

# Annual Report

2020-21



Sheffield &  
Rotherham

*For nature, for everyone*





I think we can all agree that last year was a year like no other. The Covid 19 pandemic affected all of us. But if there is to be a positive message from all that happened, it has to be that many of us re-discovered nature. And, perhaps because there were less people out and about, or because we had more time to 'stand and stare', or even because the weather was so good, wildlife seemed to thrive.

Nothing seemed to symbolise this extraordinary year for wildlife and people than a visit from overseas by the bearded vulture (cover photo). This magnificent bird, with its 2.8m wingspan, soared over our Sheffield moors and beyond, delighting and enthralling many wildlife watchers of all ages. Birds such as the bearded vulture inspire us, they help us to think bigger, be more ambitious about what could be if we can bring wildlife back.

So 2020-21 was all together an extraordinary year for the Trust. It was challenging and inspiring all at the same time. You will see from this Annual Review that we continued to work hard and ultimately delivered a great deal for wildlife and people. Naturally, our face to face engagement activity and volunteering were the areas most affected by the national lockdowns but, nevertheless, with your support, we continued to deliver a great deal.

We launched our first, very popular Nature Adventures online programme of videos, blogs and activities to keep all ages entertained and connected to nature. Both Wild at Heart and Natural Neighbours changed their approach, sending out activity packs full of ideas to help group members keep engaged when we could not meet face to face. We worked hard to ensure our volunteers could safely support our conservation work across the Nature Reserves whenever restrictions allowed. The land management work carried out has improved the habitat for many species including pied flycatcher, snipe, lapwing, water vole and great crested newts. We also asked you to take action for wildlife in many ways and many of you took the pledge to take #ActionforInsects in your garden or local patch – thank you.

Reflecting on this year like no other, I would like to thank our staff and volunteers for working 'above and beyond' often in very challenging situations. And of course, to thank you – our members, partners and funders – without your ongoing support none of this would be possible. And this year particularly so.

Thank you,  
Liz Ballard, CEO

COVER PHOTO: BEARDED VULTURE (WILL BOWELL), THIS PAGE: BEE ON GREEN ALKANET (JON HAWKINS/SURREY HILLS) PHOTOGRAPHY

**109** nature adventure videos were published with **84,285** views in total.

**1,452** of you attended our virtual events at which we raised **£2,875.28**.

You donated **£2,522** which unlocked funding of **£30,220** to carry out a restoration project on our **Crabtree Ponds** reserve.

**590** hectares of land for wildlife.

We engaged **962** children and young people in face to face outdoor learning sessions and **Wild Play** activities.

The **Nature Counts** wildlife monitoring system continued to grow reaching **35,000** records.

Our **Natural Neighbours** project in Rotherham distributed **480** family activity packs.

We have run **259** work days, providing **1,025** days' worth of volunteer support.

**30 Days Wild** sign up increased by **61%**

Our **Badger Appeal** reached **£15,214.74**

**A big thank you** to our members, volunteers, funders and partners – without your ongoing support none of this would have been possible.





# A Year in Review

Here are some of the highlights of 2020-21, made possible with the support of our members.  
Thank you for your ongoing support – we have achieved so much together.

## April 2020

**Wildscapes CIC, was awarded Registered Practice status by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.**

The Trust donated PPE to the NHS. The donated PPE was delivered to Rawmarsh Health Centre (Rotherham) and Royal Stoke Hospital.

*'We can't thank you enough for your donation.'* @medsupplydriveuk, Instagram



## May 2020

The **River Rother Restoration project** was completed at our Woodhouse Washlands nature reserve. See page 6 for more detail.



## June 2020

1,221 of you signed up to connect with nature every day throughout June **#30DaysWild**

## July 2020

**The first shared vision for the care and management of Sheffield's Street trees was published** alongside an online survey gathering views to help shape the final Sheffield Street Tree Strategy.



## August 2020

Following the visit from the rare **bearded vulture** to the Sheffield moors we launched our virtual events programme with guest speaker Jose Tavares from the Vulture Conservation Foundation.



## September 2020

**A new FREE suite of resources for teachers and home schoolers was launched as part of our Action for Insects campaign.** Six sessions were developed aimed to inspire and educate young people about amazing insects, the problems they face and actions we can take to make a difference.



## October 2020

Our **Wyming Brook nature reserve** retains the Green Flag Award.



## November 2020

**The Sheffield Lakeland Landscape partnership (SLLP), Working with Water team installed fencing on farmland in the High Bradfield area,** helping to keep livestock out of streams and wet woodland. Our Working with Water Field Officers delivered natural flood management and wetland habitat improvements across the Sheffield Lakeland area.

