



BACK TO NATURE

Impact Report 2020

Love **Essex** • Love **Wildlife**



Essex
Wildlife Trust

**‘WE NEED TO MAKE AN IMPACT.
ALL OF US. WE NEED TO STAND UP
FOR WILDLIFE AND PROTECT
THE NATURAL WORLD’**

Keeley Hazelhurst
Chair, Essex Wildlife Trust



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With a little **help** from our **friends**...



Keeley Hazelhurst

Chair
Essex Wildlife Trust

2020 has been an immensely difficult year for so many people. We've faced challenges we couldn't even have imagined. Loved ones have suffered illness, isolation, and worse.

Children have missed out on so much. Young families have juggled work and teaching, Zoom-fatigue has set in, and young people faced the prospect of a year with few opportunities. At times it felt like rock-bottom.

Then we realised that we actually do like our families, we miss our friends, we enjoy that quick and awkward chat when we buy a coffee. How much did you appreciate a wave or socially distanced chat with the neighbour? The chance to make new friends, explore somewhere different, or learn something new were suddenly very exciting. We learnt that keyworkers are local heroes.

Surprisingly, the Great Outdoors was the unsung hero – saving our sanity and even our relationships. We noticed wildlife, walked new footpaths, took delight in learning about the nature on our doorsteps. We encouraged our children to feed the birds, to identify trees, and to spot insects. And the weather, well, wasn't 2020 fantastic?

Who knew that a global pandemic would make us appreciate what we have, and what we are on the verge of losing? The climate crisis has not gone away. Nor has the decline in biodiversity. We still consume too much, and value too little, too late. Society had the grim realisation that wildlife can't wait any longer. In response, Essex Wildlife Trust stepped up a gear.

This is our line in the sand moment. This is our time to rise.

We need to make an impact. All of us. We need to stand up for wildlife and protect the natural world. Essex Wildlife Trust can be the catalyst for change, but we need your help. We need the whole of Essex to have a deep connection with nature. We need to share our ideas with more people, shout our message from the treetops, and bring the whole county with us. There is so much we can do, and so much our tireless, committed team want to achieve – whether it's ecological restoration, creating nature networks across the whole county, or Nature Nurseries for preschoolers.

As you will see in this year's Impact Report, our team continued to protect our wildlife and, despite everything else, emerged stronger and more resilient. But now we are ready to step up the pace. We've innovated. We've planned. We've created. We are ready to invest in wildlife and to lead the change.

But we need a little help from our friends. From you.

Keeley Hazelhurst

Back to nature



Andrew Impey

Chief Executive Officer
Essex Wildlife Trust

2020 was a year of challenges – my most challenging year as Chief Executive. It was also a year of opportunities. Although much of our work was affected by the furloughing of staff, the forced closure of our Nature Discovery Centres, and the cancellation of outdoor learning activities and fundraising events, we made significant headway in many areas.

Covid-19 held a mirror to us as an organisation and forced us to ask a number of searching questions. Are we resilient as a charity? Are we adaptable and agile? Are we ready for the challenges that lay ahead over the next decade and beyond?

I reflect on these questions now with great pride. We answered them with a resounding 'yes'. Successive lockdowns unlocked a wave of creativity and innovation at the Trust, as we responded proactively to unprecedented challenges, guided by our Covid-19 Response Strategy: protect the Trust, keep the family together, and come out stronger.

As a result, there is much to celebrate. Launched at the start of the year, our Strategic Plan 2020-25 has had an impact on all areas of the Trust and has brought new clarity and cohesion to our work. We had major successes in all our strategic Goals, which we have summarised in this Impact Report. We also made great strides in our journey towards being a more strategic and impact-led organisation.

If this year had a theme, it was people. All of the hours of conservation work that we do on our own land is crucially important, but ours is a relatively small percentage of the overall land in Essex. The big change will come from new attitudes and behaviours, and this year saw a sea-change in people's relationship with nature, which is a reciprocal relationship. Although our strategic driver for engaging people is to protect wildlife, we never lose sight of the many other benefits of improved nature connectedness. We need nature. The positive impact on human health and wellbeing is supported by a growing base of evidence.

There is no purpose without impact. At the end of this year, we introduced two new Higher-Level Objectives, in common with other Wildlife Trusts. By 2030, we need (i) 30% of land and sea connected and protected for wildlife and (ii) 1 in 4 people in Essex to take action for wildlife. You will hear more about these objectives in the near future: it is on these two fronts that we will have the most impact on the climate crisis and the ecological crisis. This is the scale of our ambition and it will only be achieved with your continued support, for which I extend my heartfelt thanks.

We look back only to look forward. We are proud of this year's achievements, but we cannot dwell on past successes. We know we need to be smarter, more efficient, and more targeted in our work. We are ready for more impact in 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Impey". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Protecting wildlife

It was a challenging year for conservation. The world may have paused, but the clock was still ticking for the **climate crisis** and the **ecological crisis**. For this reason, we continued with our plans at pace, in spite of restrictions, limitations on staff capacity, and increased public pressure on nature reserves. The achievements 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**.

Leading wildlife gain across the county

The first Covid lockdown had a profound impact on our ability to deliver projects on the ground. Restrictions were placed on volunteering. Many partners had to furlough staff. Everything was turned upside down. Unfortunately, projects such as the **25th Essex Otter Survey** and the **Roxwell Brook Flood Management Project** had to be postponed (although have now resumed), while the **Barn Owl Conservation Project** was brought to an early close.

However, while the stalling of the Environment Bill in parliament delayed progress on Nature Recovery Networks both nationally and locally, we started to address the absence of a county-wide **Local Nature Partnership in Essex**, working with Essex County Council, the RSPB, and other partners. This partnership will be critical to taking a joined-up, county-wide approach to realising our collective vision for a **Wilder Essex**.

