



Love **Essex** • Love **Wildlife**



Essex
Wildlife Trust

URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

Nature needs our help

We have entered the most vital decade for nature. It's now or never for our natural world.

Our climate is in crisis and this will affect us all. We are dependent on the natural world in every aspect of our lives. The air that we breathe. The water we drink. The food we eat. Our physical and mental health. **We need nature and we need wildlife.**

There is now an **urgent** need to tackle the climate emergency; restore damaged habitats, connect our protected areas to the rest of the landscape, and lobby for legislation that places natural heritage at the forefront of policies and forward planning. **We all have a role to play in protecting what's important to us.**

**'WE NEED NATURE
AND WE NEED WILDLIFE'**



Action starts close to home

Think globally

Act locally



In order to stop the deterioration of our natural world in its tracks, we need to think globally while acting locally.

We need to create a **Wilder Essex**. One where wildlife is thriving, every person has access to nature and our habitats are all connected. Essex should be a safe haven for wildlife and an example to which other counties can aspire.

Late spring mornings should ring out with the song of the nightingale, our evenings should be illuminated by glow worms. Hedgehogs should be snuffling through our gardens, bees and butterflies should gently flutter by and starlings should dance in the sky in their thousands. Every person should experience walking through a wildflower meadow, brimming with insects and colours galore. Or be able to stroll through an ancient woodland to the beat of a woodpecker's drum.

We want the people of Essex to experience all of our county's natural spectacles and we need to ensure these will never be lost.

'ESSEX SHOULD BE A SAFE HAVEN FOR WILDLIFE'



Essex's conservation charity



Creating a Wilder Essex isn't just a vision, we know it's possible.

Essex Wildlife Trust has brought back species on the brink of extinction before and transformed damaged and degraded habitats into havens for wildlife.

Backed by our dedicated team of volunteers and members, the Trust was founded in 1959, giving us the benefit of over sixty years of experience in tackling environmental challenges covering our land, rivers and sea.

But our conservation efforts do not stop at the county border. Essex Wildlife Trust is part of a wider grassroots movement of Wildlife Trusts across the UK who engage in critical conservation work and campaign collectively on behalf of wildlife and the natural world.

Our collective aim is to deliver significant and measurable impact for wildlife conservation, and together, we strive to create a **Wilder Future**.



**'TOGETHER, WE STRIVE TO
CREATE A WILDER FUTURE'**

Havens for nature

ESSEX WILDLIFE TRUST
PROTECTS
AND MANAGES
87 NATURE
RESERVES



Essex Wildlife Trust protects and manages **87 nature reserves** throughout the county - refuges for wildlife within our ever-growing society.

From ancient woodlands offering a green lung in **Southend-on-Sea**, to the last place in the county where all three species of heather grow together. We protect the largest remaining species-rich water meadow in Essex to the historically important gardens at **Warley Place**. These areas of significant natural heritage are protected for perpetuity.

But previously discarded areas have also been brought back to life, creating new homes for wildlife within our landscape. The song of the nightingale rings out at the old gravel works at **Fingringhoe**, while the former landfill site at **Thameside** is now littered with rare invertebrates and reptiles. Unproductive grasslands have been transformed into flower-rich meadows and coastal grazing marshes now hold lagoons, perfect for waders and wildfowl.

‘PREVIOUSLY DISCARDED AREAS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE’



Connecting our landscape



Nature reserves can be a lifeline for species, yet our sites only encompass 2.3% of the total land in Essex. At the moment, it's like a jigsaw puzzle with vital pieces missing.

Our patchwork landscape must be connected by wildlife corridors and stepping stones, forming a Nature Recovery Network. As Essex becomes under increasing pressure from intensive agriculture, housing developments and transport infrastructure, we must create wilder areas where wildlife can shelter and thrive.

From rivers to road verges, hedgerows to ponds and gardens to city parks, we need to restore our landscape and connect up the wild places. If every garden in Essex were to become a mini nature reserve, we'd be able to bridge that gap between our urban and rural landscapes.

Creating these corridors will not only help bring wildlife back, it will help it become more resilient in the face of climate change.

**'RESILIENT IN THE FACE
OF CLIMATE CHANGE'**



Wilder



Wilder Essex

Wilder Essex

Wilder Essex

Wilder Essex

#WilderEssex

A Nature Recovery Network is not only about connecting our habitats for wildlife, but connecting people with wildlife and green spaces once again.

Each year our Nature Discovery Centres see over a million people leaving the busy world behind them and entering into a place of wonder, full of wild spaces to discover and wildlife encounters waiting to happen. Our centres provide refuge for the people of Essex and act as gateways to the natural world.

Essex should have boundless opportunities for children to learn outdoors in a natural environment, a place to be independent and confident, a place to be playful and curious, a place to inspire a lifelong love of nature.

