

A summary of the impact of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust in 2019 - 2020

Annual Review

2019 - 2020



Lincolnshire
Wildlife Trust

Message from the Chair

My preparation for writing the Chair's Annual Report usually starts with a look back at last year's report, if only to see how many things we promised came to fruition.

With that in mind, I am pleased to report that the acquisition of the "missing piece" of Sow Dale, joining our existing "Upper" and "Lower" reserves, was completed and work is underway to manage the whole site as an integrated reserve.

In addition, and at short notice, we took advantage of the opportunity to extend our existing reserves at Lawn Wood, Bottleneck and Jackson's Meadows by acquiring 22 acres of grassland, linking these reserves to the nearby historical castle site at Castle Bytham. Funding for this came from local members with a significant gift of £50k particularly welcome, along with legacies. This acquisition will allow us to extend the area of traditional meadow habitat in the south of the county and a management plan is currently being prepared.

Returning to last year's report, I mentioned that we were planning to

recruit a new member to the senior management team to take forward our work on membership recruitment and engagement. I am pleased to report that Matthew Capper was appointed to that role during the year and we are pleased to welcome him to the team.

This review covers the period from April 2019 to March 2020, however it would not be complete without a comment on the impact of Covid-19, which led to the Trust closing down some of its operations at the end of March; essential activity, livestock checking for instance, has continued throughout.

Whilst restrictions have been gradually relaxed, Banovallum House is still not fully open with many staff working from home. Some members of staff were put on furlough. Face-to-face engagement has been suspended, including the work of the LoveLincsPlants Project and our normal educational activities and events around the county.

The pandemic has certainly brought home to government how much the public values open space and exercise, although our reserves have also

experienced at times unprecedented levels of anti-social behaviour and vandalism, which on occasions we have been unable to address.

As ever, our staff have coped with everything that has been thrown at them with their customary good humour and common sense. I would like to thank all of them for the manner in which they have coped with these difficulties with a particular mention to our Chief Executive and his senior management team for providing leadership, support and guidance throughout the crisis.

All the hard work over the years in the preparation of risk assessments and contingency planning came to the fore, and will see the Trust emerge from these "unprecedented times" in good heart and with a firm focus on what needs to be done to achieve Nature's Recovery across this wonderful county.



David Cohen,
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Cover image: Barn owl (Danny Green/2020VISION)



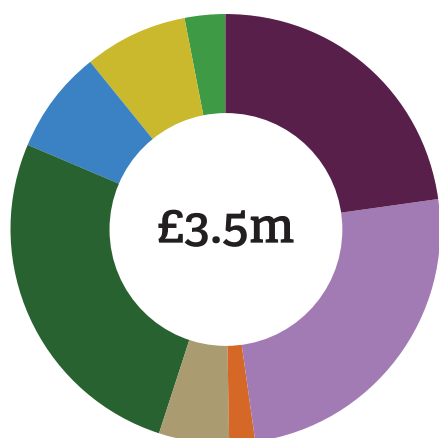
In April 2020, a pair of common cranes took up residence at our reserve at Willow Tree Fen, near Baston and settled down to breed. This required us to close the reserve to visitors as cranes are notoriously unaccepting of human presence during the breeding period. A group of local volunteers watched over the cranes, spending in excess of 1,500 hours on the bridge by the closed car park since the birds arrived. The single chick did well under the protection of its watchful parents and fledged in mid-August; this is the first breeding record in Lincolnshire for 400 years.

Summary of our income and expenditure for the year ending 31 March 2020.
More details can be found in our audited Annual Report and Financial Statements
at lincstrust.org.uk/publications.

During the year, £2.9m was spent on achieving the Trust's charitable activities. This represents 93% of total expenditure. This has been spread across Nature Reserves, Wider Countryside Conservation and Inspiring People. Substantial extensions were made to the nature reserves at Sow Dale and Castle Bytham at a cost of £485k and using some of Angela Bates' legacy which was received in 2019.

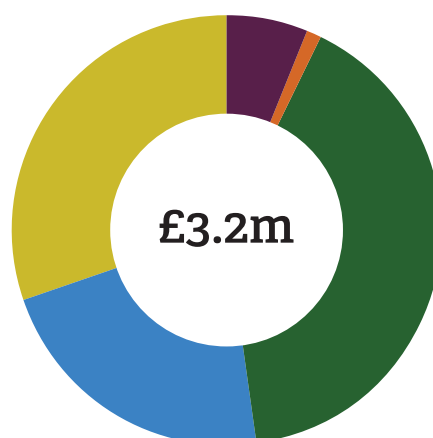
The Trust ended the year faced with many operational and human challenges posed by Covid-19. As at 31 July 2020 the charity's investment values have been restored and the government's financial support of around £100k has been critical in enabling staff to be retained. The main challenge has been cash flow and appropriate steps have been taken to enable the Trust to proceed with planned operations and projects.

