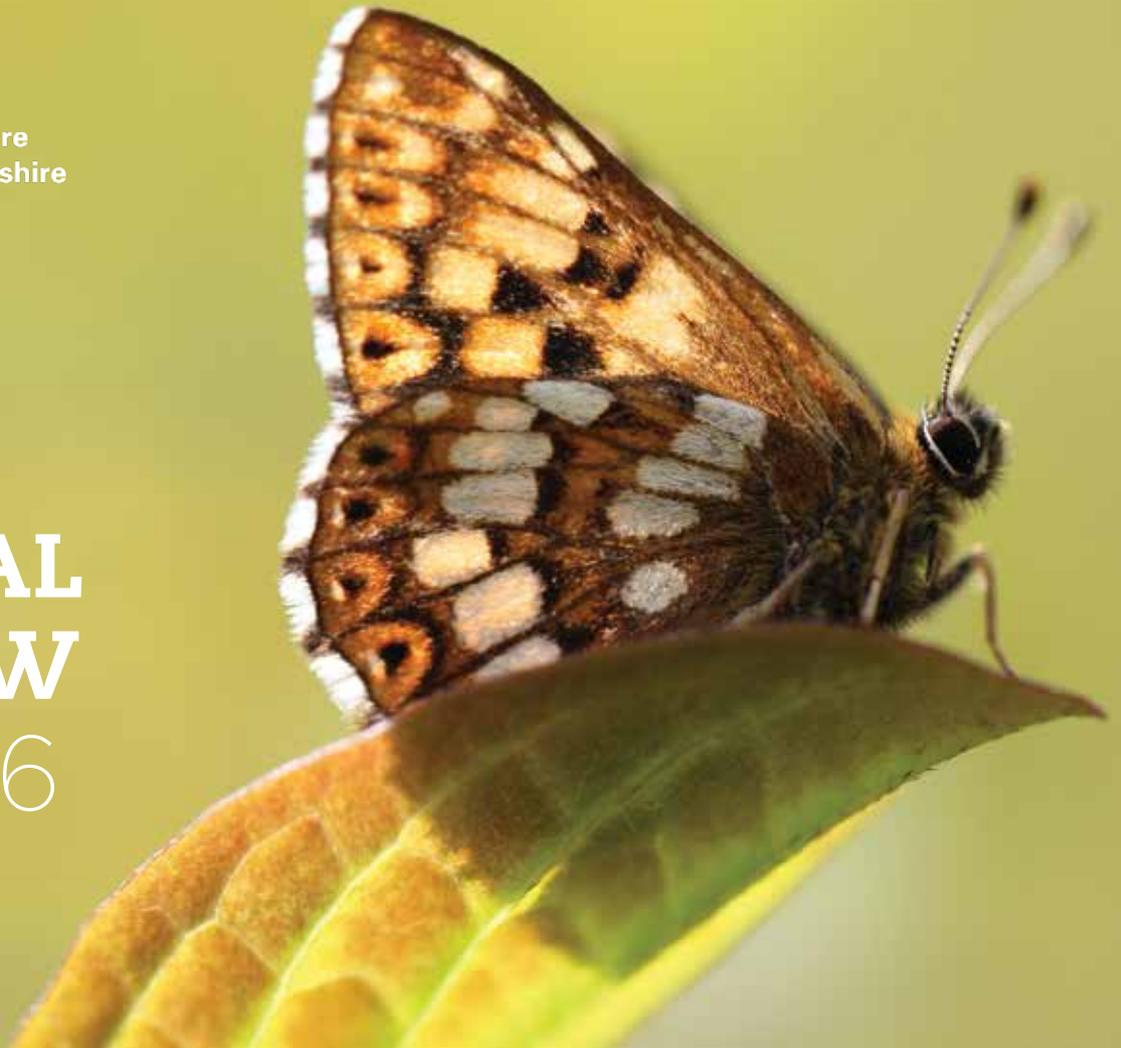




Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire

ANNUAL REVIEW 2015-16



Foreword by Derek Langslow CBE

Image: by Phil Mynott



In October 2016 I step down as the Chairman of the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. I look back on my time and feel immensely proud of the work we have done to make our three counties the best that they can be for wildlife.