## December 2020

Christopher and Liz braved the rain to plant a commemorative silver birch tree in the garden of our Victoria Hall office in recognition of **Christopher's 6 years' service as our Chair of Trustees.** Thank you again Christopher.



## January 2021

Dr Nicola Rivers, Living Landscape Development Manager, supported community group **Owlthorpe Fields Action Group** and presented as Expert Ecology Witness in the Owlthorpe Fields Planning Inquiry. See page 13.

## February 2021

**Over 800 children received nature inspired home school resource packs,** filled with nature-based crafts, species spotting sheets, wildlife watch magazines and more to help them connect with nature during lockdown.

## March 2021

**Thanks to our wonderful members who donated to the Crabtree Ponds appeal.** Renovations on the nature reserve began. Bat boxes were installed to provide roosting sites for the many bats that frequently visit the site, including pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), brown long eared (*Plecotus auritus*) and whiskered/Brandt's bats.





## Working towards our vision

# Creating a Network for Nature

As a result of our work, there will be a more resilient network for nature. This network will support a greater diversity and abundance of wildlife, habitats and natural spaces.

The **River Rother Restoration Project** was completed. Three in-channel berms were installed to diversify the flow of the river, along with corresponding re-profiling of the riverbanks. Volunteers planted 200 native trees and two floodplain bunds were created to hold back surface water on the floodplain; temporary bodies of standing water for wading birds.



**Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership** worked with key partners, such as Yorkshire Water and Sheffield City Council, on a variety of activity including: woodland management advice for **Goshawk**, agreeing **Osprey** nesting platform locations, scoping **Barn Owl** habitat suitability and surveying and protecting existing populations of **Water Vole**.



It has been a good year for **piebald flycatchers** at **Fox Hagg** following dedicated woodland work.



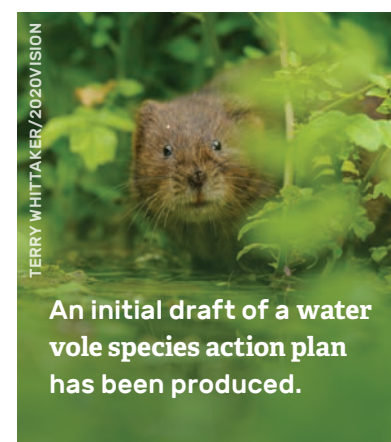
In partnership with Sheffield City Region and consultant, Natural Capital Solutions, an evidence-based **nature recovery network map for South Yorkshire** was developed (near completion). The finalised map will help inform a Nature Recovery Network Strategy.



Tree safety work has been carried out at **Wyoming Brook**, **Crabtree Ponds** (pictured) and **Sunnybank**. Two information boards have been installed at **Blacka Moor** and a suite of access improvements completed at **Carr House Meadows**.



Work at **Brook's Bank farm** (Yorkshire Water) by **Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership** to develop several scrapes resulted in good numbers of snipe and lapwing.



Over **700 hectares of land farmed** has been influenced to be managed for **biodiversity and wildlife in the Sheffield Lakeland** area, resulting in woodland, pond and wetland habitat creation.



**Wildscapes CIC** created and restored **50 ponds** across **South Yorkshire and Derbyshire** as part of a Natural England initiative to launch district level licensing for great crested newts in these regions. The 50th pond was created at Thrybergh Country Park in Rotherham and forms part of the memorial garden created there to honour Covid-19 victims.



Despite COVID-19 restrictions, monitoring was successfully carried out at **Agden Bog**, **Carr House Meadows**, **Kilnhurst Ings**, **Hammond's Field** and **Greno Woods**.



A number of new ponds, installed by **Wildscapes CIC** across our nature reserves, have already been colonised by **great crested newts**.



**Wildscapes CIC** planted over **37,000 trees** in the **Peak District**. The work formed part of a 10 year plan, financed by the English Woodland Grant Scheme, to return native woodland to the cloughs and valley sides of the Dark Peak in the Peak District National Park. We are planting a mix of native species – Alder, Bird Cherry, Downy Birch, Hawthorn, Holly, Rowan, Sessile Oak and Silver Birch.

