

St Alban's going for Bronze in 2024

I was racking my brains what animal to choose this month – so why not one of my favourites, the **OTTER**. Most of you will know that the otter is an excellent swimmer, I've been lucky enough to spot an otter twice, both times in Scotland, and both by chance, the first time was near Glentroll in Dumfries & Galloway and the second was in the sea off the West coast of the Isle of Syke at Duntulm, no photos I'm afraid as I was too busy watching, you'll have to take me at my word.



They can be quite elusive but may be seen mainly in West Wales, the West Country and East Anglia, hunting in wetlands, rivers and along the coast. They need clean rivers, with an abundant source of food and plenty of vegetation to hide their secluded holts.

Otters are a protected species, they are a rare and elusive animal but are widespread over the country except central and southern England, Isle of

Man, Isles of Scilly and the Channel Islands.

Otters have their babies in underground burrows called Holts and the young are swimming by 10 weeks old

The otter is well suited to a life on the water as they have webbed feet, dense fur to keep them warm, and can close their ears and nose when underwater. They eat mainly fish but will eat waterbirds, frogs, toads and newts and even crustations.

Ring of Bright Water is a book by Gavin Maxwell about his life in a remote house in coastal Scotland where he kept several wild otters as pets. He wrote this in 1960 and a fictionalised film of the same name was released in 1969, this was my first encounter with otters.



Gavin Maxwell was born near Port William in Wigtownshire. He was a naturalist and author. They erected a memorial to him just above Port William. It says Gavin Maxwell 1914-1969 Author and Naturalist. Haec loca puer amavit vir celebravit 'This place he loved as a boy, as a man he made it famous'. I visited in July 2023 (my photos). Well worth a visit and the views are glorious.



PREPARE FOR A GREENER CHRISTMAS taken from my Eco News November 2023

These ideas are still relevant in 2024. How can we make sure our Christmas is both a celebration of Christ's coming and better for His creation?

Here are some Eco Christmas ideas

Advent Calendar. Support overseas farmers by ensuring that your advent calendar, and any Christmas chocolate, is Fairtrade.

Natural wreaths and decorations. Collect holly sprigs, ivy trails, pinecones, rose hips... Don't take too much and do leave some berries for the birds. Then make a beautiful wreath and Christmas decorations from natural materials.

Homemade gifts. Baked goods for example or buy gifts from a charity shop. You could buy an attractive glass or vase and fill it with chocolates or flowers. Kilner jars, and other glass jars, filled with small items also make attractive gifts.

No Palm Oil. Many beauty products contain palm oil. Its production causes mass deforestation, air pollution and human rights abuses. Read labels carefully. Avoid products with unsustainable palm oil.

Dim the lights but not the joy! LED Christmas lights help to save energy and money. Use eco-friendly candles made from beeswax, soy or other vegetable alternatives – avoid paraffin-based candles.

Try a Veggie Christmas meal. Would your visitors be willing to try a tasty new vegetarian recipe? Check out the Eco News November 2023 which has a recipe at www.stalbanofferton.org.uk If you do eat meat, make sure it's free-range or organic, and buy it from a local farmer or independent retailer (see ECO Tips November 2024 on the website)

Recycle right. Christmas increases our countries waste. Paper Recycling - most wrapping paper is not recyclable. You can test it by doing the 'scrunch' test. If it springs back, it isn't recyclable. And always remove the Sellotape. No Glitter or foil. Same for Christmas Cards

Dates for your Diary



National Hot Chocolate Day

Celebrate with us, come along to church and indulge in a yummy hot chocolate and biscuits.
(or if you prefer coffee or tea)

Friday 13th December

12.30pm-1.30pm

**All funds raised will go towards
the upkeep of St Albans**



CHRISTMAS FAIR

St Albans Christmas Fair

Saturday 30th November 11am-2pm

**Raffle, tombola's, tea/cake, Father
Christmas and much more.**

Come along and join in the fun