



THANK YOU

Impact Report 2022

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Essex
Wildlife Trust

**'2022 WAS AN EXTREMELY BUSY YEAR
FOR THE TRUST: A YEAR CHARACTERISED BY
DELIVERING BIG PROJECTS AND LAYING
STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE.'**

Andrew Impey
Chief Executive, Essex Wildlife Trust



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Essex
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Together, we can **achieve great things**



Keeley Hazelhurst

Chair
Essex Wildlife Trust

We've all had those easy wins which are great, and who doesn't love it when a plan comes together first time? But sometimes it takes more energy and commitment than one person alone can bring. **Together we lift each other.** We inspire each other to achieve our goals, we bring out the best (and sometimes the worst) in our nearest and dearest, we shout encouragement from the sidelines, and we celebrate together.

We all collaborate in one way or another – whether that is as families, friends and work colleagues, or **communities, action groups and national partnerships**. Different teams coming together to help, support, and make positive changes. Essex Wildlife Trust is no different.

This year we have really seen the benefit of working together. Many of our projects are in collaboration with you, - our members, volunteers, other wildlife organisations, community groups and of course the lovely families who support our **Nature Nursery**.

On the subject of education, did you know that Essex Wildlife Trust has a huge outdoor learning team – the largest county-based team in the country – working with children from tiny **Nature Tots**, through **Forest School** and **Wilder Schools**, and we also support GCSE and A-Level courses. We work together with families, schools and authorities to spread knowledge and to inspire a love of nature almost from day one.

The **Local Nature Partnership** brings together all sorts of organisations from across Essex and we strongly support the direction the partnership is taking to make Essex a wilder county. We've also continued our work with the **Spains Hall Estate beaver reintroduction** and with the **Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew** to support

their work on rare orchids. We've worked with charities such as the **John Swire Charitable Trust** and the **National Lottery Heritage Fund** to deliver fantastic new initiatives, and with the families of our legators to ensure their loved one's memory lives on in our work.

Our **Wilder Communities Team** supports 30 town and parish councils to become wilder, working with groups all across the county to support them with their own plans and ideas, enabling them to have real impact locally. It is a joy to see.

I couldn't finish without mentioning our **volunteers and members**. The sheer determination and steadfast support you give us allows us to achieve the impossible. To turn the tide on nature depletion, to conserve the best of our lovely county, and restore what we can to its former glory.

Fabulous, wonderful, inspiring teamwork.

Enjoy the sunshine, it's a beautiful day.

Keeley Hazelhurst

Our wonderful staff and incredible volunteers



Andrew Impey

Chief Executive Officer
Essex Wildlife Trust

Looking back, 2022 was an extremely busy year for the Trust: a year characterised by **delivering big projects** and **laying strong foundations** for the future.

We further developed our Conservation Team to enable more strategic focus on nature's recovery, grow our **portfolio of marine work**, and establish **conservation evidence** as an integral discipline for the future. It was the second anniversary of the formation of our **Ecology Team** who have been helping to underpin all of our work with a solid base of scientific data, which is now starting to drive everything we do.

Many projects delivered great things for wildlife. Among these were **Greener Thames**, a multi-site project with the RSPB, 40 hectares of improvement at **Blue House Farm**, 75 hectares of improvement at **Fobbing Marsh**, and an exciting new project to restore **Warley Place**.

Our Nature Discovery Centres returned to normal levels of engagement post-Covid while also benefitting from a **year-long programme of improvement**, spanning signage and interpretation, retail, food and beverage, and the visitor experience. We hope you've noticed and enjoyed these enhancements. We also **reopened Bedfords Park**.

Our renowned education department was transformed into the new **Wilder Learning Team**, who are already making waves. Their work is guided by our new **Engagement Strategy**, which also drives our **growing portfolio of community work**. Meanwhile, our pioneering **Nature Nursery** completed its first full year of operation and the feedback from parents has been incredible.

It was another good year for communications at the Trust, an area for which we are widely regarded as a national leader. The **Essex brand was**

adopted nationally, which brought huge kudos to the Trust. We managed our best levels of engagement ever, and we achieved **many campaign successes**, which we hope you enjoy reading about.

There was also a lot of work behind-the-scenes. A significant amount was achieved under the umbrella of our **Digital Transformation Project** which aims to introduce effective and efficient systems for the future. There was investment in ensuring excellence in **safeguarding**, we introduced new approaches to managing the **volunteer experience**, and there was a raft of work to maximise staff retention and position the Trust as an **employer of choice** in the face of volatile job markets and worsening economic conditions.

I really hope you find reading this year's report as satisfying as I do. These are your achievements as much as ours: **we couldn't do it without you**.

It's perhaps worth emphasising that this Impact Report gives a summary of the work which, for the most part, is **in addition to the business-as-usual** job of managing over a hundred nature reserves and running the most visitor centres of any Wildlife Trust in the movement.

It is also worth noting that **the role of volunteers and staff is implicit in many cases but cannot be overstated**. While some volunteers and members of staff are mentioned by name, this report is a celebration and thanks for everyone's work: our wonderful staff and our incredible army of volunteers and Local Groups.

Protecting wildlife

2022 was a busy year for nature conservation at the Trust. The extent of what we achieved was in large part down to the incredible support of our volunteers, who multiply our impact by a factor of 10.

From reconnecting Essex's rivers to securing the **strongholds for iconic species such as turtle dove and nightingale**, the achievements we've highlighted in the following pages were above and beyond our 'business-as-usual' management of over a hundred sites across the county for the benefit of people and wildlife, covering 3,030 hectares of land and approximately 200 km of watercourses.



Nightingale photo: MatusHaban - stock.adobe.com

Our volunteers are at the heart of everything we do

We are enormously grateful for the **2,000+ volunteers** who continue to support our staff teams at Nature Discovery Centres, practical conservation work parties and Wilder Learning activities this year. Volunteer satisfaction survey results show 92% agree that they **feel appreciated** and part of the team where they volunteer. A massive thank you to all our volunteers and those that work closely with them.

