



# Wild at Heart

WE DEDICATE OUR YEAR END NEWSLETTER TO OUR VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORTERS, WHO HAVE MADE OUR FIRST TEN YEARS WILDLY SUCCESSFUL, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON WILD.

## TEN YEARS ON

We conceived our project in late 2011, brainstorming about how to measure and quantify river otter recovery in the SF Bay Area. We soon realized we had a river otter by the tail, due to otters' remarkable charisma coupled with their status as indicators of ecosystem health. It is a great success story, much needed during these tough times. Our mission is to support watershed conservation, since river otters inhabit watersheds from stem to stern. We found the best way to do that was through community science and awareness, education, and research.

We've made close ties all over the Bay Area and beyond, established a robust monitoring and research program supported by a well-trained and devoted cadre of volunteers, and initiated education programs for adults and students that spread understanding throughout the Bay Area. During that time, our commitment to our original mission has not changed, while our programs have grown and evolved. Looking back is a lot of fun, and gives focus and direction to decisions about how we can make the next ten years even more productive in supporting our planet.

We feel lucky and grateful indeed to have navigated the intricacies of getting our work off the ground, enjoying the results of our labors, and learning through the tough spots. We continue to be buoyed by the hearty appreciation

of otters and our conservation efforts shown by the community. We thank you, and we're eager to build upon our successes during the next decade. Just as laws supporting the environment, new protected spaces, and human determination led to improvements in our lands and waters that sent ripples forward, our project sent ripples into our communities to help educate, understand, and support watershed conservation. *We carry on!*

*Megan Aradore*

Co-founder, Executive Director



Moving forward, we will continue to work through community science, education, and research. An important part of our work is applying that community science and research to local communities and affecting natural resource management decisions.

## Otter Spots! Community Conservation

We're taking the information we've gleaned through Community Science Otter Spotter to the streets to support urban conservation. Look for much more on this nascent project in the coming months and years.

"I only just discovered this project today! River otters have always been one of my favorite animals. Growing up in the Bay Area as a kid I thought they were some rare animal I'd only see in a zoo. Now I see them all over the place! I hope people will continue to regularly report otter sightings."

— Michael Amado, Otter Spotter



## SPLASH WINNERS!

Our second annual *Splash! Mostly Water* arts contest brought us beautiful art, poetry and photography based upon the theme of water and its importance to our planet. Huge thanks to our perceptive and accomplished team of judges, Camille Dungy, Jaymi Heimbuch, Jouko van der Kruijssen, and John Muir Laws.

We loved holding our online Awards Ceremony in November...[enjoy viewing it on Youtube](#), along with many river otter videos of all sorts!



[Visit our website to see all the winning entries.](#)

Here, we honor our first place Splash contest winners, who help raise awareness and inspire the protection of our planet's waters with passion and determination. We have added the judge's comments, which always expand our perceptions of these heartfelt works.

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### CHILDREN: ART

Alisa de Vil, *The Ocean in Us*

“A seal and fish spinning in a gyre. The colors and patterns are beautiful and show the connection between the water and the animal that lives in it. It’s graphically a beautiful piece, and it conveys the message about the importance of water for all of us really strongly.”

— Jack Laws

### CHILDREN: POETRY

Jayden Reid, *Reflections*

“These couplets seem to sing. The repetition of “late” in the beginning pulls me in, and then the poem shifts and changes throughout so that I keep looking closer and closer to find what is going to be revealed. It’s like a little mystery in twelve lines, but it’s not particularly complicated. The language in the poem is clear and precise, creating a portrait of something (water) undeniably beautiful and precious.”

— Camille Dungy

### CHILDREN: PHOTOGRAPHY

Anastasia Nguyen, *Ripples*

“Tack sharp, correctly exposed, perfectly frozen in the moment. What I really like about it is that you can actually see the bird in action in the surf. It actually captures the behavior very well of what this bird is doing and how it interacts with the environment.”

