



**Suffolk**  
Wildlife Trust

# A celebration of the year

**Impact report**

April 2023 to March 2024



**Nature once determined  
how we survive.  
Now we determine how  
nature survives.**

David Attenborough

President Emeritus  
The Wildlife Trusts



# Thank you

**Since 1961, Suffolk Wildlife Trust has been protecting and restoring the county's wildlife and wild places and creating opportunities for people to connect with nature.**

As the biodiversity and climate crises become an ever-apparent reality, our mission as a wildlife charity has never been more needed – or more urgent.

Every day our teams across the county are making steps towards our vision for a wilder Suffolk. We are uniquely placed to empower local action for nature in our county. With others we will champion 30% of our land and seas to be well-managed for nature and work to inspire 1 in 4 people to take action for biodiversity and climate. Working with our neighbouring Wildlife Trusts and the UK Wildlife Trusts movement, our collective efforts give us real hope for a wilder future.

As we look to the future, our nature reserves are more important than ever for wildlife – and for people. However, they alone cannot slow the biodiversity crisis. This is why we have been developing our relationships with farmers, landowners, and communities across Suffolk to support and enable nature's recovery across the wider landscape. We need every sector of society to play their part in helping nature to recover and thrive.

From our reserve wardens, farm wildlife advisers, and landscape projects, to our advocacy, ecology, and engagement teams – everything we do is made possible thanks to the support of our members, volunteers, partners and supporters. We hope you enjoy reading through this annual summary and sharing the achievements of your Trust during 2023-24.

Thank you for your continued support. It is hugely valued.



**James Alexander**  
Chair



**Christine Luxton**  
Chief Executive



**Thanks to your support, we are doing more for Suffolk's wildlife than ever before – to bring nature back.**

# 365 days for wildlife...

2023

## BBC COUNTRYFILE SHOWCASES HAZLEWOOD MARSHES

All our reserves are special places for nature, but rarely has the raw power of nature made so drastic an impact than at Hazlewood Marshes. In April, BBC Countryfile shared the incredible story of the reserve's transformation.

On 5 December 2013, a tidal surge broke through the sea wall and flooded the freshwater reserve with salt water. Whole communities of plants and invertebrates disappeared almost overnight and so did the birds that depended on them – such as water rail and bittern.

Yet the explosive power of nature gives as well as takes and a new dynamic wetland has emerged. Now, spoonbill are regular visitors, avocet and lapwing are breeding on the reserve, and we have enjoyed huge flocks of black-tailed godwits and dunlin.

In the Countryfile episode, Matt Baker spoke with our team about the importance of the new habitat as a fish nursery for the estuary.



## WILDFLOWERS THRIVE IN OUR SUFFOLK MEADOW RESERVES



Meadows of blooming wildflowers epitomise the enduring magic of spring. We are proud to care for some of Suffolk's most precious wildflower meadows.

Many meadows are nearing their peak in May, making it the perfect time for our reserve teams and volunteers to complete annual plant surveys.

Natural wildflower meadows are one of the rarest habitats in the UK and it's predicted we have lost 97% of our wildflower meadows since the 1930s. As well as being a colourful spectacle, wildflower meadows are hugely diverse and important habitats that support an entire ecosystem of invertebrates, especially pollinators such as bees.

At Martins' Meadows, the team spotted bugle, common fragrant-orchid, green-winged orchid, red clover, twayblade, and yellow rattle. Meanwhile at Bradfield Woods, the previous year's coppice block had an emergence of early purple orchid, herb-Paris, water avens, and yellow archangel.

## GIANT LOG PILE FOR STAG BEETLE CREATED IN IPSWICH

For some of Suffolk's most distinctive and at-risk species, we champion targeted action to boost their chances of survival and recovery.

One such species is the stag beetle – the UK's largest terrestrial beetle. These spectacular "antlered" beetles are under pressure due to the loss of the dead and decaying wood habitat they rely on during their long life cycle.

Suffolk holds a globally significant population of stag beetles, and Ipswich is a notable stronghold. In Kiln Meadow, a small Council-owned nature reserve in south-east Ipswich, we joined forces with Greenways and the Ipswich Wildlife Group to create a giant stag beetle habitat with over 25 tons of logs.



