

Wild at Heart

YEAR END NEWSLETTER 2020

A Quick Look Back, Ready to Leap Forward

In many ways, 2020 was the year of nature. As we all remained in various stages of shut down, many recognized anew the healing power of being outdoors. More people than ever flocked to our natural areas, reflected in a near-doubling of our Otter Spotter sightings reports during 2020. Of course, increased human use of outdoor spaces brings its own problems, and we are glad to be here to be part of the solution. We were able to navigate a bumpy year successfully, and are now invigorated by new ideas and plans that arose from the sudden changes brought by the pandemic.

We regroup!

By the end of March, our plans were no longer in effect. To say our finances took a hit would be an understatement. However, we took heart from the otters' resilience, and like them, became opportunistic and aggressive...not as predators, but in seeking new ways to make good things happen in our shared watersheds.

We conducted a deep dive into our past, present and future. We wanted to enter what looked to be a choppy new reality with a robust understanding of our capabilities, and get to work on areas in need of restoration. We came up with key themes and strategies to meet the challenges ahead.

As always, we look to our communities of people, nature, and ideas to support our continuing work. We're going strong, and excited to move forward into 2021.

Best regards,



Megan Isadore
Co-founder and Executive Director



KEY THEMES AND STRATEGIES

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion!

Effective conservation includes everyone. We are strengthening our close ties to community through commitment to diversity and equity in our program goals, among our volunteers, and on our Board.

RIGHT: Children recognize that otters are a lot of fun! We use the fun part to help explain how to help ensure that otters always have a safe home among us.



ABOVE: Our mostly water contest sent ripples throughout the arts community! Photo by Carlos Porrata

Exploration!

Finding and nurturing connections to new neighborhoods helps us understand how we can best provide hands-on environmental education with an emphasis on local conservation.

Collaboration!

Collaborating broadly brings new ideas, experience, and inspiration. It allows us to increase our ability to deliver community science, research, and education.

Expansion!

Moving toward regional conservation goals in partnership with very local neighborhoods is key to conservation in urban areas. The otters lead the way!

BELOW: Otter Pups wait for mom to bring breakfast in Modesto. Photo by Matthew Gibson



CONNECTING TO MEET OUR CHALLENGES

We offered popular Zoom presentations both on our own and in partnership, reaching more than a thousand people with news about conservation, otter natural history, and what it's like to work in the field.

We also held our Mostly Water Art, Photography, and Poetry Splash! awards ceremony on Zoom. Please read all about it below!



One of our younger fans, Oscar, who not only had a Facebook fundraiser for us for his birthday, but has now asked Santa for donations to us for Christmas. What a great otter supporter!



ABOVE: Local wildlife had to contend with fire, smoke, and drought conditions. Many watercourses dried early this year, necessitating moves to wetter areas. Photo by Brenden Collett-Grether

RIGHT: Field technician Brenden Collett-Grether camera checking. Our monitoring was severely curtailed this year due to the pandemic and fires.

We joined with local nonprofits to form the West Marin Together Equity Group, supporting our coalition of 43 groups in diversity, equity, and inclusion work. Our [first newsletter](#) came out this month.

We bolstered our partnerships by joining with local, regional, and national groups to further conservation goals through community-based science and education.

Our Mostly Water Splash Online Art Contest was a great success, even as the pandemic diluted our artists' time and attention. We plan to do it all over again during 2021.



MOSTLY WATER CONTEST, TRULY INSPIRING!

“If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water.” – Loren Eiseley

We were inspired by the thoughtful, beautiful, heart-felt entries we received to our first Mostly Water Art, Poetry, and Photography Contest. It kept us going through the really tough days of the pandemic and wildfires here in Northern California. Our Zoom awards presentation featured super videos made by our award winners, and fascinating commentary and discussion by our judges.

If you haven't seen them, please take a look at [all the entries](#), the [winning entries](#) with videos from the artists, and the entire [awards ceremony](#). Our [judges](#) made it fun, rewarding and so interesting!

Thank you to our [sponsors](#), whose participation makes our work possible and connects us more closely to the communities we serve.



OTTERS

Two little otters swimming all around,
When they sneak up on their prey,
They don't make a sound.

They chase their prey into a shallow inlet,
Then the prey is caught just like when in a net.
Those otters have now caught their prey!
And now we say, "Good job! Hooray!"



