



Wildlife Trust for
**Beds, Cambs
& Northants**

Impact Report

2025–26

wildlifebcn.org

Registered Charity No. 1000412. Company Registration No. 2534145 (England and Wales).
Blue tit on willow at Nene Wetlands by Rachel Lynn Martin.



Chair's Foreword



Welcome to the annual *Impact Report* for the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants.

We have completed the first year of our new highly ambitious and stretching Five Year Plan which was launched in April 2025 so this report

summarises the progress we have made.

As I said at our AGM last year, this new plan emphasises urgency, ambition, scale and impact in our efforts to make a wilder future in our region. Nature needs us more than ever so we are pushing ourselves and persuading others to do more for wildlife.

Ambition has to be matched by action so, to hold ourselves accountable to you, our supporters and funders, we have developed a series of impact measures which will tell the story of not just what we are doing but the real difference we are making.

Our operating environment continues to create challenges for us – every new member is hard won, every donation and grant is more competitive, and every piece of communication has to cut through the noise and misinformation of our fast-paced modern digital world.

The Government continues to present nature as a block to its ambitions for economic growth – though its recent report on global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security* perhaps signals a long overdue dawning realisation that ultimately we depend on nature, rather than nature depending on us.

Despite difficult times it has been a year of hope at the Trust. The beavers at our Nene Wetlands reserve are breeding, we are reviving our woodlands in the face of ash dieback disease, wetlands are being creatively reinstated on the Great Fen, and plans are underway to ensure our biggest purchase of Strawberry Hill can be accessed sensitively and is maintained as an oasis of birdsong.

The Trust has been investing in our human future too by running a trainee placement scheme to set the conservationists of the future off on their career path (see page 10). I was lucky enough to hear them giving a presentation to us trustees about the work they had been getting involved in. Their positivity and energy was an uplifting tonic – if they represent the future of the conservation movement then perhaps we really can be genuinely hopeful that nature on our island will thrive once again.

The Trust is creating a community where everyone's contribution, however small, whether financial or voluntary, is essential and valued.

All this work needs funding. Last year we launched our Wilder Future Fund and the response has been fantastic.

"I can think of no other organisation that has, can and will do so much to protect and help the wildlife of our three counties to thrive," commented one generous donor. "Keep going. We need you more than ever!" said another.

This sort of feedback means so much and reminds us that we have an obligation to protect nature in our region, not just for the special species and habitats it is home to – but for everyone who lives and works in our three wonderful counties.

I am honoured to introduce this report and delighted that it includes this year an afterword from our distinguished president Sir Partha Dasgupta – see page 16. Thank you for your support.

Hilary Allison, Chair of the Council

* Global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security - A national security assessment - Defra, published January 2026 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/696e0eae719d-837d69afc7de/National_security_assessment_-_global_biodiversity_loss_ecosystem_collapse_and_national_security.pdf

Common Darter at Farthinghoe Reserve
by Andy Gamble



Some of the people we work with

Nature is a network of interlinking relationships. Here are some of the people we have worked with over the past year.



“We’re firm believers that all of us can play a role in tackling climate change – especially with the choices we make on a personal and local level. The opportunity to be part of that with the

BCN Wildlife Trust – and by extension enable our customers to support amazing initiatives like the protection of biodiversity at Strawberry Hill – means we see the Trust as the perfect partner to help us deliver our own environmental restoration goals.”

Dan O’Sullivan, Meaningful Planet, WTBCN Corporate Supporter



“Nature reserves play a vital role in supporting the wellbeing of people across South Cambridgeshire. These green spaces offer a place to unwind, connect with wildlife, and enjoy the

restorative benefits of being outdoors. They strengthen our communities, boost mental and physical health, and help protect the rich biodiversity that makes our area so special. By supporting organisations like the Wildlife Trust, we’re helping to safeguard these cherished landscapes for current and future generations.”

