

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



Annual Review

2019/20



Protecting local wildlife

Welcome to our Impact Report

We're delighted to share a selection of highlights from the past year, showing the wide-ranging impact that BBOWT has had for wildlife and people in our three counties.

The overarching aims of our 2016-2021 Strategic Plan *Be part of nature's recovery* are to increase landscape resilience across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire by restoring nature and increasing wildlife-rich habitats, and to reconnect people with the natural world.

Over the last year we've made significant progress towards our five-year targets. More than 6,000 hectares of land outside BBOWT's direct management have now been improved for wildlife thanks to our work. We've recorded more than 100,000 volunteer sessions and more than 4,000 people have taken part in new activities in the natural environment to benefit their health. As part of our work to ensure the natural world is at the heart of everyone's lives, we've met with nearly 150 decision-makers.

There is still much to do and, as we near the end of our current strategic plan, we're already planning the next five years so that we continue to strive for nature's recovery, to connect people and the natural world, and to highlight nature-based solutions to the climate emergency.

Thank you for your continued support over the last year. At this time of nature and climate emergencies and when so many people are still disconnected from nature, we know that our work is more important than ever to create a thriving, healthy and resilient natural world for wildlife and people. Your generosity ensures that we can keep working hard to achieve this.



Joanna Simons

Joanna Simons,
Chair



Estelle Bailey

Estelle Bailey,
Chief Executive



Our Impact 2019-20

Our work protects and restores the natural world, and connects people with wildlife

Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust

September 2020

Read more about our work during 2019/20 in our full Annual Report and Accounts at bbowt.org.uk/publications

OUR VISION

An environment rich in wildlife, valued by all

OUR MISSION

To create a living landscape across our towns, cities and countryside and inspire our communities to act for nature

OUR AIM

To lead the way to nature's recovery and connect people with nature so that:

- Our soil and water resources are managed to create functioning ecosystems and wildlife-rich places.
- Local communities, decision makers, landowners and businesses work with and for nature.
- People recognise their dependence upon nature and the value of it to their mental and physical wellbeing.



86 nature reserves covering **2,644ha** of land

Provided wildlife friendly land management advice on

1,857ha of land



Nearly **15,000** planning applications screened



More than **7,400** people in our area

signed the petition to stop and rethink HS2

4 education centres,
2 visitor centres &
1 environmental centre



220,000 visitors to welcomed to our nature reserves and visitor centres



400 public events attracting **57,000** people



25,644 memberships support our work

Restore land so it is rich in wildlife

Our 86 nature reserves are natural havens where wildlife can thrive and spread into the wider landscape when conditions are favourable.

During the year we acquired some ridge-and-furrow meadows at Amcott Bridge Meadows SSSI, which has extended our Upper Ray Meadows nature reserve.

While caring for our reserves to ensure that they flourish and their wildlife thrives is an essential part of our work, we are doing more to protect and improve biodiversity beyond our own land. By working with local landowners, local government and other partners, we've developed three new Living Landscapes, including the 240km² East Berkshire Living Landscape. We are creating a network of wildlife-friendly habitat across our three counties and moving towards our target of increased wildlife-rich land throughout Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.


2,644ha
of land managed
for wildlife, and
people!


333
biological surveys
carried out on our
nature reserves


We care for
about 10%
of the remaining
floodplain
meadows (MG4)
in the UK



CASE STUDY: Restoring the wetlands at Chimney Meadows

Our new Wetland Restoration Project at Chimney Meadows is restoring precious habitats and making more space for nature.

Thanks to funding from the RDPE Water Environment Grant, this exciting new partnership project will revive and create natural riverside wetland systems. These new and restored habitats will be homes for wildlife, as well as helping to prevent flooding and improve water quality in the Upper Thames area.

Chimney Meadows Nature Reserve is at the heart of our Upper Thames Living Landscape, a network of habitats that make up one of the best wetland areas in England. Internationally important plant communities thrive here, together with rare wading birds that find a haven among the meadows.

