Friends of the Sea Otter (FSO) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1968 and dedicated to the protection of a rare and threatened species, the southern sea otter, throughout its North Pacific range, and all sea otter habitats worldwide.
Dear Members & Friends:

Please join us as FSO celebrates our 40 years of working towards the protection and preservation of the sea otter! We have been hard at work for the past 40 years and plan to spend the next 40+ years defending and protecting our beloved sea otters and their ecosystem. Together with the help of our allies, we are advancing the protection of the northern sea otters off Alaska’s shores and the southern sea otters along the Californian coast. Of course, FSO wouldn’t have been able to last so long without such a strong and passionate group of constituents, including yourself! We thank all of you, from our new members to those who have been with us since 1969, for your unfailing support and energy, which drives our actions and advances our mission – to protect sea otters and their habitats.

Ryan Bigelow
Ryan is pursuing his masters degree in International Environmental Policy student at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. Ryan is interested in marine conservation and is excited to be part of Friends of the Sea Otters.

Candace Leong
During a UCSC class, Candace studied otter raft size at Big Sur. Shortly after she became a volunteer at the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Sea Otter Research and Conservation program (SORAC) where she was able to groom and feed a 10-day old otter pup.

Chris Miller
Chris has been involved with Friends of the Sea Otter for many years and is an active volunteer at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Jud Vandevere
For many years Jud studied the natural history of the southern sea otter. In The Sea Otter (Enhydra lutris): Behavior, Ecology, and Natural History by Dr. Reidman and Dr. Estes. Biological Report 90 (14) are listed nine articles authored and two co-authored by Vandevere.

Jennifer Covert.
Jennifer has been working with Friends of the Sea Otter since February 2008. She ensures our office runs smoothly, takes care of our membership and produces our newsletters. Jennifer also liaises between our consultants, Don Baur and Nina Young, in Washington DC, and our Board, and other like minded organizations.

Ashley Downing
Ashley has just finished her first year at the Monterey Institute of International Studies where she is pursuing a masters degree in International Environmental Policy. She is interested in all conservation issues and is very excited to be working with Friends of the Sea Otter for the summer.

Please meet our board members and staff:

Kid’s Corner:
Letters from the Tamagawa Academy in Tokyo, Japan, taught by Margaret Simmons who’s husband was involved with Friends of the Sea Otter since it first began in 1969.

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Critical Habitat Designation for the Northern Sea Otter

New critical habitat for the Northern Sea Otter

In February, we provided Comments on the Proposed Critical Habitat Designation for the Northern Sea Otter with the Defenders of Wildlife, Oceans Public Trust Initiative and the World Wildlife fund. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has proposed an area for critical habitat for the Northern sea otter. FSO has worked with its environmental

and research partners to provide comments on the proposed designation and to track its progress until a final determination is made.

You can find our comments, along with other comments by going to regulations.gov, searching for sea otter, and click on Docket ID or type in the following link: http://www.regulations.gov/DocPublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=FWS-R7-ES-2008-0105

Strategies to Defend FWS

Develop a Strategy to Defend US Fish and Wildlife Service, as it Declares the Translocation a Failure

In the first half of 2009, the FWS will publish its record of decision (Final Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Regulations) on the Failure Declaration of the Translocation of southern sea otters to San Nicolas Island. In anticipation of challenges to this determination, FSO will prepare an updated advocacy document that rebuts any arguments made by the fishing community in their comments on the Draft EIS and any arguments that they make on the final determination. In addition to the declaration of the translocation as a failure, FSO will support ending zonal management and the “no sea otter zone”.

The Otter Raft

Dr. James A. Mattison was a busy man throughout his professional career whether it was running his medical practice, helping to found Friends of the Sea Otter, or participating in a myriad of community activities. The reknowned surgeon and environmentalist, whose passion helped save Elkhorn Slough from becoming an oil refinery site and bore the wrath of abalone fishermen for his efforts to protect the sea otter’s food supply, died on November 20, 2008 at the age of 83.

Jim Mattison played a vital role in sea otter preservation and FSO’s development. He was an active trustee of Friends of the Sea Otter, which, with Margaret Owings, he helped found in 1968. He served as President for many years and was on both the policy and nominating committee. He was an invaluable resource to the organization and spent much of his free time throughout the years, in the field, studying and photographing otters.

Mattison received his medical degree from the University of California Medical school in 1951 and used his knowledge and skills performing otter post-mortem examinations. The information generated by his exams has been useful to the California Department of Fish and Game. Dr. Mattison was also instrumental in developing the only hyperbaric chamber on the West Coast. The chamber is used to help divers suffering from the potentially fatal effects of surfacing too quickly.

In his free time, Dr. Mattison’s affiliations ranged from medical societies to conservation groups to research institutes, and photography and diving clubs. He also spent much of his time outdoors hunting and fishing, and kayaking often with his wife. He is remembered by his three children and wife of 57 years, Joanne Mattison, who recalls: “He always encouraged us to be ourselves and to find our joy in the service of our fellow human beings; that is a wonderful legacy to leave.”

Margaret Wentworth Owings was one of the most eloquent and honored voices in the wildlife conservation movement. Margaret was the founder and first president of the Friends of the Sea Otter from 1968 until the early 1990s. She was most closely identified with the California sea otter, whose cause she championed through Friends of the Sea Otter.