The long-term objective is to have 30% of land and sea in Essex protected and connected for wildlife by 2030. We have been mapping the county to determine how this will work in practice. We know we need to increase our presence in our towns and cities and, to show our commitment to urban wildlife and reconnecting people with nature, we will soon have our first **Urban Engagement Officer**.

Often the best way to understand new initiatives and opportunities is to engage with them. In the spirit of this, we submitted Abbots Hall for Natural England's **Biodiversity Credit Offsetting Pilot** in England and were one of only nine successful sites. This has been an extremely valuable experience and has generated ideas for taking Abbots Hall forward as a flagship site, which was also a big focus this year (more to follow soon).

We play a major role in the Combined Essex Catchment Partnership and this year completed the development of the **Essex Fish Migration Roadmap**, which identifies the blockages in our county rivers that limit the movement of fish. The Roadmap is the foundation for a decade-long project of river connectivity work and has required a great deal of collaboration with the Thames Estuary Partnership and the Environment Agency.

Extending our work on rivers, we have been working on the **Regional Plan for Water Vole Recovery** through Waterlife Recovery East, a collaboration between

the Wildlife Trusts and other Non-Government Organisations, Local Authorities, Government bodies, and Internal Drainage Boards across the region. This has laid the foundations for a project on a scale never before attempted in England. In a similar vein, we also led on the development of a **Badger Protection Plan** with input from the Essex Badger Protection Group.

We have been chairing the **Blackwater Conservation Partnership** to manage the 'conservation landscape' of the Blackwater estuary, one of the most heavily designated areas in the UK. Each year this partnership gathers more momentum and is embarking on a growing programme of projects.

Since 2002, we have been pioneers in saltmarsh restoration and coastal realignment. This year we produced a **Saltmarsh Restoration Report** which outlined the next steps for Essex and identified the links with climate change and 'nature-based solutions' (for example 'blue carbon': the ability of saltmarsh and seagrass to sequester carbon). This has laid the groundwork for the next 'phase' of the project to be delivered (and funded) in 2021. To develop and expand our coastal work, we have developed a new seagrass project for Natural England's ReMEDIES programme and laid the foundations of our own **Essex Seagrass Project**, ready for launch in 2021.

Meanwhile, at Abbots Hall we organised and completed **estuarine fish surveys**, piloting survey approaches, testing techniques and locations. This has provided a great base on which to build future surveys and new opportunities for citizen science.

Influencing the planning system is one of the most important ways to get the best deal for wildlife. Our work in the area of planning and development continued in earnest this year. We responded to major infrastructure projects including the Stage 1 consultation on **Bradwell B nuclear power station** and the **Lower Thames Crossing**. From July to December, we examined 389 planning applications and responded to 68. We also responded to (and campaigned about) the '**Planning for the Future**' **White Paper**, outlining the need to put nature's recovery at the heart of the planning system.

This work was only possible because of your support. Thank you!



Maximising the conservation value of land

Our dedicated **Conservation Grazing Team** worked hard to ensure that our herds and flocks of native breed cattle, ponies and sheep were managed to deliver the best outcomes for wildlife across all of our grazed sites, while maintaining the highest welfare standards. Underpinning these aims and standards is our newly developed **Conservation Grazing Strategy**, which will guide our decision making for the next five years and position us at the forefront of conservation grazing. We also recruited two expert members of staff to lead this operation.

We continued to develop our **Fobbing Marsh** and **Blue House Farm** restoration projects, both of which will become wonderful wetlands in the coming years. We have had setbacks, including the discovery of historic contaminated land at Fobbing, planning conditions and objections at Blue House Farm, as well as funding disappointment from the oversubscribed Green Recovery Challenge Fund. However, these challenges often make a project stronger in the long run: we refined both schemes, revisited planning applications, secured funding, and acquired Environmental Agency permission. Great progress has since been made on these two important projects.

Work continued on developing and delivering a new Trust-wide **Ecological Monitoring Programme** using a system of monitoring modules, along with analysis of when and where monitoring is required through the calendar year. Groundwork also progressed in recruiting an expert **Ecology Team** to support this work.

An unexpected threat to wildlife came in the form of **increased recreational pressure** on many habitats and species early in the year. Due to the unforeseen effects of Covid-19, the need for access to green space was unprecedented. People reconnected with the natural world and wildlife, but many of our sites were unprepared or too fragile for increased usage. Access to green space should be a universal right: we just need more of it.

A comprehensive **Reserves Evaluation** was completed for all of our sites. This evaluation will inform conservation and resource prioritisation across the county in the coming years, taking a strategic view of the Trust's landholding as a whole rather than planning each individual site in isolation. This was followed by the development of a new **Action Plan+** process for some of our key sites. All of our reserves now have either an Action Plan, Action Plan+, or full Management Plan depending on their size and conservation requirements.

Finally, we continued to meet our obligations under the **Basic Payment Scheme** and **Higher-Level Stewardship**, and further developed our **Woodland Strategy** and **Grassland Strategy**, both of which will be rolled out in 2021.

Championing key species

It was a unique year for our key species. Government restrictions kept us indoors for prolonged periods, so our focus turned to **WildlifeTV**, which we ran across all of our social media channels and digital platforms. Here, we promoted wilder gardening techniques, launched our Action for Insects campaign, encouraged the people of Essex to build **ponds for toads** and **homes for hedgehogs**, and much more. At the Trust, we see campaigning as a form of 'indirect conservation', and it was through this medium that we were able to make the most impact for wildlife in the first half of the year.

