



Sheffield &
Rotherham

Annual Report

2019-20

For nature, for everyone



2019-20 has been another exciting year for Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust as we work towards our vision – to see a Living Landscape – an amazing, green landscape for the wildlife and people of Sheffield and Rotherham – which is understood, enjoyed and cared for by local people and organisations.

Our National lottery Heritage funded project, 'Data for Nature', drew to a close after completing a variety of volunteer led surveys across our sites giving us a better understanding of the wildlife and habitats on our nature reserves. Following on from the success of this project we have secured funding and launched a new project, 'More Data for Nature', aimed at understanding biodiversity trends across a landscape scale.

We also made great strides in our campaigning work this year, launching the Working Draft Street Tree Strategy, celebrating a win in the fight to save ancient woodland Smithy Wood and challenging the South Yorkshire Police to improve their approach to wildlife crime.

We connected over 9,300 people to nature through our community projects; Outdoor Learning, Wild at Heart and Natural Neighbours, a number which seems to grow and grow every year.

Like many others at the end of this period we were impacted by COVID-19. Since the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown began we have continued to care for our network of nature reserves that provide such vital respite for users, boosting health and wellbeing and providing much needed access to nature. We of course had to pause many of our plans but our staff leapt to the challenge and we adapted our services and projects to ensure we stayed connected to you and you stayed connected to nature during this time.

We launched an online engagement campaign called Nature Adventures which included interesting videos, blogs and activities to keep you supported and entertained. Our Natural Neighbours and Wild at Heart teams worked hard to reach those who may not have access to the internet by making up activity packs to post to the participants they usually engage with through their community projects.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to our members, volunteers, funders and partners – without your ongoing support none of this would have been possible.

Thank you,
Liz Ballard, CEO



Engaged over **3,000** people in our community engagement and health and wellbeing projects.

Connected over **6,300** children and young people with nature.

Over **250** people have written to their MPs calling for stronger laws to protect nature as part of the 'Wilder Future' campaign.

Installed **350** metres of accessible Trans Pennine Trail bridleway link at Woodhouse Washlands.

900 volunteer attendances through our Volunteer Work Days.

Received over **15,000** online wildlife sightings from the public after launching the recording site 'Nature Counts'.

Delivered **100** days of essential maintenance across our nature reserves.

Submitted responses to **44** planning applications...
...and positively influenced **17**

590 hectares of land managed for wildlife.

A Year in Review

Here are some of the highlights of 2019-20, made possible with the support of our members.
Thank you for your ongoing support – we have achieved so much together.

April 2019

Volunteers carried out surveys across a variety of sites as part of the **Data for Nature** project which helped us to understand the wildlife and habitats on our nature reserves in more detail.

www.wildsheffield.com/wildlife/wildlife-conservation/more-data-for-nature/data-for-nature

May 2019

The first female **Brandt's bat** was recorded in South Yorkshire during a bat survey for the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership (SLLP).

June 2019

Our **Wild at Heart** project won a gold award in the 'Beautiful Borders' competition at **BBC Gardeners' World Live** after impressing the judges with their entry designed to inspire people to try out simple wildlife gardening ideas in their own gardens.



July 2019

We completed work on the Agden Rocher Bog As part of The SLLP Working with Water project. Scrub was removed and dilapidated fencing has been replaced to safeguard this precious bog habitat.



August 2019

Wyming Brook nature reserve was recognised for its environmental character, quality maintenance and visitor experience by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, retaining its Green Flag Award.

www.wildsheffield.com/reserves/wyming-brook



September 2019

Following an **open letter to the South Yorkshire Police** Chief Constable seeking action to improve their approach to wildlife crime, we received several encouraging replies from Chief Inspector Mark James, the Force Lead for Wildlife and Rural Crime, regrading tackling wildlife crime in our region.

www.wildsheffield.com/response-from-south-yorkshire-police-to-our-open-letter-tackling-wildlife-crime



October 2019

Our Data for Nature project was **shortlisted** for the National Biodiversity Network Group Award for Wildlife Recording.