In 2017, we extended the reserve to include 45 hectares of former agricultural

land over the river at Duxford. This land has given us a unique opportunity to undertake a wetland restoration project of a size and scale that is rarely possible in the Thames catchment.

This project will improve opportunities for fish passage and spawning, restore and create river and floodplain habitats, reconnect the River Thames and Wadley Stream to their floodplains, restore native river and bankside flora and fauna, renew riverside fencing to tackle pollution, maintain floodplain meadows, and improve the experience of visitors with new interpretation and orientation boards.

Read more about the wetland restoration project at bbowt.org.uk/chimney-meadows-wetland-restoration

Creating access to 2.1km of new potential fish spawning grounds




45ha
wetland
restoration
scheme

260ha
existing river and
floodplain habitats
further restored



"A wetland restoration project of a size and scale that is rarely possible in the Thames catchment."

Connect with people and communities

Our work to connect and inspire thousands of people with the natural world ensures a greater appreciation of it, which is essential for nature's recovery.

We continue to welcome thousands of people to our visitor centres and nature reserves where they can experience the delights of nature first hand.

Over the last year we also attracted over 57,000 people to more than 400 inspiring events. We celebrated 50 years of Sutton Courtenay Environmental Education Centre and welcomed more than 10,000 schoolchildren to our sites. Thanks to our Wild and Free bursary scheme nearly 1,000 children were able to experience our environmental education sessions.

Our wildlife trainee programme gives essential skills to people looking to start a career in conservation and environmental education, and this year more than 50 people took part in the scheme. We continue to build on our urban wildlife projects too so we can reach more diverse communities.

 **32,126**
followers on
social media

410,000 
unique website visits

241 media
broadcasts
or articles 



CASE STUDY: Inspiring the next generation of wildlife champions

Our Wild Trax project gave young people, aged 11-18 years, in Tring and Aylesbury a unique opportunity to gain skills for a career in conservation. The project was supported by the Rothschild Foundation and worked in partnership with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, and the Natural History Museum in Tring.

The project was created in response to concerns that young people are becoming increasingly disconnected from wildlife, and struggling with stress and health problems. The Wild Trax partners wanted to help change this, and to learn how best to engage with young people.

During the project we delivered taster days, assemblies and careers events, and developed strong links with three main schools and a youth organisation. At The Mandeville School in Aylesbury, we helped Year 8s design a wildlife area in their school grounds and established a school club to help maintain it. The wildlife area was funded by Thomas Cook Children's Charity and Mid-County Co-op.

Students from Bucks UTC visited College Lake nature reserve to learn hands-on conservation skills. We regularly worked with Tring School's outdoor classroom groups, helping to manage their outdoor classroom area and giving the students opportunities to learn about wildlife conservation through trips to partner organisations.

Linking with Action 4 Youth's Inspiration Programme, we helped students to learn about the importance of our work, and gave them practical conservation and team working skills through site visits. Young people who joined us as part of the National Citizenship Scheme (NSC) also installed new wildlife-friendly features, such as bird boxes and feeders, along the Bear Brook by Aylesbury Waterside Theatre.

We were thrilled to see young people flourish and gain confidence through the project, giving them the opportunity to make a difference to their local wildlife and wild places.

Read more about the Wild Trax project at bbowt.org.uk/wild-trax

We engaged with over  **2,800**
young people

4 
school
partnerships

 **50** outdoor
experiences
delivered

**"I think I've found
my role in life"**
Wild Trax participant



Value nature by explaining its benefits

We will only make real progress when everything that nature does for us (all the economic and social benefits of the natural world) is recognised and valued by decision-makers, landowners, planners and developers.

We are illustrating the multiple services delivered from nature-based solutions (such as improving soil health, mitigating flood risk, and increasing carbon sequestration), so that businesses begin to recognise and invest in nature to support the long term sustainability of their operations.

Throughout the five years of the strategic plan we are highlighting the health and wellbeing benefits that come from engaging with nature. This year we expanded our innovative programme following a recent pilot project. We are also working with decision-makers to prioritise the integration of natural green spaces within development, new infrastructure and community facilities.