As a member of the Point Lobos League, she fought successfully in 1947 to save the beaches between the Carmel River and Point Lobos State Reserve, and the south end of Gibson Beach. She also campaigned to keep the scenic Big Sur coast in its undeveloped state which has helped to protect the sea otters.

Margaret was a leader in conservation battles not only through deeds, but through the eloquence of her words that span a lifetime of activism in defense of the California coast and its wildlife. FSO would like to leave you with one of her quotes:

From The Otter Raft of December, 1970

“As we watch or photograph the otter, stretched out on the rocking kelp on a fresh salty day, we feel an empathy with this little animal riding the lap and slap of the coastal waves. Could it be envy?”

Commemorate our Founders!

As we reflect over our long past and look towards the future, we would like to take the time to commemorate our founders, Margaret Owings and Jim Mattison. During the 1960’s they pioneered and brought much needed attention to dwindling sea otter populations. Due to their hard work and perseverance, we have the opportunity and thrill of seeing sea otters from the Alaskan coasts down to southern California. Let’s delve into the hearts and minds of the Friends of the Sea Otters founders and take a moment to thank them.

Dr. Mattison was a busy man throughout his professional career whether it was running his medical practice, helping to found Friends of the Sea Otter, or participating in a myriad of community activities. The reknowned surgeon and environmentalist, whose passion helped save Elkhorn Slough from becoming an oil refinery site and bore the wrath of abalone fishermen for his efforts to protect the sea otter’s food supply, died on November 20, 2008 at the age of 83.

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“As we watch or photograph the otter, stretched out on the rocking kelp on a fresh salty day, we feel an empathy with this little animal riding the lap and slap of the coastal waves. Could it be envy?”
An adult female southern sea otter (*Enhydra lutris nereis*), that stranded as a newborn pup and was reared at the Monterey Bay Aquarium (MBA) with a surrogate sea otter mother, has successfully given birth and weaned a pup of her own in the wild. The female, known as “MBA 339”, is part of a long-term study by biologists in the aquarium’s Sea Otter Research and Conservation program (SORAC) to evaluate the effectiveness of surrogacy as a method for rehabilitating and releasing stranded neonate sea otters.

MBA 339 was found stranded at Manresa State Beach in Santa Cruz County in October 2005 at 4 weeks of age. Initially she was bottle-fed by SORAC staff and volunteers wearing a black nylon poncho and welder’s helmet to hide their form and eliminate eye contact, in an effort to minimize likelihood of imprinting on humans. At 6 weeks of age, once 339 began to retrieve and consume solid food on her own, she was introduced to “Joy”, one of five female sea otters on exhibit at MBA. Joy served as her surrogate mother for 20 weeks. Prior to being weaned, 339 received a surgically implanted VHF radio transmitter, color-coded flipper tags, and passive integrated transponder (PIT) to allow SORAC biologists to track her post-release movements and behavior. On July 5, 2006, at 9 months of age, she was released to the wild.

Historically, stranded sea otter pups were rehabilitated for release using methods that were heavily dependent on human care, a factor that may have contributed to release failures and low post-release survival in the wild (Nicholson et al., 2007). To address inability of pups to reintegrate with the wild population and avoid interactions with humans, SORAC began experimenting with the methods now employed in the surrogacy study: pairing stranded pups with captive adult female sea otters (from MBA’s Sea Otter Exhibit) that adopt the pups as their own. In contrast with other strategies, surrogate sea otter mothers provide developing pups with species-specific mentoring, tactile stimulation while grooming and nurturing the pup, nourishment through food sharing, and demonstration of feeding methods, such as dismembering crabs and cracking open hard-shelled bivalves using rocks as tools (Nicholson et al., 2007).

In order to evaluate the relative merit of rehabilitation methods employed in the study, surrogate-reared otters are monitored on a weekly basis following release – in order to characterize free-ranging behavior, estimate gender-specific survival rates, and determine causes of mortality. Ultimately, success of the surrogacy program depends upon demonstrating that rehabilitated sea otter pups integrate into the wild sea otter population, behave normally, and contribute reproductively to the wild population.

In July 2008, 2 years after release, MBA 339 was observed with a newborn male pup – the first surrogate-reared otter to reproduce (a second surrogate-reared female, MBA 327, also recently gave birth to her first pup). The male pup remained with 339 through a 230 day dependency period – comparable to the upper end of observed dependency among wild southern sea otters (120 – 280 days; Riedman et al., 1994) – suggesting that even though 339 was a first-time mother, she was relatively successful at obtaining adequate resources for herself and the pup.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium has been involved in sea otter conservation efforts since before it opened its doors in 1984. MBA’s SORAC program has made progress in understanding conservation and natural history of the southern sea otter, and pioneered many of the medical and surgical procedures used to keep sea otters healthy in zoos and aquariums around the world. This work is part of collaborative efforts with researchers from the U.S. Geological Service, California Department of Fish and Game, U.C. Santa Cruz, U.C. Davis and other partners aimed at understanding why the southern sea otter population is rebounding so slowly.

**Literature Cited**


Thanks to our devoted donors. Without you we could not support sea otters around the world.

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New Website Launched!

Visit our new and exciting website that was launched at the beginning of June. Enjoy our brand new interface and read about the latest most up to date news on sea otter action. You can still send e-cards, donate and sign up for memberships. Plus check out every issue of The Otter Raft since it debuted in 1969! Please send your thoughts for additional content you would like to see to info@seaotters.org

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