There was much to celebrate with the **Warley Place** volunteer team winning the Environmental category at the BBC Make a Difference Awards and one of the Trust's longest serving volunteers, **Bob Reed**, achieving a phenomenal 50 years actively volunteering at Sawbridgeworth Marsh. Congratulations all!

Volunteer roles at the Trust are continually evolving and this year we welcomed our first cohort of **campaign volunteers** to help engage the public with our campaigns, and successfully recruited the first volunteers to support the **Nature Nursery Team** at Abbots Hall. We look forward to seeing these areas go from strength to strength in the future.

Ray Marsh Award 2022

The Ray Marsh Award 2022 was presented to **George Catchpole**, an exemplary volunteer whose dedication to the Trust will have a lasting impact for nature in Essex.

Over the past 20 years, George has volunteered in a variety of roles, including many years as Chair of the Trust's **Colchester Local Group** as well as being a trustee. George has **single-handedly enhanced data coverage in Essex**, uploading 14,482 records for over 500 Local Wildlife Sites. However, George's dedication extends beyond data collection, and he can now be found using his horticultural expertise to lead the Abbots Hall garden volunteer team up to 5 days a week.

Thank you, George, for all that you continue to do for the Trust.

Leading wildlife gain across the county

In March, the first meeting of the **Essex Local Nature Partnership** was held, led by **Essex County Council**, with the Trust as the Partnership's **lead nature conservation organisation**. The Partnership agreed to endorse four key aims or targets, two of which closely match the Trust's own strategic objectives: 1 in 4 people in Essex taking action for nature and climate by 2030 (**'1 in 4'** for short) and 30% of land and sea actively managed for nature's recovery by 2030 (**'30 by 30'**).

Achieving these targets will require a transformation in the way nature conservation is promoted and funded and the ways in which land is managed across the Essex countryside. To enable the Trust to respond to this rapidly changing policy environment, the new Conservation Directorate was formed during 2022, with three pillars of activity: **Nature Reserves and Natural Capital**, **Conservation Evidence**, and **Nature Recovery**.

To lead wildlife gain across the county in a significant way, two new Heads of Nature Recovery were appointed: **Rachel Langley**, previously the Living Seas Coordinator, became the Trust's **Head of Marine & Coastal Recovery** and **Mark Iley**, previously the Living Landscapes Development Manager, became the Trust's **Head of Landscape & Rivers Recovery**. This two-pronged approach to nature recovery ensures that Essex's internationally-important marine and coastal environment are given the focus they need and that there will be a doubling down on our efforts to recover the condition of Essex's rivers, whilst also ensuring that the new policy complexities and funding opportunities of **biodiversity net gain (BNG)**, **nature-based solutions (NbS)**, **ecosystem services**, and **natural capital** are fully embraced.

Alongside all these new programmes of activity, a large amount of project work progressed, including the new **Wilder Seas Strategy**, which focuses on how to engage people with these often neglected or unseen ecosystems, and identifying the most effective ways to protect the many vulnerable habitats, from oyster beds to saltmarshes.



The **Blackwater Partnership** continued to thrive, chaired and coordinated by Trust officers, with two well-attended meetings in 2022. This partnership has enabled very productive collaborations with a wide range of different organisations and specialists, including universities. The partnership has also ensured that marine concerns are integrated into other coastal considerations and the wider Blackwater landscape.

Key marine and coastal recovery projects have included **saltmarsh restoration**, **seagrass bed** monitoring, **beach-nesting bird** protection and monitoring, and **native oyster restoration**. In addition, the first phase of the **Beneficial Use of Dredged Sediment (BuDS)** project has been completed – focusing on a selection of three sites all in the Blackwater Estuary, including Tollesbury Wick. These are all collaborative partnership projects and demonstrate a range of approaches to deliver active marine and coastal restoration projects, as well as reducing key pressures, such as recreational activity.

Inland, work continued to assess the details of the 400+ blockages in Essex rivers that were identified by the **Essex Fish Migration Road Map**. These barriers currently render our waterways a string of linear lakes rather than free-flowing, dynamic habitats. This is an ambitious 10-year project, and this year, a fish pass was installed at Dedham Mill on the River Stour. Monitoring confirmed that it is now being used by eels, trout, and chub.

In addition, work continued restoring the freshwater habitats of **Roxwell Brook** and providing nature-based solutions. At **Cherry Orchard Country Park** in Rochford, the Trust coordinated the restoration of the lake edges, with tree planting to follow soon.

The pressure of development remains very high in Essex. This required a lot of responses to important planning issues throughout the year, as well as contributions to some Local Plan consultations. We were also involved in responding to **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)**, including the North Falls and Five Estuaries offshore windfarms, which will affect marine and inland habitats particularly across Tendring District.

The **Lower Thames Crossing** consultation began again in the autumn and we worked with other Wildlife Trusts and environmental NGOs on a combined position. The Trust's Planning Coordinator represented the Trust at an important planning appeal concerning a development near **Tiptree Heath** at which the use of the biodiversity metric was challenged. We also continued to contribute to **The Wildlife Trusts' National Planning Group**.

Maximising the conservation value of our land

To better understand the conservation value of our nature reserves it is vital to compile evidence for many components of the sites. These include habitat condition, the trends in the populations of key species and the range of natural variation in the composition and structure of vegetation and other communities of species. With the second field season of the **Ecological Monitoring Project** completed in 2022, the importance of some of the Trust's reserves to the whole of Essex is becoming more apparent.

Wrabness, for example, despite its relatively small size, has become the most important site in the county for the endangered **turtle dove** with counts of up to 10 birds on the reserve this spring. **Fingringhoe**, in the meantime, remains Essex's most important refuge for **nightingales** with 20 singing males recorded this year. The long-term survival of these species in the UK is dependent on many factors, but without key protected sites like Fingringhoe and Wrabness, where significant numbers allow successful pairing and breeding, both species might already have disappeared entirely from Essex. The Trust's reserves remain places from where nature can recover and so maximising their value is of the utmost importance, whilst seeking wildlife gains across the county.