BBOWT responded to numerous planning applications in our three counties this year. In Oxfordshire some applications threatened the wildlife in some of our most precious wildlife sites, designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs). We also worked with partner organisations in relation to these and the outcomes for wildlife were greatly improved by amendments to applications or the refusal of applications.

1,382  **people took part in special health and wellbeing activities on our reserves**

65  **local councillors signed a pledge for nature in the run up to local elections in May 2019**

182  **Wildlife Ambassadors**



CASE STUDY: Using the power of nature to help people's wellbeing

The Nature Discovery Centre is a hub for our innovative health and wellbeing projects, which demonstrate the benefit that regular contact with nature has, particularly for our mental health.

The Nature Memories Café continued this year with weekly sessions for people impacted by dementia. A regular group of people attend the café and enjoy craft sessions such as making bird feeders, baking wildlife-shaped breads and sowing seeds. For many this session is a vital time of respite and there is a great sense of support for carers who meet with others in a similar situation as well as those with dementia. Sue Butterworth from West Berkshire Council has been invaluable with her specialist advice for running the project.

Melanie attends the café with her father and says, "He looks forward to attending and enjoys every moment. It encourages him to join in and be creative with his mind and conversation. It also helps me understand what other families are experiencing. Shared knowledge is so helpful".

Our new Engaging with Nature project began during the autumn. Following a pilot project in 2017, we were successful with our funding application to the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund and The Tanner Trust. The new two-year project will see four community groups attend sessions over six months at a time. Our first group came from Eight Bells for Mental Health, based in Newbury, and took part in weekly habitat management activities around the site.

2  **pioneering health and wellbeing projects**

Weekly  **Nature Memories Café sessions**

24-week  **programmes of free nature therapy sessions**



"The Nature Memories Café has become a lifeline to us."

Jayne, carer

Partner with others to maximise our impact

To make real progress towards nature's recovery at a landscape-scale, we must combine our expertise with that of other organisations.

We engage with many local authorities, other NGOs, businesses, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission to achieve our goal of living landscapes across our towns, cities and countryside.

We have developed strong relationships with all our local MPs and many of our local councillors. Our work with MPs has helped to improve the Environment Bill, and we're working to ensure Nature Recovery Networks are created through our three counties. We continue to highlight the dangers of unsustainable development in the proposed Oxford-Cambridge Growth Arc.

More than 30 local businesses support our work through our Investors in Wildlife programme, and we enjoy great relationships with companies that promote wildlife-friendly farming, including Vine House Farm and Jordan's Cereals through the Jordan's Farm Partnership.

 All **21** local MPs engaged with

200 local councillors engaged with 

35 Investors in Wildlife corporate partners 



CASE STUDY: Making spaces for wildlife across the central Chilterns

Small, wildlife-rich areas can be just as important as big ones - and by improving and connecting many of these little islands of nature we can help wildlife recover over a large scale, which is what our Rough Around the Edges (RATE) project is doing across the central Chilterns.


RATE is part of the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership Scheme led by the Chilterns Conservation Board and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Through this project BBOWT is supporting community groups that need advice, training and resources to create, restore and improve habitat for wildlife in small spaces, such as churchyards, allotments, community gardens, ponds and meadows.

We're restoring a badly neglected pond at Radnage Common, and we're creating and restoring hedgerows, sowing wildflower meadows, creating ponds and


training volunteers at Lindengate, the 5-acre grounds of a mental health charity in South Buckinghamshire.

We've worked with Widmer End Community Combined School, helping them to create more wildlife homes around their new pond, with children and families learning how to make hedgehog and bird boxes that they can also put in their gardens.

All our projects draw communities and local volunteers together, raising awareness of their local wildlife, and giving them the knowledge and resources to improve and look after their local spaces for wildlife over the long term, which ensures the benefits for wildlife last well beyond the lifespan of our involvement. Working with partners is essential to the success of the projects and means we can be even more effective when working with local communities.