Income



- Subscriptions, donations and gift aid **£803,000**
- Legacies **£882,000**
- Merchandising **£67,000**
- Investment **£182,000**
- Nature Reserves **£927,000**
- Wider countryside conservation **£273,000**
- Inspiring people **£273,000**
- Other **£101,000**

Expenditure



- Generating subscriptions and donations **£195,000**
- Merchandising **£40,000**
- Nature Reserve management **£1,284,000**
- Wider countryside conservation **£693,000**
- Inspiring people **£950,000**

Thank you for your support

A gift to us all

We would like to thank everyone who remembered Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust in their Will. We are honoured to record our appreciation to the following individuals whose legacies we received or were notified of in the year ended 31 March 2020.

Mary Angela Sarah Bates
Rosamond Thorn
Kate Turp
Joan Florence Cooke
John Harrison Osgerby
Ruth Winifred Painter
Margot Adelaide Hill
Helen Margaret Outram

Alan George Riseborough
Simon Joseph Enderby
Winifred Margaret Spilman
Beverley Margaret Green
Peter Foster Seed
Joyce Kathleen Lindsey
Phyllis Jean Bruning
Eileen Mabel Briggs



Over 700 tall thrift plants were propagated and planted to help secure the future of this nationally rare wildflower

BARRIE WILKINSON

Nature's recovery on reserves and beyond

Our nature reserves are precious wildlife havens but only through landscape-scale conservation can we ensure that Lincolnshire's wildlife can recover and be more resilient to future pressures.

It's easy to forget the dramatic political upheavals of 2019 leading to a December General Election. Local action on the ground needs to be supported by strong legislation. Our key asks of government are to commit to an ambitious Environment Act and to introduce an Agriculture Bill that supports farmers in delivering public goods. Progress is now unfortunately delayed by Covid-19 but we have inputted into the relevant consultations.

We were invited by Defra and Natural England to inform the development of the national 25 Year Environment Plan. This has included securing two trial projects that will influence the future way in which the Government pays

farmers to farm in environmentally friendly ways.

It was also a year of extreme weather conditions. Near drought across the county was followed by flooding at Wainfleet and Barlings Eau. These events raised opportunities for improved management of river catchments. Our work on the River Eau at Saltfleet

provided valuable space for water during times of intense rainfall. Water is allowed to flood onto the land to take pressure off the river channels and prevent flooding elsewhere. The floodwaters can then naturally drain back into the river channel. It's also beneficial to wildlife such as curlew and lapwings that feed in these wet meadows.



Caring for special places

Your membership is protecting local wildlife in nature reserves and the wider countryside

3,877

hectares of Lincolnshire's finest countryside were protected and managed as Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust nature reserves

1,200 metres

of ditching was cleared at Far Ings National Nature Reserve resulting in another good year for bitterns with two nests

1

Award winning mitigation scheme. With our partners, we were instrumental in the South Humber Gateway Mitigation Strategy which won an Excellence in Planning Award

10 million

ecological records held by the Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre were made more easily accessible through the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership's innovative online tool, LERCSearch

2,187

grey seal pups were born at Donna Nook National Nature Reserve. They were visited by nearly 60,000 people and 1 pomarine skua

8,500

plants of 52 species were propagated for habitat restoration across Lincolnshire from seed harvested from our reserves

Creating places where snipe drum and cranes bugle

Ten years ago, looking out across the arable fields of what was then Willow Tree Farm, it was easy to see the potential. To hear, not just the sound of the wind whistling past your ears, but snipe drumming and cranes bugling. The clue was in the patches of bare soil where the crop had failed.

The fields at Willow Tree aren't as flat as might be expected for the notoriously flat Fens. The slight undulations, dips and hollows hold water, and the waterlogged conditions can cause crops to fail. Exploiting this capacity to hold water was vital to bringing back the wildlife.

Following a fundraising campaign which many members supported with donations, alongside gifts in Wills and grants, we were able to buy the 112 hectares of bean and cereal fields at the now renamed Willow Tree Fen.

Creating a new fenland nature reserve required understanding and controlling the water. Water control structures were installed to allow for carefully managed

flooding of the site.

Ten years on many of the iconic wetland species are now thriving. Otters, water voles and water shrews are present. Breeding birds include lapwings, water rail, marsh harrier and shelduck.