In 2015-16 we took the first steps to achieve our ambitious new five-year vision. Our aim is that by 2020 our three counties will be better for wildlife than they were in 2015. We will achieve this by improving our nature reserves for wildlife and people and ensuring that our work in the wider countryside helps create a thriving Living Landscape. This new plan comprises seven thematic strands, which will shape and guide our work in the period 2015-2020.

These reflect the breadth of the Trust's work, the way it works with partners, the opportunities it provides its staff and the support it gives its members and volunteers.

This document mainly focuses on how we make a difference for wildlife and people - our Delivery and Reaching Out strands. Our Five-year Vision also focuses on strengthening the way we work internally and building the ethos of outreach, engagement and promotion of the Trust's work among all our staff and volunteers.

This year has brought challenges in the way that we contact current and prospective supporters. A Government review of charity regulation followed several episodes of negative media coverage, brought about by a few charities behaving badly in their communications with supporters.

We have always treated supporters' information with care, respected donors' wishes and have never given or sold their data to third parties. In response to the review, we now ask people to opt-in to receiving information from us rather than allowing people to opt-out as we had done previously. We are expecting further regulation in this area that will require further changes to our procedures.

This year there have also been changes to charity accounting and reporting regulations that means we cannot include as much financial information as we would like to. For a copy of our full Annual Report and Accounts please see: www.wildlifebcn.org/annualreview

Derek Langslow



Our vision: People close to nature, in a land rich in wildlife

Variable damselfly by Mark Tyrell



Our mission is to:

- ✓ Conserve local wildlife, by caring for land ourselves and with others
- ✓ Inspire others to take action for wildlife
- ✓ Inform people, by offering advice and sharing knowledge

Our values:

We believe

- That we must focus on all wildlife and whole ecosystems to safeguard the natural environment
- That everyone has a role to play in restoring nature
- That we should value, respect and listen to our staff, volunteers, members and supporters so they can contribute fully to achieving our vision
- That working in partnership brings more benefits than working alone
- That conservation depends on local knowledge and good science
- That we achieve more for wildlife by operating in an efficient and business-like manner
- That we should operate in an environmentally sustainable way
- That working to restore nature should be rewarding for everyone involved

Living Landscapes

The Wildlife Trust continues to focus on nine Living Landscape schemes. However, as part of the development of the Trust's new five-year plan, work in these areas has been re-categorised. Each Living Landscape scheme is now classified within the following categories colour coded as below

Growing

A Living Landscape where the Trust is significantly increasing its conservation, education and community activity, resulting in an increase in land area under positive conservation management or restoration, and growing strong partnerships.