Cllr Peter Sandford, chair of South Cambridgeshire District Council, who chose Wildlife Trust BCN as its charity of the year from 2025–2026.



“The Wildlife Trust’s Paxton Pits education centre is the perfect place to bring my class. The people that run the place are amazing, they make it a really engaging day out for the children.

They are getting hands on experience of things we can’t offer them in school and are just having the best time putting into practice the things we learn in the classroom. Historically, children were outside more but lots of their hobbies now are indoor activities so bringing them outside and being at one with nature is fantastic. It’s amazing what nature can do – the children are just really happy and engaged here.”

Sammy Evans, Primary School Teacher, Waterbeach Community Primary School



“As Mayor of Ramsey, I have been delighted to work with the Wildlife Trust BCN at the Great Fen to protect the nature reserves, wildlife and their habitats within our local area. I have

particularly enjoyed the projects introducing children and young people to nature identification and conservation. The nature reserves are helping with the local visitor economy and are an asset to our community. The Wildlife Trust are getting things just right with the balance of protection and well-planned events within the Great Fen and Ramsey Heights Countryside Centre. Long may this continue.”

Val Fendley, Mayor of Ramsey

Paxton Pits 15 year celebration event (Holly Wilkinson)



Strategic Report

Our Vision

People close to nature, in a land rich in wildlife

What do we do?



Nature conservation on our nature reserves

We manage over 100 nature reserves including some of Britain's rarest habitats such as ancient woodlands, wild fen, and wildflower meadows.



Provide nature conservation advice and support to landowners

We work beyond the boundaries of our nature reserves by advising landowners who own and manage important sites for wildlife.



Monitor and research wildlife

We carry out surveys to enable us to monitor population trends and assess the success of our practical habitat management.



Inspire a love of nature

We support people to learn more about local nature through our events, training workshops and school programmes and we help them reap the benefits of simply connecting with nature.



Advocate for wildlife

We campaign for a Wilder Future by lobbying local and national government for better protection of wildlife, and we review and respond to local development plans, ensuring we can achieve the biggest impacts possible.



Provide vital green spaces to all sectors of society.

We improve people's lives and wellbeing by giving them places close to their communities to meet, escape, and unwind.

We do all of this work with a Nature Recovery Network in mind – local activities joining together to create a national network of linked spaces – because we believe that a well-connected landscape is better for wildlife and for people.

Why is our work important?

Nature has an intrinsic value, but healthy green spaces also provide ecosystem services including:

- Climate regulation
- Mental and physical health improvements
- Pollination of food crops
- Flood alleviation
- Healthy soils

Pressures such as agricultural intensification, urbanisation and climate change are affecting our wildlife.

19%
Across the UK species studied have declined on average by 19% since 1970*

16%
Nearly one in six species are threatened with extinction from Great Britain*

*State of Nature Report 2023



Long-tailed tit at Farthinghoe Nature Reserve by Andy Gamble

Our Strategic Goals

G1

Nature in recovery

G2

People taking action

G3

Natural solutions

Our Strategic Transformations

1

Delivering a nature recovery network

2

Empowering our communities

3

Step change in fundraising

4

Digital transformation

5

Breaking down barriers

Our Enabling Priorities

1

Good governance and operational excellence

2

Retaining and building a wide supporter base

3

Ensuring our reserves are the foundations for nature's recovery

4

Sustainability

5

Marketing and brand

6

Invest in highly skilled, diverse staff and movement-wide learning

7

Volunteering

8

Speak with a bold and confident voice

Goal 1: Nature in Recovery



Matt Jackson
Director of Conservation

This year the Trust was involved in the development of the four Local Nature Recovery Strategies that cover our region. Final plans were approved for some areas, and

the rest reached the public consultation phase. The strategies, developed by local authorities in partnership with conservation organisations, landowners and local experts, provide a statutory framework for targeting conservation action in the wider countryside.