Directly working with **9 groups** 

 Over **300m** of hedgerow improved (managing and planting 6 hedgerows)

125 people from community groups directly engaged through the project 

"Thank you SO much for all your hard work and bringing the resources we needed. It was a great success!"

*Helen McCammond, Deputy Head Teacher
Widmer End Community Combined School*



Building our capacity to deliver

Everything we do depends on the organisation being efficient, financially robust, well-led and governed effectively.

We support and equip our staff and volunteers to deliver our strategic plan. We've worked to strengthen our governance to ensure the Trust continues to be effective and fit for purpose. We ensure that BBOWT has the robust systems and governance processes that are fit for purpose and compliant with regulatory services.

We're working to increase our income by developing new income streams and maximising funding through our membership, donations, legacies and grants. We rely on the generosity of our members and the wider public to fund the majority of our work as we receive no core government funding. We continued to raise the income we need to ensure the Trust can flourish through membership, support from companies and corporates, generous legacies, and grants.



More than
1,700
volunteers



Over **52** people
took part in
our successful
BBOWT Trainee
programme



156
members of staff
dedicated to
nature's recovery



CASE STUDY: Transforming spaces for nature through people power

BBOWT is fortunate enough to have nearly 70 volunteer working groups across the three counties, with more than half led by key volunteers. Over the year, our 1,700 volunteers contributed more than 32,000 volunteering sessions on reserves, at our visitor and education centres, at events, and in our offices. Without these dedicated people we simply couldn't do what we do for wildlife at our nature reserves and beyond.

Every year volunteers are recognised for their vital contribution at our Volunteer Awards. The Friends of Chimney Meadows volunteers were one of three groups to receive an award for Outstanding Group Contribution at the 2019 Volunteer Awards. They are recognised for changing the vast landscape of Chimney Meadows nature reserve from what was arable, barren

and overgrazed land to the wildlife-rich landscape it is today. Twice a month the volunteers venture out in order to keep on top of all the vegetation and infrastructure management, which is a very big job. The group accomplishes a huge amount from scrub clearance, cutting back protruding branches and making habitat piles, to dead-hedging, fence repairs, and car park maintenance.

Each member complements the group with their unique skills, sharing a great sense of camaraderie and a passion to care for the wildlife and to create a positive experience for visitors. The group was formed when BBOWT purchased Chimney Meadows and comprises many longstanding members, in addition to newer recruits.

Group
established
in **2004**



1 Coronation Meadow,
a prime example of a
wildflower meadow
in Oxfordshire

308 ha,
the size of
Chimney Meadows
nature reserve



"The group has transformed an arable, barren and overgrazed land to the wildlife-rich landscape it is today"

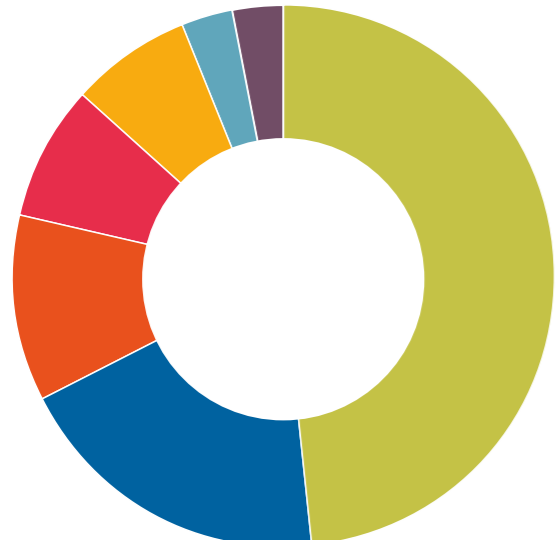
Lisa Lane, Upper Thames Living Landscape Manager



2019/20

Financial Review

BBOWT continues to maintain a healthy financial position. Income from membership, membership donations, agri-environment scheme grants and investments increased.