In addition to bird surveys, the **Ecological Monitoring Project** is also covering 11 other modules of survey and monitoring for the nature reserves. These include rapid grassland assessments, woodland habitat condition, deer impact measurements and butterfly surveys. This suite of monitoring data from year to year will now be consolidated and further refined within a new section of the Conservation Directorate, **Conservation Evidence**, that was set up during the year. **Dr Zoe Ringwood**, previously the Area Manager for the South West, was appointed as the new **Head of Conservation Evidence** in October and will work with the Ecology and GIS teams to develop innovative research and survey techniques. The new team will also aim to better manage our databases and to begin to use data more effectively, both within and outside our nature reserves, to influence the way land is managed for nature and to determine priorities for nature conservation in our rapidly changing environment.

In addition to planning for the future, a significant amount of **transformational land management work** was conducted during 2022 across the **internationally important grazing marshes** within the Trust's coastal reserves. Several multi-faceted projects are in progress with much of the work already achieved during 2022 and the rest to be completed by the end of March 2023. In total, more than **215 hectares** of this very rare wet grassland habitat will be restored or enhanced for wildlife.

At **Blue House Farm**, a major project worth over £320,000 has been completed this year, funded by a **Biffa Award Partnership Grant** and **Essex & Suffolk Water's Branch Out Priority Habitats Scheme**. This complex project,

across **40 hectares** of these River Crouch marshes, involved the installation of better infrastructure to manage and retain freshwater across the grazing marshes, the creation of **new wetland scrapes and foot-drains** with anti-predator fencing around them to encourage breeding waders, especially **lapwings** and **redshank**, and the improvement of the grassland sward for over-wintering **Brent geese**.

Supported through the **National Lottery Heritage Fund** and working with the **RSPB**, the flagship **Greener Thames Project** paid for the clearing of **over 6.5 km** of old foot-drains and low-ways at **Howlands Marsh** and **Lower Raypits** and a new infrastructure of tracks and anti-predator fencing at **Tollesbury Wick**, as well as new machinery to help manage these important grasslands. As with the **Blue House Farm** project, this work should enhance wet grassland habitats for breeding waders and the invertebrates on which they feed.

Access to these wildlife-rich green spaces, without disturbance to the birdlife, is also vital for people given the limited accessible open space along the industrialised north Thames coastline. At **Fobbing Marsh**, the infrastructure for a new section of the **National Coastal Path** was installed, and the national pathway was opened during the summer around our Fobbing Marshes reserve and further along the Thames to Southend. Another Thames Estuary Trust reserve, **Two Tree Island**, became the focus for the celebratory opening in July, by the **Minister of State, Lord Blencathra**, of this length of the national trail, with the Trust hosting the event and Trust staff providing guided tours of the site.

Volunteer work parties, with the exceptional efforts of the Trust's **Volunteer Wardens** supported by **Area Officers** coordinating hands-on conservation work across tens of Trust reserves, again achieved huge amounts of work this year. The range of work covered coppicing at **Copperas, Shadwell**, and **West Wood**, managing **heath fritillary** habitats at **Pound Wood** and **Belfairs Woods**, enhancing water vole habitats and cattle checking at **Sawbridgeworth Marsh**, haymaking and bramble clearance at **Gunners Park** and **Shoebury Ranges** and managing the extensive and critical infrastructure of fencing, pathways, boardwalks, bridges, bird hides and water control structures across the Trust's landholdings.

The exceptional work of one group of volunteers, the **Warley Place Volunteer team** headed by **Mick Hedges**, was recognised by the **2022 BBC Essex Make A Difference Environmental Award** in November. Warley Place also saw the beginning of an out-of-the-ordinary restoration project for the Trust, which will be completed early in 2023. The project, funded in its different parts by **National Highways and Countryside Stewardship grants**, centres on the restoration of the built, rather than the natural, heritage of this lovely 10-hectare reserve made famous by the celebrated horticulturalist and plants-woman, **Ellen Willmott** of **Warley Place**. The work has, so far, involved the painstaking reconstruction of the ha-ha, a large section of the walls of the walled garden and the rebuild of the imposing roadside boundary wall. All this heritage and environmental conservation activity coincided with, and was celebrated at, an event on the anniversary of Ellen Willmott's birthday in August, sponsored by **Essex Gardens Trust as part of the Essex Women's Commemoration Project (EWCP)**, at which a **commemoration plaque** was unveiled by **Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Essex**.



Beaver photo: WildMedia - stock.adobe.com

Championing key species

Beavers were making the news nationally throughout the year, with projects highlighted in the media across the UK, especially in the light of the UK Government's change in **Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species regulations 2017**. The legislation protects the animals from persecution and their activities from damage, with the aim of allowing room for this keystone species to naturalise in the wider environment. This provides important context for the level of achievement of the Trust's Wilder Rivers Team who were part of a long-running partnership with **Spains Hall Estate** that has successfully introduced beavers to this part of Essex. In June, the partnership, which included Essex Wildlife Trust, received the prestigious **CIEEM Award for Best Practice – Small Scale Nature Conservation** in 2022.

On the freshwater theme, the Trust's advisory and project work on **water voles** continued and preparations for mitigation management, control of mink and new habitat creation ahead of any potential **Lower Thames Crossing** development were renewed, as the proposals for this huge infrastructure project began to be further developed following a hiatus during the Covid lockdowns.

The Trust's important **Action for Insects** umbrella project continued into its second year with a renewal of the **Bugs Matter** survey work to gather more data. This data is vital for differentiating declines in insect species from their natural year-to-year fluctuations in numbers. In addition, the **Big Wild Seed Sow** was also launched for a second summer and approximately **9k packets of wildflower seeds** were distributed to the public across Essex, multiplying the reach of, and engagement with, this project, demonstrating the appetite for people

to do something positive for nature. It has resulted in many more wildflowers across the Essex landscape, providing important food and habitat for pollinators.