— Jouko van der Kruijssen

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## Population Monitoring

A ten-year dataset on monitoring a single species is unusual, and very difficult to fund! That’s why we’re so grateful to our volunteer camera monitors who are with us year after year to keep an eye on otter doings. These data give us a basis for advising on watershed conditions around restoration, public use, and resource management, and comparison studies like our Drake’s Beach restoration study. We’re analyzing data from that study now and will have results out during 2022 and 2023 that help us understand how otters react to this restoration and help resource managers protect wildlife and habitat during the course of future restorations.

“Our monitoring program helps us measure changes in river otter success over time. Those changes give us insight into the outcomes of efforts to conserve our watersheds in the face of continuing stress from climate change and the loss of local biodiversity.”

— Terence Carroll, ROEP President and Research Director



## Education

As we grow during the next decade, we will expand our outdoor environmental education programs, as well as continue our popular online presentations to reach many more people both in California, nationally, and internationally.

“Great program! “Tell Karen I thought it was wonderful and thank her from me!! It is so cool that you guys do zoominars, they are so fun to watch! I love all the stories!”

— *Panama Landes, 13, Tennessee, one of our younger rising stars*



*SPLASH Winners continued*



### YOUTH: ART

*Abee Fries, Healthy Waters, Happy Otters*

“The whole piece is just filled with positive energy. It reads really strongly, all colors play together really nicely. I love the handling of the paint, and the energy and the joy that comes with this. I love that you can see the otters coming from different places, with slightly different positions.”

— *John Muir Laws*



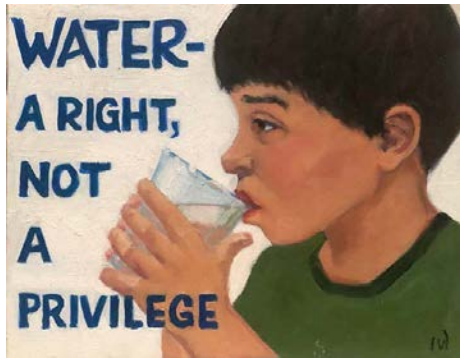
### YOUTH: PHOTOGRAPHY

*Maximilian Rabbitt-Tomita, Otter Party*

“Otters are really tough to get images of! Getting an image of one otter is really difficult. Then you throw together a group of multiple otters, that are moving around and you can still see so much of their facial expressions. This is such a great shot showing the family dynamic of a group of otters. And we’re able to see their habitat at eye level and feel like you’re in those grasses, in that area with the otters. It is such a great wildlife shot.”

— *Jaymi Heimbuch*

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### ADULT AMATEUR, ART

Idie Weinsoff, *Water, a Right*

“The statement bars no holds, and it is a beautiful piece. Water in a transparent cup is extremely difficult to draw. That little portion where you’re seeing through the hands, seeing the different angles in the glass, is extremely challenging. The planes on the face and the planes on the body describe the small hands on the body perfectly. The font helps emphasize the universality and importance of this message.”

— *John Muir Laws*



### ADULT AMATEUR: PHOTOGRAPHY

Karen James, *Surfacing*

This is a great image ... we’ve taken lots of photos of river otters, they’re always on the move, they’re a hard subject when they’re out of the water. I think this is very unique, something that people who see otters regularly see, those

bubbles blowing underwater, but to capture the otter before it reaches the surface, as it’s coming up, is a really hard thing to do. You have to deal with reflections, focus on and in the water. You get the added bonus of the facial expression as it’s coming up, as well as the diagonal lines

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# THANK YOU

## BUSINESS SUPPORTERS

Many thanks to our *Splash* contest business supporters for helping bring awareness of water issues, especially drought, front and center.

### WATER CHAMPIONS \$1500

Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District  
ROEP Board of Directors

### WATERSHED \$1,000

Mt. View Sanitary District

### VITAL WETLANDS \$500

Novato Sanitary District  
Recology.  
Mt. Diablo Audubon

### MIGHTY RIVERS \$250:

Jacqueline Jones Design  
Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
San Rafael

### LAKES AND RIVERS \$100

Peter Barto Voice Actor  
Carlos Porrata Nature Photography  
Oxbow Marina  
Korth’s Pirates Lair Marina  
Jeff & Wendy Photography  
Law Office of David J. Weinsoff