Income 2019-2020		
Total: £5.66m		
£000s		
£2,709	48%	Membership and donations
£1,084	19%	Grants and corporate donations
£649	12%	Individual donations and legacies
£430	8%	Agri-environment scheme income
£422	7%	Trading activities
£169	3%	Investment income
£196	3%	Other income



Expenditure 2019-2020		
Total: £5.69m		
£000s		
£1,848	33%	Nature reserve management
£1,681	29%	Wildlife awareness and education
£1,035	18%	Membership and fundraising costs
£557	10%	Looking after the wider countryside
£542	10%	Trading costs
£23	0%	Investment costs

Membership

Our Fundraising Promise

The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) is committed to fundraising and communicating in an honest and transparent way.

We aim to ensure that everyone who chooses to support us, whether by joining BBOWT, making a donation, giving their time to volunteer with us or attending events, has a positive and rewarding experience and understands that their support is truly valued.

As part of this we will be honest and transparent, protect your data, be respectful of your wishes, and accountable. BBOWT Trustees regularly review all fundraising activity for both its cost effectiveness and compliance. Furthermore, Trustees review all complaints received and any fundraising ones are reported to the Fundraising Regulator.



Gifts in Wills of
£287k

25,644
memberships

3,757 new
memberships
during the year

10,225
Wildlife Watch
Club members

74 new people
pledging to
leave a gift
to BBOWT in
their Will

Overall income
from membership
and membership
donations grew
by 7% to
£2,709k

48% of our income
is from membership
and donations

Thank you to our supporters

The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust relies on the generosity of its members and other supporters. Without this support we would not be able to achieve BBOWT's aim to lead the way for nature's recovery and to connect people with nature. Thank you to the following organisations and individuals who have supported BBOWT during the 2019-20 financial year.

President

Steve Backshall

Honorary Vice-Presidents

Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher
Dr Pam Berry
Sir Clive Booth
Dr Robin Buxton MBE, DL
Roger Dobbs (to April 2019)
Professor Dieter Helm CBE
Martin Spray CBE
Lady Audrey Wood

We'd like to acknowledge the tremendous contribution of our Honorary Vice-President, Peter Hinde, and Honorary Vice-President and past Chair of BBOWT, Hugh Mellor CBE who both sadly passed away in 2019.

Board of Trustees

Joanna Simons (Chair)
Barbara Muston (resigned 11 December 2019)
Graeme Thompson (Honorary Treasurer)
Ian Davidson (Honorary Secretary)
Frances Brindle
David Cairns (resigned 11 December 2019)
Jane Cotton
Sir Paul Hayter (resigned 12 October 2019)
Natalie Ganpatsingh (appointed 11 December 2019)
James Gillies (resigned 12 October 2019)
Julie Macken (appointed 11 December 2019)
Chris Mees (appointed 12 October 2019)
Diana Nettleton (resigned 12 October 2019)
Mike Pollard (appointed 12 October 2019)
John Pulsinelli (resigned 25 February 2020)
Gregory Webster (appointed 11 December 2019)

Charitable Trusts (£1,000+)

Aylesbury Vale Community Trust	The Frogal Trust
Canal & River Trust	The Helen Roll Charitable Trust
Cecil Pilkington Charitable Trust	The Leonard And Suzanne Phillips Foundation
Dennis Curry Charitable Trust	The Mitchell Trust
EBM Charitable Trust	The R&J Bleach Trust
Mobbs Memorial Trust	The Tanner Trust
Richard Radcliffe Charitable Trust	The Woodcote Trust
The Banister Charitable Trust	

Corporate Partners

A Menarini Logistics	MEPC Milton Park
Alnylam	NatureBureau
Anglian Water	Neve's Bees
Anne Veck	NFU Mutual
Berkeley Homes (Oxford & Chiltern)	Nurture Landscapes
Blenheim Palace Estate	Oracle
Bowles and Wyr	Oxford Bus Company
Costain	Oxford Office Furniture
Country Land and Business Association	Oxford Science Park
Darklight Design	Panasonic UK
DCS Group	QuickMoveNow
Eling Estates (Gerald Palmer Eling Trust Company)	Rational Windows
English Provender Company	Robin Swailes Design & Development
Freeths	Ssassy Homes
Hindsight Consultancy	Seacourt Ltd
Holidays in the Cotswolds	Sophos
Ipsen	Taylor & Francis
Johnson Matthey	Thames Water
Kings Centre	The King's Centre
Lanes Group plc	Whitley Stimpson
	Vine House Farm

