

Gwent Wildlife Trust

Our Impact 2021



Our wildlife is in
crisis, find out
how you're helping
reverse the decline
in Gwent





Over
97% of
Wales' meadows
lost in the past
100 years

Restoring important wildlife habitats

Decades of work with local partners and volunteers is restoring ancient hay meadows - species-rich grassland habitats across Gwent. Twenty years on from our first surveys at New Grove Farm in Monmouthshire, we're now recording amazing increases in Green-winged Orchids in a previously species-poor field: from zero in 1998 to a remarkable 8,568 this year!



Welcome to our first impact report.

We are so grateful for your support in helping us to ensure that Gwent is a wild place which continues to inspire all who live here and visit. Looking back over recent years we have come a long way and we couldn't have done it without you. We have expanded our network of nature reserves, engaged nearly 34,000 school children, seen off the M4 relief road, restored wildlife sites, and held over 1,600 wild health sessions to improve the wellbeing of our communities.

These are just a few highlights but they reflect the important fact that impact takes time, and it is due to your continued support and our dedicated staff and volunteers that we have been able to restore nature reserves over decades, reintroduce species over years, and nurture curiosity throughout the childhoods of our next generations. Against a backdrop of biodiversity decline, climate crisis and worsening health outcomes, we have shown that by working in partnership with local communities, councils, Natural Resources Wales and other charities, it is possible to stop the rot and address these problems. The next step is for us to scale up this change by bringing even more people together to take action where it matters most, at home, and for what matters most, the natural world that sustains us.

To achieve this over the next five years we are focussed on two themes, firstly, delivering Nature's Recovery by expanding our most important nature reserves and working with neighbouring landowners to improve their land for nature. Secondly, we will be working with local communities to demonstrate how Natural Solutions exist for society's problems by alleviating flooding, improving health and wellbeing, cleaning drinking water, purifying air and storing carbon, so that people can live happily today and be even happier tomorrow.

We have been inspired by you and the wildlife of Gwent and we hope that you will be inspired to continue to support our vision for the future in whatever way you choose, as a partner, volunteer or member, by taking action yourself at home or in your community, donating to an appeal or remembering Gwent Wildlife Trust in your will. Any support you can give will make Gwent a better place for us and our wildlife. Thank You.

Adam Taylor
Chief Executive.



“Our vision is for people close to nature in a landscape rich in wildlife”

Gwent Wildlife Trust would like to thank: Our President, Chris Hatch, President Emeritus, Roger James, Vice Presidents and Trustees, Volunteers, Members, Wildlife Guardians, Local Wildlife Site owners, the late Mrs Pat Gorvin for all their generosity, AES Ltd, Ancre Hill Vineyard, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Campaign Against Levels Motorway (CALM), Eastmans Plc, Frank Sutton Ltd, Friends of the Gwent Levels, Heron House Financial Management, Hopkins Machinery, Mandarin Stone, Marshalls Plc, Monmouthshire County Council, National Lottery Community Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Natural Resources Wales, Newport City Council, NRW Unison, Phoenix Project – Cardiff University, Players of the National Lottery, Players of the People's Postcode Lottery, Sogefi Filtration, The Banister Trust, The Makin Family, The Waterloo Foundation, Torfaen County Council, Travel Chapter, Tri-Wall Europe, Vine House Farm, Welsh Government, Wye Valley AONB.

GWENT WILDLIFE TRUST

Seddon House, Dingestow,
Monmouth NP25 4DY.
Tel: 01600 740600.
Email: info@gwentwildlife.org
Web: www.gwentwildlife.org
Reg Charity No: 242619.

Designed by Jones Design Create.

Impact Highlights

These are just some highlights of our impact, made possible by decades of support from our funders, members and volunteers. Thank you for your ongoing support particularly in this last difficult year of the pandemic – together we have achieved so much.



Bigger, better, more joined up places for nature

From the hay meadows of Wyewood neighbouring Pentwyn Farm in 2007, to the post-industrial upland site of Central Valley in Ebbw Vale, to the 82ha wetland of Bridewell Common neighbouring Magor Marsh in 2019, to taking on management of one of the largest and most important areas for native woodland in Britain, Piercefield Woods in the Wye Valley last year, we continue to expand our network of 33 nature reserves, some of the best examples of Gwent's diverse habitats which are enhancing connectivity for wildlife and access to wild places across Gwent.