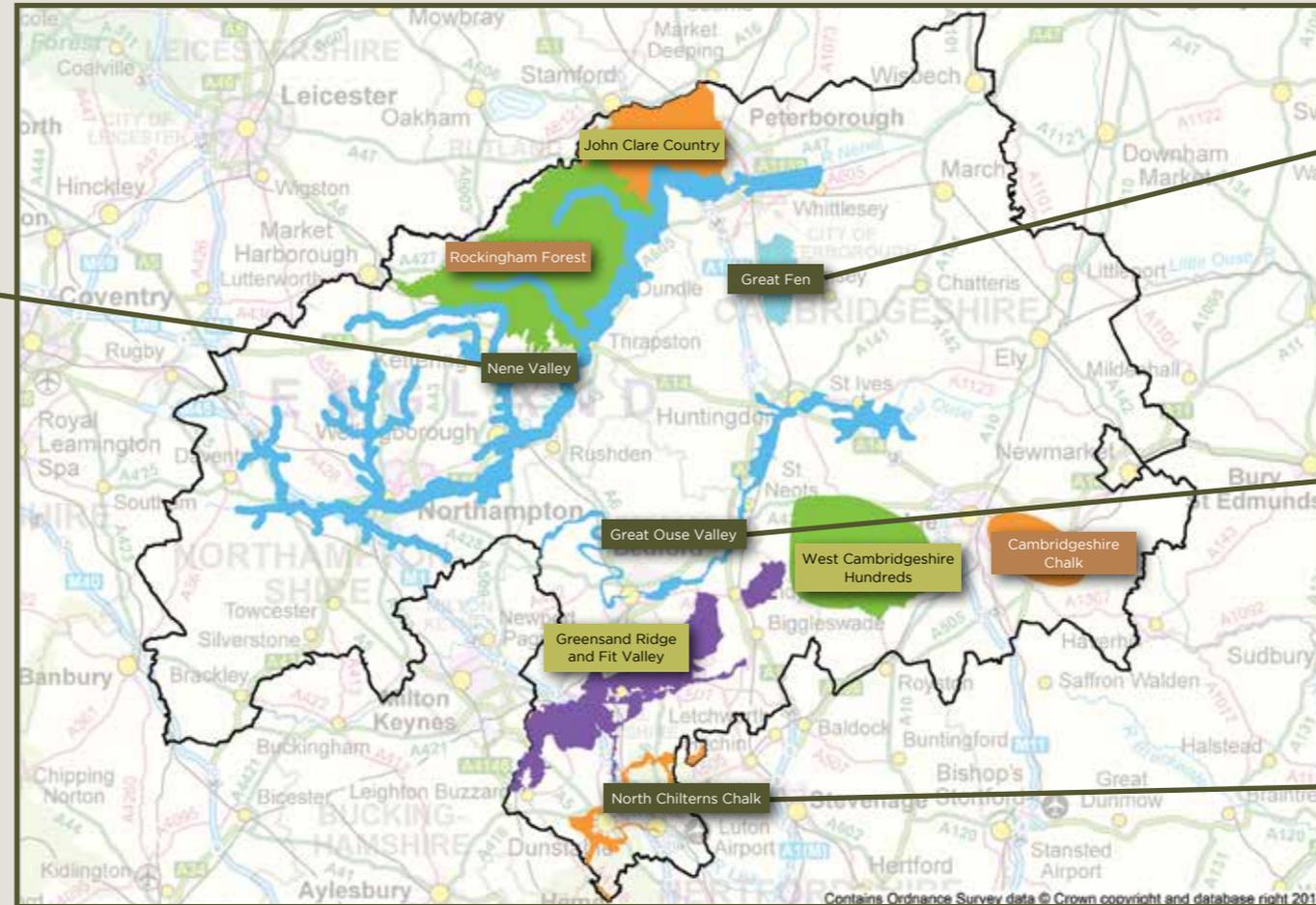
Maintaining

A Living Landscape where the Trust is maintaining its level of conservation, education and community activity with a focus on improving the condition of land currently under conservation management and maintaining existing partnerships.

Responsive

A Living Landscape where the Trust is improving its knowledge and strategy for conservation, education and community delivery, capitalising on opportunities for action, responding to potential threats and building partnerships to support progress.

In the **Nene Valley** we celebrated the culmination of our Heritage Lottery Funded work at Irthlingborough Lakes and Meadows which has seen this once neglected Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) transformed into a haven for wildlife and people. New islands have been created and willow and electricity pylons have been removed to make the area more attractive to breeding and overwintering birds, such as skylark, lapwing and wigeon.



In the **Great Fen** we created a new 140 hectare wetland at Kester's Docking, north-east of Holme Fen and in January 2016 work began at Engine Farm where farmland will be transformed into a 170 hectare area of wetland habitats and open water.

In the **Ouse Valley** we are conducting a trial using mineral licks for cattle impregnated with seeds as a means to increase the diversity of wildflowers found in the valley's meadows.