Many of our reserves that support key species became busier. While it was fantastic that visitors were enjoying the sites, more people meant more disturbance, and certain species suffered. **Beach-nesting birds** had a relatively disturbance-free start to their breeding season due to the strict lockdown between March and April. But as restrictions eased, human disturbance was severe as people flocked to the coast to explore new places. This resulted in no successful **little tern fledglings** in the Blackwater and Colne estuaries in 2020. Our **Share Our Shores** partnership project with the RSPB, which aims to support the success of beach-nesting birds such as the oystercatcher, ringed plover and little tern, has never been more important.

Until this year, **orchid counts** at Chafford Gorges were looking very positive after significant habitat enhancement and restoration works. Unfortunately, social distancing doubled the width of some footpaths and many orchids were trampled. Our hope is that, with more people visiting the reserve, there will be long-term positive impacts to this urban site and orchid populations will recover in 2021. There was also some good news at Chafford. **Glow-worm numbers** showed a significant increase, following several years of dedicated habitat improvement for the species.

We undertook significant work at Blue House Farm to enhance habitat conditions for our **key wetland birds**, both breeding and overwintering. This included increasing foraging areas, repairing and monitoring anti-predator fencing, managing water levels and creating splashy muddy margins for foraging waders and dabbling ducks. There are further exciting plans for this site for 2021.

Our saltmarshes are a crucial nursery habitat for juvenile fish. This year we developed a **citizen science**

survey methodology which will help connect people with our coastline, habitats, and species, while also allowing us to collect valuable data.

Our pioneering **eDNA water sampling** of the River Blackwater and River Colne this year proved incredibly successful. As well as detecting water vole, otter, and mink, we also detected mammals as small as pygmy shrews, as well as residual DNA from a range of mammals including deer, fox, and polecat. This provides many future opportunities for conservation. It's amazing what we can gain from a single 500ml water sample!

Surveying of the **beaver enclosure** at Spains Hall in August showed that, although water levels had dropped since the winter, large amounts of water were still being held on site, which is fantastic. Meanwhile, **water vole conservation** included ditch clearance works at Rushy Mead.

Sadly, much of the UK stronghold for the **rare Fisher's estuarine moth** was lost to the sea after a breach of the seawall at Skipper's Island in the spring. Fortunately, we have been preparing for this possibility for the past two decades by creating habitat for the species at sites away from the dangers of flooding. This includes Wrabness, where we planted hog's fennel plugs, the moth's caterpillar foodplant... for which we appeared on Countryfile!

Finally, we began our flagship **Action for Insects** project in the autumn by sowing trial plots of an insect-focused seed mix, as well as planning project work on our reserves, citizen science monitoring for 2021, and general profile-raising of our incredible insects in Essex!

And not to forget our **wonderful toads**. Our thanks to those of you who took part in our toad-focused citizen science campaign.

Photo: Nick Upton/2020VISION



2020 in a nutshell



101

sites managed
for wildlife

8,756

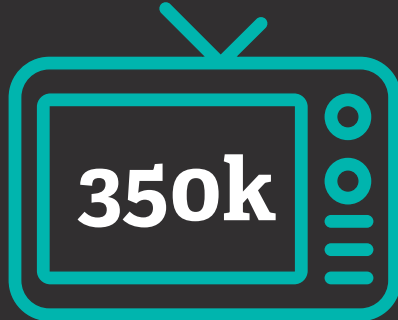
CHILDREN INSPIRED
VIA ASSEMBLIES AND NATURE
FRIENDLY SCHOOLS



389

PLANNING APPLICATIONS
EXAMINED

68 RESPONDED TO



350k
views
of WildlifeTV

HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF OUR
THESE ARE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS



476

CHILDREN
INSPIRED VIA DROP OFF DAYS



5,400

participants in 30 Days Wild

3,100 IN 2019



120K CUPS
OF TEA AND
COFFEE SOLD

UP FROM 67K

Love Essex • Love Wildlife

2 NSIPS ENGAGED WITH
(Nationally Significant
Infrastructure Projects)



480,000 VISITORS TO CENTRES

DOWN FROM 1.15 MILLION VISITORS IN 2019

OUR HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2020



AS MUCH AS OURS

38.6K

39.1K IN 2019

MEMBERS



16K

NEW SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

UP 39% ON 2019



514 home educated students inspired

MAGAZINES PER YEAR,

QUARTERLY AND SEASONAL

4



1,120

participants in Nature Tots

66

FOREST SCHOOL EDUCATORS TRAINED



19K

SUPPORTERS RECEIVED OUR FORTNIGHTLY WILD NEWS

750 people lobbied local MPs and Councils



Essex
Wildlife Trust

Inspiring a lifelong love^{of} nature



As well as protecting wildlife, our mission is to inspire a lifelong love of nature. When people feel connected to the natural world, they are more likely to **take action** for wildlife, as well as being happier and healthier. There is now an overwhelming **base of evidence** to prove that this is the case.

It was a challenging year for inspiring people in person, which is our usual mode of delivery. Successive national lockdowns necessitated the closure of our **Nature Discovery Centres** and curtailed the delivery of almost all forms of engagement except online. Nonetheless, we adapted well to the new normal. As well as moving much of our **delivery online**, we engaged greater numbers than ever through **Wildlife TV**, secured some **sizeable grants**, and saw our new flagship **visitor centre at Langdon** take shape.

Creating places of wonder

Following our best ever year for visitor numbers in 2019 (1.15 million), our **Nature Discovery Centres** and Parks had a challenging year, like many businesses. We navigated our way through two successive lockdowns and had to furlough nearly all centre-based staff; similarly, our volunteers were unable to support us as usual. Even when we could open, our income-generating potential was affected: our food and beverage offer was heavily reduced, and we were limited to selling essential retail. Our commercial activities are important: all **profits go to protecting wildlife**, so a bad year has repercussions that may affect our conservation work.