We now manage 448.59ha (or around 5km²) of nature reserves for wildlife – see centre map for details

Inspiring future conservationists

Since 2009, our Wildlife Warriors group has inspired around 100 young people in Gwent to get involved with nature conservation.

Wildlife Warrior alumni include Florence Cordner, who is now a budding botanist, Sam Ashman who became a woodland trainee and now works in outdoor education, and Michael

Rodgers who is now inspiring the next generation of young people in wildlife activism through our Stand for Nature Wales project.

Read more at gwentwildlife.org/get-involved/stand-nature-wales



Improving health through nature connectedness



321 people from 35 organisations have participated in Wild Health since 2017.

We've held 1,621 Wild Health sessions for people all ages and abilities with employability, confidence, physical and mental health issues, to connect with nature outdoors, with walks, practical work tasks and 'geocaching' fun! A total of 2,614 hours of beneficial action for wildlife and another 2,366 hours of great outdoors recreation!

"Louise described one activity as "a changing point in my life" it was a great challenge for her both mentally and physically but learning about an area she had lived in and loved for years inspired her and was instrumental in her recovery." **Wild Health community partner.**

"We all learnt a lot about nature too and felt revived. Thank you again for being so welcoming and we will be going on further 'expeditions'." **Participating family, The Integrated Autism Service.**

Saving Wales' most threatened mammals

Once common, water voles have undergone one of the most serious declines of any wild mammal in Britain during the 20th century, due to sustained habitat loss and predation from non-native mink. From local



extinction, our ambitious project (started in 2011) to reintroduce water voles to the Gwent Levels has meant they are now successfully breeding and found on waterways up to 10km away. And in March 2021, our joint Wildlife Trust Wales' Welsh Beaver project reached a monumental milestone with the enclosed release of a beaver family at Cors Dyfi in Montgomeryshire.

Read more at: gwentwildlife.org/living-landscapes/water-voles-gwent-levels and gwentwildlife.org/living-landscapes/bringing-beavers-back-wales.

PHOTO CREDITS: HARVEY LLOYD THOMAS, BILLIE CHARITY, ROB WALLER



Around
120 rugby
pitches of SSSI
land protected from
development with
monumental 2019
#NoNewM4
decision

Campaigning to protect wild places

After campaigning in coalition for over 20 years, we finally saw off plans for a new M4 motorway through the heart of the Gwent Levels. First Minister Mark Drakeford articulated what we had been highlighting for decades, that the motorway would permanently damage the Gwent Levels SSSIs, its unique reed network, wildlife and historic landscape.

Supporting an army of nature volunteers!

170 volunteers collectively give hundreds of hours of their time to helping with practical work on reserves, fundraising, photography and filming, surveying, monitoring and livestock checking every year. We gratefully provide skills, training and tools, friendships and opportunities to enjoy nature and take direct action for wildlife locally.

Our volunteers have won awards and some have gone on to join the staff team like Ben Boylett, Nature's Recovery Officer, pictured.

"I've been a volunteer since 2010 and thoroughly recommend it. I've met lots of interesting people and many have

become good friends. No previous skills or knowledge required but you can gain lots more if you want!"

Pauline, GWT shepherd and livestock volunteer.



Embedding nature learning in education

Since our formal education work began in 2006, 33,628 school children and 1,364 schools have learnt about the natural world at our education centres in Magor and Ebbw Vale.



Two staff members, Kathy Barclay and Natalie Waller are Forest School Level 4 trainers and together have trained 21 educators in Level 3 Forest School and 6 in Level 2. Both Kathy and Natalie have also delivered Agored Cymru accredited Level 2 Outdoor Learning Practitioner (OLP) courses to 34 teachers and assistants in Level 2 OLP.

PHOTO CREDITS: NEIL ALDRIDGE, NATALIE WALLER, HEPBURN PHOTOGRAPHY

Our Living Landscapes



Connecting wildlife gems

By Andy Karran
Evidence Manager



You will all be aware of our fantastic Nature Reserves and likely know about SSSI's, there are however many other wildlife gems that perhaps go under the radar. These are our Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are areas that have been recognised as having particular value for wildlife due to either the habitat or species they support. However, despite their value (many are every bit as valuable as formal Nature Reserves or SSSIs), they are not statutorily protected and generally do not receive funding for their management. The vast majority of LWS are privately owned by farmers and small-holders. Their very existence is down to the sympathetic management of both past and present owners.