November 2019

Our members pledged to take **action for insects** after a new report, *Insect Declines and Why They Matter*, revealed conclusively that drastic declines in insect numbers look set to have far-reaching consequences for wildlife and people.

www.wildsheffield.com/campaign/afi

December 2019

Our team of incredible volunteers worked hard at Fox Hagg nature reserve **enhancing the willow tit habitat** and enjoying a well-earned cook out.



January 2020

We celebrated the news that **MSA Extra withdrew their application** to develop a major motorway service area on Smithy Wood, a semi-natural ancient woodland and Local Wildlife Site near J35 of the M1, after 7 years of campaigning to save the woodland.

www.wildsheffield.com/campaign/smithy-wood

February 2020

Wildscapes, our Community Interest Company, embarked on a project to deliver a number of **Great Crested Newt** ponds across the Derbyshire region.

wildscapes.co.uk

March 2020

We launched **'Nature Adventures'** our digital engagement programme designed to keep our members and followers supported and entertained during lockdown.

www.wildsheffield.com/getinvolved/nature-adventures

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 **Brighter Sunnybank project** was completed. The urban nature reserve now has improved access and infrastructure. We opened up the woodland area to increase the security of the site and enhanced the wildflower meadows.



A major river restoration scheme was completed at the **Woodhouse Washlands** nature reserve on the River Rother, with installation of three berms in the artificially straightened river channel to create more diversity in the flow and improve conditions for fish breeding. Earth bunds were also installed on the floodplain to create standing water for over-wintering waders and three new great crested newt ponds were dug.



To improve the nature reserve for breeding migrant woodland birds, such as redstart, spotted flycatcher and pied flycatcher, a woodland restoration project was undertaken at **Blacka Moor**. Invasive rhododendron and sycamore were removed, in particular along the watercourses, and targeted thinning created glades and a more open woodland structure. Halo thinning was undertaken around 90 of the largest trees on the reserve, to create space for these future veteran trees to thrive. Two new woodland ponds were created to provide extra feeding opportunities and specially designed bird boxes were installed to provide breeding sites.

www.wildsheffield.com/reserves/blacka-moor



The **Data for Nature** project continued to collect data across our nature reserves, which helped the Trust understand the wildlife and habitats on our nature reserves in more detail. Baseline data was collected by volunteers for woodland condition and meadow assessment at 3 nature reserves, bird surveys at 4 nature reserves and Ancient Woodland Indicators at Moss Valley. Other monitoring includes: vegetation at Hammonds field, dragonflies at Kilnhurst and Woodhouse, bog at Blacka, skylark at Woodhouse and waders at Woodhouse. Also in the autumn, fungi at Blacka and Carr House Meadows and harvest mice at Woodhouse. Funding was secured to continue this project and More Data for Nature was launched.

www.wildsheffield.com/wildlife/wildlife-conservation/more-data-for-nature

We are working towards increasing biodiversity through natural flood risk management, woodland management and partnership working. We made really good progress engaging farmers in the **Sheffield Lakeland** area with onsite natural flood risk management improvements that also benefit wildlife. Additionally through the SLLP Woodland Heart Project we worked with Sheffield City Council to convert 7Ha of conifer plantation to broadleaved woodland, including some ancient woodland restoration.



Helen Taylor

Forestry restoration work was carried out to ancient woodland at **Greno Woods nature reserve** as part of a long-term management plan which aims to bring about a gradual shift towards the re-establishment of native broadleaf to the north and east of the site, providing a range of benefits to wildlife, people and the landscape.

www.wildsheffield.com/reserves/greno-woods

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.

Over the summer holidays (2019) the **Outdoor Learning and Natural Neighbours** teams worked alongside a group of 11-15 year old Roma boys, in Eastwood Village, Rotherham, to redevelop the playground at their community centre. Empowered by the sense of responsibility the boys who come from a group considered to struggle in mainstream education, focused on the task, remained motivated throughout, worked hard and delivered what was expected of them.

www.wildsheffield.com/the-eastwood-eco-warriors-working-hard-playing-harder



Emily Canning

Hands-on farm visit experiences delivered at Cliffe House Farm, home of **Our Cow Molly**, connected children from urban areas with the countryside, food production and wildlife. Our farm family days at Our Cow Molly were extremely popular with over 1500 children taking part during just one weekend.