In the **North Chilterns Chalk** we are working with several landowners through our Biffa Award funded Scrub Off project to remove scrub from chalk grassland sites across our Living Landscape area.

Delivery – nature reserves

We will enhance our nature reserves to make them even better for wildlife and for people.

The Wildlife Trust manages 127 nature reserves covering 4,003 hectares (approx. 9,891 acres).

- We opened a new nature reserve at Trumpington Meadows in Cambridge, managed on behalf of the developer, Grosvenor. This 58 hectare (143 acre) site includes riverside wet grassland and recently created meadows.
- We established a three-way partnership which provides branches for the giraffes and other animals at ZSL Whipsnade Zoo. A contractor has been thinning trees at Cottage Bottom Fields, Blow's Downs, to provide branches to feed the zoo animals.
- Godmanchester nature reserve enhancements have included the creation of wader scrapes, erection of a new bird hide, restoration of hedgerows and improvement of paths.

- Work has progressed with habitat and access improvements to the Titchmarsh reserve thanks to funding from Biffa Award, including repairs to damaged hides, new fencing, new interpretation, scrub clearance, laying a hedge and replacement of owl boxes and tern rafts.

- We worked with the Floodplain Meadows Partnership to monitor the spread of meadowsweet at Fancott Woods and Meadows and cut control plots as a trial, to reduce the vigour of meadowsweet, which outcompetes other wildflowers.

- Work started on the Veolia funded Moo and Mow project at Pegsdon Hills with new and replacement fencing, scrub management and new cattle-handling pens helping with livestock and habitat management.

- Thanks to the help of our wonderful balsam wardens, we are winning the fight against Himalayan balsam in the Flit Vale with significantly less balsam upstream from Flitton Moor.



Giraffe by ZSL Whipsnade

- Turf stripping trials at Cooper's Hill continue to show good results for heather regeneration, helping to overcome the damage caused by another year of high numbers of heather beetle.
- The bluebell season was especially busy this year at Brampton Wood with good displays to be seen in the north east corner of the wood.
- Creation of new ditches and a back channel at Stanground Wash keeps more water on site to allow breeding birds, such as teal, little egret and redshank, to return.
- The Trust, Anglian Water and British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) produced a new leaflet providing national management guidance on best practice scrub management for nightingales, based on the methods developed and proved to be successful at Grafham Water.

Delivery – wildlife highlights



Nightingale by Nick Clayton

- Slow worms moved to Totternhoe from the Luton guided busway are doing well after five years, with lots of healthy specimens including many juveniles and pregnant females.
- The Flit Vale Local Group's small mammal survey at Flitwick Moor produced good results finding wood mouse, yellow-necked mouse, bank vole, common shrew and the first confirmed record of water shrew for this reserve.
- Working in partnership with Butterfly Conservation, evidence of Duke of Burgundy butterflies was found at Sewell Cutting.
- This year numbers of little egrets seem to have increased with regular sightings at Summer Leys, Pitsford and Titchmarsh. The top count of 11 was at Titchmarsh.

- The best year on record for fly orchids at Hoo Bit with specimens found well away from the traditional haunts.

- 2015 saw the highest numbers (in recent years) of man and musk orchid around Totternhoe nature reserve and surveys in March 2016 found even more man orchid (246 in 2015 and over 300 in 2016).

- This year's survey at Woodwalton Marsh revealed that numbers of bee, twayblade and pyramidal orchid have all increased and common spotted orchid has now been recorded.

- Ely Local Group carried out the annual orchid count at Chettisham Meadow and counted over 8,800 green-winged orchids, an amazing number for a meadow that is less than one hectare.

- Upwood Meadows flourished in the spring with abundant displays of cowslips, adder's tongue fern and a green-winged orchid population recorded as 2,909 individual spikes.

- At Felmersham Gravel Pits, bladderwort is spreading into areas recently cleared of invasive water soldier.