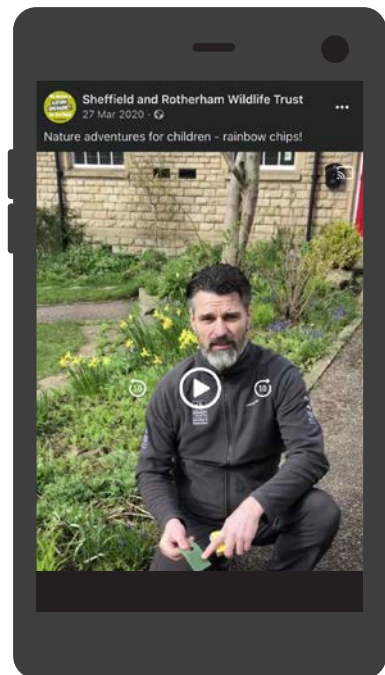


## Working towards our vision

# Connecting people with nature

As a result of our work, more local people will understand, enjoy, value and be inspired by nature and wildlife in their area, regularly visiting wildlife sites and green spaces for leisure, interest, exercise, health and wellbeing.

**Nature Adventures** provided ideas, videos and blogs to support nature-based activities. The videos were very popular, attracting a total of 84,285 views on Facebook, with one video reaching over 17,000 views and featuring on BBC Breakfast.



At a time when many of our participants were shielding and more socially isolated than ever before, the **Wild at Heart** project team adapted to continue to support people through a mix of phone calls, postal activity packs and digital content, engaging over 300 participants, with 100 of these more intensely supported throughout the year.



In the first lockdown the Wild at Heart participants took part in a collaborative activity, were sent a calico triangle and asked to create their own piece of nature inspired bunting which will be pieced together when the group comes back together.

*"It is like having a bunch of flowers."*

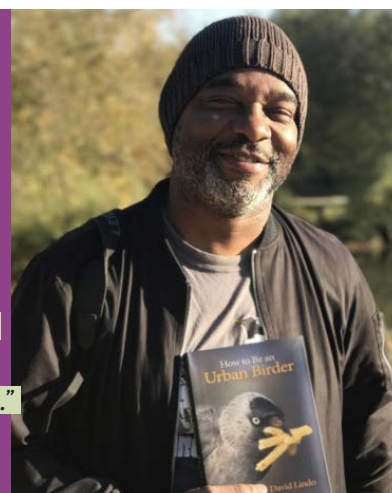
Participant Roy speaking about the pack he received. He especially liked the photos of spring flowers.

We launched our **online events programme** and welcomed some fantastic guest speakers including **David Lindo (the Urban Birder)**, our patron **Mike Dilger**, **Megan McCubbin** and Professor of Horticultural Ecology **James Hitchmough**. Additionally, we also ran a **'Nature Natters'** series of informal afternoon wildlife

talks on a variety of topics such as barn owls, water voles, butterflies and nature connectivity. 1,452 of you attended our virtual events at which we raised £2,875.28.

*"Fantastic presentation tonight by David Lindo, The Urban Birder. Very informative Q&A. Thank you."*

Social media feedback, November



In total we ran **259 volunteer work days, providing 1,025 days' worth of volunteer support**. The interest in volunteering has grown, reflected in a total of 375 registered volunteers, 205 of which were active during the year with a further 49 potential volunteers on a waiting list.

Additionally, **175 individual Sheffield Lakeland Landscape volunteers were still able to dedicate a total of 552 working days across the partnership**.

This was much appreciated by funders, partners and the volunteers themselves.

The **Outdoor Learning team** launched the new Stoneface Creative session offer to schools.

Everyone had loads of fun at our **Woodhouse Washlands nature reserve family event** (funded by Well Rotherham). The families had fun exploring the reserve and making their insect homes and wildflower seeds to hopefully encourage more insects into their gardens.



We engaged 962 children and young people in face-to-face outdoor learning sessions and Wild Play activities.



*"It was a fun activity which they enjoyed, and it encouraged them to be outside which is great."* Bethany Primary School teacher, following a natural art session in their local green space

*"I brought my kids to one in Grenoside and one in Ecclesall Woods. I found it really hard over the summer to find things that we could do... so I was very grateful to the Wildlife Trust for finding a way to run events - I know that this will have taken a good deal of boring admin time, working out how to do it - so huge thanks to those who did that. We really enjoyed the events, the instructions were clear, the packs had great stuff in them and it kept my children engaged. They particularly loved the survival one, and now want to trek off in the woods and build a shelter whenever we can - I think we may be doing a lot of this in the coming months! Thanks as well to Chris (the Scottish guy), as his introductions were interesting and engaging."* Wildplay participant

Our **Natural Neighbours** project in Rotherham distributed 480 family activity packs to 4 different neighbourhoods and developed and promoted a self-led nature trail for families at Boston Park.

