



Gloucestershire
Wildlife Trust

Impact Report

2021/2022

gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust Registered Charity Number 232580

Welcome to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Impact Report for 2021/22



One of the key activities this year has been the crafting of our new strategy to take us through to 2030. The strategy has three overarching themes: stopping and reversing wildlife declines, more people taking action for nature and normalising natural solutions to climate change. Many thanks to those members who were able to give us such useful feedback on the drafts of the new strategy (for example – at the Member's Festival at Lower Woods last September). The final version can be found in the second half of this Impact Report.

This has been a year of rebuilding following the challenges experienced in 2020/21 due to Covid-19. We've relished opportunities to kick-start projects that have been on hold, forge new partnerships and make exciting plans for the future. Staff have been able to meet face-to-face once more, volunteer work parties are back in action and school groups have returned for learning sessions. We've also been thrilled to welcome local communities back into our cafés.

We have had some great successes this year, despite restrictions. Highlights have included the final release of pine martens in the Forest of Dean, the high take-up of our HabiMap citizen science programme – with 200 volunteers expressing an interest in being involved, the acquisition of Blackness Banks – a new nature reserve in the Golden Valley, and the extension of the ERDF Wild Towns project to 2023, enabling more work to take place in seven towns across Gloucestershire. This report celebrates these and many other achievements.

The last few years have been a real challenge, but one that we were able to overcome thanks only to the support from you – our members, individual supporters, and corporate and institutional partners. You enabled us to weather the storm, and now we're raring to go with an ambitious new strategy and even more determination to work with you to put nature into recovery.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'David Bullock'.

David Bullock
Chair of Trustees

'The last few years have been a real challenge, but one that we were able to overcome thanks only to the support from you - our members, individual supporters, and corporate and institutional partners.'

How we've done against our plans

MARK HAMBLIN/2020VISION

Delivering nature's recovery at scale

Nature Recovery Zones (NRZs) are an ambitious, landscape-scale approach to connect wild places, drive nature's recovery, and support wildlife in adapting to climate change. This year we focused our efforts and made considerable progress in two NRZs - the Golden Valley and the Severn Hams.

Projects in the Golden Valley included Communities for Insects (habitat enhancements to increase the resilience of threatened insect populations), Boost for Bats (improving woodlands and neighbouring grasslands across reserves in the Stroud valleys for a variety of bat species) and Rebuilding Landscapes for Nature's Recovery (habitat enhancements and surveys for several species including large blue and marsh fritillary butterflies).

Work in the Severn Hams NRZ has concentrated on the creation of priority wetland habitat in the Severn Vale, work on a landscape-scale management plan, signage and recruitment of volunteers.

Project Pine Marten

The long-running pine marten project has steamed ahead and come to the end of its three-year translocation phase, with the highlight this year taking place in late summer when 17 pine martens were transported from Scotland and placed in specially constructed holding pens in the Forest of Dean to acclimatise.

These animals were then successfully released and their movements monitored via radio tracking collars over the following months. In addition to the release itself, the team has been busy with a series of online talks, together with training and support for volunteers on setting camera traps and carrying out scat and den site surveys.

The end of Foresters' Forest

2022 saw the end of Foresters' Forest, a National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Partnership programme, formed from an association of partner organisations and local community groups within the Forest of Dean, and led by Forestry England.

GWT's involvement included providing activities for 4 to 13 year olds via Forest Explorers, supporting the Dean Meadows Group to carry out surveys and providing management advice to the owners of wildflower meadows. It also saw the start of a significant conservation grazing project focused on creating areas of open habitat, especially heathland, and maintaining it using grazing livestock.

Reserve condition monitoring

Using a standardised approach, and supported by a dedicated group of volunteers, we have completed condition monitoring at 11 nature reserves and have prepared the programme for the 2022 season. This process involves field work, analysis of data and report writing, and provides our ecological evidence base. The results will inform future work on these reserves.