- Variable damselfly was recorded at Irlthorpe Lakes and Meadows.



Dormouse by Anthony Mould

Delivery – beyond our nature reserves

We will work with others, including other landowners and developers, to protect wildlife beyond our nature reserves

- Our Anglian Water funded Water for Wildlife work saw the restoration of another 2.5 km of the Hoffer Brook chalk stream near Harston, Cambridgeshire.
- Water vole surveys of Ransonmoor and Curf Fen drainage districts in Cambridgeshire show that between 70% and 80% of the ditches have water voles.
- Another successful year of bat punts with 555 people enjoying a trip down the River Cam.
- The Trust has appeared at the Cambridge City Local Plan Examination in Public, to present our objections to housing allocations on the south-eastern edge of Cambridge that could affect Cherry Hinton Chalk Pits and Beechwoods nature reserves, as well as directly threaten other County Wildlife Sites and the Cambridgeshire Chalk Living Landscape.



Bat punt on the River Cam by Glyn Reed

- The Trust continues to work with Prologis and its ecologists to progress the habitat creation scheme at Lilbourne Meadows as part of the extension to the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal.
- The Trust contributed to the production of Supplementary Planning Advice related to the Nene Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) and also the production of a mitigation strategy for public pressure on the SPA that new housing in the area may bring.

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS – also known as County Wildlife Sites) form a crucial part of our ecological network. The protection and, where possible, improvement of these sites is the most important conservation work we undertake beyond managing nature reserves. We survey sites, engage with owners and seek to get sites into positive management.

There are over 1,600 Local Wildlife Sites across our three counties. The Trust counts the numbers of sites we survey each year, the numbers of landowners we actively engage with and the numbers of sites where we have helped to bring about positive management. We also measure the overall percentage of Local Wildlife Sites in positive management.

This year two new lowland meadow Local Wildlife Sites covering 12ha were discovered in South Northamptonshire. The Scrub Off project cleared scrub from two calcareous grassland Local Wildlife Sites in Finedon and Kings Cliffe, Northamptonshire. Both sites are disused railways and work has increased areas of species rich grassland including plants such as field scabious and wild liquorice benefitting a range of species such as marbled white butterflies. Through Coronation Meadows funding, the Trust worked with Cambridge City Council to enhance New Bit County Wildlife Site, opposite the Cambridge Botanic Gardens.



Halse Cope Meadow wildlife site by Matt Johnson

Delivery – research and monitoring

The Trust's new Monitoring and Research Team is building on the success of the Ecology Groups programme. It also ensures the Trust's monitoring work feeds into, and informs, the conservation management of our nature reserves, and is better communicated to a wider audience. The team has launched an email newsletter, Local Wildlife In Depth, complementing our magazine Local Wildlife, and new monitoring and research pages and a blog have been created on the website, along with a Facebook group created for volunteers and staff to share information.

The team has increased our links with universities and research organisations. Students from Anglia Ruskin University have carried out projects on dormouse and bird populations using historical data. The team also provides in-house drone photography to monitor large scale habitat change, scrub control and wetland management. A new rapid grassland assessment method has been trialled at more than 20 reserves across the three counties.

Wildlife Trust Ecology Group volunteers have carried out monitoring of mammals, birds, plants and invertebrates, contributing over 5,700 hours as part of 174 monitoring projects across 65 reserves. These have included more than 45 breeding bird transects covering reserves in all three counties which identified lesser spotted

woodpecker at both Flitwick Moor and Hayley Wood. Hayley Wood also had spotted flycatcher, as did Stoke Wood End Quarter. The 10th Ecology Groups Conference took place at Cambourne Village College and was a great success with over 100 people attending.

The Ecology Groups led public bat walks for International Bat Night, promoting the Trust and demonstrating how we carry out surveying and monitoring, with more than 100 people taking part.

Bat transects monitored the rare barbastelle bat, with multiple records in Gamlingay Wood and Waresley and Gransden Woods, and a record at Southwick Wood.