Finally, on the subject of wildflowers, another significant collaboration took place at **Chafford Gorges**. The site ranger worked with scientists from the **Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew** to allow sampling of mycorrhizal fungi from the roots of rare **man orchids** to allow this species to be lab-grown. The project has been a great success with the resulting seedlings planted-out at Chafford to boost the natural populations and help the plant spread further across the site.

All these achievements for species were above and beyond our 'business-as-usual' activities for the species living within our nature reserves.

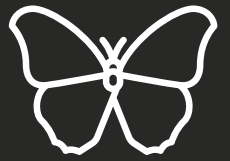


2022 in a nutshell



3,030
hectares

managed
for **wildlife**

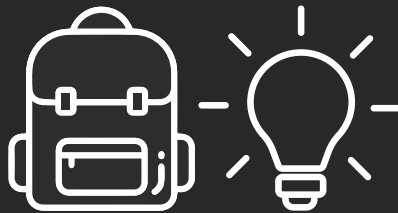


200KM OF WATERCOURSES
MANAGED FOR WILDLIFE



**32 AMBER LISTED
BIRD SPECIES**

RECORDED ON TRUST SITES



**26K PEOPLE
HAD EDUCATION
EXPERIENCES**

HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF OUR

THESE ARE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS



101

SPECIES OF BREEDING
BIRDS RECORDED ON TRUST SITES



11,000

people took
part in campaigns



19 RED LISTED BIRD SPECIES
recorded on Trust sites



2,213
VOLUNTEERS
HELPING TO
PROTECT WILDLIFE

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15K



PEOPLE PLEDGED TO TAKE ACTION
AFTER AN EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

OUR HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2022
AS MUCH AS OURS



17K



BIOLITZ RECORDS SUBMITTED



142K

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

AND SUPPORTERS

30

parish and town councils
pledged to take action

VOLUNTEERING
HOURS



100K

132



Urban Wildlife Champions

across Essex



83



WETLAND
BIRD SPECIES
RECORDED



8.2M

READERS OF OUR
PRINT STORIES



Essex
Wildlife Trust



Inspiring a lifelong
love of nature

Our mission is to **protect wildlife** and **inspire a lifelong love of nature**. These two aims are very closely linked: by encouraging people to take action for wildlife, we can maximise the potential of engagement as an effective form of **indirect conservation**.

From the launch of the **Nextdoor Nature** project in Basildon, Thurrock and Tendring, to our first full year of operations at the **Nature Nursery**, it's been a busy year working with people at every age and stage of life. Through our education programmes alone we worked with over **26,000 people**, while over **17,000 records** were submitted as part of the inaugural Essex BioBlitz which we launched with the University of Essex, meaning it is already the **the largest citizen science project in Essex**.



Hanningfield Nature Discovery Park welcome signage

Creating places of wonder

2022 was our **first full year of trading since 2019** without Covid restrictions.

The priority for our Nature Discovery Centres was to **return to a business-as-usual position**. However, we began the year necessarily cautious in our approach to visitors and operated with a reduced number of volunteers.

Operations soon gathered pace, however. **Bedfords Park** was refurbished, restaffed, and reopened in June, and the number of visitors grew throughout the second half of the year. Meanwhile, **Langdon** had its long-awaited official opening by the Mayor of Basildon, which was a great occasion.

Refurbishment also took place at **Abberton**, where the opening up of the former education room has provided additional space for visitors. **Fingringhoe** and **Belfairs** were also fully redecorated, while work began at **Hanningfield**. Our **retail** range continued to improve, focusing on sustainable products of local provenance that reinforce the connection with wildlife and nature. We also introduced **new equipment** to enable faster service and a better visitor experience.

A key aspect of making our centres and nature reserves 'places of wonder' is **signage and interpretation**. 2022 saw more progress than any previous year.

Installations of signage from 'roadside to front door' was completed at **Fingringhoe, Hanningfield, Thameside**, and **Ingrebourne**, with installations at **Bedfords Park** and **The Naze** planned for early 2023. We also installed significant signage at Wrabness and Great Holland Pits as part of the **Tending Loves Conservation (TLC)** project.

We installed waymarking and interpretation at many other reserves, as well as audioposts. Sitemaps, themed trails, and directional signage are now at **Fingringhoe, Hanningfield** and **Abberton**. Orders have been placed for Thameside with installation planned early 2023.

An important part of site interpretation is temporary and seasonal signage, which we call 'guerrilla signage' (think chalk boards). This year we established a group of **Guerrilla Signage Champions** to ensure lively and timely guerrilla signage across our sites. Fantastic examples are available at Abberton. Come and visit to find out about all the wildlife you can experience!



Community engagement and education

Urban Wildlife Champions Workshop: Preserving Ponds

We were joined in August by **Jen Burlingham** who became our first **Head of Community Engagement**, overseeing the **Wilder Learning Team**, who run our education programmes, our pioneering **Nature Nursery Team**, and our growing **Wilder Communities Team**.

We operate **the largest county-based outdoor learning team in the UK**, with three clusters covering North, Mid, and South Essex, each managing education provision at several Nature Discovery Centres. The teams offer flagship education programmes, including **Nature Tots, Forest School, Wilder Schools** (i.e. schools either hosting or visiting us), and **Accredited Forest School Training**.

To demonstrate the impact of our delivery, all provision was surveyed and data was collected in line with the four pillars of our **Engagement Strategy**: Access, Experience, Connection, and Action. Figures show that, in 2022: (i) approximately **26,000 people accessed our Wilder Learning programmes**; (ii) **25,500 people had a great experience**; (iii) **17,000 people felt more connected to nature** and (iv) **15,000 people took action for nature**.

Our pioneering **Nature Nursery** completed **a full year of operations** as the Trust's first entirely outdoor nursery, offering inspiring and affordable Early Years provision, based on 'learning through nature'. The team of **experienced and highly trained practitioners** achieved high levels of compliance from all inspections and visits, and were awarded the **Millie's Mark Accreditation** for excellence in paediatric First Aid, child health and wellbeing.

38 families attended the nursery, with **15 successfully graduating** in July to the next stage of their education. Our long-term ambition is to have multiple Nature Nurseries, and to **inspire the sector with an alternative model for preschool childcare and education**. Although a full Ofsted inspection did not take place, the **feedback from parents and carers has been consistently outstanding**.