We have been working with landowners to recognise these wonderful sites throughout Gwent for the last 20 years through a variety of projects. We now have over 400 LWS within Monmouthshire, with new sites being discovered every year.

Many of these sites are grasslands, which are hugely important to discover and conserve as 97% of species-rich grasslands have been lost since WW2. Woodlands and Traditional Orchards are also well represented.

The LWS now cover about 1,600 hectares - or around 1,600 rugby pitches! This is far in excess of that covered by our Nature Reserves. They are spread across the county, thus providing an invaluable network of connectivity for our wildlife between Nature Reserves and across Gwent.

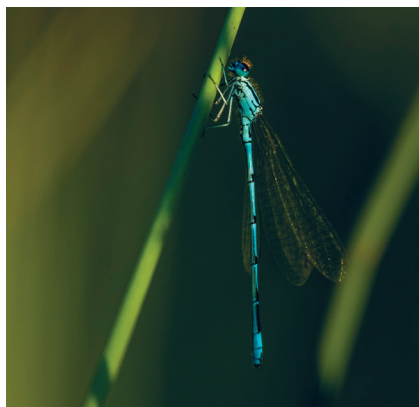
We have undertaken surveys for all these sites, informed the landowners of their value and provided advice as to how they can maintain and enhance their land for wildlife. As a result, hundreds of people have a new appreciation of the wildlife on their doorsteps and take a real pride in their sites. It is not unusual to receive calls from LWS owners proudly keeping us updated on how their orchid numbers have increased. As well as the initial surveys, we have formed a LWS community through annual newsletters, Landowner Days and securing grants for wildlife friendly management works. The success of the work is exemplified in that when we resurveyed 150 of the LWS

between 2015-2017, every single one still retained its wildlife value.

100's of people have a new appreciation of the wildlife on their doorsteps

The impact of our LWS work within Monmouthshire will continue and we are working hard to grow the LWS network

throughout the rest of Gwent, currently connecting with landowners and surveying in Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Newport and Caerphilly.



Saving and restoring a vanishing wetland habitat

By Gemma Bodé
Head of Nature's Recovery

- 8 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) covering 59km²
- 1,500km of water-filled reens and ditches
- 650,000 people living on or near the Levels, visitor numbers at Magor Marsh doubled in 2020

Back in 1963, Gwent Wildlife Trust's founders bought our first Nature Reserve at Magor Marsh, recognising what a precious corner of Wales the Gwent Levels were – of incalculable value to both people and wildlife. Back then, they may have only had an inkling of the extent of the threats that it would be facing some fifty years later. But I hope they would be proud of our ongoing work and joining with us in celebrating our impact against tackling these continued threats.

PHOTO CREDITS: ANDY KARRAN, NEIL ALDRIDGE, HUGH GREGORY



The Gwent Levels landscape is entirely man-made and has been in existence for hundreds of years, but depends on constant and sympathetic management for its survival and that of its diverse and abundant wildlife. Many years of dedicated work alongside regular volunteers, clearing reens and ditches, coppicing willow, monitoring wildlife populations and cultivating hay meadows is resulting in good outcomes for a variety of our threatened wildlife today.

260 species of wetland invertebrates recorded

Our aim for the Levels has always been to achieve bigger, better and more joined up places for nature. But with developmental pressures (for housing, transport, industry and more recently the race for low carbon energy) and climate change driving down the size and connectivity of natural habitats, oftentimes it has felt like we're running to stand still. But by increasing the scale of our impact through important partnerships like the Living Levels scheme, campaigning in coalition with the local community and the relentless energy and support of local volunteers, we believe we can keep improving outcomes for nature's recovery.

Read more at: livinglevels.org.uk and gwentwildlife.org/campaigns/our-campaign-against-m4-motorway

PHOTO CREDITS: ANDY KARRAN, LOWRI WATKINS



Creating an urban uplands haven

By Natalie Waller
Head of Natural Solutions

It's hard to imagine that 20 years ago our now glorious Central Valley Nature Reserve was part of one of the biggest steelworks in Europe. We started managing the site in 2015 in partnership with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC), who own the 20 hectare site. Our plan was to transform the area into a protected nature haven for people and wildlife to enjoy.



Now this urban upland site (it's over 350m above sea level) has swapped the harsh clanging and banging of the steelworks for the silent fluttering of speckled wood butterflies and the twittering of goldfinch and chiffchaff. And the only workers seen using the site are bees or people enjoying a lunchbreak stroll.