However, even under these difficult circumstances, there were successes. We welcomed **480,000 visitors** and sold a whopping **120,000 cups of tea** and coffee this year. We often joke about cups of tea at the Trust: although it may seem arbitrary, every cup has the potential to result in action for wildlife. While these figures illustrate the impact of being closed at our busiest times, they also show that our regular visitors returned quickly (thank you!); we also had good numbers of new visitors, who were no doubt re-engaging with nature during and between lockdowns.

Our team of **loyal volunteers** were impacted, with very strict working practices required. We were necessarily cautious about putting volunteers at risk in our Nature Discovery Parks and Centres. As we all know, our volunteers are an essential part of the Trust and without them we had to limit opening times at some of our centres. It was hard for members to see some of our sites remain closed due to this, even when restrictions were lifted after the first lockdown. However, for the second lockdown we made the necessary provision to allow sites to remain open for at least some days each week to ensure members had access to their favourite places.

Our **events programme**, which is a core part of our public engagement at Centres, was perhaps the hardest hit, with no events able to take place since the end of February. However, there were also many positives in 2020, particularly in terms of **better signage**, **better systems**, and a new '**meet and greet**' initiative to ensure visitors feel welcomed and at home. We also made changes that will improve our operations and trading.

The highlight was our new **Langdon Nature Discovery Centre**, which has progressed well, although the opening date has been delayed until Summer 2021 due to further lockdowns. It is a remarkable building and has the most **wildlife-friendly carpark** in Essex, possibly the UK. Designed by local supporter John Little, it is made using gabions filled from local hardcore, Thanet sand from the A13 widening scheme, recycled waste material as the growing medium for wild flower beds which will provide a rich source of nectar, and bee posts for solitary bees. Visitors will start their wildlife journey as soon as they step out of their car, or dismount from their bike.



Delivering outstanding outdoor learning

We responded with agility to the limitations placed on our usual outdoor learning activities and were able to continue delivering to many of our key audiences, albeit with a reduced programme. These included **Nature Tots**, **Forest School**, and **Accredited Forest School Training**, despite having to furlough a large number of staff during the first lockdown.

However, in many ways, the restrictions enforced during the pandemic laid the foundations for a **revolution in outdoor learning**, and we were ahead of the curve in Essex. Moving from physical to online delivery enabled us to reach new, larger audiences. We produced daily video and activity-related content for **WildlifeTV** (see the opposite page) aimed at children, families, Forest School leaders and general school educators. We also launched our pioneering **Inside Out consultancy**, which offered advice and training to schools and educators, building the skills and confidence for schools to take their learning outside.

We developed a flexible hybrid model for delivering **Forest School Training**, which enabled theory-based lessons to take place via Zoom, supplemented by face-to-face practical lessons as and when Government guidelines allowed. In total, we ran four **Level 3 courses** and a **Level 2 course** in 2020, training **66 educators** for the future.

We want to connect people to nature at every age and stage of life. With this in mind, our first **Nature Nursery** is ready to launch in 2021 following significant work: major site development, the design of an Early Years programme which meets educational and legislative requirements, and the recruitment of an experienced Nursery Manager. Our hope is that the Nature Nursery becomes a **new model for nature-based education**, not just in Essex but throughout the UK.

For older audiences, we developed a new suite of Zoom-based **Wild Living courses** covering a range of topics from wildlife gardening to the social history of Langdon plotlands, all of which received excellent feedback from participants. This is an area that we want to grow in the coming years.

We secured a number of funding grants, including £250k for **Tendring Loves Conservation**, which aims to develop nature connectedness and 'pride in place' in the Tendring district, £14k from the NHS to run **Wild Wellbeing** sessions in Colchester, aimed at children and families with low wellbeing, and funding from **Land of the Fanns** and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to run Forest School training, provide school-based support, and develop online training resources for teachers and young people to encourage them to use the Land of the Fanns landscape in education.

We also continued our **Nature Friendly Schools** work, engaging ten schools across Essex to offer children the opportunity to learn outside the classroom, supporting their wellbeing, mental health, and engagement with school.

Growing wildlife supporters

Like many membership organisations, 2020 was a mixed year. Our membership numbers dropped due to the economic uncertainties of the pandemic while successive lockdowns halted our ability to recruit new members. Despite this, we ended the year on **38.6k members** (and have since returned to 2019 levels of membership). We are incredibly thankful for the continued support. It means so much to us and to wildlife.

We launched **Wild News** in March, a regular fortnightly email to **19k supporters** to ensure we kept everyone up to date with the Trust's work and any relevant changes to Government guidelines. We launched **WildlifeTV** at the same time to connect the public with nature during the first lockdown. This was a scheduled programme of videos and activities, intended to engage, inspire, and educate supporters to help wildlife at home. Staff from around the Trust created **225 videos** across 14 weeks, generating over **350k views** and over **19 hours** of inspirational content, which is now available on our new **YouTube channel**.

Our digital channels saw tremendous growth in 2020. Alongside YouTube, we started a **TikTok account** to reach new supporters of all ages. We launched a new monthly podcast, **The Wildlife Explorer**, in December. Essex Wildlife Trust also represented Europe in the National Geographic's first **Around the World** live event to their **138 million followers**. Overall, we gained over **16k more social media followers**, ending the year with **57.7k**, an increase of **39%**.