The **Wilder Communities Team**, launched in the summer, includes projects based on the 'community organising', Team Wilder ethos: (i) **Urban Wildlife Champions**, supporting 142 individuals in local communities; (ii) **Wilder Towns, Wilder Villages**, supporting 30 town and parish councils; and (iii) the **Nextdoor Nature** initiative, working with local communities at the grassroots level. The team includes **two externally funded Community Organisers**, working specifically in Clacton, Jaywick, Basildon, and Thurrock. A **comprehensive programme of workshops and webinars to support and empower** these initiatives was also developed and delivered.

We also worked closely with our fantastic **Local Groups**, who engage communities at district, town, and parish level, to develop a **new Constitution** that will provide a better platform for their work in future years.

Growing wildlife supporters

Nature Neighbours hedgehog mural

Hannah Stewart joined the Trust in April as **Head of Fundraising**. Hannah has a wealth of experience and leads the new Fundraising department, bringing together Fundraising and Membership.

Despite the cost-of-living crisis and economic uncertainty, we have **retained our membership base of 40,000**, which has been no mean feat, recovering from the 2020 dip caused by Covid. We also ran two appeals: the **Green Match Fund** and **Save our Species**.

Our **Corporate Membership Scheme** continued to grow, with **380 Investors in Wildlife**. Several companies contributed directly to our projects or to general funds, through fundraising, sponsorship, and volunteering. In addition, the **role of our Nature Discovery Centres in growing wildlife supporters** cannot be overstated, with approximately a million visitors in 2022.

It was **another good year for communications and campaigning**, an area **led by Emily McParland, Head of Communications**. In January, we released **Places of Wonder**, the new nature reserves guide, available as an exclusive membership benefit. Meanwhile, **our brand 'went national'**, with the Wildlife Trusts movement adopting our logo and visual identity, something of which we can all be incredibly proud.

The Trust's influence grew: our print stories reached **8.2 million readers**; we have **72k followers on our primary social accounts**; and **22k recipients of Wild News**. We produced season 2 of the **Wildlife**

Explorer podcast, ranking among top 15% of podcasts on Spotify.

It was our first full year having a **campaigning function** and we now have **11k campaigners**. We led the **Essex BioBlitz** in partnership with the University of Essex, encouraging local wildflower records. **Over 17k records** were submitted, making the BioBlitz **the largest citizen science project in Essex**.

This year's **The Big Wild Seed Sow** also saw **9k packs of wildflower seeds** given out and £2k donated. Part of our overarching **Actions for Insects** campaign, we also encouraged **734 people to write to their local MP** against neonicotinoids, while **322 car journeys** were tracked for **Bugs Matter**.

Other notable campaigns included **rights for beavers**, saying **no to peat** (which led to a ban from 2024), the display of our **Photography Competition** at High Chelmer, and another great **30 Days Wild**.

Our **Wildlife Webcams** continued to attract a large audience, widening access to wildlife. **Radio Essex** listeners even named one of the owls 'Barnadette'. We also ran a competition to name the **hedgehog mural** in Chelmsford, celebrating our **Nature Neighbours** campaign. The winner was 'David Hasselhog'. This story reached over a million people, with coverage on ITV and BBC.

The good, the bad and the ugly

By and large, 2022 was a very good year: it was an improvement on 2020 and 2021 in almost all respects. It wasn't perfect though, and it would be disingenuous for us to say otherwise. Such is the scale of the challenge in conservation, there is **always more to do than we have the time or resource to manage**. However, there was much to celebrate as well as areas for improvement and reflection. As always, we are fiercely ambitious for our county and **hold ourselves to the highest standards**.

The good

It was a good year for delivering long-standing conservation projects, particularly large-scale improvements at **Blue House Farm**, **Fobbing Marsh**, and several sites under the aegis of the **Greener Thames** project. We created the capacity to better serve our marine and coastal environment by investing in staff and developing a **Wilder Seas Strategy**. With 350 miles of gloriously unique coastline, Essex needs the best people doing the best work. The amazing **Warley Place** was also awarded funding for long-term improvements, driven by the team of volunteers led by Mick Hedges, culminating in them winning the **BBC Make A Difference Environmental Award**, while **Bedfords Park** was reopened.

We developed a new **Engagement Strategy**, which now drives our campaigning, communications, education, and community work, including the work of our fantastic **Local Groups**. In line with this, we delivered **Wilder Learning** activities to thousands of people in Essex and, in the process, **widened access** to the natural world and mobilised people to **take action**. That the **Essex 'brand' was adopted nationally** was also a point of pride for all of us.

There was also a lot of work behind the scenes, including a significant amount under the umbrella of our **Digital Transformation Project** which aims to introduce effective and efficient systems for the future. We also invested time and energy into ensuring that our **safeguarding** practices are excellent.

The bad

On the whole it wasn't a bad year, but our **Nature Discovery Centres** were still hampered by the tail end of Covid, which meant a slow return to a business-as-usual position, although the second half of the year made up for the first.

Of more concern is that Wrabness has now become the most important site in the county for the endangered **turtle dove**, while Fingringhoe remains Essex's most important refuge for **nightingales**. The long-term survival of these species in the UK is in the balance. We really do need your help – and the help of funders and donors – to reverse this situation.

The ugly

We never have time to do everything we want. However, **progress in transitioning our fleet of vehicles to electric** has been slower than we would have liked. This really has to be addressed in 2023. In addition, there has been a **succession of disappointing developments** (or lack of developments) from central Government in relation to the environment, which have made operating context for conservation even harder. And frustratingly, our **centre at Chafford** remains closed.

Financial summary

Essex Wildlife Trust year ended 31 December 2022

Financial review

2022 was the first year of near normal operations for the Trust since the pandemic, although the first half of the year continued to see some impact, particularly in the takings at our Nature Discovery Centres (NDCs). A reduction in grant and legacy income in 2022 compared with 2021 meant that the Trust's total income declined by £0.2m. However, its operating expenditure grew by £1.4m reflecting increases in both its charitable activities and the amount spent on raising funds through its trading activities.

