



Our Year for Wildlife 2019/2020



The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust is concerned with the protection and recovery of nature and has always recognised that that this is essential for people too, for the provision of clean air, water and food as well as our health and wellbeing.



We identified three key objectives for our work in 2019/20.

- *Safeguarding wildlife and the natural environment*
- *Managing and improving sites for wildlife*
- *Inspiring people to value and take action for nature*



Nature Reserves

Around 5,000 volunteer hours were committed to our nature reserves for the benefit of wildlife and visitors alike. Wet grassland was cut to help the common snipe at Portrack, a new amphibian pond was dug at Bowesfield and sand martins began nesting at the artificial nesting bank at Coatham Marsh.



During 2019/20 our volunteers:

cut and raked 8 hectares of wildflower grassland to help wildflowers to thrive;

collected 50 bags of litter from the nature reserves.



The Batts

The Batts is a local wildlife area on 11 acres of former farmland on the edge of the village of Dalton Piercy, Hartlepool. The Wildlife Trust worked with the Parish Council, the owners of the site, to increase its biodiversity with mini-meadows, bee banks and bird boxes.

The mini-meadows produced a fantastic burst of wildflowers, brightening the pathways used by local walkers and drawing a frenzy of pollinating insects. Several bee nests appeared in the banks and 30 small nest boxes and a large owl box are ready to attract breeding birds in the spring.





Wilder Coast

Our coastline supports internationally important populations of coastal and wading birds which are, sadly, under threat from disturbance by people and dogs. This project carried out a series of bird monitoring and disturbance studies, supported with awareness-raising, engagement and education activities. “Ambassadogs” were recruited to promote responsible behaviour towards feeding birds, while a leaflet “The Good Dog’s Guide to Birds on the Beach” was produced and distributed through cafes, vets, pet shops and libraries.

During 2019/20:

233 Members of public engaged; 34 Volunteer days;
9 events with total 148 participants; 1 Beach clean;
21 Ambassadogs recruited



Tees Valley Wild Green Places

The year saw the completion of our five-year project which supported community groups to take on the conservation and management of some 25 of the Tees Valley's Wild Green Places. The project connected communities in all five Tees Valley authority areas, providing a comprehensive package of skills development opportunities and practical habitat improvements such as woodland planting, wildflower meadow creation and the erection of bird and bat boxes.

During 2019/20:

18 community groups were supported with improvements to green spaces,
228 people involved in practical volunteering

19 young people gained John Muir wild places awards.



Portrack Marsh and Coatham Marsh

Two of the Trust's nature reserves were designated by UK government as nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest and internationally important Special Protection Areas for Wild Birds. According to government, these sites "...represent England's very best wildlife and geological sites on land and at sea and their conservation and enhancement secures vital elements of our natural and cultural heritage."



The Trust began conservation management of Coatham Marsh in 1982 and acquired Portrack Marsh in 1998.



Life Skills

We deliver conservation experiences combined with heritage skills workshops to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in the Tees Valley who are suffering with various forms of health issues. During the year, Life Skills participants took on some improvements at Bowesfield, removing scrub, which had encroached on bird feeding areas. They created a dead hedge to discourage visitors from walking too close to the pools and they constructed a raised path across a boggy and flood prone section of the site. These activities helped the participants to learn new skills, be active, exercise outdoors, socialise, meet new people and give back to their community.

During 2019/20:

we delivered 76 days of Life Skills activities engaging with 52 participants and totalling 1,650 hours of volunteer activity.



East Cleveland Nest Box Network

This project worked with landowners across East Cleveland to establish a network of wildlife rich-habitat to support the recovery of barn owls. Boxes were erected on 63 sites, fulfilling a need for new nest sites for owls, but these also needed to be supported with wildlife-rich feeding habitat in order to ensure the establishment of populations.

In the first year of monitoring, 26 of the nest sites were occupied by breeding barn owls.

Over 1400 owl pellets were collected and analysed, showing how barn owls are eating a diet dominated by field voles and shrews. The pellets also showed that the harvest mouse, a species with very few records, is actually widespread in East Cleveland.





One Planet Pioneers

This project is a collaboration with Middlesbrough Environment City and the Actes Trust with the aim of developing the skills of young people aged 14-21 years, through environmental projects, events or one off activities, establishing a new generation of environmentalists.

Two apprentices worked at the Trust for a full year and achieved a Level 2 Diploma in Environmental Conservation. We worked with Hemlington Linx youth clubs and ran bush craft and nature conservation activities for groups of young people in Middlesbrough who have English as a second language.



At Maze Park young volunteers installed a nature trail illustrating the site's bird, insect and plant life.



Environmental Education

Our work with schools encourages young people to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment. We do this so that the next generation has a deeper understanding of environmental issues and has the skills to make informed and responsible decisions.

School visits took place throughout the year, both to Woodhill and the Margrove Heritage Centre as well as to our other nature reserves. St Therese Primary School, Ingleby Barwick signed up as a Green “Growing Wild School” and we are working with them to make their school grounds nature-friendly. Forest Schools activity was delivered at Bowesfield Primary school over a 6 week period, which proved very popular with the pupils.

Sensing the Wild

We joined forces with a group called “Going For Independence”, taking groups of blind and visually-impaired people out to experience wildlife and nature across the seasons. Many of the participants were unable to enjoy regular outdoor visits and particularly to the wider countryside because of the support they require.



The project gave us an insight into how people with low vision are isolated and excluded from activities that others can access and offering ways to improve this. Summer walk highlights included a visit to Errington Woods which included discovering the mining heritage of the woods as well as its wildlife. Various natural objects were passed around and described by walk guides. The walk concluded with a camp fire and barbeque with sausages and toasted marshmallows.

Thank You!

Most people agree that wildlife and wild places are valuable and yet wildlife continues to decline on land and at sea. We have reached a point where the natural world is in a critical condition and we need your support more than ever.

A big thank you to all our members, partners and supporters who helped us during 2019 / 20. We very much hope you will continue with us to create a Wilder Future .