In our first full year at Strawberry Hill in Bedfordshire we've worked with a range of partners to monitor species, create a series of ponds and carefully prepare it to make it accessible to the public without impacting on the wildlife and the special tranquil nature of the site.

Two beaver kits were born in the enclosure at the Nene Wetlands, the first newborn beavers in the county for more than 800 years. Within their first year the family have had an amazing effect on the habitat within the enclosure, with new wet areas and channels dug out, which, together with their coppicing activity, has rapidly created a much more varied range of habitats.

Our Senior Monitoring and Research Officer, Gwen Hitchcock, published a summary of 10 years of monitoring the translocation (moving from one site to another) of slow worms in Bedfordshire. The Luton-Dunstable guided busway impacted on slow worm

populations, which were moved to nearby areas, and it's heartening to see that the populations have thrived in the selected areas over that time – a testament to successful habitat management on our own reserves and on Luton Borough Council sites nearby.

Sadly we said goodbye to Grafham Water Nature Reserve at the end of March as its management reverted to Anglian Water, and a heartfelt thanks from myself, the rest of the directors and Trustees must go out to the staff and volunteers who have cared for it so well over the years.

Case Study: Strawberry Hill

Our first full year at Strawberry Hill has been a busy time. Working with other nature groups to survey species has given us a better understanding of what is there and creating a series of ponds has created new wet areas to support insects, birds and more.



Holly Wilkinson



Watch this highlight video of some of our activity over the past year.



Staff visited or registered **86 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and 48 potential sites.** Across BCN, **49% of LWS are in positive management.**



100% of our woodland reserves are in moderate or good condition. **90% of our grassland reserves** are in moderate or good condition – but of these **15% are currently declining.**



Our volunteers gave us **53,470 hours** of their time over the past year.



4.3km of new ditches were dug to bring water into habitats in the Great Fen.



We helped create **20 new ponds in Cambridgeshire.**



Our teams have completed **40 grassland surveys**, helping to shape management plans and tracking the health of nature reserves over time.



Volunteers have carried out **1,800 hours of monitoring and research across 15 projects**, helping us gather vital data about sites.



We have **analysed 194.5 hours of recorded bat data** from our reserves and **identified 11 bat species** using 12 different sites.



The hosted Local Environmental Record Centres have added **613,339 species records to their databases** improving species and information available to planners, developers and researchers.

Case Study: Woodland monitoring and research

Our three counties are still among the least wooded in the UK. However, nearly half of the nature reserves we manage include some woodland. With ongoing impacts from new pests and diseases, expanding deer populations, and climate change, it is essential that we know what condition our woodlands are in. Therefore, we have recently increased our woodland monitoring work in several ways.

We started a programme of standardised, repeatable woodland condition monitoring, based on detailed sampling within each wood looking at structure, species present and tree health. After several years of surveys, we can see clearly that deer browsing and tree disease (specifically ash dieback) are having major impacts. Positively, we have also discovered some new locations for ancient woodland species and a few very impressive mature trees. We have also gained a better understanding of the wide range of tree species our reserves support. The amount of elm we have recorded provides hope that even species severely affected by disease will continue to be important parts of our woodlands in future.

We have also undertaken specific management trials aimed at understanding how to tackle some key management challenges. These have returned encouraging results. Trials of re-profiling rides to improve drainage – increasingly important as climate change brings wetter winters – have found a resulting improvement in ground conditions. Importantly this was without negative impacts on ride flora. Trials of a new deer deterrent spray found it did discourage deer from browsing coppice.

All of this is helping to give our reserves management staff a more detailed picture of our sites, as well as providing evidence to support management decisions.

Waresley Wood bluebells

Goal 2: People Taking Action



Pete Stubbs
Director of Engagement

This year the Trust has been working towards a more impactful way of engaging with our communities, moving away from 'doing things for' them and towards

'doing things with' them. By beginning to adopt a Team Wilder way of working, a form of community organising, we've been able to forge deeper connections with communities and empower them to take action for nature.