Helena Dolby



Wayne Munro Smith

A highlight in the Natural Neighbours' calendar is **Eastwood Funfest**, a neighbourhood celebration that takes place on the Natural Neighbours project site, Eldon Road Recreation Ground and is the result of a community effort led by Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust's Natural Neighbours Project and the Clifton Learning Partnership. For summer 2019 the theme was 'Carnival', and the day showcased local musical talent, costume and mask making, cooking, play and craft activities, with a carnival procession led by Sheffield Samba band.

There was a fantastic response to our recruitment drive for our **Working for Nature trainee scheme**. Despite appalling weather we had great attendance on the John Muir Discovery Award, a week long course giving a taster as to what the Working for Nature traineeship is all about. Every day it rained but this did not dampen the spirits of the attendees. Following this we recruited two new 1-year trainees especially focussing on people less likely to have the opportunity to work in the environmental sector.



We had nearly 900 volunteer attendances through our **Volunteer Work Days**, supporting monitoring programmes. Land Management team and our ecology as part of the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership. This included setting up a new Barn Owl group to support the conservation and installation of barn owl boxes in the Lakeland area. To say a big THANK YOU to our volunteers we organised a Volunteer Raptor Day which included a talk about raptors and how to ID them, an explanation and show of raptor boxes, pellet dissection and a guided walk around Wyming Brook.



A sneak peek into Wild at Heart

Wild at Heart delivers friendly and supportive nature-based activity sessions for adults over 50, helping to improve wellbeing and personal resilience through building a connection to nature. Here is a sneak peek into the Wild at Heart sessions.

www.wildsheffield.com/discover/your-community/wild-at-heart



Creating fruity bird feeders



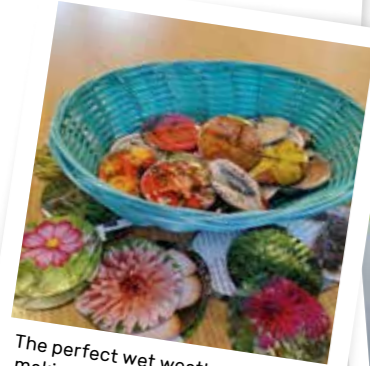
Tai Chi session focusing on our breathing and slow, strong movements



A peaceful morning trying out our pyrography skills



Tending to the mini Wild at Heart garden within the walled garden at Clifton Park



The perfect wet weather activity - making personalised badges from nature magazines



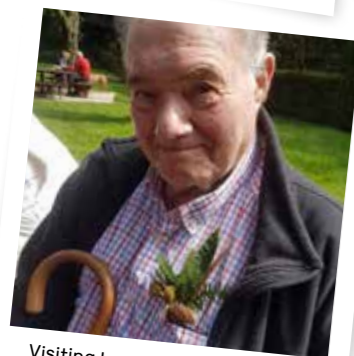
Festive fun - creating unique and personal table decorations



Learning to write poems, making 'linguistic snapshots' of the world around us in our Yorkshire slang



Nature walks



Visiting Langsett Reservoir and making flowery buttonholes to give us a sense of where we had been



Exploring Wyming Brook nature reserve and creating beautiful pinecone and birch leaf spirals



Using lavender to make scented bags and tasty biscuits



Creating our gold-winning entry in the 'Beautiful Borders' competition at BBC Gardeners' World Live

Wild at Heart isn't just a project which connects lonely people together - it also offers a space for people to connect and find shared interest, build confidence and skills in a safe and encouraging setting. This is the social glue that allows these social bonds to form naturally.

