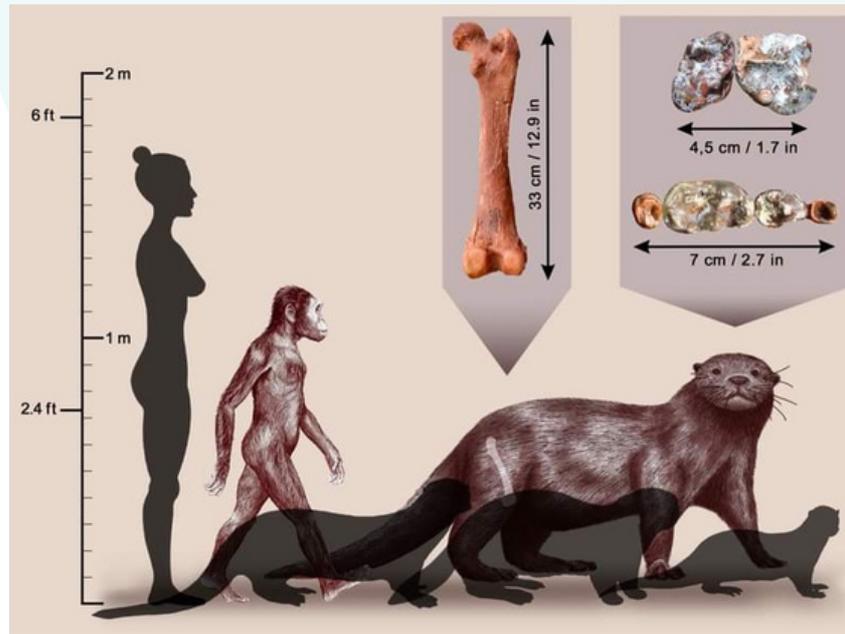
LION SIZED OTTER

Scientists have identified a new species of long-extinct otter in Ethiopia that was the size of a modern lion. Weighing an estimated 200 kilograms, it is the largest otter ever described; it would have lived alongside our own ancestors 3.5 million to 2.5 million years ago.

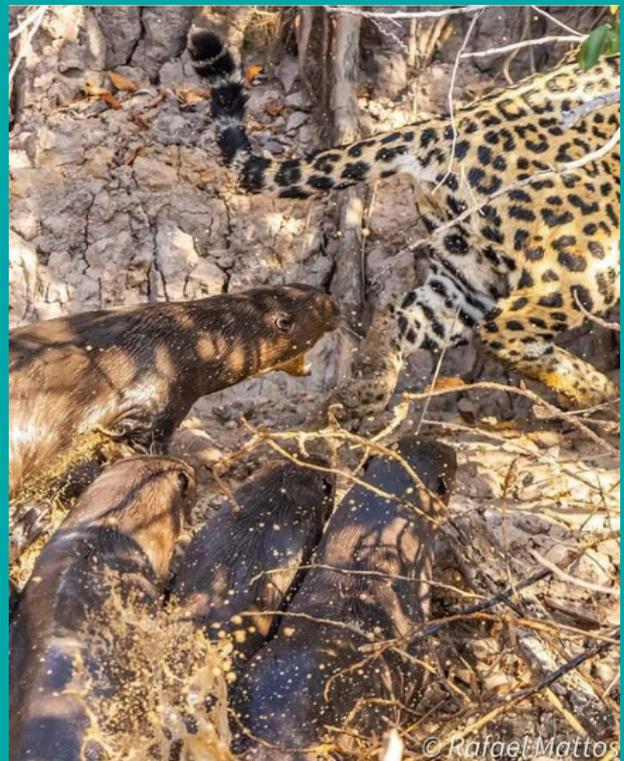
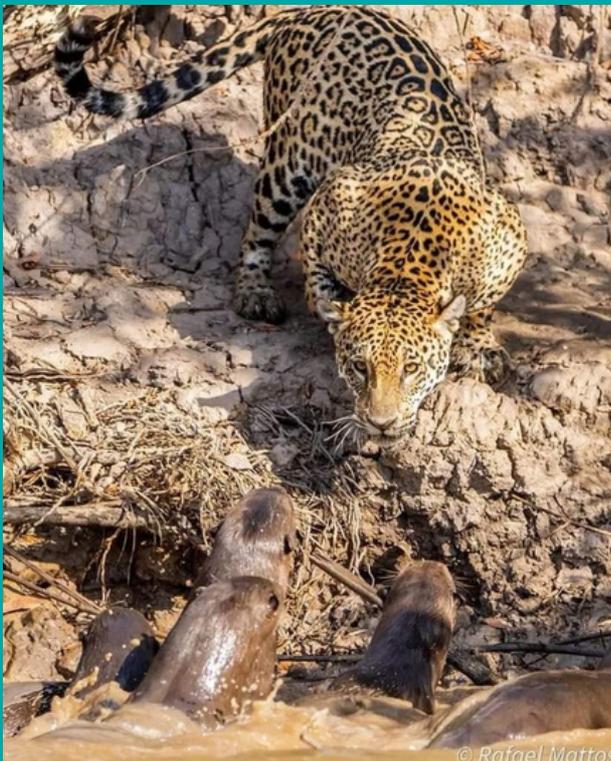
“The peculiar thing, in addition to its massive size, is that isotopes in its teeth suggest it was not aquatic or semi-aquatic, like all modern otters,” said study co-author Kevin Uno. “We found it had a diet of terrestrial animals, also differing from modern otters.”