Central Valley, sitting at the heart of the Ebbw Vale, close to schools, businesses and the town's railway line, is now a natural hub enjoyed by thousands of local people including schoolchildren, dog walkers, commuters, as well as visitors from farther afield.



After BGCBC carried out extensive landscaping, treeplanting and seeding, our ongoing work in improving this wildlife haven is resulting in the variety of grasslands, wildflowers, woodland, ponds and reedbeds there today. Already making the reserve their home are rare bees like the shrill carder, as well as ten species of butterfly including graylings and dark green fritillaries.

Every spring and summer, Central Valley erupts with colourful wildflowers and grasses. Small mammals like voles make their home in the undergrowth and slow worms and common lizards bask in the sun - all trying to avoid detection from hunting barn owls and kestrels. The trees and scrub areas are full of birds including spring visits from willow warblers.

Adjacent to the reserve is our Environmental Resource Centre, which was built in 2010 to host training and events. Children can discover the frogs, newts, darting dragonflies, damselflies and kingfishers by dipping its former steelworks cooling ponds.

I wanted to pass on my thanks and gratitude for all the hard work which has been done in this area and which continues to do so.

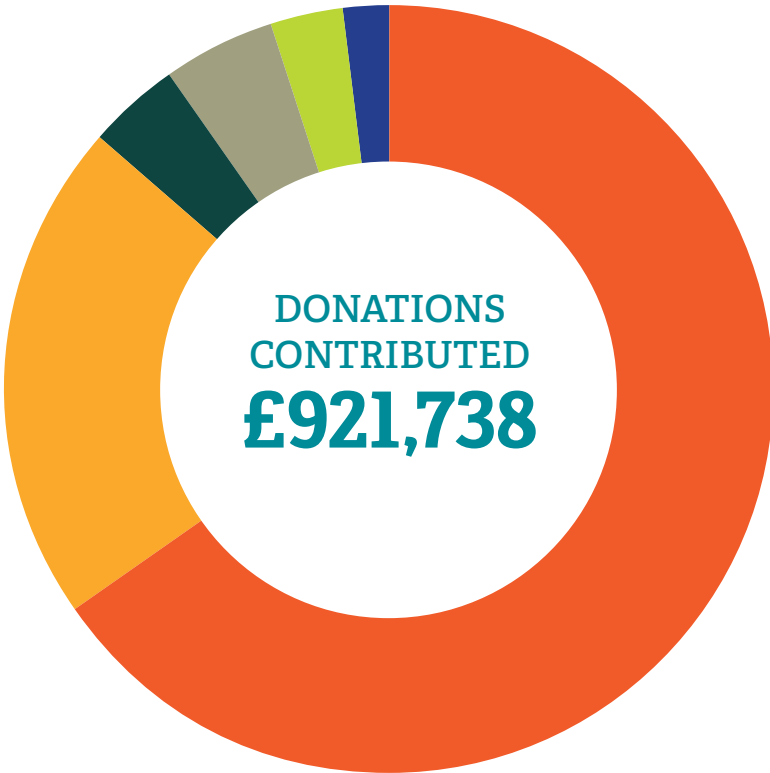
The path has made such a massive difference to me personally, as well as my family and many others.

I am registered blind and have a guide dog... I go down there every day as I can enjoy the walk without worrying that I might fall.

David, Beaufort, Ebbw Vale.

Our Finances for the year ended 31st March 2021

Income



DONATIONS CONTRIBUTED
£921,738

- 64%** GRANTS AND TRUSTS
- 22%** MEMBERSHIP
- 4%** DONATIONS AND LEGACIES
- 6%** EARNED INCOME
- 3%** OTHER FUNDRAISING
- 2%** OTHER

Grants and Trusts - £587,126 Grants from statutory bodies, (e.g. Welsh Government), charitable trusts and foundations

Membership - £202,414 Regular contributions from members (people and businesses)

Donations and Legacies - £37,882 Donations, gifts in wills and in memoriam and business support

Earned Income - £52,198 Sales of services, trading, rent, event and course income

Other fundraising - £26,486 Includes annual raffle and community fundraising activities

Other - £23,423 Investments and recovered VAT

Gift Aid proportionally distributed across membership and donations

Building a Local Force for Nature



7,550 members

Gwent Wildlife Trust is part of a local, national and global movement of activists for wildlife and, together with 45 Wildlife Trusts in the UK, we continually strive to build this support through fundraising, communications and campaigning.