School visits to our sites continue to have a transformative impact on pupils' wellbeing, giving them the access to nature that they lack at home. At Paxton Pits we have witnessed a child with selective mutism at school speaking about the wildlife at the centre – time in nature really can tackle anxiety and improve mental wellbeing! In Northants, the team have been working with a group of Wilder Schools, forming a more meaningful connection over a series of outreach visits. These relationships allow us to reach more pupils and empower the schools to take action for nature on their own site which will lead to greater provision for pupils beyond individual day trips.

The past year, through National Lottery funding, has also seen us launch two successful traineeship programmes. These have enabled us to provide a pathway into green careers for young people, giving them experience of varied roles within the conservation sector. In Luton and the Great Fen, trainees have

developed skills in engagement, monitoring, practical conservation and communications, leading to one job with the National Trust and one conservation MSc in Japan (exploring the effect of paddy field abandonment on amphibian populations) (see page 10 case study).

The positive impact that time in nature can have on people's lives cannot be overstated. Our communities are as important as our wildlife; we will continue to facilitate access to nature and grow relationships to allow people to make a real difference for nature in their local spaces.



Watch the video here

Case Study: 15 years of Paxton Pits

Our education centre at Paxton Pits in St Neots opened its doors in 2010 and we recently held a very special event with families and volunteers who have been involved over the years to celebrate the impact this special place has had on young people's lives.



Our stories appeared in regional media outlets **62 times** and in national media outlets **six times** over the past year.



Through our Team Wilder initiative we engaged with **29 community groups**.



At the end of the 25/26 financial year the Trust had **20,224 memberships**.



We have engaged with **9,034 school pupils**.



We have worked with **81 individual schools** in our region.



We ran **43 Forest School sessions for SEN groups** at 3 different locations.



We ran **664 community engagement sessions**.



Our staff have spent **1,276.5 hours delivering 240 events for adults, 239 events for children and 98 events for families**.



Our Wilder Future Fund **raised almost £300,000** in its first year.

Case Study: Wilder Luton



Some of our Wilder Luton volunteers join trainee Aaron to lay a hedge at Bramingham Park

The Wilder Luton project continues to find new ways of engaging people with their local landscape, providing opportunities to learn new skills and helping to build community. Over the past year we ran regular activities like the Walk in the Park programme (11 walks for 90 people) and our children's clubs at Wardown Park.

We engaged with four primary schools running assemblies, workshops or offering advice on improving their grounds for biodiversity and we are now in contact with six secondary schools, including an Islamic Boys School, where we run practical sessions making bird tables, bird boxes and creating wildlife gardens.

Our volunteers help to manage public sites for wildlife including 25 people laying a hedge at Bramingham Park and 16 more planting 450 trees on Stopsley Common. Activities like these not only improve the environment but they connect those involved with nature and each other, give them new skills and raise our profile.

We have been focusing more on young people by providing different ways to explore nature and learn new skills. We ran three youth ranger sessions, attended by 25 young people, and delivered three sessions for students from Barnfield College who are new to Luton and learning to speak English. This was a great chance for them to enjoy a different part of Luton. We also ran two activities for young people not in education or training.

Building these links with youth organisations helped us to promote two paid traineeships which ran from September 2025 to February 2026. Thirteen young people applied and we enjoyed providing solid work experience to the two successful candidates.

In February we ran an event showcasing a film about the chalk hills of Luton, commissioned by the Wilder Luton project. It was attended by 130 people, and we look forward to sharing this film more widely and in different settings.

Trainees

Over the past year we have been very lucky to host five fantastic trainees at the Trust. Three young people joined our Great Fen team for six months and two joined our Wilder Luton project.

While we still rely on volunteer positions to deliver our work this is an important step towards a future where unpaid placements are phased out, levelling the field and opening up careers in conservation to the most talented and passionate individuals in society regardless of their background.