We featured regularly across **TV and Radio** stations throughout the year, with features on Countryfile, BBC News, The One Show, BBC World Service, Radio 4, BBC Essex, Look East and ITV Anglia. Our stories covered everything from planting hog's fennel for the Fisher's estuarine moth, to our wildlife webcams connecting people with nature during lockdown, to the importance of saltmarsh habitat. These features can reach millions of people at a time, helping to increase the profile of the Trust and widen the influence of our work.

It was another record year for **30 Days Wild**. Our annual campaign challenging the public to connect with nature for all 30 days in June saw **5.4k sign-ups** compared to **3.1k** in 2019. This was followed by a new challenge event, and the Trust's first virtual fundraising event, the **Essex Coastal Challenge**, which we hope will become an annual challenge. **173 participants** ran, walked, swam, and kayaked throughout August, raising over **£14k** for the Trust.

We also engaged in other key campaigns for nature. The **Planning to Fail** campaign, which highlighted the failings of the proposed changes to the planning system for wildlife and people, generated over **750 responses** to MPs and Local Councils in Essex, ensuring that safeguarding nature is at the forefront of the minds of our local decision-makers.

To finish the year, members received their new magazine, **WILD**, in December. The magazine is now quarterly and seasonal, rather than only three times a year. Members also have the option to receive it digitally as part of our new Green Membership, while the design has been brought in-house, using the Trust's very own studio, the **Design Hide**.



The good, the bad and the ugly

It was a year of contrasting fortunes. We performed well, considering the circumstances, but there is a long way to go: we aren't yet the best organisation we can be. Regardless of the pandemic, there is still much to do to elevate our thinking and delivery to the level that will meet the **challenges we face** in the future.

The good

Necessity is the mother of invention. One of the highlights this year has been the agility and adaptability we have shown in the face of adversity. As a result, our delivery is now more flexible, at reserves, in centres, and through our activities and events. We can deliver Forest School training remotely, for example. Who would have thought it?

We have increased our reach through digital media and have found new ways to bring wildlife to people's homes. Webcams and WildlifeTV are just two examples of how we have engaged new audiences in a more inclusive way, helping to overcome physical, emotional, and psychological barriers to accessing nature. More broadly, our relationship with nature is once again at the heart of our search for happiness, health, and wellbeing. Nature is also back on the political agenda, which is the only way we will really tackle the climate crisis and the ecological crisis.

During the course of the year, we also completed a full Governance Review and, in the process, welcomed many new trustees with considerable expertise. As a result, our Board of Trustees is now much more diverse and our governance processes are more robust.

The bad

One of our aims for 2020 was to update our signage and interpretation across as many of our sites as possible. Due to a combination of site closures, procurement challenges, internal capacity due to furlough, and other general disruption due to Covid-19, we are not as far along this road as we would have liked.

Too much of our signage and interpretation is in a state of disrepair; some of our reserves include branding that is many years old. As a result, we are developing plans to ensure that this work is given the priority it needs over the next five years. We hope you will enjoy seeing your favourite sites given some much-needed love and attention over the coming years.

The ugly

The ugliest thing about 2020 has undoubtedly been the pandemic. This resulted in unavoidable delays in two of the biggest projects we've been working on over the past couple of years: the Nature Nursery and the Langdon Nature Discovery Centre, both of which were originally planned to open towards the end of the year but have now moved to 2021 openings.

Financial summary

Essex Wildlife Trust year ended 31 December 2020

Financial review

2020 was another strong year for the Trust financially, despite Covid-19. Net income of over £2.6 million was more than twice that of 2019 and whilst long-term investments didn't perform quite so strongly as the year before, they still increased in value by £0.7m. Total funds rose by £3.3m and now amount to over £33 million.

The increased net income was largely the result of a greater level of legacy income, which, at £3.6m, was up by £2.6m. This more than offset the impact of reduced income from some other activities due to Covid-19, which impacted both the trading performance of our food, beverage and retail subsidiary – where income was only 40% of 2019's level as Nature Discovery Centres (NDCs) had to close – as well as charitable income for activities which could not be delivered such as education. Most other sources of income were similar to the previous year, although we did receive £0.6 million in Covid-19 support payments for furloughed staff from government and business support grants from local authorities.

While we made some savings in our expenditure plans, including the direct costs of operating NDCs when they had to close, this positive result and the underlying strong financial health of the charity enabled us to maintain expenditure on charitable activities in 2020 at a level that was broadly similar to 2019, with the results described elsewhere in this report. In the balance sheet, the increase in tangible fixed assets reflects work on the new NDC at Langdon and the gifting of a substantial property as part of a legacy to the Trust.

The first few months of 2021 saw the continuation of the Covid-19 lockdown, including the initial closure and then partial re-opening of NDCs, but our charitable and trading activities have gradually returned to normal levels as the country has emerged from lockdown. The Trustees agreed a budget for 2021 that underpins an investment in the future of wildlife in Essex and although the delayed start to the year has meant the deferment of some plans, we are confident that our financial strength will allow us to deliver on them as the country returns to a new normal in which supporting wildlife has an ever-increasing role to play.

Bob Holmes

Treasurer
Essex Wildlife Trust

Summary Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities	2020 £000's	2019 £000's
Income		
Donations and Legacies	5,828	3,721
Charitable Activities	2,213	2,084
Other Trading Activities	1,540	3,114
Income from Investments	459	469
Total Income	10,040	9,388
Expenditure		
Charitable Activities	4,590	4,611
Raising Funds	2,809	3,801
Total Expenditure	7,399	8,412
Operating Surplus / (Deficit)	2,641	976
Net Gains / (Losses) on Investments	691	1,653
Defined Benefit Pension Scheme	(14)	192
Net Movement in Funds	3,317	2,821
Funds Brought Forward	29,922	27,101
Funds Carried Forward	33,239	29,922

Summary Consolidated Balance Sheets	2020 £000's	2019 £000's
Tangible and Intangible Fixed Assets	15,308	12,961
Long Term Investments	13,401	12,423
Stocks	188	353
Debtors	1,583	2,076
Short Term Investments & Cash at Bank and in Hand	3,403	2,915
Creditors falling due within one year	(458)	(635)
Creditors falling due after more than one year	(186)	(171)
Total Net Assets	33,239	29,922
Designated Funds	7,379	5,383
General Funds	5,403	4,498
Total Unrestricted Funds	12,782	9,881
Restricted Funds	17,389	17,109
Endowment Funds	3,068	2,932
Total Funds	33,239	29,922

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 Farm, 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 30 June 2021 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**. Wildlife in Essex would be in a much poorer state without you.