The Trust recorded the highest number of live dormice in 10 years (11) and nests (15) from a June nest box check at Brampton Wood, and for the first time a dormouse was found in a hedge outside the reserve. In Northamptonshire, more dormice were found in one day at Souther Wood, part of Fermyn Woods, just north of our Titchmarsh reserve, than have been found in the last 10 years.

Silver-washed fritillaries had continued success on many sites, including Brampton Wood and Old Sulehay, and 142 species of water beetle, bug and dragonfly/damselfly were recorded over 15 reserves.

The Trust continues to host and support the three Local Biological Record Centres covering each county:

- The Bedfordshire Recording Monitoring Centre (BRMC) obtained funding from the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Trust to digitise historical records of molluscs and Orthoptera.
- The Cambridge and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC) Ten Year Anniversary Event was celebrated on Saturday 2nd May at Madingley Hall.
- The NBRC's WILDside project secured £70,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to provide a boost for wildlife recording activities, with a range of surveys to engage people in recording.



Rapid Grassland Assessment by Esther Clarke

Reaching out – education and community

We will engage with people to enhance the recognition and reputation of the Trust

The education and community team engaged with 19,802 people during 2015-16. This is a slight increase on the 2014-15 figures of 19,536. The number of people engaged in community activities continues to increase year on year in line with reaching out objectives (7,430 in 2013/14, 7,931 in 2014/15, 8,074 in 2015/16).

- The Trust worked in partnership with Nene Park Trust, Buglife and Froglife to plan and deliver the first Peterborough Wildlife Festival at Ferry Meadows Country Park. The final event attracted over 1,400 people.

Spitfire excavation by Matthew Roberts



- The number of Wildlife Watch groups has remained at 20 this year but the number of children attending has increased for the second year in a row to 1,694 (1,576 in 2014-15). Cambourne Wildlife Watch claimed the top prize of 'Best Watch Group' in the national RSWT Watch group of the Year competition.

- The Trust has 14 Local Groups who play active roles locally in raising awareness about wildlife and the Wildlife Trust. This year Local Groups raised £16,232 (£16,149 in 2014-15).

The Great Fen

- In October the Great Fen team organised the excavation of a World War II Spitfire near Holme Fen. The media and community interest in the event was among the strongest in the Trust's recent history. The new Great Fen archaeology group supported the excavation, there were tours of the excavation for more than 200 local people, and 383 people visited the Spitfire themed Great Fen Discovery Day at Holmewood Hall.

- The Great Fen – where you can see the Milky Way on a clear night – was designated as a Dark Sky Discovery Site by the Science and Technologies Facilities Council – only the third in the East of England.

Nene Valley

- In the Nene Valley, our Living Nene project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, came to an end in August.
- We received 500 responses to our survey about the Wildlife Trust's vision for the Nene Wetlands and our Rushden Lakes Visitor Centre that is due to open its doors in 2017.

Ouse Valley

- We were supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund to deliver a suite of education and community activities at Godmanchester nature reserve in the Ouse Valley. The project finished in October 2015. It attracted more than 40 volunteers who have enthusiastically given their time to make the site the wonderful place it is now.

North Chilterns Chalk

- Education and community activity on the North Chilterns Chalk continues to establish connections with the local community and support management of the urban fringe nature reserves.

Wildlife Training Workshops

Wildlife Training Workshops are available free to all our active volunteers. Our training programme remains among the most comprehensive and highly regarded in the country. In the last financial year, 43 workshops were programmed with 632 places offered.

