THE RIVER OTTER



ECOLOGY PROJECT

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By the end of March, our plans were no longer in effect.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 Jeadore

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!



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



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!

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 <u>first</u> <u>newsletter</u> came out this month.

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

We bolstered our partnerships by joining with local, regional, and national groups to further conservation goals through communitybased 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.



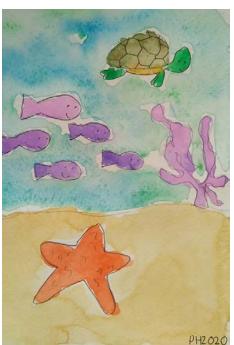
OTTERS

Two little others 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 MOW 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 "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."

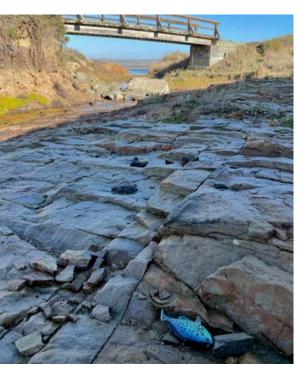
Isla, age 6 Contestant, Children's Art

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.riverotterecology.org <u>Facebook</u>

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

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

Anonymous, In honor of Yeva Johnson Anonymous Angelina Allaback Jean Amos Joanne Anderson Judith Apfel Robert Aston Elaine Baden Sharon Barnett Susan Bartholome Pete Barto **DeRoyce Bell** Karen Berger Jessica Berman Barbara Bessey Wayne Best Jeff Boehm Diane Bouchard Margaret O'Brien and Christopher Boyd Benjamin Broadbent Maddie Cargas Lance Carnes Colin Carroll Jim Carroll Anne Chambers Ignacio Chapela Karin and Steve Chase Sang Chung Dennis Clark Natalie Clark Christine Codding Dede Collett Sheila Conway Kathy Coultrup Ann Cross Elaine de Man John Deamer George Dean Susan Delmanowski Maria Denzler Barry and Barbara Deutsch Wendy Doherty and Steven Pearson Annie and Paul Dolan-Niles John Dolinsek Barbara Dornan Ken Drexler Meredith Duke Peggysue Dunn Philip Eager Ashley Eagle-Gibbs Amanda Eckenfelder

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Ring of Bright Water Circle

Anthony Brewer Mia Monroe and Stephan Meyer Heidi and Charles Triay

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.

IN APPRECIATION

Special Thanks

Aviva Rossi Brenden Collett-Grether Elena laffa 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

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Richard Vacha, Founder, Point Reves Tracking School

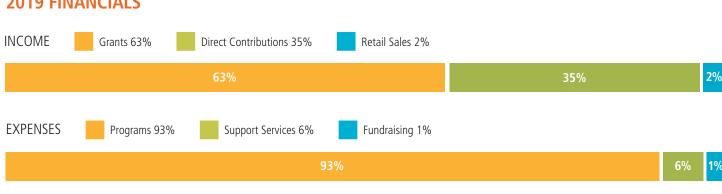
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Special Welcome to our New Partners

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