### IN-KIND SUPPORT

Barry Deutsch Design  
Folkmanis Puppets  
Jaymi Heimbuch Photography



## What do your gifts fund? A cumulative approach...

**10** years  
of 100 miles of non-invasive  
river otter monitoring that  
powers our research and  
helps resource managers  
understand the ecosystems  
they protect

**2** peer-reviewed  
research papers published

**15** comment  
letters and public  
testimony on agency  
project proposals based  
on our research

**4,774** otter sightings  
through Otter Spotter that inform us of otter presence  
all over California and beyond, leading to an updated  
range map, public awareness, and basis for new Otter  
Spots! Initiative

**6** awareness campaigns  
like Welcome Back Otters,  
Splash!, Otter Spots Community  
Conservation, and East Bay  
Urban Otter outreach

**84** awareness media spots  
through print, television,  
online, and radio

### *SPLASH Winners continued*

of the bubbles and also the weeds under water. Everything comes together in this one, and it's always compelling to have a unique, never before seen perspective of an animal that most people don't get to see very often."

— Jouko van der Kruijssen

### **ADULT AMATEUR: POETRY**

Peter Jain, *Stillness and Peace on Stone Lagoon*

"This is a spare poem that uses vivid imagery to give me a sense of the animal it describes. Nearly all my senses are involved as we stand near Stone Lagoon and watch the (unnamed) otter in action. The poem is also sonically exciting, employing assonance and consonance and other internal rhyme to wrap a cozy world of continuity around the otter."

— Camille Dungy



### **ADULT PROFESSIONAL: ART**

Kathryn Degliantoni, *Cataract on Mt. Tam*

"Here we sit in the middle of a cascade coming down the hillside before us. Painting a waterfall is extremely difficult. The minute you get in there with your brushstrokes and start adding waterlines your white waterfall starts to turn darker. It's no accident that you're seeing strong contrasts between the water and the rocks. That holds our eye, and plays there. And in the areas in between, a beautiful mix of wet in wet watercolor to give you a sense of lush, overlapping vegetation."

— John Muir Laws

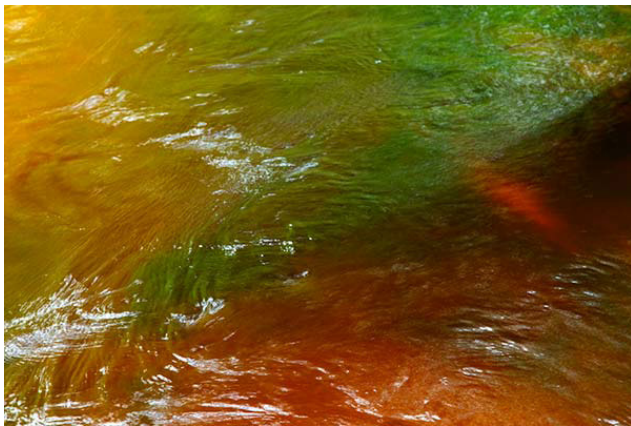
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## ADULT PROFESSIONAL: POETRY

Sandy White, *The Ecology Student Conducts Research for her Thesis*

“The repetition in this poem works so well to ground the rising anxiety and stakes of the poem. It’s like a constant din is created with the returning rhymes and language, which seems to fit the awful outcome of the student’s study. I love a poem that teaches me something even as it does its work as a poem, and this is that type of piece. Now I want to go around shushing myself and those around me. Bring down the decibels! The fact that the last stanza is shorter than all the others is surprisingly heartbreaking to me.”

— Camille Dungy



## ADULT PROFESSIONAL: PHOTOGRAPHY

Brianne Lehan, *Following the Flow — Where Waters Collide*

“This is a bold entry for a contest and I absolutely love the painterliness of it. So often photographic entries involve something that is very distinct. This is very different, and really gets in the heart of the theme: what is water, what does it make you feel when you sit down and look at it. What does it feel like to contemplate maybe a river bed or stream, creek, or ocean. Rather than knowing exactly what you’re seeing when you’re looking at it, this one leaves loads of room for pondering, allowing shapes and movement to come up to you. This really stood out for the boldness and the beauty of the piece.”