Our Trustees

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Baroness Young of Old Scone

Vice Presidents

Mr Michael Allen
 Prof David Bellamy
 Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey, Bt.
 Sir Hugh Duberly
 Dr Norman Moore (died 21 October 2015)
 Mr Ioan Thomas

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 Mr Tony Juniper (retired 10 Oct 2015)
 Cllr Bill Parker (retired 10 Oct 2015)
 Sir John Robinson, Bt. (retired 10 Oct 2015)
 Mr Paul Solon
 Prof William Stephens
 Dr Ed Turner (appointed 10 Oct 2015)
 Dr Matt Walpole

Wildlife Guardians

Our Wildlife Guardians scheme, which was simplified in 2015, continues to be strongly supported and has seen some growth in the number of Wildlife Guardians. Wildlife Guardian subscriptions provided circa **£42,000, showing a retention rate of 96%, with 45 Guardians at the end of 2015-16 and an increase of nine people (25%).**

By joining as a Wildlife Guardian you can help us to plan for the future, knowing that the funds we need to make a difference are in place. You will help create thriving habitats for wildlife. And you will help protect some of our rarest and most beautiful species of plants, insects, birds and animals.

There are three levels of Guardianship, starting with Attenborough at £600 per annum. As a Guardian you will receive exclusive benefits, including project updates, tours, visits and event invitations.

Tribute to a Vice President

It is with sadness that we record the death of Dr Norman Moore, on 21 October 2015. Norman was one of the leading conservationists in post-war Britain, perhaps best known for his pioneering research, carried out at Monks Wood Research Station in Huntingdonshire (now Cambridgeshire), on DDT and other pesticides, demonstrating their impacts on birds of prey. He was chief scientific advisor to the then Nature Conservancy Council, wrote the Guidelines for the selection of SSSIs, and was instrumental in founding the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.

As an ecologist, Norman played an international role in dragonfly conservation, and also had a lifelong involvement with Woodwalton Fen NNR. Norman lived in Cambridgeshire for most of his life, and was a strong advocate of the Trust's Great Fen vision.



People and Culture

Our staff and volunteers will excel in their roles

The Trust benefits from the contributions of more than 1,000 volunteers, who are essential to all aspects of our Trust's work. Our nature reserve wardens and volunteers help to manage our nature reserves and to greet and help visitors. Mid-week work parties and corporate work teams tackle conservation management tasks on reserves. Watch leaders provide exciting activities for younger members. Local Group volunteers organise a diverse and fascinating range of talks, walks and events. Ecology Group volunteers monitor our nature reserves, office volunteers help with a huge range of tasks, and Trustees provide governance and support to the staff.



Volunteers at Wilson's Pits by Pete Johnstone

Partners

We will build strong and effective partnerships that benefit wildlife, the Trust and others

The success of the Trust comes primarily from our supporters. The financial and time contributions from supporters are the lifeblood of the Trust and it is largely their generosity that has enabled us to undertake much of the Trust's essential conservation work during the year. Increasing the supporter base and membership will continue to be a key priority as this will have a direct effect on our capacity to do more for nature conservation. Without the support and co-operation of a huge number of people, we would have achieved little during the year. The support of members, corporate members, sponsors, charitable trusts, government organisations at all levels and our professional advisers has been vital, as has the remarkably dedicated work of our volunteers and staff.

Financial support has come from many quarters, and we are particularly grateful for all the monies received from in memoriam giving, and to those people who generously remembered us with a gift in their will. Legacies have made a substantial contribution to the work of the Trust in recent years and we are always very grateful when someone remembers us in their will. We are doing more work to encourage more supporters to remember us in this way. We were the grateful beneficiary of a significant legacy this year of £30,000, left to us in the will of Mrs Audrey Linzell. This year we also received legacies from: Miss Bridget Smith, Mrs Marian Couchman, Miss Anne Bradbury, Mrs Joy Simpson, Mr Graham Soden and Mrs Gillian Bradley.

Membership is very important to the Trust because we are only as strong as our supporters, who also give us credibility and influence. At the end of March 2016 the Trust had 35,893 members which was a 1.3% net decrease from the previous year although great efforts were made to retain existing supporters. Members provide the Trust's largest single source of income with £960,436 income and £253,322 Gift Aid in 2015/16. Corporate membership subscriptions provided £45,574 showing a 7.5% increase.