Thanks to your support, snipe returned to breed having last bred in the late 1980s. They were followed in spring 2020 by the return of cranes to the Lincolnshire fenland landscape.



The courtship display of male snipe, high over wetlands, is characterised by a 'drumming' sound caused by the vibration of the tail feathers

TIM MELLING

Making bigger, better and more joined up nature reserves

When you visit some of the smaller Trust nature reserves, you are aware of the edges; the point where nature reserve becomes farmland or urban fringe. To really help nature recover and thrive, nature reserves need to be bigger and connected to other wildlife-rich places.

We look for opportunities to buy land next to existing nature reserves to make them bigger. We have been fortunate in the past year to be able to do this at two nature reserves: Sow Dale in the Lincolnshire Wolds and Castle Bytham in the south-west of the county.

The acquisition of 40 acres of 'middle Sow Dale' near Old Bolingbroke fulfilled a long held ambition to connect Upper and Lower Sow Dale Nature Reserves. The single Sow Dale Nature Reserve is 124 acres in total with 1½ miles of stream. The purchase was made thanks

to a successful appeal, funds from legacies and a grant from The Banister Charitable Trust.

Two fields also came up for sale next door to the Trust's nature reserve at Castle Bytham. It was an opportunity to save this jewel in the gently rolling pastoral landscape of the Kesteven Uplands between Grantham and Stamford. Lawn Wood, Bottleneck and Jackson's Meadow Nature Reserves overlook the village and its ancient castle site.

The successful acquisition of 20 acres means the nature reserves connect to the protected castle monument. These two grassy fields have fantastic potential for restoration.

These purchases were made possible because of the generosity of members giving donations and from gifts in Wills.



Like many species, brown hares need more space than a small reserve can provide

DAVID TITLING/2020VISION



Everything works better when it's connected.
Sir David Attenborough

Inspiring people to value and protect nature

People are at the heart of our work. To achieve our vision of a Wilder Future, it is vital that we inspire others - that we nurture an interest in nature.

Access to wildlife and wild places is important for people of all ages. Only through experiencing wildlife will people value wildlife and want to help protect it. Spending time in nature also enhances our health and wellbeing.

We engage with thousands of people annually through school visits, guided walks and events, at our Visitor Centres and on nature reserves. As well as over 250 formal education visits to nature reserves and centres, we have 12 Wildlife Watch groups providing monthly activities for children. Alford Wildlife Watch Group secured second place in the Watch Group of the Year Awards awarded by The Wildlife Trusts.

We hosted two Open University students on 10 week internships. As Assistant Conservation Officers, Simon Winter and Catherine Watson, completed a series of practical and office-based activities from attending conservation policy meetings to designing eco-friendly flowerbeds for the gardens at the Trust headquarters in Horncastle.

Dynamic Dunescapes is a national project aimed at restoring the health of important sand dune habitat at nine sites. A key objective in Lincolnshire is providing volunteer accommodation at Saltfleetby and Gibraltar Point, which will significantly improve our ability to manage our coastal reserves.



The last ten weeks have been a fantastic experience - making memories for life.
Simon Winter, student intern

Inspiring and empowering

Your membership is helping people build connections with nature that will last a lifetime

16

local Area Groups organised events, fundraised and shared their love and knowledge of wildlife

over 7,000

school children, from primary school to undergraduates, were inspired about the natural world by visiting our nature reserves

1,500+

people signed up for the annual 30 Days Wild challenge in Lincolnshire to spend time in nature every day in June

27,751

members provided vital support enabling the work of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust protecting our wildlife and wild places to continue

436,578

people visited our website to see information about nature reserves, events, voluntary opportunities and how to identify animal poo

7

members of staff and volunteers joined thousands of people from across the UK at the 'Time is Now' mass lobby of parliament in June - helping to keep the environmental crisis at the forefront of the political agenda

Providing opportunities for volunteers to make a difference

Volunteers continued to give their time and provide specialist skills to help us care for the county's wildlife and wild places. From regular work parties on reserves to running Wildlife Watch groups and organising fundraising events to surveying wildflowers, we are truly grateful.

At Donna Nook, 55 volunteers assisted the staff in wardening the site during the busy seal pupping season. They gave a total of 1,985 hours of work in the bracing

winds of the Lincolnshire coast in winter.

Our sixteen Area Groups are the focal point of voluntary activity in the community. As well as running a range of indoor talks and visits to reserves, they organised special fundraising events. These included the annual quiz in Spilsby and running a themed stall at the popular 1940s weekend in Woodhall Spa.