Natural Neighbours also teamed up with the Refugee Council in Rotherham to work with recent asylum seekers. After successfully delivering nature-based activity packs to existing groups and the British Red Cross during lockdown, the team was approached by the Refugee Council to see if they were able to offer anything similar to asylum seekers being temporarily housed between Sheffield and Rotherham.



*"We really wanted to develop something that would encourage a vital connection to local nature; helping orientation in a new area and country, as well as providing important health and wellbeing benefits to those who are likely to be experiencing stress."*

Natural Neighbours team



# Wildlife photography

We love it when you share your wildlife photography with us. Our members, volunteers and staff sent in these wonderful photos when out and about on their nature adventures.



JOSEPH STUART



ELESHA SEARLES



NABIL ABBAS



CATHERINE DOWNES



CHRISTOPHER TOMSON

This page, clockwise from top left: Our Working with Water Officer, Joe, was lucky enough to spot this beautiful mountain hare camouflaged in the grass; A wonderful shot of toads on the move, captured by site volunteer, Elesha; A brood of 15 adorable goosander ducklings on our Woodhouse Washlands nature reserve; A wander around our Wyming Brook by Chris Tomson; Our ecology volunteer, Catherine, took this fantastic photo up on Blacka Moor.



CHRIS MEASURES



CHRISTOPHER TOMSON

Clockwise from top left: Tree lichen spotted across our Blacka Moor nature reserve; Carr House Meadows by volunteer Dave Hall; Family enjoying a snowy walk on Blacka Moor; A magnificent stag and Wood anemones on our Blacka Moor nature reserve, both by Harriet Eisner; A magnificent photo of our Greno Woods reserve looking breathtakingly magical and ethereal in the mist.



DAVE HALL



NICKY RIVERS



CATHERINE DOWNES



HARRIET EISNER



# TAKING ACTION FOR WILDLIFE

As a result of our work, more local people and organisations will take action to care for wildlife, nature and the wider green landscape.

We submitted our views on proposed national changes to the planning system as part of the 32 consultations that we have responded to in the past year. We influenced the outcomes/outputs of at least 7 including the Sheffield City Region Strategic Economic Plan.

We have had at least 729 engagements and actions from our members in our campaigns this year, exceeding our target of 300 – mainly via digital campaigning.

In addition, at least 695 non-members took action or otherwise engaged in our campaigns. Out of these figures, 53 were direct enquires from people concerned about threats to the natural environment, including 22 from our members.

**Nature Recovery Sheffield**, a new coalition of groups and campaign was formed.

**NATURE RECOVERY SHEFFIELD**



Cabbage white and hoverfly on ragwort: JON HAWKINS/SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

An application for up to 300 new homes in the Loxley Valley was unanimously refused by Sheffield City Council.

Dr Nicky Rivers, Living Landscape Development Manager, spoke at the planning committee to highlight our concerns, in particular a lack of information on impacts to protected species and the Local Wildlife Site. A good result for nature!

*“Great result. I managed to catch a little of the proceedings, including the objection by your good selves. Well done!”*

Reaction from a supporter on Facebook

## Action for Insects

Alongside other Wildlife Trusts we launch a new practical initiative to help insects and reverse sharp declines in their populations. The downloadable wildlife gardening guide to ‘Taking Action for Insects’ was packed with easy to follow practical tips for the garden and the home.



The decision in May 2020 by Sheffield City Council to refuse a planning application submitted by Avant Homes to build 72 houses on part of Owlthorpe Fields, was unfortunately overturned through a Planning Appeal.

Dr Nicola Rivers, Living Landscape Development Manager, supported and represented Owlthorpe Fields Action Group as Ecology Expert Witness at the inquiry. Dr Rivers argued that the site, which has been left to re-vegetate naturally for 20 years, was now of sufficient ecological value to be designated as a Local Wildlife Site:

*“I am very disappointed with the decision. Owlthorpe Fields, which link two existing Local Wildlife Sites, could be an important component of a nature recovery network in this area as they already have 20 years of natural regeneration as a head start. The Fields are also of huge value to local people. It has been fantastic to use our expertise to support Owlthorpe Fields Action Group, who have put in so much work to collect evidence on the ecology and to campaign. As a result of being so involved in the Inquiry, we have secured some small gains for ecology, including more protection for the Ochre Dyke Ancient Woodland and more off-site biodiversity compensation.”*



The partnership working strategy for city’s street trees was unveiled.