Rebuilding the volunteer programme

We've been working hard to rebuild our volunteer programme following the pauses caused by the Covid-19 pandemic - during which time the number of active volunteers decreased. We now have 580 active volunteers. The diversity of our programme has increased both in terms of demographics and the sorts of tasks undertaken by volunteers.

One of the big successes this year has been the recruitment of volunteers to the HabiMap programme. HabiMap is a rolling citizen science programme to carry out detailed surveys of all habitats across Gloucestershire every 10 years. We had to cap the numbers of new volunteers after 200 individuals expressed an interest.

Community empowerment toolkit

Through working with the local community at Ashleworth - who are passionate about helping wildlife to thrive in their local area, we've created a community empowerment toolkit. This toolkit is intended to give wildlife-friendly communities the power, platform and connections (and if needed the know-how) to make a difference. It includes advice on bird boxes, wildflower meadows, hedgehog highways, engaging with the public, training and finding funding.

Our Bright Future

We completed Our Bright Future, a six-year project working with young people to help them value and benefit from an awareness of local wildlife and a connection to nature, and to gain valuable skills and experience. Delivered in partnership with Avon Wildlife Trust, the project worked with 3,671 young people. Of these, 75% were aged 11 to 14 and 25% 15 to 24. 1,236 AQA certifications were awarded via the project and, during the six-year period, several greenspaces were improved for people and wildlife.

Gloucester Rainscapes

The Gloucester Rainscapes project concentrated on improving water quality and reducing flood risk in Gloucester, focusing on the Barton and Kingsholm areas. We installed demonstration rain gardens and planters in key community locations, working with local volunteers to prevent rainwater from reaching rivers and drainage systems too quickly. Interpretation boards and leaflets



were produced in different languages to raise awareness and surface water drains were painted with the yellow fish symbol of the 'yellow fish' campaign - to help to raise awareness of pollutants entering watercourses.

Natural Health Service

We have continued our Health and Wellbeing programme, 'Natural Health Service'. This has included projects such as Nature on Prescription - a series of outdoor nature walks for cardiac rehabilitation patients, Nature Nurtures - a pilot project to demonstrate the impact of the natural world on young people's mental wellbeing, and Carers in Nature which involved walks and online sessions for carers.

Building with Nature in Local Plans

Building with Nature sets standards for high quality green infrastructure, and local authorities are now using these standards to create and accredit good policy and guidance. Developers are also using Building with Nature to create better places for people and wildlife. This year, two strategic allocations have committed to Building with Nature in Local Plans, and discussions are underway with a third.

Engagement with young people

We've increased our engagement with young people through specific initiatives. Wild Trainees is a vocational training and work-based learning scheme dedicated to providing hands-on practical land management skills for 18 to 25 year olds. Our learning programme has engaged with more than 5,000 young people face-to-face this year, and nearly 6,000 online. Our Youth Advisory Group is helping to shape the future of the organisation, providing advice and challenge to the Board of Trustees and the Chief Executive.

WilderGlos platform

In 2021 we launched our WilderGlos digital platform. This provides resources and information to enable and empower individuals and organisations to take action for wildlife, and earn points for doing so. During the past year, 1,850 people took action using the platform, and 5,296 individual actions were taken - including planting nectar-rich plants in gardens, using less plastic and putting up bird boxes.

Plans for the future

Our plans for 2022/23 include:

Starting to deliver Severn Treescapes

We'll be delivering a new partnership project, Severn Treescapes. This is an ambitious programme to create a 60-mile corridor of enhanced tree cover across Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, from the Lower Wye Valley in the south to the Wyre Forest in the north.

Severn Treescapes will expand, connect, protect and improve the woodland network, demonstrate that woodland creation at a regional scale is compatible with productive agricultural land, and will enhance connections between people, trees and woodlands.

Expanding green infrastructure

Delivering more space for nature close to where people live is one of the key ambitions in our new strategy. We'll be working on plans for a Severnside Nature Park in Gloucester and will start rolling out the Barton Street Nature Highway project by working with businesses and local residents. In the coming year we'll also complete the ERDF Wild Towns project – which has focused on creating, connecting and enhancing green spaces for wildlife in seven towns across Gloucestershire.