Jenny King, Wild at Heart Project Officer

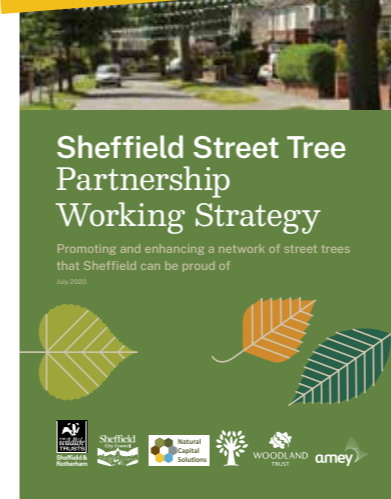
You at Wild at Heart encourage us to do things, things we wouldn't have done ourselves - and that's wellbeing really.

Liz, Wild at Heart participant

Taking action for nature and 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.

STREET TREES



We took on the role of Independent Chair for the Sheffield Partnership Street Tree Strategy Group with the aim of developing a shared strategy that AMEY, Sheffield City Council and local community groups could agree to. After a series of discussions and workshops, and with the help of guest experts, the Working Draft Street Tree Strategy was published in March 2020 and has since been adopted by Sheffield City Council.

www.wildsheffield.com/campaign/street-trees/street-tree-working-strategy



BADGER APPEAL

Thank you to everyone who has donated to our Badger Appeal. We have raised £14,315 to date.

In the summer of 2019 we met with the Lord Mayor of Sheffield to the Trust to discuss our Badger Appeal for a vaccination programme and provided information about the threat of a badger cull for our area and Living Landscape Development Manager Dr Nicky Rivers shadowed Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's Badger Vaccination Project to learn how the work is carried out on the ground in case we need to implement such a project in our area.

www.wildsheffield.com/badgers



HS2 STOP AND RETHINK

The national 'HS2 Stop and Rethink' campaign was launched which generated 438 signatures from people in Sheffield and Rotherham on a national petition to the Prime Minister.

Mark Riddler, Vice-Chair, attended Parliament with a number of representatives from other Wildlife Trusts to present the signatures to Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

www.wildsheffield.com/campaign/hs2

WILDER FUTURE



We continued our work with the Wildlife Trust network and through Greener UK to secure a strong Environment Act for the country when we leave Europe. This has developed in to the Wildlife Trusts' national 'Wilder Future' campaign. As part of this campaign:

We forwarded over 300 messages from people in Sheffield and Rotherham to their MPs, asking them to support the new Environment Bill and call for stronger legislation.

Met with Louise Haigh, MP for Sheffield Heeley to raise the importance of including Nature Recovery Networks in the Environment Bill.

Sent a group of staff and volunteers to London to attend The Time Is Now, a mass lobby event at Parliament. Many attendees spoke to their MPs to call for a strong Environment Act, and we featured in live TV coverage of the event on Sky News.

Gave a speech about the need for action on the ecological crisis at the Sheffield Youth 4 Climate Strike in Sheffield City Centre.

Organised a nature and environment themed hustings at The University of Sheffield for main party General Election candidates in the Sheffield Central constituency.

Held a workshop on environmental campaigning at the Catholic Diocese of Hallam Schools' Environment Day

www.wildsheffield.com/campaign/wilderfuture

"Great session, thanks for organising. Now more than ever it seems we need to work to protect our environment!"

Dr Robert Mills, Lecturer in Environmental Science, University of York, hustings event attendee

Save Smithy Wood

CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

This year we celebrated a big win in the Save Smithy Wood campaign. Here is an insight into the journey so far. www.wildsheffield.com/campaign/smithy-wood

2013

We began the fight to protect Smithy Wood, an ancient woodland, from being destroyed by a proposed new motorway service area (MSA).

Worked in partnership with other organisations opposing the scheme, supported the Cowley Resident's Action Group in their application to designate Smithy Wood as a Village Green and continued to update and engage the public, our members, local woodland experts and the local MP through the media and public events.

2015

Responded to a further planning consultation in autumn 2015 and continued to engage with the process through to Planning Committee and beyond, as required.

Liaised with local wildlife and planning experts from across the city to co-ordinate and submit a detailed objection to the planning application.

2017

Held a public rally outside Sheffield Town Hall with over 300 attendees.



2019

June Reminded the public about the beauty of the ancient woodland with a press release about the carpet of bluebells at the site – an indicator species of ancient woodland – and reiterated our opposition to the planning application.