Grant-making and Statutory Bodies

DEFRA
Environment Agency
Natural England
Reading Urban Wildlife Group
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Tesco Bags of Help
The Avast Foundation
The City of London Corporation
The Chilterns Conservation Board
The National Lottery Heritage Fund
The National Lottery Community Fund
The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts

Landfill Communities Fund

Biffa Award
Grundon Waste Management Ltd
The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE)
Veolia Environmental Trust

Local Authorities

Bracknell Forest Council
Cherwell District Council
Didcot Town Council
Gerrards Cross Town Council
Oxford City Council
Oxfordshire County Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Vale of White Horse District Council
West Berkshire Council

Legators

We are extremely grateful to the following people who left a bequest to BBOWT in their Will...

Sidney Beach
Roger Benson
Graham Burton
Michael Dawes
Barbara Hall
Jean Scott
Mary-Rose Seldon
CL Sumner
Adrienne Thirkell
Rodney Thompson

Patrons

John Eckersley
Professor & Mrs Helm
Jean and Roger Jefcoate CBE, DL
Dr Robin Buxton MBE, DL
Lady Audrey Wood
Liz Ware
Sally Rankin
Dr Peter Asquith



Looking forward to 2020/21, our plans for the next year and beyond

We are planning a programme of work that continues to deliver against our strategic plan objectives to restore nature in our three counties, and connect people with the natural world.

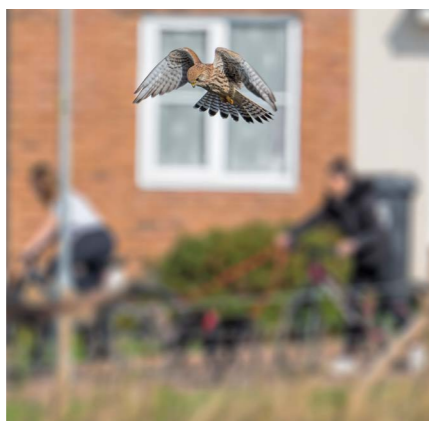
The reality is that the year ahead has already been transformed by the COVID-19 pandemic and we have to reshape and scale our plans to respond to the challenges posed.

We know that nature-based solutions to the climate emergency will play a key role in mitigating the effects of the changing climate as well restoring wildlife across our three counties and beyond. This will be a key focus of our work with win-win benefits for both nature and climate. Within the organisation, we will assess how we work to see how we can be carbon neutral and lead by example.

We will do more to tackle the disconnection between people and the natural world so that everyone benefits from the positive affect that nature has on our health. We also want more people to act for nature in our three counties, whether by volunteering for us, making their gardens more wildlife-friendly or by giving nature a voice and writing to local decision-makers.

We will continue to support and develop our staff and volunteers to deliver the current strategic plan. During the year we will develop our new strategic plan for 2021-26, which will build on our work for the nature and climate emergencies and the disconnection between people and wildlife.

[Read more about our plans for 2020/21 in our full Annual Report and Accounts at \[bbowt.org.uk/publications\]\(https://bbowt.org.uk/publications\)](https://bbowt.org.uk/publications)



“Connecting people with the natural world around them is vital if we are to tackle the nature and climate emergencies, and bring nature back.”

Estelle Bailey

Be part of nature's recovery

Your local Wildlife Trust brings people and nature together to protect our environment.

Our experts work with more than 1,700 volunteers to look after 86 nature reserves, four education centres and run hundreds of amazing events. We rely on the generosity of individuals, charitable trusts and businesses. To find out more or to contribute visit bbowt.org.uk

The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust is one of 46 Wildlife Trusts across the UK. Together The Wildlife Trusts form the largest UK voluntary organisation dedicated to protecting wildlife and wild places on land and at sea.



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204330

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00680007

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