As at March 2016 our corporate members were:

PLATINUM

The Biodiversity Consultancy,
Cambridge Building Society

GOLD

Hewitsons, Prologis UK Ltd,
UK Power Networks

SILVER

Anglian Water Ltd, Arqiva Ltd, Central England Co-operative, NFU Mutual Cambridge, Orton Hall Hotel and Spa, PalmerSport, Scott Bader, Scudamore's Punting Company, Unilever Research Colworth

BRONZE

Alpro Soya, Building Services Design, Cambridge Steiner School, Cambridge University Press, Center Parcs Woburn Forest, Colpac Ltd, David Ball Group, Gardenworks Tree Surgery, Granta Park, Kier Homes, KierWSP, Lafarge Tarmac, Method, Roem Ltd, Wesley Coe

STANDARD

Acorn House Veterinary Surgery, An Norvys, Athene Communications, Barnwell Trailers, British Racing Drivers' Club, Cambridge Belfry Hotel, Cambridge Econometrics Ltd, Cambridge Regional College, Cambridge Water Company, Canoe2, Cemex, Centrica (Peterborough Power Station), Cranfield University, Creative Tops, Downing College Cambridge, GreenAir Cars, Hellidon Lakes Golf & Spa Hotel, Highgate House, JB Shropshire & Sons, The Jordans & Ryvita Company Ltd, Lockhart Garrett Ltd, The Marshall Group of Companies, Mott MacDonald, Moulton College Ltd, Perkins Group Ltd, Richard Buxton Environmental & Public Law, Rotary Club of St Neots St Mary's, RPS Group, RWE Generation UK, Spendlove Contracting, Vine House Farm, Weetabix, Wellcome Trust, Whittlebury Park LLP, Willowbrook Construction

We also received additional support

from: Anglian Water, Arjuna Wholefoods, ARM Holdings, BGL Group, British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Caterpillar Foundation, Canoe2, Center Parcs, Creative Tops, CSR, Dobbies, Godmanchester Photographic Society

We would also like to thank the following who have supported the Trust financially and with help in kind:

The Alan Evans Memorial Trust
Amptill Town Council
The Banister Charitable Trust
The Barbara Price Charitable Trust
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity
The Benham Charitable Settlement
The Mr and Mrs M G M Bevan Charitable Trust
Biffa Award
Butterfly Conservation
The Cambridge Chrysalis Trust
Central Bedfordshire Council
The Chapman Charitable Trust
Chilterns Conservation Board
The Christopher H R Reeves Charitable Trust
The Clark Bradbury Charitable Trust
Daventry District Council
The Desborough Community Development Trust
The Douglas Compton James Charitable Trust
East Northamptonshire Council Environment Agency
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Fenland District Council
The Friends of Paxton Pits
The Frederick and Phyllis Cann Charitable Trust
Forestry Commission
Gamlingay Community Turbine Tithe Fund

The Greensand Trust
Heritage Lottery Fund
Huntingdonshire District Council
IBC Charity Fund
Little Paxton Scarecrow Festival Committee
Luton Borough Council
The M S Staples Charitable Trust
The Maud Elkington Charitable Trust
The Mitchell Trust
Middle Level Commissioners
Natural England
North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit
Peterborough City Council
The Raven Charitable Trust
The Red Tile Wind Farm Trust
The Richard Radcliffe Charitable Trust
River Nene Regional Park
River Restoration Centre
The Robin and Henrietta Woods Charitable Trust (1976)
RSPB
Sandy Town Council
St Mary's Charity
Tarmac
The Thriplow Charitable Trust
University of Northampton
Veolia Environmental Trust
Viridor Credits
Whittlesey Town Council
The Wild Flower Society
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
The Wixamtree Trust
WREN Community Action Fund

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Company number

2534145

Registered Charity number

1000412



Cover image:
Duke of Burgundy by Jim Higham



Family at Tumpington Meadows by Fiona Gilsenan