We are very grateful to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for supporting these placements.

Kaitlyn Goodwin, Peatland Progress trainee

“I’ve learnt a lot from creating digital marketing plans, running a social media page and supporting various family and adult nature events to conducting protected species surveys and coppicing trees. Another big thing I got out of the traineeship is confidence. From all of the experiences, to the amazing staff and volunteers I’ve met, I have grown to feel confident in my knowledge, to ask questions, to apply for different opportunities, to have a place within the conservation world, and to continue growing professionally as an ecologist. I was able to apply for jobs that I am 100% sure I would not have been able to apply to beforehand. I have now successfully attained a job as Assistant Ranger at Blakeney Point, Norfolk with the National Trust thanks to my time at the Wildlife Trust BCN!”

Ellen Blackmore, Peatland Progress trainee

“I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to join the Wildlife Trust BCN as a Peatland Progress Trainee. Prior to this role, I found it incredibly difficult to break

into the conservation sector and lacked relevant practical experience, despite holding an MSci in Environmental Science. I was also unable to commit to long-term volunteering, so the fact that this traineeship was a paid position made it accessible to me in a way that previous opportunities had not been. During the traineeship, I gained a wide breadth of experience. As a result, I am now in a much stronger position when applying for new roles, and I am very grateful for the opportunity and experience this traineeship has provided.”

Talia Henman, Wilder Luton Trainee

“This traineeship has been an invaluable gateway into the conservation sector and has helped me to build confidence in my knowledge of UK wildlife and in my personal and practical skills. I have gotten to meet so many passionate people that have given amazing advice and overall reaffirmed my love for nature and conservation. Getting involved in the different types of work within each area of the Wildlife Trust has given me a comprehensive understanding of the conservation sector and allowed me to explore personal areas of interest that I may wish to pursue in my future career.”

Katie Bolton, Peatland Progress trainee

“When I completed my degree in 2024, what I had most in common with almost all of my fellow Zoology graduates was the struggle to get a job. I have gained so much from this traineeship in less than six months, and I am extremely grateful that organisations like the Wildlife Trust BCN are taking new steps to tackle the issue of job accessibility for young people in conservation. The traineeship gave me the skills, confidence and the financial breathing space to consider a big move for the next stage of my conservation career. I’m going to Japan to begin a Masters in the effect of paddy field abandonment on amphibian populations.”



Luton trainees
Aaron and Talia



Trainee Kaitlyn smelling
aniseed funnel



Trainee Katie using an
auger to sample soil

Goal 3: Natural Solutions



Brian Eversham
Chief Executive

Our reserves and the communities we serve are vitally important for the Trust – they are the bread and butter of what we do. The Natural Solutions goal of our new Five Year Plan, however, was written into our strategy to push ourselves to think more widely when it comes to the changes we want to see for the environment.

We challenged ourselves to inform and engage with decision makers, influence public debate on the importance of nature for all of us and use what we have learnt locally to make a difference beyond our borders. It's certainly the hardest of our three goals to quantify – which is why there is no column of neat statistics on this

page – but we must stay focused on the positive impact we're having even if it is fiendishly hard to measure.

This year has seen us reaching out to all the MPs in our region, many of whom are new to political life, spending time to meet several of them and take them for, what I hope were, eye-opening visits to our reserves. Some are on the same page as us, and are actively campaigning for the protection of chalk streams, some are interested to hear what green spaces mean for their constituents, others have not taken the time to respond. But we will continue to knock on their doors until they do.

Influencing key audiences has also been a key feature of our work in the Nene Valley over the past year. Our new Special Protection Area (SPA) Engagement officer has led a busy programme of events to raise the profile of the habitat, and our family of Natural Solutions champions – the beavers which were introduced last year – have made headlines and attracted thousands of visitors to the Nene Wetlands Nature Reserve.

