

**Christmas Newsletter**

Dear All,

Many thanks to everyone for their commitment to the otters of the northeast, your photos and records.

For those who are members and have not yet received welcome information and car sticker, these will be in the post today. You will also shortly receive a survey protocols document which will be sent by email to save printing costs. We will make some hard copies available for those who do not have access to a printer.

This year, Vivien Kent has been busy organising and co-coordinating otter survey work and carcass collection across Durham. This survey work,which could not happen without your time and dedication, has produced a fantastic image of otter and their spread across County Durham. A link to a summary report can be found on the website. Many thanks to Vivien as an integral cog in The Otter Network.

I (Lizzie) have put my time and effort into DNA studies along 59km of the Tyne from Jarrow to Hexham which I hope to share with you in the near future. This work would not have been possible without Krzystof Dabrowski of Newcastle University. He processed and analysed all spraint samples collected over at the Waterford Institute in Ireland to produce some lovely maps of male and female distribution along the Tyne, including inner city watercourses.

We must take this opportunity to thank the WIT for their knowledge and expertise with DNA extraction and letting us occupy their labs for 2 weeks this summer.

We also need to thank Addy de Jongh, a fabulous Dutchman with an infectious passion for otters who encouraged and supported The Otter Network. Sir Addy has dedicated his life to otters, starting as a student of Hanz Kruuk on Shetland several decades ago. For those who don't know of Hanz Kruuk, he has provided much of our understanding of the otter in the UK. Addy and his team are responsible for the continued presence of otter in The Netherlands. Without his teams work we may not have wild otter in The Netherlands. If you get chance to hear Addy speak at an otter conference, mustelid or mammal conference - you will be inspired.

Thank for the IUCN Otter Specialist Group for their support and distribution of knowledge on otter species from around the world.

Next year, we will have the April spraint collection which will hopefully extend across much of Northumberland as well as Durham and Darlington.

We should also point out the that International Otter Conference will be held in Brazil. Details of how to attend are on the IUCN OSG network for those who would like to know more. We are hoping to have at least 1 member there (me) but finances may not allow this!!

Once again, thanks for your time, energy and enthusiasm. Please please encourage others to join to fill the pot to provide insurance for the events. The more dosh the more fun things we can organise.

Please note your money has not been used for the creation of the website, any promotional materials, DNA work or report writing. All of this has been financed by The Otter Network Founders (myself and Vivien). Your money goes directly to allowing you to help us to survey for otters.

Have a wonderful Christmas and happy otter spotting.

Lizzie and the team