



Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire

The Wildlife Trust takes a whole
ecosystem approach to nature
conservation, working from
landscape to landmark

2020 - 2025

Our Wildlife Trust

The next five years

For over 20 years, we have created larger nature reserves, supported the creation of wildlife friendly land between these reserves, and championed landscape-scale conservation – we call this a Living Landscape. We chose Living Landscapes for wildlife and have delivered them with and for people, but we know we need to go much further and faster. The next five years will provide the crucial groundwork for nature's recovery during the next 50 years.

Laura Downton

Why do we need nature?

Many of us value wildlife in its own right, but there are many compelling and urgent reasons to value and protect our natural environment.

The coronavirus pandemic brought into sharp relief the vital role nature plays in supporting people from all walks of life during challenging times. Even before the outbreak, levels of obesity and mental health problems had reached an all-time high. The extensive research on the powerful impact of nature on improving health and wellbeing has never been more relevant.

At the same time, nature is playing a heroic role in limiting impacts of the climate emergency now facing the world. The sea-level is rising; floods, droughts and wildfires are becoming a fact of life. Healthy natural systems absorb huge amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases but have the potential to play a vastly bigger part if looked after better.

Perhaps the biggest argument for nature though lies in the essential role healthy natural ecosystems play in our very survival, creating life-giving resources such as food, water and oxygen.



Our need for nature has never been clearer. Sadly, the threat to nature has never been greater.

We are undergoing a major ecological crisis. Wildlife and wild places are being damaged, destroyed and pushed to the margins of our lives. Catastrophic species loss means the way we experience nature is already different today compared with the experiences of our parents and grandparents. Our natural habitats take years or even centuries to establish. Once lost they are difficult to replace, and species extinction is forever.

The next five years also holds additional challenges, particularly for our three counties;

- The Ox-Cam Arc developments will start in earnest with potential to threaten nature in myriad ways.
- Our exit from the EU means agri-environment policies will be remodelled, presenting opportunities for strengthening them, but also exposing us to the risk of weakened protection.
- The impact of the response to Covid-19 is hard to predict, but is likely to include economic challenges for all levels of society for some years to come.

But we have the skills and experience to bring wildlife back.

We must fight to conserve our remaining wildlife and find every opportunity to enable nature to recover. We must cultivate nature-based solutions to tackle the enormous global challenges we face. The case for nature conservation is clear. We need to be robust, flexible and ambitious to address it. The state of the environment demands it; human health and wellbeing demands it; and the future deserves it. With your help, we can bring wildlife back.

Wildlife, including once common species, is in serious trouble.



Claire Haskins, John Bridges, Alistair Grant

5 YEARS IN 4 STEPS

Bringing Wildlife Back: Building a Nature Recovery Network

For nature to recover, or better still to thrive, we must include all wildlife across all ecosystems in our plans. This has long been our approach and our strength.

Since 2000, we have been working towards the concept of 'Living Landscapes', taking nature conservation beyond reserve boundaries to create natural networks in areas especially important to wildlife. We are now taking this approach further. For nature to recover we know we need these networks to be bigger. They need to be mapped with routes for growth and connection identified. They need to join with our neighbours to form national networks and they need to be protected by law.

To achieve this big ambition we have set four priority areas for the next five years.

1 We will make Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire wilder

Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire are home to many special and unique natural habitats as well as a large number of rare and specialist species. From ancient woodlands to floodplain meadows, from fen violets to black hairstreak butterflies, our counties still hold highly valuable pockets of nature. But they also hold the seeds for a bigger transformation. Our work protecting key wildlife habitats and creating a local Nature Recovery Network will help sow these seeds – figuratively and literally!

How we will achieve this:

- Campaign to put wildlife at the heart of development plans for the OxCam Arc and across the three Counties, with a target of doubling the amount of nature-rich land.
- Acquire strategically important land to deliver conservation and engagement priorities.
- Advise on and manage more natural greenspaces for developers, always ensuring big gains for biodiversity whilst providing sustainable income streams for our work.
- Increase the proportion of nature reserves and Local Wildlife Sites in favourable ecological condition, through direct management and through our landowner advisory service.
- Inspire, advise and support farmers and other landowners to embed wildlife-friendly practices, such as through our Farming for the Future and Water Works partnerships.
- Work with partners to develop healthier rivers, streams and wetlands throughout the Nene, Flit Vale, Great Ouse and Cam valleys.



Robert Enderby

We always put local wildlife and local people first.



Our aim is to improve and enlarge habitats suitable for all wildlife and people.

Rebecca Neal



Our monitoring and research helps us to take care of our rare specialist species like green-winged orchids

Brian Eversham



Chris Gomersall/2020Vision

Surveys tell us which conservation methods really work.

2 We will undertake more research to better understand our wildlife and what it needs

Active nature conservation is a recent human endeavour, with new approaches being developed all the time. We look to science through our research and surveys to identify which approaches work and can be applied widely and effectively. We intend to cement our position within the scientific nature conservation community as an evidence-led organisation.

How we will achieve this:

- Strengthen our capacity for research and surveys, to improve our conservation management.
- Deliver a biodiversity skills training programme that builds a broad variety of knowledge in conservation and identification of important species groups.
- Work more collaboratively with universities and other research centres.
- Support Biological Records Centres and the local recorders network.

3 We will inspire more people to love and take action for nature

In the past, the harmony between people and nature was more obvious. We have embarked on a damaging downward spiral of disconnection; as we are increasingly detached we value it less and the quality of our natural environment declines. We disconnect further and wonder why nature doesn't nourish us as it used to. It is vital that we reverse this disconnect, both for our own sakes and to aid nature's recovery.

How we will achieve this:

- Deliver an exciting education programme, to include new Forest School opportunities, teacher & youth training and new health & wellbeing initiatives.
- Engage with a more diverse audience, with support already gained for specific initiatives across all three counties, such as Chalkscapes in Bedfordshire.
- Recruit and support members and volunteers individually, in families or in the work place to support our vital work, with a new focus on engaging young people.
- Raise visibility and connection with our cause, such as by wider promotion of our events, improved site signage and by continually reviewing and improving communications.



Paul Harris/2020vision

Conservation comes from love and caring and that comes with access to nature.

4 We will work nationally when it benefits wildlife locally

Our three counties connect to the rest of Britain, Europe and the world in so many ways: geographically, politically, culturally and biologically. Nature doesn't recognise human boundaries and the way it fares here depends almost as much on what happens elsewhere as on what we can do in our three counties. Changing government plans and strategies, climate change, pollution, and the threats to migratory wildlife that breed here all affect local wildlife. If we want wildlife to thrive locally, we need to engage at every level of human society.

How we will achieve this:

- Campaign to ensure that MPs, Councillors, teachers, parents and other influential people recognise the need for nature's recovery and adopt our ideas as part of their agendas.
- Launch a carbon-offsetting scheme through our Great Fen peatland restoration project.
- Explore and develop other natural solutions to the climate crisis and other human-made problems.
- Work tirelessly to help create, and implement, national nature recovery strategies, gaining strength from the national network of Wildlife Trusts.



Daniel Zeichner MP

We make the case for nature conservation at every level of society.



Please be part of our success over the next five years. Nature conservation is for us all.



Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
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Company Registration No. 2534145 (England and Wales).
Registered Charity No. 1000412.