The Great Fen is the biggest showcase we have of the power of nature to meet the large scale challenges of climate, biodiversity decline, soil health and sustainable farming, and it's had one of its busiest years ever. Not only have we created a brand new wetland at New Decoy Farm (see case study on page 12) but our resident PhD student Georgemma Hunt has completed her study into the potential for sustainable building materials produced in the Fens, and we have developed new resources including a mobile 'Tiny House' to take our learnings on the road. At nearby Speechly's Farm we have secured long-term income through innovative carbon financing. Through the high integrity Wilder Carbon standard, we're

now selling carbon units and receiving considerable interest from forward thinking, responsible businesses.

I'm excited to see that we have built on previous hard work and have started the new Five Year Plan period with a keener focus on the bigger picture and the positive influence we can have on society.

Case Study: Beavers at Nene Wetlands

In February 2025 we released a family of beavers at Delta Pit in the Nene Wetlands. They have been very busy managing the woodland, creating water channels and having two kits.



Beaver Trust



Find out more
in this video



Siân Williams & Rebecca Green
undertaking rapid grassland
survey at Houghton Meadows

Holly Wilkinson

Case Study: New Decoy and inspiring communities at the Great Fen

Exciting developments have been taking place at the Great Fen over the past year with the completion of a new wetland at New Decoy Farm. There is now a network of wet grassland, ditches, pools and a lake which started to fill with water over winter. Our specialist contractors deployed diggers to turn the former arable land into 25 hectares – equivalent to 60 football pitches – of new wetland habitat.

The area around the water's edge was seeded with grassland plants last year using a state of the art agricultural drone which sprayed a seed mix suspended in liquid. This is the start of work funded by the Co-op Foundation's Carbon Innovation Fund to test new ways to sow, manage and monitor crops sustainably on peatlands.

More wildlife is arriving on site all the time including lapwings and dragonflies, and we will continue to monitor the area carefully to record the arrival of wading birds, insects, amphibians and mammals including otters and water voles.

It is fantastic to have a wetland that can be seen from the road and we hope to have the paths reopened for visitors in the summer. We also began work on developing a new visitor hub at New Decoy Farm – with a new parking area which will be used for events.

Elsewhere on the Great Fen inspiring local people has taken many forms – from individual and small group counselling in a nature setting, to the hugely successful Apple and Harvest fair in Ramsey with over a thousand attendees. The work we do really touches people's lives and moves them to action – a particular highlight was a Furniture from Wetland Plants workshop hosted at Ramsey Heights, where a group of young people learned about materials science and sustainability, designing and building stools – helping to change their life goals and aspirations.

Finance

Total income:
£8,720,363

£1,176,635

Donations, legacies and corporate sponsorship

We are hugely grateful to all those individuals and organisations who have given to fund our work over the past year. We remember with gratitude our generous supporters from whom we received a gift in their Will.

£1,725,385

Membership (and Gift Aid)

Our members and corporate members not only provide substantial unrestricted funds that can be used where the need is greatest, they also give strength to our voice when advocating and campaigning for wildlife.

£2,688,135

Grants

The grants we are awarded each year are vital for some of our most important projects. Competition for grants is always high so we are thankful for the belief in our work of the grant makers who have supported us in the past year.

£567,079

Rural Payments Agency

Payments made by Defra for the environmental stewardship and management of land.

£1,031,625

Land advice, advocacy and management contracts

Income resulting from partnerships with land owners such as councils and property developers where an improvement for wildlife can be obtained.

£1,531,504

Business activities

Income from products and services we sell – including from our Nene Wetlands visitor centre and online shop – land rents, and event fees charged and other activities helping to create a sustainable income.

Total expenditure:
£8,648,711

£4,841,852

Nature reserve management

With over 100 nature reserves in our care, we continue to spend the largest portion of our income on maintaining and improving these precious habitats for wildlife.