15,499 Social Media followers by March 2021, with over 1,000 new followers every year

Gwent Wildlife spotting group, launched in 2020 to share wildlife sightings, now has over 700 followers

"A year ago, after joining [Gwent Wildlife Trust's wildlife spotting] group and developing a new appreciation of the nature on my doorstep, I bought a camera and started counting up the different birds I'd managed to photograph - wondering if I could make it to 70 within the year... I made it to 90! We all have our favourites: my sons like the mandarin and yellow wagtail, my daughter loves the lapwing, while I'm a fan of the humble nuthatch. The photos may not all be great, but a year ago I genuinely thought that all small brown birds were sparrows... it's been an enlightening 12 months!"

Debra, Caldicot

Expenditure



78%	PROTECTING WILDLIFE AND ENGAGING PEOPLE
10%	OPERATIONAL SUPPORT
5%	GENERATING FUNDS
4%	MEMBERSHIP
3%	GOVERNANCE

Protecting wildlife and engaging people - £1,009,166

Delivery and associated direct costs of our conservation, education, policy, public engagement and campaigning work

Operational Support - £135,579 Compliance and support functions including Finance, Health and Safety, I.T, Human Resources.

Generating funds - £59,684 Staff and office costs related to generating funds for our work

Membership - £53,634 Membership recruitment, communications and financial and administration costs of processing regular donations

Governance - £36,187 Annual audit, consultancy and legal fees and governing board meeting costs

Full audited accounts will be available on our website by 1st September, 2021 at gwentwildlife.org/our-funding

A Living Legacy – thank you.

As reported in our 2017-18 Annual Review, 4 years ago, we received an astonishingly generous legacy of over £2.5m from Mrs Pat Gorvin, a member of Gwent Wildlife Trust from the mid-1960s. Pat and her husband supported GWT through thick and thin until their old age. Pat survived her husband and continued to help us. Sadly, Pat passed away in 2016 but left 60% of her estate to us in her will. It is right that we reflect on the impact of this legacy, to date, in this report.

Perhaps most significantly, it contributed half of the purchase price for Bridewell Common Nature Reserve on the Gwent Levels and has also helped us make small expansions to other sites. It has enabled us to invest in more comprehensive surveying and monitoring of nature reserves to better understand how we can

restore wildlife, and given us the means to reach out to more children across Gwent to encourage a lifelong love of wildlife from our centres at Magor Marsh and Ebbw Vale. It has also enabled us to continue managing wildlife habitats at scale across Gwent, even where funded projects have ended, such as in the Eastern Valleys, whilst

seeking new sources of funding to continue and build on our achievements there.

It is only because of acts of generosity, not only huge gifts

like Pat Gorvin's but all the thousands of small contributions that we receive, that we can hope to meet the challenges of the biodiversity crisis at a local level. Our endeavours are supported by caring people who bring resources that are valuable beyond money - time, passion, advocacy and enthusiasm.

When you donate, pay membership subs or leave us a legacy, you are effectively transferring value from money to nature; from hard cash to natural beauty and we never underestimate the significance of these actions. Thank you.



Gwent Wildlife Trust

Key To Additional Features llwedd i Nodweddion Ychwanegol

 Coal Spoil Habitats /
 Cynefinoedd Tipiau Glo

 Ancient Woodland /
 Coetiroedd Hynafol

 Species Rich Grassland /
 Glaswelltir gyda Chyfoeth
 o Rywogaethau

 Wetland /
 Gwlyptir

 Upland Heathland /
 Rhostir yr Ucheldir



Strawberry
 Cottage Wood



BRECON
 BEACONS
 NATIONAL
 PARK / PARC
 CENEDLAETHOL
 BANNAU
 BRYCHEINIOG

Abergavenny / Y Fenni

Ebbw Vale /
 Glynebwy
 Environmental
 Resource Centre

BLAENAVON
 WORLD HERITAGE
 SITE / SAFLE
 TREFTADAETH BYD

Central Valley

Silent Valley

Priory Wood

Kitty's Orchard

Raglan / Rhaglan

The Wern

Pentwyn

New Grove
 Meadows

Margaret's
 Wood

Prisk
 Wood

Margaret's
 Wood

Wyeswood
 Common

Monmouth / Sir Fynwy

Dixton
 Embankment



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natur
GWENT