November An alternative MSA application at Junction 33 in Rotherham was approved by Rotherham Council's Planning Committee.

November We held an event 'Irreplaceable; An Evening of Trees' in partnership with author Julian Hoffman and Sheffield Trees Action Group (STAG) which included a talk about Smithy Wood from Living Landscape Development Manager Dr Nicky Rivers.

2020

January We celebrated the news that MSA Extra withdrew their application to develop a major motorway service area on Smithy Wood.

What's next?

But this is not the end.

For this wood to be saved for local people and wildlife we now ask St Pauls as land owners to work with us so that we can secure this woodland for future generations to enjoy.

Looking ahead and beyond...

COVID-19 had a major impact on our work going into 20/21. However we are beginning to open up our activities, such as conservation volunteering and trialling engagement offers with our schools and wider community.

Therefore, at this point in time, we still plan to work to our programme of activity as originally planned but recognise this may be reduced.

We would especially like to thank our loyal members and supporters and supporters for helping the Trust during this time. Your support has enabled us to continue the work on our reserves and stay connected throughout lockdown, thank you!

We would also like to thank our various funders who have been exceptionally supportive and understanding during this difficult time.

In the year ahead, some of our key areas of activity will be:

- **Long-term nature reserves and green spaces monitoring** programme in place, supported by our Data for Nature volunteers.
- **Connect over 4,000 children and young people** with nature through our outdoor learning service, Wildplay and targeted projects.
- **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.
- **Support over 570 volunteer attendances** to help us deliver conservation across our sites.
- **Achieve our maintenance, biodiversity and access objectives** across our nature reserves.
- **Raise awareness and seek to influence** MPs, local Councillors and key decision-makers about issues that impact on wildlife and the natural environment.
- **Map an evidence based Nature Recovery Network** for Sheffield and Rotherham.
- **Progress our key campaigns**, including Save Smithy Wood, Our Moors, getting a good deal for wildlife from HS2.
- **Engage with over 1,700 people** through our guided walks and workshops across our Nature Reserves and as part of our Natural Neighbours and Wild at Heart projects.
- **Support the delivery of** the Sheffield Partnership Sheffield Street Tree Working Strategy.

Thank you

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



Trustees

Christopher Pennell MBE (Chair)
 Mark Ridler (Vice Chair)
 Tom Dodd (Treasurer)
 Krys Craik
 Suzanne Leckie
 Andrew Parker
 Andrew Perrins
 Alison Holt
 Niel Stewart
 Dr Stephen Campbell
 Ben Stone
 James Hall
 Kris Mackay

Financial Summary

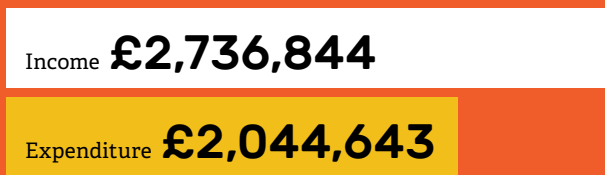
2017/18



2018/19



2019/20

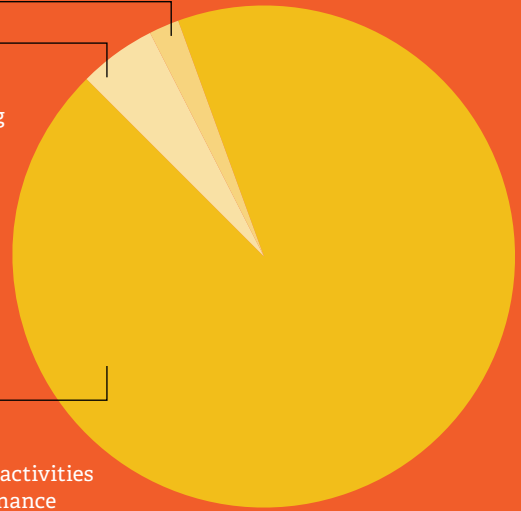


How we spend our money

2% Governance

5%
Generating
voluntary
income

93%
Charitable activities
excl Governance



**Sheffield &
Rotherham**

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