£1,782,936

Conservation outside our reserves

Key to building strong Living Landscapes and to creating a Nature Recovery Network, this work encompasses our advocacy and advice for land managers, work on our waterways and partnership projects.

£1,170,241

Fundraising and income generation

Costs invested in generating financial support.

£853,682

Education and community engagement

Inspiring a love of nature is central to our mission. People will not protect what they do not love.

Gifts in Wills

We are always truly grateful when our supporters choose to make nature a part of their special ongoing legacy, entrusting us to protect the local species and habitats they love, beyond their lifetime. Every gift included in a Will has a significant impact on creating a wilder future for our three counties – creating places for wildlife to thrive and for people to enjoy.

This year, legacies have supported a range of conservation projects on reserves, helped us buy vital equipment, carry out monitoring and advise landowners.

Gifts in Wills are fundamental to making our wilder future a reality.

We deeply appreciate the recent legacy gifts from our generous supporters, in particular:

Julia Ball
Gavin Boyd
Nigel Brynolf-Trett
Peter Cain
Brian Dickens
Catherine Fawcitt
Shirley Fieldhouse
Roger Hadlow
Mary Halsey
Sheila Hornsey
Jill Lankester
Wynne McNay

**Roger and Janet
Moreton**
Maureen Moser
Bernard Nau
Joan Pilditch
Bernard Scott
A J J Street
Peter Walker
John Wilson

For more information on Gifts in Wills, visit wildlifebcn.org/legacies

Supporting our work

We are very proud to be associated with some of our region's most sustainable and forward-thinking businesses, and exceptionally grateful for their ongoing support for our work.

Thanks to all those that have supported us, including:

ProfitShare Partners

Fill Refill Co
Meaningful Planet

Corporate Partners (Gold)

The Biodiversity Consultancy
Cambridge Science Park
Ede & Ravenscroft
Fujifilm UK Ltd
Prologis UK Limited
RS Group
Suez

Corporate Investors (Silver)

Anglian Water Services Ltd
Cambourne Business Park
Cambridge University Press & Assessment
Colpac Ltd
Colworth Park
DefiniGEN
Granta Park
HCR Hewitson
Igas

Insmed
Johnson Matthey
PA Consulting
Scott Bader
UK Power Networks
Wyboston Lakes

Corporate Supporters (Bronze)

Alpro UK Ltd
Cambridge Business Park
Cambridge Water Company
Caterpillar
Center Parcs Woburn Forest
Cheveley Park
Dawson Wam
Dojima Sake Brewery
Eastern Tree Surgery
Hunts Wildlife Landscapes
Hybrid Software Helix
Holidaycottages.co.uk
Jesus College
Jordans Dorset & Ryvita
Marshall Group
Richard Buxton Environmental & Public Law
Scudamore's Punting Co Ltd
Softwire
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Spendlove Contracting
Stowe Family Law
Tarmac
University of Northampton
Wellcome Genome Campus
Whittlebury Park
Zeiss

Funders

Anglian Water
Barbara Price Charitable Trust
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity
Benham Charitable Settlement
Bevan Charitable Trust
Biffa Award
Big Give
Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority
Central Bedfordshire Council
Chapman Charitable Trust
Chilterns National Landscape
City Fibre
Constance Travis Charitable Trust
CoOp Foundation
Dave Gavin Foundation
Defra
Douglas Compton James Charitable Trust
Environment Agency
Eric Stanton (Northampton) Trust
EU - Horizon
Fenland District Council
Glassmoor Local Environment Fund
Groundwork
His Royal Highness, The Duke of Gloucester
Jack Patston Charitable Trust
Kiln Family Trust
Looker Energy Environmental Fund
Luton Borough Council
Michael Marks Charitable Trust
National Grid
National Landscapes Association

