

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the August email update to all OVA members. We have a lot going on at the moment – and hope that you enjoy reading about our activities and plans. We are this month focusing on our water campaigning group (called ORCA), as well as reminding everyone about our winter talks program which starts shortly.



If you would like to help and volunteer for any of these it would be lovely to speak with you. Do let us know.

This email update contains the following items:

ORCA Campaign to #ReviveTheRiverOtter:

- Our volunteers have been testing the River Otter at 12 locations every 2 weeks. We have analysed the data, gained support from town and village councils from Honiton to Budleigh Salterton. We have teamed up with Richard Foord MP and written to South West Water about the situation. Read all about this important initiative below.

Can you help?

- We are looking for people to help us in a number of different areas – from events, to administration, to web and a town representative for Budleigh Salterton. We cannot continue to run our programs without help and assistance from our members. Can you help?

Winter Talks schedule:

- Our winter talks start on the 10th September with what promises to be a fabulous talk about the balancing act between humans and birdlife on our estuaries. Please mark your diaries with our winter schedule shown below. Everyone is welcome. Full details, including timings, are shown below.

Walks Update – weekly walks:

- We have a great line-up of weekly walks scheduled through to September. Details below – everyone is welcome.

Photo Competition

- Please do send in pictures for our annual photo competition. Email them to editor@ova.org.uk

Flora, Fauna & Fungi Group:

- River-fly (invertebrate testing) being planned. Invasive species program starting. Leaflets & booklets to build. More details shown below. Can you help?

Website & Social media update:

- We continue to update the OVA website with new sections and additions. Please do keep it bookmarked (www.ova.org.uk).
- We now have 1,180 supporters on our main Facebook group, and 277 supporters on our ORCA water quality campaign group.

1. ORCA Campaign to #ReviveTheRiverOtter

Thankyou to everyone who has helped our program. Here is a brief summary:

- Our ORCA team continue to test the River Otter. We have now completed 11 cycles of testing (at 12 specific locations every 2 weeks) with a team of 50 volunteers.
- The river is classified as “poor” ecological status by the Environment Agency. Our goal is to move the river from “poor” to “good” by 2030.
- Pollution occurs from many sources – including both Agriculture and South West Water (SWW). However, the majority of issues in the middle and lower sections of the river occur because of SWW sewage pollution.
- We have teamed up with local MP Richard Foord to bring pressure on SWW in regard of their untreated sewage discharges and the phosphate levels within their continuous treated discharges.
- The ORCA team have met face:face with SWW, the Environment Agency and Richard Foord (MP) to discuss the state of the river. SWW declined to offer any changes to their current practices in the short-to-medium term.
- Richard Foord has issued a press release to launch a campaign with the OVA entitled [#ReviveTheRiverOtter](#). You can read his release on our OVA website [here](#).
- The OVA has issued their own press release as a follow-up with supporting comments from Devon County Council, East Devon District Council, Otterton Parish Council, Budleigh Salterton Town Council, Ottery St Mary Town Council, Newton Poppleford & Harpford Parish Council, Westcountry Rivers Trust, River Otter Fishereies Association, Ottery Fly Fishing Club, Tracey Farm, Clinton Devon Estates, Richard Foord MP. You can read this release on the OVA website [here](#).
- The BBC and local newspapers have already covered this campaign in their news updates. You can view some of this on the OVA website [here](#).
- Richard Foord has written to SWW CEO Susan Davey asking for demonstrable improvements to these two issues. You can view the letter written by Richard Foord to Susan Davey on the OVA website [here](#).
- SWW have replied with a detailed explanation of their plans – which unfortunately do not constitute significant change in the next 10 years. You can read their reply in full on the OVA website [here](#).
- The ORCA team are preparing a detailed analysis of the response – we will be sharing when completed.

We want to work with South West Water to stop their untreated sewage discharges AND to reduce the phosphate levels in their continuously released treated sewage. We know that you, as members of the OVA, fully support this approach and we want to thank you for your help, suggestions and support for this important program.