As a result, the Trust incurred an operating deficit of £1.4m in 2022 compared with a surplus of £0.2m in 2021. As I mentioned in last year's financial review, to allow the Trust to deliver all aspects of its strategic plan, the Trustees have approved medium-term plans which show operating deficits while income is grown to meet the higher level of expenditure. The operating loss in 2022 was in line with these plans.

Global fears about rising inflation, and the challenges in the UK arising from the minibudget in September, meant that 2022 was a difficult year for investment markets and the Group incurred an unrealised loss of £1.8m on the funds it holds as long-term investments. Adding this to the operating loss meant that the Group's total funds fell by £3.2m in the year from £34m to £31m, giving up most of the gains seen in the last 2 years.

Income from grants and donations reduced from £1.3m to £0.3m because 2021's figure included the final grant income for the Langdon Nature Discovery Centre. Legacy income was down by £0.5m but, at £0.9m, remains a substantial source of income which can fluctuate significantly from year to year. Membership income was the same as in 2021 but income received to help fund the Trust's charitable activities rose by £0.5m although expenditure on those activities increased by £0.7m. Income from trading activities at the Trust's 11 Nature Discovery Centres increased by £0.8m (50%) to £2.4m, while the costs of earning that income increased by £0.6m.

In the balance sheet, the largest change was the reduction in the value of long-term investments. This was partly due to the market changes mentioned previously but also because some cash was withdrawn to fund the operating losses – this is also the reason for the reduction in the cash held as short-term investments. In the analysis of funds, several designated funds were released back to general funds, as I mentioned last year, to ensure the Trust has the free funds needed to underpin the expected deficits.

While it is disappointing to be reporting a first loss for 5 years, the operating loss was planned and the value of long-term investments is expected to fluctuate in the short term while growing over the long term. The Trust's financial strategy remains on course.

Bob Holmes

Treasurer
Essex Wildlife Trust

Summary Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities	2022 £000's	2021 (restated) £000's
Income		
Donations and Legacies	2,631	4,151
Charitable Activities	2,690	2,184
Other Trading Activities	2,715	1,882
Income from Investments	349	398
Total Income	8,385	8,615
Expenditure		
Charitable Activities	5,898	5,117
Raising Funds	3,876	3,234
Total Expenditure	9,774	8,351
Operating (Deficit) / Surplus	(1,389)	264
Net (Losses) / Gains on Investments	(1,802)	975
Defined Benefit Pension Scheme	(32)	138
Net Movement in Funds	(3,223)	1,377
Funds Brought Forward	34,336	32,959
Funds Carried Forward	31,113	34,336

Summary Consolidated Balance Sheets	2022 £000's	2021 (restated) £000's
Tangible and Intangible Fixed Assets	15,253	15,347
Long Term Investments	12,110	14,572
Stocks	413	262
Debtors	2,003	1,844
Short Term Investments & Cash at Bank and in Hand	2,366	2,851
Creditors falling due within one year	(978)	(488)
Creditors falling due after more than one year	(54)	(52)
Total Net Assets	31,113	34,336
Designated Funds	559	3,580
General Funds	7,772	9,678
Total Unrestricted Funds	8,331	13,258
Restricted Funds	19,865	17,830
Endowment Funds	2,917	3,248
Total Funds	31,113	34,336

These are the summarised accounts. If you would like to view the full audited accounts in more detail, please go to www.essexwt.org.uk or request a copy from **Essex Wildlife Trust, Abbots Hall nature reserve, Great Wigborough, Colchester, Essex CO5 7RZ.**

The accounts have been audited by Moore Kingston Smith LLP and received an unqualified audit opinion. They were approved by Board on 10 August 2023 and will be submitted to the Charity Commission and the Registrar of Companies.

We couldn't do it without you

We are enormously grateful to our members, our Local Groups, our legators, corporate members, and funders. It's your support that will help achieve a **#WilderEssex**.

Legators

The wonderful foresight and generosity of our legators enables us to increase our impact on wildlife in Essex in the coming years.

All Gifts in Wills and Deed of Variations, no matter what size, make a significant difference to what we can achieve, and we are truly grateful to every single person. A huge thank you to our amazing legators in 2022.

- Mr Peter Arbrey
- Mr Phillip Blatchford
- M. Beryl Davis
- Mr Michael Stephen Emms
- Ms Edwina Doreen Lambert
- Mr Stephen Charles Malenoir-Vickers
- Mr Alan William Thomas Smith
- Miss Reta Miriam Stevens
- Mr Arthur Denis Todhunter
- Ms Sonia Elizabeth Triggs
- Mrs Mary Helen Vogl
- Mrs Jean Marion Walsh
- Mrs Audrey Worcester

Funders

We are also extremely grateful to our funders in 2022, who have helped us towards our core costs and our projects.

- Biffa Award
- Active Essex Foundation
- Community 360
- National Highways
- People's Postcode Lottery
- Branch Out
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Anglian Water
- The John Swire (1989) Charitable Trust
- The ROSCA Trust
- The Simon Gibson Charitable Trust
- The Wildflower Society

These lists are not exhaustive. **Essex Wildlife Trust** is very grateful to all its generous funders.

Corporate Members

A special thanks to our Investors in Wildlife - locally-minded businesses across Essex working to make business wilder. You are helping us to build a 'green alliance'. Together we are greater than the sum of our parts.