The natural world never ceases to inspire. It's never too late to learn about its wonders or re-discover your love of the great outdoors. We need to see people of all ages and backgrounds engage with the natural world at every stage of their life.

‘CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH WILDLIFE AND GREEN SPACES ONCE AGAIN’

Creating wilder

towns and

villages



Only **30%** of Essex is considered to be 'urban' but **80%** of residents in the county are considered to be 'urbanites'. Most of us live in urban environments and it's here, where there is the most people power, that we can create real change for the better.

Over time Essex will become more developed, but this can't happen in isolation from the natural world. Urban green spaces rich in wildlife are proven to boost our immune systems and people need to have access to this social prescription tool, wherever they live. Connectivity and sustainability must be embedded in the planning process.

Every house should be integrated with bird and bat boxes, sheltering spots over winter and homes to raise young in the spring. Gardens should have margins of wildflowers bustling with life, log and stone piles with crevices for invertebrates and perimeter fences should all have gaps for hedgehogs to cross through on their daily journeys. Pesticides should become a thing of the past and ponds should be re-installed to bring natural pest controllers like frogs and toads back into your garden.

No matter the size of the area, we need to be making our gardens, our green spaces and our towns and cities wilder.

'WE CAN CREATE REAL CHANGE FOR THE BETTER'



The rivers



Water is a lifeline for all species and our rivers are at the heart of our local communities. The gentle trickling of a local stream to the mighty Thames Estuary, Essex's network of rivers flows through our county like arteries and veins.

But as our weather becomes more extreme, flooding will become an increased risk. Natural flood management is needed to tackle this, creating dams that hold back water in times of both storms and drought.

There are unseen problems too that our rivers are facing. Essex has around 500 blocked fish passages, stopping fish like European eels and sea trout from reaching their historic spawning sites. Now the barriers have been identified we need to ensure they are removed by creating bypass channels or modifying structures to make them fish friendly again.

Our rivers are also heavily impacted by our daily choices on land, both as landowners and as consumers. Pollution - from chemical runoff to plastic - travels through our rivers and contaminates our channels. Buffer strips can drastically reduce agricultural runoff, allowing mammals such as the water vole and otter to thrive in our waterways once again.

We need to combat pollution together, by adjusting land management practices and considering the impact of our individual purchases on the environment, to keep our rivers rumbling with life.



'RIVERS ARE AT THE HEART OF OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES'

Our wild seas and estuaries



Our coastline stretches for over 350 miles



The Essex coastline stretches for over 350 miles, a haven for wintering and breeding birds, threatened plants, spawning fish and beds of native oysters that filter our waters. Harbour porpoises swim in our seas and a growing population of common and grey seals rest and raise their young on our coastline.

Essex has three nature reserves at sea – Marine Conservation Zones designated for wildlife and the essential habitats they offer. Our efforts are on ensuring effective management plans are introduced to create measurable protection for our marine life.

The impacts of climate change are heavily felt on our coastline. Saltmarshes, internationally important habitats for birds and nursery sites for fish, are retreating at a rate of 100 hectares per year. Their natural walls protect our coastal communities from storm surges and the habitat itself stores carbon at an even faster rate than woodlands. Essex Wildlife Trust will continue to champion managed realignment projects to create new saltmarsh habitat while restoring damaged and degraded marshes.

We need people to realise the value of our coastline, but equally, as the population of Essex grows we must ensure we're sharing the shores with our breeding wildlife – respecting zoned off areas to allow the UK's smallest seabird, the little tern, the brightly beaked oystercatcher and common seal pups to grow up without disturbance.

'WE NEED PEOPLE TO REALISE THE VALUE OF OUR COASTLINE'



**‘NO ONE WILL PROTECT WHAT THEY
DON’T FIRST CARE ABOUT
AND NO ONE WILL CARE ABOUT
WHAT THEY DON’T FIRST EXPERIENCE’**

Sir David Attenborough
President Emeritus of The Wildlife Trusts

#WILDERESSEX

HELP US CREATE A WILDER ESSEX

There's a lot that needs to happen but we are ambitious for our county's future. Everyone in Essex needs to play their part in creating this change for our county, for our wildlife, our wellbeing and our future.

WILL YOU JOIN THE EFFORT?

Protect

our **wildlife**
and **wild places**

Inspire

yourself and the
next generation

Enable

wildlife to **thrive**
where **you live**

Join

Essex Wildlife Trust
as we work to create
a **Wilder Essex**

FIND OUT MORE AT WWW.ESSEXWT.ORG.UK/WILDER-ESSEX

Thank you to all of Essex Wildlife Trust's supporters, partners and everyone taking action to create a **Wilder Essex**.

Love **Essex** • Love **Wildlife**

Photo: Bertie Gregory/2020VISION

#WilderEssex



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