National Lottery Heritage Fund
Natural England
Nene River Church
New Gap Charitable Trust
PEM Charitable Trust
Penchant Foundation
Peter Smith Charitable Trust for Nature
Ramsey Town Council
Ramsey Wind Farm
Raven Charitable Trust
Reach Community Solar Farm
Robin & Henrietta Woods Charitable Trust
Rural Payments Agency
Sabina Sutherland Charitable Trust
Simon Gibson Charitable Trust
St Mary's Charity
Swire Charitable Trust
Wadlow Wind Farm Community Fund
Waitrose
Wakefield Trust
Wild Flower Society
William Haddon Charitable Trust
Wixamtree Trust
Wright's Clock Land

Waresley & Gransden Wood fungi
by Helen Dunning

Nature and the economy

Spotted woodpecker at Farthinghoe Reserve by Andy Gamble



**Sir Partha Dasgupta,
President of the
Wildlife Trust for
Bedfordshire,
Cambridgeshire and
Northamptonshire
and Frank Ramsey**

**Professor Emeritus of Economics at
Cambridge University**

The human economy is embedded in Nature even while we transform her by our activities. That transformation is today an overreach. Estimates suggest that currently the ratio of the demands we make on Nature's goods and services globally to the rate at which Nature can replenish herself sustainably is about 1.7 today. We humans are literally devouring Earth.

Contemporary discussions on our overreach are built on two indicators: climate change and biodiversity loss. This was reflected in a pair of reviews that were commissioned by the UK's Treasury Department (The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review, 2007 and The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review, 2021). As to their relative complexities, it is a common observation that climate change can be discussed, at least as a starter, in terms of a single parameter – mean global temperature – in contrast to biodiversity loss, whose multi dimensionality and spatial heterogeneity cannot be avoided at any stage of discussion. That suggests to many people that it is easier to design policies toward meeting climate change than toward reducing biodiversity

loss. There is truth in that thought, but it overlooks a feature of biodiversity loss that in principle makes our human efforts to reduce it a lot easier.

Mean global temperature, being the 'mean' (or 'average'), covers the entire biosphere; it is a global characteristic of the climate system. Being the mean, it camouflages wide disparities across Earth's surface, even while those disparities present themselves in wide differences in flora and fauna across the globe. But once we cease thinking of the global climate in terms of the mean, we realise that like biodiversity, climate is also dispersed across the globe. It's a mere habit of thought that makes climate seemingly easier to comprehend than biodiversity.

Climate and biodiversity are linked to one another. We have become aware that in a warming planet both flora and fauna are slowly creeping toward the poles. But there is a singular difference between the climate system and biodiversity, and it arises from the fact that humans are less sensitive to local climate variations than are many species of insects, plants and animals. Which is why small changes (as perceived by us) in the climate system can bring about large changes to the character of local ecosystems.

The climate system is a global public good. Because each one of us has a negligible effect on global climate, we free ride on others in our reliance on the climate. That is why discussions on tempering climate change move rapidly toward the search for international policies (e.g., zero net-emissions), and thence to a search for a centralised institution to

enforce agreements.

In contrast, the heterogeneity of ecosystems enables human communities to nurture their local ecosystems without having to display much concern about the state of ecosystems at distances removed. When we worry about our landscape, it is the local landscape that first comes to mind. The term, 'NIMBY' is taken to be derogatory, but if we replace it with 'NIMBY for Nature', the label reads entirely differently.

The point is of course that we can tend our own garden and protect and promote our local biodiversity. That is why biodiversity protection encourages a decentralised approach (there are, after all, 46 Wildlife Trusts in the UK). We worry about the bit-by-bit encroachment on our local biodiversity, whether it be owing to a road extension that tramples over an ancient orchard, whether it be an enlargement of residential accommodation that destroys a bat habitat, or whether it be the development of a business district that obliterates a space for wildlife. The bit-by-bit encroachment makes the transformation of our landscapes so insidious. At each step it appears as a mild irritant to local inhabitants, but over time it becomes sinister. Eternal vigilance is a necessary requirement not only for preserving our freedoms, but also for protecting the world around us.