LEGATORS

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

Mr John Raymond Baxter	Mrs Jean Kathleen Lucas
Mrs Ruth May Burkin	Mrs Minnie Elizabeth Morris
Mr John William Davies	Mrs Joan Pickford
Mr Gerald Graham Evans	Miss Kathleen Nellie Sage
Mr Peter Francis Fuller	Mr Derek Secker
Mr Norman Charles Gibbons	Mr Campbell Robert Smith
Mr Keith Albert Greenaway	Miss Beryl Ivy Vincent
Miss Olive Margaret Griffiths	Mr Derek George Warner
Mr Roger Howard	Mr Colin Wills
Mr Christopher (Kit) Hughes	Mrs Betty Barbara Harriett Wisbey
Mrs Jacqueline Leppard	

All gift 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 2020.**

FUNDERS

We are also extremely grateful to our funders in 2020, who have helped us towards our core costs and our projects.

AIM Foundation
 Anglian Water
 Biffa
 Countryside Stewardship
 Environment Agency
 Essex Community Foundation
 Essex & Suffolk Water
 Ida Davis Family Foundation
 Land of the Fanns
 National Lottery Community Fund
 National Lottery Heritage Fund
 People's Postcode Lottery
 Thames Water
 Veolia

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

CORPORATE MEMBERS

Our thanks to local (and locally minded) businesses that are part of our Investors in Wildlife scheme, working in partnership with us to make business wilder. You are helping us to build a 'green alliance' that is greater than the sum of its parts.