A new shared vision for the care and management of Sheffield’s street trees was published alongside an online survey which asks for views from individuals and organisations to help shape a final strategy by spring 2021. The working strategy, which outlines a positive and exemplary approach to the future management of the city’s street trees, came following months of partnership working between representatives from Sheffield City Council, Amey, Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust, Sheffield Tree Action Groups and The Woodland Trust.

Additionally, the Sheffield Street Tree Warden scheme was set up with over 50 wardens recruited.



## TAKING SMALL ACTIONS

Thank you to all of you that acted for wildlife. We asked you to...

- Sign the ‘Stop new badger culling licences’ petition
- Sign the ‘No to Neonics’ petition
- Respond to the Government’s pesticides consultation
- Pledge a patch for beetles in the ‘Go Wild for Beetles’ campaign
- Sign the #RethinkHS2 petition
- Ask MPs to stand up for nature #EnviormentBill
- Write to your MPs to ask them to attend the debate on peatland burning
- Rewild the planning system by adding your views to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee about the planning system in England
- Respond to the first draft of the Sheffield City Council New Local Plan
- Pledge to take action for insects
- Attend the first virtual lobby of parliament #TheTimeisNow
- Demand peat free compost



## Looking ahead and beyond...

### Outcome 1: Creating a network for nature

- Long-term nature reserves and green spaces monitoring programme in place, to better understand and improve our effectiveness in conservation management
- Continue our conservation efforts to support species such as goshawk, osprey and water vole and work with partners to set up a barn owl action group
- Achieve our maintenance, biodiversity and access objectives across our Nature Reserves
- Deliver feasibility and design work for biodiversity improvements along the River Rother (with the Environment Agency)
- Agree an evidence based Nature Recovery Network for Sheffield and Rotherham and develop initial Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- Delivering woodland creation across South Yorkshire
- Deliver biodiversity and natural flood risk management improvements along the Rother
- Increase biodiversity through natural flood risk management, woodland management, across a number of sites in west Sheffield, through the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership

### Outcome 2: Inspiring people

- Connect over 4,000 children and young people with nature through our outdoor digital learning service
- Directly engage with over 2,400 children and young people through our Outdoor Learning onsite programme
- Engage with over 1,000 people through our online events and a further 1,000 through our Wild at Heart and Natural Neighbours targeted programmes
- Support over 120 volunteers to help us deliver conservation across our sites and support our work
- Take forward our successful National Lottery Heritage Fund Working 4 Nature Training project, supporting two trainees to develop their conservation skills

### Outcome 3: Taking action for nature and wildlife

- Raise awareness and seeking to influence MPs, local Councillors and key decision-makers about issues that impact on wildlife and the natural environment
- Respond to local planning applications, especially those that have the potential to cause significant harm or opportunity to the network for nature
- Progress our key campaigns, including responding to the Nature Emergency in Sheffield and Rotherham, Save Smithy Wood, Our Moors, getting a good deal for wildlife from HS2
- Support the delivery of the Sheffield Partnership Sheffield Street Tree Working Strategy
- Mobilise our members to campaign for wildlife
- Working with local climate change organisations in Sheffield and Rotherham to support, promote and take action on the climate and ecological emergency
- Enable local people and groups to manage their local green space for wildlife and/or campaign for wildlife through Natural Neighbours and Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership
- Continue our three-year natural flood risk management research project through Sheffield Lakeland, with support from Sheffield Hallam

## Financial Summary

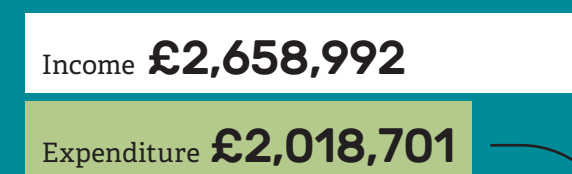
2018/19



2019/20



2020/21



### How we spend our money

2% Governance

5% Generating voluntary income

93% Charitable activities excl Governance

## Trustees

**M Ridler** (Chair)  
**B Stone** (Vice Chair)  
**T Dodd** (Treasurer)  
**S Leckie**  
**A Parker**  
**A Perrins**  
**N Stewart**  
**J Hall**  
**K Mackay**  
**S Campbell**  
**Sarah Blandy** (from 24th September 2020 AGM)  
**Helen Francis** (from 24th September 2020 AGM)  
**Holly Schofield** (from 24th September 2020 AGM)  
**K Craik** (to 24th September 2020)  
**A Holt** (to 24th September 2020)  
**Christopher Pennell** (to 24th September 2020)





**Sheffield &  
Rotherham**

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