Zplan Wealth Management	Claridon Group Ltd	Fenn Wright	Ken Rush Associates Ltd	PNP Trees	Stillwater Management
A Duke & Son	Cleancare International	Firstead Properties Ltd	Kingswood Group Ltd	Port Flair Ltd	Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome
A R Adams (Funeral Directors) Ltd	Clearstone Energy Limited	Fisco Tools Ltd	KJL Group	Port Of London Authority	StreetsWhittle & Partners LLP
Abbott Fasteners Ltd	Clifford Brown & Grimsey Insurance	Flowline Ltd	L Holmes Dental Laboratory	Port of Tilbury London Ltd	Stubbers Adventure Centre
Accuro Environmental Ltd	Brokers Ltd	Formara Ltd	Langdon Hills Golf Club	Premier Print & Promotions Ltd	Summerdale Veterinary Centre
ACL (Adult Community Learning) Essex	CNG Business Advice T/A Smart Support	Frank Howard Tools & Fixings Ltd	Lathcoats Farm Shop	Prestige Conjuring	Swallow Aquatic
Actual Health and Safety	Coachstop	Franklin Group	Laurie Wood Associates Ltd.	Primassure Ltd Insuring Essex Growth	Sync Creative
Adam & Greenwood Funeral Home	Coda Systems Ltd	G & K Groundworks Ltd	Lawsons (Whetstone) Ltd	Priority Support Services Ltd	Systematics International Ltd
Adhesive Technical Services	Colchester Borough Council	Gallopier Wind Farm Ltd	Leisure Hire Marquees Ltd	Procam Agriculture Ltd	T J Evers Ltd
Affinity Water Ltd	Colchester United Football In The Community	Gardenature	Lemon Fencing Ltd	Purple Bear Group	Talis Projects Ltd
Albea UK Ltd	Collier & Catchpole Limited	Gardens Of Peace Muslim Cemetery Trust	Liz Lake Associates Ltd	Qinetiq Shoeburyness	Tarmac
Alchemize Ltd	Colne Stoves & Fireplaces	Gemini Office Solutions Ltd	Local Business Domination	Quadrant Security Services Land & Marine Ltd	TechWise Ltd
Andy Rose Photography	Come Shine With Me Cleaning Ltd	George Thompson Ltd	London Southend Airport Co Ltd	R Gwynell & Sons	Tendring District Council
Anglian Water Services Ltd	Commodity Centre (UK) Ltd	GIS Spatial Mapping	Loughton Town Council	Rawley Plant Ltd	Thames Card Technology Ltd
Animal Health Co Ltd	Complete Intacare Hygiene	Globalnet IT Innovations Ltd	Lucy & Co	Rayleigh Town Council	Thames Water Utilities Ltd
Aqua Environmental Services Limited	Complete Locksmith Services Ltd	Glorcroft Limited	LWFC&G Ltd	Raytel Group Ltd	The Big Bear Cider Mill Ltd
Ash Associates Ltd	Constable VAT Consultancy LLP	GN Surveys Ltd	M Lucking & Sons	RDA U.K.	The Big Green Internet Ltd
Associate Enterprises Ltd	Consult A Penguin Ltd	Goodmove Moving & Storage Limited	M P Chartered Architects	Red Cell Ltd	The CME Personnel Consultancy
Ayers & Cruiks	Cooper Bros (Great Oakley) Ltd	Gower Brothers Ltd	Maldon District Council	Revive Digital Media	The DS Group
B & M Barnes	Corrilan IT Consultancy Ltd	Grape Passions Ltd	Maldon Golf Club	Reynolds Industrial Cleaning Ltd	The Finishing Line Ltd
B.E.E. Pest Control	Courts Of Rayleigh	Grays Office Supplies	Maldon Marine Ltd	RHS Garden Hyde Hall	The Full Works Ltd
Backhouse Solicitors	Crane Building Management Services Ltd	Great Dunmow Town Council	Maplewood Carpentry Ltd	Rimplas	The Othona Community
Baker Labels	Curtis Assemble & Test Ltd	Green Light Print Solutions Ltd	Marks Hall Estate	Riverside Veterinary Group	The Royals Shopping Centre
Bakers Of Danbury Ltd	D & A Media Ltd	Green Robins	Marmi Ltd	RL Solutions Ltd	The Survey Initiative
Barclays Bank PLC	D Chennells Ltd	Greetings	Martyn Lewis Chartered Accountant	Rochford District Council	The Trop Shop
Basildon Borough Council	D H Industries Ltd	GRIDSERVE Sustainable Energy Ltd	MDM Timber Ltd	Rochford Hundred Golf Club	Thinking Outside Ltd
Battlesbridge Antiques Centre (The Old Granary)	D J Fisher (Farms) Ltd	Gripdeck Ltd	Messrs. Tilbrook's Solicitor	Rochford Tree Services	THS Concepts Ltd
Benchmark Landscape Ltd	D K Moriarty Ltd	Guardian Industrial Doors	MHS Radiators	Ruark Audio Ltd	Tim Grigsby
Bennetts (Brentwood) Limited	Daniel Bridge Photography	H W Wilson Ltd	Millane Contract Services Ltd	Ruggles & Jeffery Ltd	Tim Moya Associates
BGA Architects	Daniel Robinson & Sons	Harlow Garden Services Limited	Mirror Door Systems Ltd	RW & JR Burroughs	Timber Tec
Birkett Long	Daws Heath Timber Ltd	Harwich Haven Authority	Miru	S G Shields (Benfleet) Ltd	Tina Wing Photography
Birketts LLP	DeVines Accountants Ltd	Healthy Life Essex CIC	Monthind Clean Ltd	S P Bardwell Ltd	Trait Design Ltd
Bitwise IT Ltd	Diamond Press Ltd	Henderson & Taylor (PW) Ltd	Montrose Trees Ltd	S Stibbards & Sons Ltd	Transdec
Bizphit	Downwell Demolition Ltd	HESC Ltd	MWS	S. Carter & Son	Transscape
Blackburn & Co Ltd	Eastwood Tile Warehouse	High Chelmer Shopping Centre	MyWebHero Limited	Sally Parkinson Photography	Tree Fella Ltd
Bland Landscapes Ltd	Edmund Carr	Hi-Tec Europe Ltd	Navigator Terminals Thames Ltd	Santry Davis	Trenitalia c2c Ltd
Blatella Films Ltd	Effective Business Network	Home Instead Senior Care	NC Appliance Repairs Ltd	Sarah Green's Organics	Twister Solutions Ltd
Bowling Garrard Electrical Ltd	Electrical Solutions	Hoppings Softwood Products Plc	Networking Essex	Scooter Store Ltd	TWO Services Ltd
Braintree District Council	Ellisons Legal LLP	HSQE Ltd	New Holland Agriculture	Scott Wallis Seeds Ltd	UK Power Networks Ltd
Brents of Brentwood Ltd	Elm House Veterinary Centre	Hugh Pearl Land Drainage Ltd	Nexus HR Consultancy Ltd	Sealife Adventure/Miller Leisure Ltd	United Technologies UK Ltd
Brett Aggregates	Endeavour Drilling Ltd	Hunter And Sons Tree Services	Nicholls Law	Seekay Horticultural Supplies	Universal Image Systems Ltd
Brewster Motors Essex Ltd	EPC-Group UK	Hygiene Contracts Limited	North Benfleet Hall Fishery	Sheridan Accountancy Services Ltd	Utilize Plc
Bright & Sons Ltd	Essex & Suffolk Insurance Brokers	I D Corcoran Building Contractors Ltd	Oak View Landscapes Limited	Shipman Security Systems Ltd	Vanitorial Ltd
Brightest Fuels Ltd	Essex & Suffolk Water PLC	Ian Wallinhurst Kar Co Ltd	Office Needs (Essex) Ltd	Sibbons Plant Hire	Vaughan & Blyth (Construction) Limited
Brown & Carroll (London) Ltd	Essex Chambers Of Commerce	IDC Greenscapes Ltd	Old Park Meadow Ltd	Silver City Estates Ltd	Ventam Systems Ltd
C J Bardwell Ltd	Essex County Council Environment & Economy	Immervox Ltd	Olympus Keymed Ltd	Simmons Printers	Waldegraves Farm Ltd
Cadman Construction Ltd	Essex Digital Copiers	Impamark	One to One Personnel Ltd	Skinandbliss.Com Ltd	WAVEDATA Ltd
Call Of The Wild Zoo	Essex Mechanical Services	Industrial Metal Services	Organisation For Responsible Businesses B)	Solar Green Ltd	Wellity
Calor Gas	Essex Reclamation Ltd	Infotec Consulting	Orwak Easi UK Ltd	Southfields Veterinary Specialists	Whirledge & Nott
Capel Court Plc	Essex Salt Ltd	Ingrebourne Valley Ltd	Osea Leisure Park	space282	Wickham Engineering
Carbon Sure Consulting Ltd	Essex Security Services Ltd	Intu Lakeside Ltd	Palms Solicitors	Spains Hall Partnership	Wilkin & Sons Ltd
Castle Point Borough Council	Estuary Housing Association Ltd	Islandbridge Properties Ltd	Peak Security Systems Ltd	Squibb Group Ltd	Willow Garden Day Nursery
CBD Pure Life	European Refrigeration Ltd	IT Lifecycle Services Ltd	Peldon Hall Farms	SRBE Ltd t/a Jovic Plant	Wire Free Protection Ltd
CEME Limited	Excaltibur Scewbolts Ltd	J & D Foods	Perrywood Garden Centre & Nurseries Ltd	SRC Group	Witham Town Council
Champion Services Group Ltd	Express Environmental Solutions Ltd	J B Russell Engineers Ltd	Pest Defence Ltd	SS&C Financial Services International Ltd	Woodfashions Ltd
Channels Golf Club Ltd	F H Ives Ltd	Jackie Spurr Consulting Ltd	PGM Carpentry Contractors Ltd	St Cedd's School	Woodham Ferrers Water Ski Club
Chatbox Productions	F P Guiver & Sons Limited	Javalin Network Services Ltd	PJR Communications Ltd	St Georges Pest Control Ltd	Wormell Plant/hire
Chelmer Marquees Ltd	Fen Farm Caravan Site	JKS Group Ltd	Platt Rushton	Stanley Bragg Architects Ltd	Wow Balloons
Chelmsford City Council		Joy Creative	Plummer Electrical Engineering	Station Automotive	Writtle University College
Chorus Advisers Ltd		Kaizen Consultancy Ltd	PMR Solutions Ltd	S-Tech Solar Ltd	Zealandia
City & Country		Kelly Turkeys	PMV Essex Ltd	Stewart Landscape Construction Ltd	Zest Recycle Ltd
Clacton On Sea Golf Club					