Read more:

https://news.climate.columbia.edu/2022/09/06/in-ethiopia-a-fossil-otter-the-size-of-a-lion/?fbclid=IwAR0aRltiiZs3ERn8d_QjOPo2SrEaGJTMFLtrfOhwxXGVwgbZHs9pWMEuZjc



Reconstruction of the otter *Enhyriodon omoensis* (in background), compared with three current species, left to right: the South American giant otter; the sea otter; and an African otter. *E. omoensis* occupied Ethiopia's Lower Omo Valley at the same time as human ancestors known as Australopithecines (shown here for size comparison along with a modern human). The otter's femur and dental remains are shown in insets. (© Sabine Riffaut, Camille Grohé / Palevoprim / CNRS – Université de Poitiers)



Giant otters vs Jaguar! These incredible photos show a family of giant otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) mobbing a jaguar which was showing an interest in the otters from the river bank. In the end, the otters won out as the jaguar made a hasty retreat back into the rainforest.

Photos by Rafael Carvalho de Mattos, taken in Mato Grosso, Brasil.

OTTERLY AMAZING PHOTOS

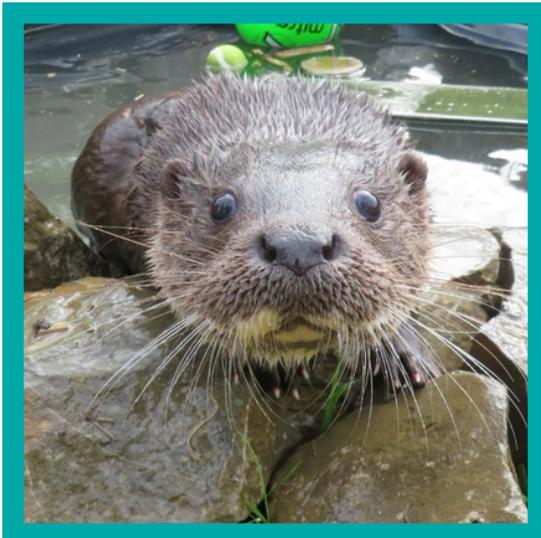
Every issue we're going to be showcasing some of the amazing photos you have taken of otters! This first issue contains so amazing photos our volunteers have taken at our rehabilitation centre. For each issue we'll be asking YOU to for your amazing otter photos to feature here!



Dave Webb



Dave Webb



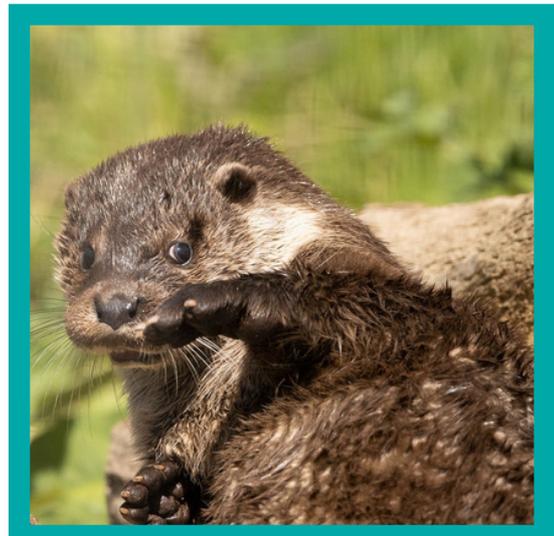
Summer Hales @summermacaca



Summer Hales @summermacaca



David Thomas @justdavepictures



Nigel Childs @nimages15

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR UKWOT SUPPORTERS CLUB MAGAZINE AND RECEIVE 4 ISSUES A YEAR!

One of our main aims is to educate about otters and their conservation, so we're thrilled to finally have this new magazine finished. This magazine is also a way of raising some much needed funds for our charity.

We are very happy to bring you this first issue of our UKWOT Supporters Club magazine for free. We would love to hear what you would like to see from our magazine in future issues. We are going to be publishing a new issue every 4 months. A subscription will cost £12 yearly and will be sent out via email. This magazine is perfect for all otter lovers and would also make a great gift! To subscribe send us an email to ukwotfundraising@gmail.com

In order for our magazine to be worth while we will only be continuing with it if we receive more than 10 subscriptions to begin with. If you subscribe and we cannot continue you will be refunded.



SUPPORT US

WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR PEOPLE TO FUNDRAISE FOR US! FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION BY JOINING OUR FUNDRAISING FACEBOOK GROUP 'FRIENDS OF UK WILD OTTER TRUST' OR BY EMAILING US ON [UKWOTFUNDRAISING@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ukwotfundraising@gmail.com) TO GET INVOLVED!

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