2. Can you help?

We are looking for someone to help maintain our website, as well as an events coordinator, and a history coordinator. We are also looking for a representative to act as our interface with Budleigh Town Council.

If you can help, please do let us know. If you know someone who could help, please do let us know. Without people helping, it becomes impossible to achieve our goals and deliver for you, our members.

3. Talks: Winter Schedule

We have now finalised our talks schedule for the coming winter. Please do mark your diaries for the following talks:

2025	September 10 th	Birds v People by John Goss Custard John has carried out scientific studies on the effect of human population on river estuaries
	October 15 th	Organic Farming - Recovering the Landscape and Producing food by Sam Walker (local farmer)
	November 19 th	Devon Hedges by Tom Hynes
2026	January 21 st	Update on Otter restoration project by Rick Lockwood (Chief Ranger)
	February 18 th	Have you seen my little rubber Duck by Ken Atherton A story of the Plastic Pollution of our Oceans
	March 18 th	ORCA Campaign Update – by Felicity Christie & Peter Williams

Talks are open to all. Doors open at 7pm and the ticket cost is £4.00 for members and non-members. We are also looking forward to starting talks in Ottery St. Mary. We will be sharing details of these in future newsletters and via the OVA website. Please do keep an eye out for these.

4. Walks Update: Weekly walks

Thanks to the Walk Leaders there has been a varied Walk Programme delivered in August. We have two walks planned in September:

- “Otterton Heritage Walk” on the 2nd which will be led by Dee Woods.
- “Woods, Coast and Country Loop” on the 23rd which will be led by Jane Kewley and Austin Penn.
- Other walking opportunities are available during the Sidmouth Walking Festival (13-19).

Why not come out and enjoy the scenery, meet friends and learn about our local surroundings? Everyone is welcome and there is no charge for these walks.

There are also walks scheduled in every week in October. Full details of all walks are available on the OVA website [here](#). Please **always** check the OVA website for last minute updates, cancellations or changes – one can never be sure what weather awaits us next week, let alone next month!

We have been approached by a number of people asking if we do shorter walks, or more nature walks. To cater for this, we have been talking to the team at Seachange who offer regular shorter walks. You can find out more information about Seachange walks on their web [[here](#)].

We also work very closely with the team over at Pebblebed Heaths. They also do regular ranger walks. Again, you can find more information about their walks on their web [[here](#)].

5. OVA Photo Competition

Please do send in pictures for our annual photo competition. Email them to editor@ova.org.uk

6. Flora & Fauna Group Update

The Flora & Fauna group are looking at a number of projects including:

1. Continuing to update the OVA website with a showcase of the local Flora & Fauna of the area.
2. Investigating how to initiate a River-fly testing program along the River Otter and its tributaries. We are working closely with Clinton Devon Estates who have a training program arranged for the 23rd September. Several OVA members are attending. If you are interested in helping take this further up the river or into our tributaries, please do get in touch.
3. Invasive Species identification and Balsam pulling. Several members are already involved in different Balsam pulling programs along the tributaries and river. Again, if you are interested in setting up your own group, or wanting to help with existing groups, please do get in touch.

7. Website & Social Media

We are continuing to update the OVA website. Please do check it out and bookmark it for quick access.

We now have TWO FaceBook groups:

- The main group continues to grow – now reaching 1,180 supporters.
- Our ORCA water quality group has now grown to 263 supporters.

If you have not seen them, please do check them out. Please also add your own articles, comments and like anything ... we'd love to hear from you!

We now have an OVA Instagram account – please do post pictures to it.

We have a number of active WhatsApp groups that we wanted you to be aware of:

- ORCA leadership team.
- ORCA Water testers.
- OVA Flora & Fauna group.
- OVA Walkers.
- OVA Town and Village Reps.
- OVA Leadership team.

==== End of Email Update (August 2025) ====