

The River Otter



Ecology Project

Dear River Otter Supporters:

Bay Area river otters are unexpected and inspiring come-back kids. As waterways have been restored and protections against trapping secured in past decades, river otters have quietly and determinedly returned to our neighborhoods and parks. That's cause for celebration! It reminds us that given incremental improvements in habitat, nature will come back more quickly than we would have imagined!

The river otter is a sentinel species requiring clean water, lushly forested streams and marshes, and healthy fish populations to survive. They are also mighty fine ambassadors, inspiring people to appreciate and protect their local watersheds. And saving and protecting otters ultimately means saving watersheds for a whole cascade of biodiversity, including ourselves.



When we began the [River Otter Ecology Project](#) back in February, we suspected there were river otters all over the Bay Area. Finding them almost completely undocumented, and that most people were unaware of their presence, we decided to act! Without detailed information mapped about otter populations, their levels, distribution and habitat preferences they could easily be impacted by disease outbreaks, oil spills or development projects and no-one would ever know.

We launched our [Otter Spotter](#) program and citizen-scientists immediately began reporting in. As of today, we've recorded 200+ otter sightings in the Bay Area including San Francisco's "Sutro Sam," the only river otter documented in San Francisco in decades! **See our [online map](#). We're putting river otters back on the Bay Area's ecological map thanks to you - our members and Otter Spotters!**

We've achieved a tremendous amount in just a bit over 9 months, on a very tiny budget, including:

- Launched our website and and Facebook page, to share our findings with the Bay Area community,
- Officially partnered with the National Park Service at Point Reyes National Seashore and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area to study and map river otters across a 200-sq.mi. area of national park in the North Bay,
- Elected a hard-working Board of Directors, recruited a superb team to our Scientific Advisory Board, and successfully established our organization as a 501c3.
- Developed a rockin' team of 16 dedicated field research volunteers who lead weekly otter monitoring efforts spanning habitats from Sutro Bath, Rodeo Lagoon, Tennessee Valley, Muir Beach and Muir Woods, Bolinas Lagoon, Tomales Bay, Drakes Estero, Abbotts Lagoon and Kehoe Beach,
- Deployed 20 Otter Cams at important habitat sites that document otters 24/7.
- Launched our educational booth at the famous Beaver Festival in Martinez and gave otter presentations for the SF Naturalists Society, Davis' California Naturalist Training Course, the Salmon Protection and Watershed Network and Laguna de Santa Rosa,
- Received our first grants from the River Otter Alliance and the Rose Foundation, which helped fund Otter Cams,
- Our work was featured on ABC news ([ABC News: Researchers Studying Growing Bay Area River Otter Population](#)), in the San Francisco Chronicle ([River Otters Rebounding](#) by Carolyn Jones), Sacramento Bee ([Federal Agency Kills 7,800 Animals by Mistake in Steel Body-Grip Traps](#) by Tom Knudsen) Bay Nature Magazine (*Ear to the Ground* by Aleta George), and the SF Estuary News (by Joe Eaton).



Now that our first year is almost complete, we are looking ahead to the many exciting challenges in 2013. We hope to begin our DNA analysis and diet analyses, which will allow us to make the first population estimate and habitat assessment for North Bay river otters, as well as continue our work with our remote Otter Cams, volunteer training and citizen science, and education and outreach on all things otter!

Will you join us in supporting the next phase of The River Otter Ecology Project? Your end-of-year donation to the project will send us into 2013 with a huge push of support from the community of well-wishers who make this project as successful as it is. That's you, Otterroos!

Very happy holidays from:

Co-founders: **Paola and Megan,**

Board Members: **Terence and Sharon,**

Field Crew: **Aviva, Ginny, Andrea, Hilary, Collin, Pete, Dave, Scott, Jouko, Robert, Susan and Mike**

PS: To donate by Credit Card or Paypal, please click [HERE](#).

**To donate by check, please mail to River Otter Ecology Project,
PO Box 103, Forest Knolls, CA 94933**