— Jaymi Heimbuch

## What do your gifts fund? continued...

**282** students received outdoor, experience-based environmental education through Hands-On High School, helping them understand their opportunities to support our shared watersheds

**19** high school, college and graduate internships

**30+** research and technical reports to federal, state, and local agencies

## Ongoing

genetic/genomic studies to understand more about otter population demographics, leading to better resource management decisions by agencies

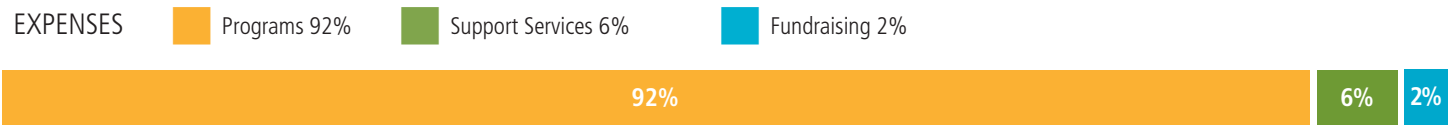
**35+** volunteers trained and deployed

**180** presentations and environmental events providing public education about otters and our shared watersheds, helping everyone understand the importance of protecting land and water for future generations (and providing a lot of fun during tough times)

Visit the [ROEP website](#) to [see our first decade of accomplishments.](#)



## 2021 FINANCIALS





# END OF YEAR THANKS

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Barry Deutsch

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Mary Ellen King

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Colleen Haradan-Gorski

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### Nicole Duplaix, FLS, FRGS:

Co-Chair, IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group, Senior Instructor Fisheries & Wildlife Dept., Oregon State University

### Thomas Serfass, PhD:

Professor of Wildlife Ecology, Frostburg State University; North American Coordinator for the Otter Specialist Group, IUCN/SSC

### Brian Simison, PhD:

Curator and Director of Comparative Genomics, California Academy of Sciences

### Richard Vacha:

Founder, Point Reyes Tracking School

## Special Thanks

### Babak Taheri, PhD:

Business advisor

### Jouko van der Kruijssen:

Splash judge, Photography

### Camille Dungy:

Splash judge, Poetry

### Jaymi Heimbuch:

Splash judge, Photography

### John Muir Laws:

Splash judge, Art

### Jacqueline Jones:

Website Designer

### Lori Wynn:

Graphic Designer

## PROGRAM SUPPORTERS

### Curiodyssey Conservation

#### Fund:

Otter Spotter

### Howard Burkhardt Endowment

#### Fund:

General Funds

### Landsberg Foundation:

Monitoring

### Marin Nonprofit Partners

#### Fund:

Otter Spots! Community

Conservation

### Neubacher Fund,

### Point Reyes National Seashore Association:

Drake's Beach Restoration Study

### Oiled Wildlife Care Network –

#### UC Davis:

Pixels v. Nucleotides Study

### Rose Foundation Wildlands

#### Grassroots Fund:

Monitoring

### West Marin Fund:

Hands On High School

## Partners

California Academy of Sciences

California Department of Fish & Wildlife

California Roadkill Observation System

California State Parks

Golden Gate National Parks

Institute for Integrative

Conservation, College of

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Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District

Marin County Office of Education

Marin County Open Space District

The Marine Mammal Center

Marin Water

Point Reyes National Seashore

Tomales High School

UC Berkeley Department of

Paleontology – Understanding

Global Change

## PHOTOGRAPHERS

Daniel Dietrich, Point Reyes Safari

Debbie Fier

Jeff & Wendy Photography

Karen James

Carlos Porrata Nature

Photography

Talia Rose, County Line Wild

## VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to our 2020 and

2021 River Otter Ecology Project

Volunteers of the Year: Wendy

Doherty and Robert DeLeo

[Thank you to all our individual donors.](#)



We are thrilled to welcome Colleen Haraden-Gorski to our Board of Directors. Colleen hails from Richmond, California, and works as VP of Operations, COO, and Director of Marketing at Balance Hydrologics. She is also an accomplished fabric designer and artist, and an open-water swimmer. Where does she find the time? This is the kind of drive and talent we love on our team. Welcome, Colleen!

## THE RIVER OTTER ECOLOGY PROJECT

PO Box 103,  
Forest Knolls, CA 94933

415-342-7956

[ROEP Website](#)



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