A SAMPLING OF THE CONTEST
ENTRIES (clockwise)

TOP LEFT:
Green Heron by Floy Zittin

TOP RIGHT:
Alone in the Sea by Ophelia Ke

BOTTOM RIGHT:
Seascape by Piper Hartman

BOTTOM LEFT:
Master Engineer by Karen James

CENTER LEFT:
Otters by Lucas Peisert

MOSTLY WATER CONTEST ENTRANTS VOICE THEIR SUPPORT

"Our natural world is what is most important to defend, take care of, and enjoy! Be graceful and loving and kind. "

*Sweetbryar Ludwig
Contestant,
Adult Professional Art*

"When John Muir Laws said what he said about my painting it made me cry. I respect him so much and to receive that kind of praise from him was overwhelming. Being isolated for so long it brought so much light into my day. Thank you for giving me a vehicle to show my art."

*Patricia Adams
First Place Tie,
Adult Professional Art*

"I think the work you are doing is wonderful. I hope you will share this news with Arisa White (contest Poetry Judge), because she is the main reason I entered the contest. I admire her work so much and was excited to have a chance for her to read some of my poems. This is just the type of positive thing that encourages me at the end of this incredibly difficult year. "

*Yeva Johnson
First Place,
Amateur Poetry*

"My photography grew out of my passion for wildlife and a desire to share the magic of intimate moments with wild animals and wild places."

*Sarah Killingsworth
Contestant,
Adult Professional Photography*

"We take a lot of things for granted, water being one of them. Water seeps through our fingers as we try to capture it, we can't hold onto it forever. Water is a scarce resource and we must conserve and preserve it. So, let's take care of this precious resource."

*Ava Li
First Place,
Youth Art*

"Water is for everyone. It is fun to play in. I like to drink water. "

*Isla, age 6
Contestant,
Children's Art*

A DAY OF PREPARATION AT ABBOTT'S LAGOON

Last year's intern and current volunteer Erin Barto and Director Megan Isadore put in some rehearsal time to make a few short videos to support PK – 5th grade students and teachers in their environmental education. The curriculum being formed through our Marin Office of Education partnership is based on discovering more about the world and scientific method through asking questions about otters. Erin and Megan headed out to Abbott's Lagoon to prepare to show students how to Spot an Otter, how to Make a Track Cast, and how to Set Up a Trail Camera. What fun! Stay tuned for the resulting videos.



Ecotones, or transition zones between biological communities, can provide rich hunting. Otters hunt well in ocean, lagoon, pond, or river.



We were saddened to find a fishing lure with hook left by the lagoon. Lures left behind can injure wildlife.



Erin Barto mixes the plaster to make a cast of an otter print. Understanding animal prints is a great way to discover much about wild neighborhoods.

The River Otter Ecology Project
PO Box 103, Forest Knolls, California 94933
415-342-7956
www.riverottterecology.org
[Facebook](#)

Join us by supporting our work to protect otters and our shared watersheds.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

Anonymous, In honor of Yeva Johnson	Elizabeth Eells	Brian Kirven	Theodore Schulze
Anonymous	June Eidson	Kermit Kubitz	Kathryn Shack
Angelina Allaback	Tom Feldstein	Barbara Lancaster	Brian Smith
Jean Amos	Debbie Fier	Eric Landes	Beverly Smrha
Joanne Anderson	Ginny Fifield	Ron Landskroner	Wendy Sparks and Jeff Torquemada
Judith Apfel	Anne-Lise Fink	F Ronald Laupheimer	Daniel Spears
Robert Aston	Dixie Finley	Matthew Leonard	Todd Spina
Elaine Baden	Moe Flannery	Julie Litwin	Alice Stauffer
Sharon Barnett	Gary Fleener	Jeff Loomans	Serenoa Steiner
Susan Bartholome	Ashby Foltz	Pam LoPinto	Margaret Szczepaniak
Pete Barto	Irene Fuller	Bruce Lowry	Junko Takahashi
DeRoyce Bell	Anna Gazo	Arthur Manzi	Doni Tamblyn
Karen Berger	Janice Gendreau	Elaine Mason	Steve Tennis
Jessica Berman	Rebecca Gibson	Julie McDade-Whyte	Lisa Thompson
Barbara Bessey	Mary Gleim	Lee McEachern	Linda Tiffany
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Lance Carnes	Marie Grenet	Carrie Miller	Ray Wack
Colin Carroll	Judy Grether	Catherine Milliken	Mary Wade
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Anne Chambers	Jeff Grether	Christina Milne	David Watts
Ignacio Chapela	Holly Groves	Katherine and Bridger Mitchell	David Weinsoff
Karin and Steve Chase	Candace Hale	Karen Moise	Andrea Willey
Sang Chung	Julie Hanft	Stephen Monroe	Patricia Williams
Dennis Clark	Scott Harrington	Laura Morgan	Carol Wing
Natalie Clark	Stephen Harrington	Peter Nelson	Kristin Womack
Christine Codding	Christine Hayamizu	Chris Niewiarowski	Spencer Wright
Dede Collett	Garry Hayes	Stacy Nii-Eastly	Annabel Zammit
Sheila Conway	Eva Heninwolf	Vickie Nolden	Sage Zimmerman
Kathy Coultrup	Ceci Herrmann	Megan Oleson	Lewis Zuelow
Ann Cross	Charlotte Hill	Sharon Osberg	
Elaine de Man	Denise Hill	Carol Owens	
John Deamer	Ryan Hillis	John Palmer	
George Dean	Gary Holm	Theo Pappas In honor of Stephan Meyer	
Susan Delmanowski	Bill Holt	Tara Pavis	
Maria Denzler	Anne Iocco	Mary Perez	
Barry and Barbara Deutsch	Janet and Tony Isadore-Barreca	Pam Perry	
Wendy Doherty and Steven Pearson	Fred Jacobs	Dale Perry	
Annie and Paul Dolan-Niles	Karen James	Alexander Plott	
John Dolinsek	Kathleen Janz	Carlos Porrata	
Barbara Dornan	Dianne Jenett	Kathy Pratt	
Ken Drexler	Philip Johns	Joseph Queirolo	
Meredith Duke	Sue Johnson	Gina Rogers	
Peggysue Dunn	Audra Kasdorf	Maggie Rufo	
Philip Eager	Janice Kattke	Marguerite Ryan	
Ashley Eagle-Gibbs	Julie Kaye	Nan Sabino	
Amanda Eckenfelder	Lisa Kearney	Betsy Sanville	
	Mary Keydash	Celeste Scanlon	
	MaryEllen King	Fredrick Schlexer	
		Todd Schopp	