Volunteers from the Horncastle Area Group at Woodhall Spa Airfield



In my experience, all the claims for the benefits of volunteering seem to be true, it has been one of the best things I've done since retirement.

Les Binns, volunteer and committee member of Horncastle Area Group

Discovering a love for Lincolnshire's plants and saving them for the future

The process of preserving plant specimens in 'herbaria' has been used by botanists for centuries. The pressed plants can survive for hundreds of years, especially when stored in temperature-controlled, pest-free environments. Sadly, Lincolnshire's historic plant specimens weren't being kept in those conditions and were starting to deteriorate.

Through the three-year National Lottery Heritage Fund project, LoveLincsPlants, these historic specimens have been passed to the Natural History Museum in London. The 5,000th historic specimen has now been curated by the project staff based at the museum. That's 5,000 pressed plant specimens that have been catalogued, digitised, safely stored and made available for research.

The collection of new specimens is underway. These new specimens are held at the Natural History Museum and at the Sir Joseph Banks Society Centre in Horncastle.

First year students from the University of Lincoln's BSc Ecology and Conservation programme were introduced to the contemporary herbarium at the Centre, having



Members of the Louth Wildlife Watch Group learnt how to create their own herbarium specimens

previously gained the opportunity to learn how to mount specimens that they had previously collected while also learning more about the freezing, digitisation and archiving process.

Educating the next generation about botany and the importance of plants is a big part of the project. School assemblies have been delivered across the county, 750 children in one day at two schools

in Grantham, bringing the total to over 2,200 children since October.

This three-year project is funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union, Sir Joseph Banks Society, the Natural History Museum, University of Lincoln and Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.



Herbaria may seem old fashioned, but they very much remain vital sources of information that are of fundamental importance to science.

Dr Carl Soulsbury, Senior Lecturer, University of Lincoln

Standing up for our marine wildlife

We continue to make a case for the protection and management of coastal and marine habitats.

Ten years since the Marine and Coastal Access Act, the North Sea has 48% coverage of marine protected areas. Unfortunately less than half of that has effective management in place. We continue to campaign for better protection of marine habitats and species. This includes responding to numerous Government consultations.

Despite the slow progress for marine protection, some of our marine and coastal species are thriving. The numbers of grey seals born at Donna Nook

continued to increase with 2,187 pups born, a steady 6% increase on last year.

The natterjack toads at Natural England's Saltfleetby Theddlethorpe Dunes NNR, under the Trust's custodianship, had a very successful year, with 33 strings of spawn recorded; one of the highest counts

And, in July, a minke whale was spotted only 300-400 metres offshore at Wolla Bank, heading south.

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

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Registered charity no. 218895

Presidents:

Mr G L Trinder (President)

Mr B Tear (Vice President)

Trustees/Directors:

Mr D A Cohen (Chair)

Mrs J Mellor

Mr T S Sands

Dr D A Sheppard

Mr A Quigley appointed Deputy Chair 14.11.19

Mr J Purvis (Honorary Treasurer)

Mr M Capper resigned 29.07.19

Mr C E Harrison resigned 31.12.19

Mr C Morrison resigned 19.10.19

Mr R Oates

Mr S Round

Mr M Smith

Mr B Tyrrel

Senior Staff:

Chief Executive and Company Secretary: Paul V Learoyd

Head of Conservation: Tammy M Smalley

Head of Finance: Sarah J Smith

Head of Nature Reserves: David R Bromwich

Head of Public Engagement and Communications:

Matthew J Capper

Corporate Membership of the Trust is designed to provide an effective means for companies to demonstrate care for the local environment. The following were Corporate Members during the reporting period:

Anglian Water Services

ARH Tucker & Sons

B A Bush & Son Limited

Cleethorpes Builders Merchants

Cray Valley Limited

Creative Nature

Crowder & Sons Ltd

Fenland Laundries Limited

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John Kinch Group

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SCS Technology Solutions Limited

Sibelco UK

Singleton Birch Limited

TCS UK Spraying

Truelove Property & Construction

UK Alternative Energy Limited

Yara (UK) Limited

Woodhall Country Park

We are grateful to the following for substantial financial support in 2019/2020 through donations, grants and the sponsorship of projects:

Anglian Water Services

Defra

East Lindsey District Council

Environment Agency

Esmée Fairburn Foundation

European Union

FCC Environment

Lincolnshire County Council

Lincolnshire Co-operative Society Limited

Ministry of Defence

National Lottery Heritage Fund

Natural England

North Kesteven District Council

RSPB

R SWT

Santander

The Banister Charitable Trust

Vine House Farm



www.lincstrust.org.uk