2plan Wealth Management	Clifford Brown & Grimsey Insurance Brokers Ltd	Fearnwood Products	Kelly Turkeys	PGM Carpentry Contractors Ltd	Spring Lodge Veterinary Hospital
A Duke & Son	CNG Business Advice T/A Smart Support	Fen Farm Caravan Site	Ken Rush Associates Ltd	PJR Communications Ltd	Squibb Group Ltd
A G Fabrication Ltd	Coachstop	Fenn Wright	Kieran Lucas Contractors Ltd	Platt Rushton	SRBE Ltd t/a Jovic Plant
A R Adams (Funeral Directors) Ltd	Coda Systems Ltd	Firstead Properties Ltd	Kiss Chase Creations	PLS Tax Solutions	St Cedd's School
Abbott Fasteners Ltd	Colchester Borough Council	Fisco Tools Ltd	KJL Group	Plummer Electrical Engineering	St Georges Pest Control Ltd
ACL (Adult Community Learning) Essex	Collier & Catchpole Limited	Flowline Ltd	L Holmes Dental Laboratory	PMB Electrical Supplies Ltd	Station Automotive
Acom ARB & Forestry	Colne Stoves & Fireplaces	Foodies To Go	Langdon Hills Golf Club	PMR Solutions Ltd	Stepwood Limited
Actual Health and Safety	Commodity Centre (UK) Ltd	Frank Howard Tools & Fixings Ltd	Lathcoats Farm Shop	PMV Essex Ltd	Stillwater Management
Adam & Greenwood Funeral Home	Communications Software (Arline Systems) Limited	Franklin Group	Laurie Wood Associates Ltd.	Port Flair Ltd	Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome
Adhesive Technical Services	Complete Intacare Hygiene	Fuud Ltd	Leagold Miller	Port Of London Authority	Strix Editions
AdValue Marketing	Complete Locksmith Services Ltd	G & K Groundworks Ltd	Leisure Hire Marquees Ltd	Port of Tilbury London Ltd	Stubbers Adventure Centre
Affinity Water Ltd	Constable VAT Consultancy LLP	Gallopel Wind Farm Ltd	LWFC&G Ltd	Premier Print & Promotions Ltd	Summerdale Veterinary Centre
Alchemize Ltd	Consult A Penguin Ltd	Garden Designs And Landscapes	London Gateway Networks Ltd	Prestige Conjouring	Swallow Aquatic
ALM Training Services	Cooper Bros (Great Oakley) Ltd	Gardens Of Peace Muslim Cemetery Trust	London Southend Airport Co Ltd	Primasure Ltd Insuring	Sync Creative
Alton Garden Centre	Corlian IT Consultancy Ltd	Gemini Office Solutions Ltd	Loughton Town Council	Essex Growth	Systematics International Ltd
Amixan Ltd	Courts Of Rayleigh	George Thompson Ltd	Louton Town Council	Priority Support Services Ltd	T J Evers Ltd
Andrew Klecha (Tree Surgeons) Ltd	Crane Building Management Services Ltd	George Yard Shopping Centre	LSJ Engineering Ltd	Procam Agriculture Ltd	Talis Projects Ltd
Andy Rose Photography	Creed Marketing Ltd	Gill Scaffolding Ltd	Lucy & Co	Qineliq Shoeburyness	Tarmac
Anglian Water Services Ltd	Curtis Assemble & Test Ltd	GIS Spatial Mapping	M Lucking & Sons	Quadrant Security Services Land & Marine Ltd	Tending District Council
Animal Health Co Ltd	D & A Media Ltd	Globalnet IT Innovations Ltd	M P Architects LLP	R & D Advisors Uk Ltd	Thames Loose Leaf
Ansell & Sons	D Chennells Ltd	Glorcroft Limited	Maldon District Council	R Gwynnell & Sons	Thames Water Utilities Ltd
Aqua Environmental Services Limited	D H Industries Ltd	Gower Brothers Ltd	Maldon Golf Club	Rawley Plant Ltd	The CME Personnel Consultancy
AR Maintenance	D J Fisher (Farms) Ltd	Grape Passions Ltd	Maldon Marine Ltd	Rayleigh Town Council	The DS Group
Ash Associates Ltd	D K Moriarty Ltd	Grays Office Supplies	Maplewood Carpentry Ltd	Raytel Group Ltd	The Finishing Line Ltd
Ashwyk Ltd	Daniel Bridge Photography	Green Light Print Solutions Ltd	Marks Hall Estate	Red Cell Ltd	The Full Works Ltd
Associate Enterprises Ltd	Daniel Robinson & Sons	Greetings	Marmi Ltd	Relish	The Landscape Centre Limited
Ayers & Cruiks	Dataware Consultancy Centre Ltd	Gripdeck Ltd	Martyn Lewis Chartered Accountant	Revive Digital Media	The Little Wellness Hub
B & M Barnes	Daws Heath Timber Ltd	Ground Control Ltd	MDM Timber Ltd	Reynolds Industrial Cleaning Ltd	The Othona Community
B.E.E. Pest Control	Dengie Crops Ltd	Growing Native	Mears Websites	RHS Garden Hyde Hall	The Royals Shopping Centre
Backhouse Solicitors	DeVines Accountants Ltd	Guardian Industrial Doors	Messrs. Tilbrook's Solicitor	Rimplas	The Safe House
Bakers Of Danbury Ltd	Diamond Press Ltd	H Tisbury & Son	Metro Limited	Riverside Nursery & Garden Centre	The Trop Shop
Barclays Bank PLC	Downwell Demolition Ltd	H W Wilson Ltd	Metro Foods Ltd	Riverside Veterinary Group	Therapy Life Centre
Basildon Borough Council	DST Financial Services	Hair & Son LLP	MHS Radiators	RL Solutions Ltd	Thomsons
Basildon Timber	Dunton Park	Hairways (Hair & Beauty) Ltd	Michael Clark Designs	Robin Greatorex Wines	THS Concepts Ltd
Battlesbridge Antiques Centre (The Old Granary)	E T Brown & Son	Harlow Garden Services Limited	Millane Contract Services Ltd	Rochford District Council	Tim Grigsby
Benchmark Landscape Ltd	Earthworks	Harwich Haven Authority	Mirror Door Systems Ltd	Rochford Hundred Golf Club	Tim Moya Associates
Bennetts (Brentwood) Limited	Eastwood Tile Warehouse	Healthy Life Essex CIC	Monthind Clean LLP	Rohan Chelmsford	Timber Tec
BGA Architects	Edmund Carr	Henderson & Taylor (PW) Ltd	Morley Riches & Ablewhite	Romstror Limited	Tina Wing Photography
Birkett Long	Effective Business Network	HESC Ltd	MWS	Ronald Fletcher Baker Ltd	TP's Car Clinic
Birketts LLP	Electrical Solutions	High Chelmer Shopping Centre	Myomancy Ltd T/A Wiltshire	Rose Of Colchester Ltd	Trait Design Ltd
Bizphit	Elisons	Hi-Tec Europe Ltd	Farm Foods	Ruark Audio Ltd	Transscape
Blackburn & Co Ltd	Elm Horticulture Ltd	Home Instead Senior Care	MyWebHero Limited	Ruggles & Jeffery Ltd	Tree Fella Ltd
Bland Landscapes Ltd	Elm House Veterinary Centre	Hoppings Softwood Products Plc	Navigator Terminals Thames Ltd	RW & JR Burroughs	Trenitalia c2c Ltd
Blatella Films Ltd	Endeavour Drilling Ltd	HSQE Ltd	NC Appliance Repairs Ltd	S G Shields (Benfleet) Ltd	Twister Solutions Ltd
Bowling Garrard Electrical Ltd	Energy Crop Solutions Ltd	Hugh Pearl Land Drainage Ltd	Neil Smith FCCA	S P Bardwell Ltd	TWO Services Ltd
Braintree District Council	Enertech Solutions Ltd	Hunter And Sons Tree Services	Networking Essex	S Stibbards & Sons Ltd	UK Power Networks Ltd
Brents of Brentwood Ltd	EOL IT Services	Hygiene Contracts Limited	New Holland Agriculture	S. Carter & Son	Universal Image Systems Ltd
Brett Aggregates	EPC-Group UK	I D Corcoran Building Contractors Ltd	Nexus HR Consultancy Ltd	Safe Fire Protection Ltd	Utilize Plc
Brewster Motors Essex Ltd	Essex & Suffolk Insurance Brokers	Ian Jewell	Nicholls Law	Safety Assured	Vanitorials Ltd
Bright & Sons Ltd	Essex & Suffolk Water PLC	Ian Wallinhurst Kar Co Ltd	North Benfleet Hall Fishery	Sally Parkinson Photography	Vaughan & Blyth (Construction) Limited
Brightest Fuels Ltd	Essex Chambers Of Commerce	Impamark	North Essex Signs Ltd	Santry Davis	Ventam Systems Ltd
Brown & Carroll (London) Ltd	Essex County Council Environment & Economy	Infotec Consulting	Oak View Landscapes Limited	Sarah Green's Organics	Veolia Environmental Services (UK) Plc
C J Bardwell Ltd	Essex Digital Copiers	Ingrebourne Valley Ltd	Office Needs (Essex) Ltd	Scooter Store Ltd	VIRIDIS Urban & Rural Ltd
Cadman Construction Ltd	Essex Mechanical Services	Intu Lakeside Ltd	Old Park Meadow Ltd	Scott Wallis Seeds Ltd	Waldegraves Farm Ltd
Calor Gas	Essex Memorials Limited	Islandbridge Properties Ltd	Olympus Keymed Ltd	Sealife Adventure/Miller Leisure Ltd	WAVEDATA Ltd
Capel Court Plc	Essex Reclamation Ltd	J & D Foods	One to One Personnel Ltd	Secret Hamper	We Work Well
Carbon Sure Consulting Ltd	Essex Salt Ltd	J B Russell Engineers Ltd	Organisation For Responsible Business (ORB)	Seekay Horticultural Supplies	Whirledge & Nott
Castle Point Borough Council	Essex Security Services Ltd	J H Palmer	Osea Leisure Park	Sheridan Accountancy Services Ltd	Whittle & Partners LLP
CBAC Services Ltd	Estuary Housing Association Ltd	J W Steele & Sons Ltd	P & P Maintenance Services	Shipman Security Systems Ltd	Wilkin & Sons Ltd
CBD Pure Life	European Refrigeration Ltd	Jackie Spurr Consulting Ltd	Page Creative	Sibbons Plant Hire	Wilkins Kennedy LLP
CEME Limited	Express Environmental Solutions Ltd	Janice Gooch Heritage Consultancy	Palmer's Solicitors	Silver City Estates Ltd	Willow Garden Day Nursery
Channels Golf Club Ltd	F H nes Ltd	Javalin Network Services Ltd	Perrywood Garden Centre & Nurseries Ltd	Simmons Printers	Wire Free Protection Ltd
Chelmer Marquees Ltd	F P Guiver & Sons Limited	JKS Group Ltd	Pest Defence Ltd	Simul Systems Ltd	Witham Town Council
Chelmsford City Council	Fastsigns Ltd	John S Dunne Ltd		Smith & O'Sullivan Ltd	Woodfashions Ltd
Chorus Advisers Ltd		K S Timber Ltd		Solar Green Ltd	Woodham Ferrers Water Ski Club
CIPHER Crystal Ltd		Kaizen Consultancy Ltd		Sootys Sweep Service	Woodhouse Engineering
City & Country				Southend Timber Ltd	Wormell Plant/hire
Clacton On Sea Golf Club				space282	Wow Balloons
Claridon Group Ltd				Spains Hall Partnership	
Cleancare International					