NEW FOR 2020

This year, taxpayers who do not itemize can deduct up to \$300 (\$600 for married couples filing jointly) in charitable giving reducing your taxable income by that amount for tax year 2020.

In 2020, taxpayers can deduct up to 100% of their AGI for charitable cash contributions, compared to the normal 60% maximum.

Corporations can deduct up to 25% of taxable income for charitable contributions in tax year 2020.

Please consult with your own legal or tax counsel prior to making a gift.

Ring of Bright Water Circle

Anthony Brewer
Mia Monroe and Stephan Meyer
Heidi and Charles Triay

IN APPRECIATION

Special Thanks

Aviva Rossi
Brenden Collett-Grether
Elena Iaffa
Frank Cipriano
Jacqueline Jones
Jenny Stock
Karen James
Lori Wynn
Mia Monroe
Peter Barto
Robert DeLeo
Sarah Allen
Sharon Barnett
Stacy Gardner
Tom Antonaccio
Jouko van der Kruijssen
Arisa White
John Muir Laws
Suzi Eszterhas

Facebook Fundraisers

Aviva Rossi
Brett Bretzman
Ericka Lynn Schmidt
French Huet
Jessica James
Jouko van der Kruijssen
Katie Ballinger
Leo Perez
Marie-Angeline Dantony
Michael Brown
Oscar Gibson
Pamela Fleming
Patrice Ribando
Raven Cruz
Richard Chiolero
Soni Bear
Sophie Attack

Volunteers

Robert Aston
Katharine Ballinger
Peter Barto
Erin Barto
Terence Carroll
Brenden Collett-Grether
Robert De Leo
Barry Deutsch
Wendy Doherty
Holly Groves
Megan Isadore
Karen James
Nancy Jean
Jacqueline Jones
Mary Ellen King
David Mackenzie
Lisa Mann
Christian Naventi
Stori Oates
Paolo Solari
Jocelyn Winkler

INTERNS

Kelsey O'Donnell
Kelsey Wright

Business Supporters

Blue Grass Community Foundation
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Iron Springs Pub & Brewery
Jacqueline Jones Design
Laguna De Santa Rosa
Lindsay Wildlife Center
Lori Wynn Design
Microsoft
Pepperwood Foundation
Tri-City Ecology Center

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Megan Isadore, *Co-founder and Executive Director*

Science Advisory Board

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Oiled Wildlife Care Network – UC Davis
Oregon State University Microplastics Study
Point Reyes National Seashore
Rose Foundation Wildlands Grassroots Fund
The Marine Mammal Center
Tomales High School
West Marin Fund

Special Welcome to our New Partners

Bay Area Discovery Musum
Department of Paleontology, UC Berkeley
Institute for Integrative Conservation, College of William and Mary
Marin County Office of Education
Nature Bridge

[Please join us by supporting our work for otters and our shared watersheds. We can't do it without you, and we thank you!](#)

2019 FINANCIALS

INCOME  Grants 63%  Direct Contributions 35%  Retail Sales 2%



EXPENSES  Programs 93%  Support Services 6%  Fundraising 1%