Defining the strategies for 10 Nature Recovery Zones

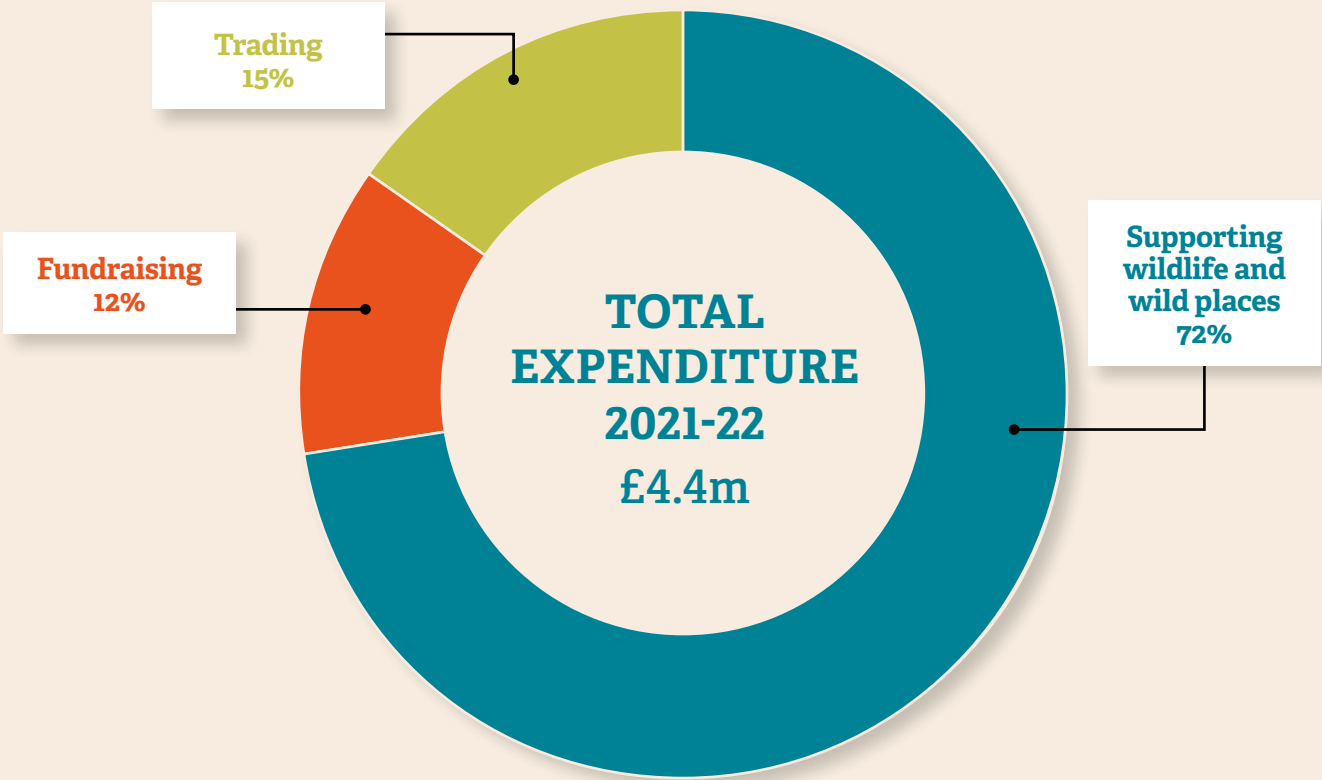
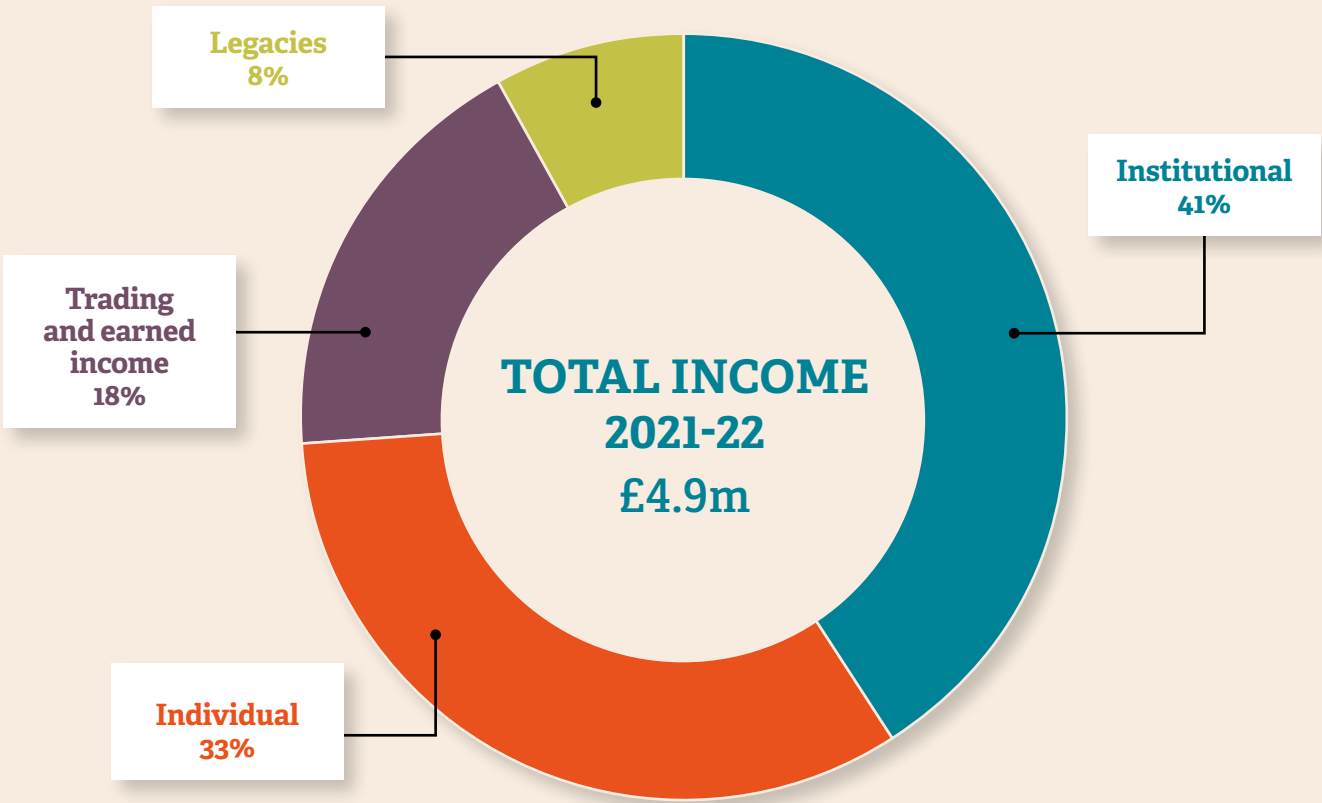
Continuing with our Nature Recovery Zone (NRZ) approach, we'll be growing and strengthening the Trust's biggest and best nature reserves to connect wildlife, drive nature's recovery and support wildlife adapting to climate change. This year we'll be defining the strategies for ten NRZs across the county, articulating our vision for the change that we want to see, including consultation with all stakeholders.

Rewilding

Working with at least one major landowner on the management of land where natural processes lead, we'll be taking a rewilding approach. New habitat mosaics created through this process will bridge gaps in the core Nature Recovery Network and contribute towards GWT's strategic target of enhancing or creating 10,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat by 2030.



Financial statement



Thank you

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Egress
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Sudeley Castle & Gardens
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Landfill Communities Fund

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Enovert Community Trust
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Viridor Credits Environmental Company

Grants

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Campaign to Protect Rural England
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Gloucestershire Gateway Trust
Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner
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The Woodchester Trust
The Yarrow Trust

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