The year ahead

One of our big areas of focus will be **ecological monitoring**. We must be able to demonstrate impact and ensure that all our decision making is based on scientific evidence. We have ambitious plans to implement our **Woodland Strategy** and our **Grazing Strategy**, the latter of which will dramatically increase biodiversity across our landholdings.

We want our sites to be exemplar reserves, which requires ambitious plans. Among our notable sites for 2021 will be **Fobbing Marsh**, **Blue House Farm**, and **Oliver Road Lagoons**. We have also secured funding that will allow us to undertake more work on **Wrabness** and **Great Holland Pits**, as well as other sites in the Tendring district.

We will continue to lead the partnership-based **Blackwater Project** in the area, trialling the concept of a **Nature Recovery Network** around the estuary and beyond. Perhaps most critical of all, we will be working closely with partners to launch the **Local Nature Partnership** in Essex and take another step towards our vision of a **Wilder Essex**.

We will start to put into practice the insights and outcomes from our **Reserves Evaluation**, having looked long and hard at the potential of our current sites to deliver for wildlife. This is likely to involve new land acquisition, the backdrop for which is our movement-wide aim to secure **30% of land and sea to be connected and protected for wildlife by 2030**.

We plan to inspire more people than ever this year. Many of our Nature Discovery Centres will benefit from **new signage and interpretation**, starting with Abberton and Langdon, the latter of which will open in the summer, giving Langdon the visitor centre it deserves. Our commercial activities will be equally integral. We have developed an ambitious **Food and Beverage Strategy** and an equally inspiring **Retail Strategy** which place **responsible catering and retail** at the heart of everything we do, both of which will contribute to our vision.

Among the most exciting prospects for this year is the launch of our **Nature Nursery**, which will be a significant step towards our aim of being at the forefront of outdoor learning. We will be targeting even younger children (and their parents) through our **Nature Babies** initiative, ensuring nature connectedness for the next generation, the custodians of the future and stewards of the natural world. We will also be enhancing our provision for adults through our suite of **Wild Living courses**.

We will be delivering a **large portfolio of funded projects**, including **Nature Friendly Schools**, **Wild Wellbeing**, **Land of the Fanns**, and **Tendring Loves Conservation**. One of our key aims is to develop a **Nature Connectedness Evaluation Framework** with the University of Essex that enables us to measure and monitor levels of connectedness across all activities in order to quantify our impact.

2021 will be a year of **bouncing back with membership growth**. We aim to have more **social media followers** and more recipients of **Wild News**, as well as establishing a **specialist campaign function**.

Sustainability will be a major thread that runs throughout 2021. We will attain **Level 1 of the Green Dragon accreditation** and initiate Level 2. We will publish our **Environmental Review**, improve our data collection, and develop an inspiring Environmental Policy. **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion** will also remain at the heart of our plans. Finally, we will continue to develop our **Project Portfolio** and ensure that our projects are undertaken to the **highest standards**.

We have much to do in 2021.

We need **your support** more than ever.