The next chapter

There is a lot to be excited about in 2023. Work with the **Local Nature Partnership** will increase in importance and the creation of Essex's **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** and its Opportunities Map will require considerable effort from many of the team.

The **Blackwater Partnership**, an alliance with **Natural England**, the **RSPB**, and the **National Trust** among others, will be another priority area. One particular focus in the first half of 2023 will be a potential **Landscape Recovery Scheme** application for the Blackwater. This will aim to encompass land both behind and beyond the seawall, including grassland and saltmarshes.

Along the coast, one of the key priorities will be to make further progress in developing the innovative **Beneficial Use of Dredged Sediments** project. Meanwhile, inland, our **Ecological Monitoring Programme** will continue to expand.

We envisage a **tough year ahead for fundraising** as the economy shrinks and the cost-of-living crisis impacts our supporters. However, we have a **Development Plan** for our Fundraising Team that should safeguard the

performance of all aspects of our membership and fundraising activities, changing the focus in some areas.

Meanwhile, the **Engagement Strategy** will continue to be embedded in our work, widening access to nature and inspiring people to take action for wildlife. Our emerging 'community organising' ethos will also continue to evolve alongside our delivery of high-quality outdoor education, with additions to the **Team Wilder portfolio of projects** planned. We will be **increasing our capacity in the Nature Nursery** with a view to securing our first Ofsted rating, ideally 'Outstanding'.

We also have ambitious plans for **Signage and Interpretation**, research papers planned in partnership with universities, significant system changes that will fundamentally improve the way we work, and big steps towards **a greener and cleaner vehicle fleet**.

We aim to have even **more successful campaigns**, secure **more national features**, more **social engagement**, an expanded **Ambassador Scheme**, and even more success through our lobbying, advocacy, and policy work.