Throughout May and June, a team of volunteers, including members of our Youth Board and Weekend Wildlife Clubs, dug a 12m long and 7m wide hole in the shape of stag beetle and buried the logs.

This enormous log pile will provide long-term habitat for the underground larvae to feed over the coming years before emerging as spectacular, adult stag beetles.

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

## HIDDEN WILDLIFE MOMENTS CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Carlton Marshes has become one of the most wildlife-rich areas in the East of England – a vital haven for vast numbers of wading birds and endangered species such as lapwing, water vole, fen raft spider and Norfolk hawker dragonfly.

Using their deep understanding of the ecology of their patch, our teams at Carlton Marshes and across north-east Suffolk have used trail cameras to monitor the reserves and in doing so have captured wildlife dramas and hidden behaviours.

Summer highlights include footage of avocet feeding at Dingle Marshes, an amusing interaction between a heron and a spoonbill at Carlton Marshes, close-ups of an otter family, and regular sightings of barn owls.



At the new reserve at Worlingham Marshes, the cameras have captured the thrilling moment a kestrel stole the meal from a short-eared owl, a hobby catching and eating a dragonfly, and a charming encounter between two kingfishers.

We share many of the clips on our social media accounts, so do follow us to see new footage as it happens.

JULY

## BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO THE NATURAL WORLD



We take huge pride in our nature reserves being places that are free to visit and open to everyone. By removing as many barriers to entry as possible, we hope to enable people to connect with nature and to leave feeling inspired to take action for nature at home.

A wide range of community groups, schools, businesses, and charities visit our reserves through the year. We were particularly honoured to host a group of Ukrainian refugee families at Lackford Lakes in the summer – a trip organised in partnership with Suffolk Refugee Support.

We led the families on guided walks around the reserve, pond dipping and nature crafts in the visitor centre. Thanks to spotter sheets and materials translated especially for the day, the families and our team were able to exchange stories of British and Ukrainian wildlife and teach each other the different names we give animals and plants.

It was wonderful to see the families feel so comfortable amongst the natural habitats and species that they recognised from their home country.

AUGUST

## THANK YOU – £1 MILLION RAISED FOR MARTLESHAM WILDS

Since announcing our ambitions for Martlesham Wilds in 2022, we were overwhelmed by the support, enthusiasm and excitement for the new reserve.

Thanks to many generous donations from our supporters and the incredible fundraising efforts of local community groups, residents and businesses we reached our £1million target, just 10 months after launching the fundraising appeal.

Since then, thanks to a generous grant of £340,000 from Biffa Award, we are installing the fencing and equipment for grazing to support the long-term management of the habitats.

Our Farm Advice team have also been conducting fascinating bio-acoustic and geophony research to survey and monitor the soil health as the previously arable land is returned to wildlife.

We are thrilled to help nature reclaim this beautiful and historic stretch of the Deben estuary, and excited to see what species return as we let nature take the lead on the former arable fields.



SEPTEMBER

## STATE OF NATURE REPORT SETS OUR DEMANDS OF GOVERNMENT



The latest State of Nature report was a sobering reminder of just how desperate the biodiversity crisis in the UK has become with one in six species at risk of being lost.

As sad as it is to read such reports, the findings help to galvanize us as part of the UK Wildlife Trust's movement and emphasises the urgency of our 2030 strategy to bring nature back.

In response to the report, The Wildlife Trusts identified five priorities for politicians to address in their General Election manifestos: Bring back the UK's lost wildlife, end river pollution and water scarcity, fund wildlife-friendly farming, enable healthy communities, and tackle the climate emergency by protecting and restoring natural habitats

Since the election we have been meeting our Suffolk MPs to discuss the issues and priorities for nature in their constituency and for the UK.

## ENHANCING THE RIVER LARK CATCHMENT FOR WILDLIFE

Since 2022, we have been working with the Bury Water Meadows Group to improve, create and restore wetland habitats along the valley of the River Lark. These works were completed in the autumn and are part of a programme of targeted projects to bring nature back to Suffolk's rivers.

The River Lark works focused on creating backwater and grip habitats and restoring historic features found on old maps.

A backwater habitat is an area of still water connected to the main river which acts as a refuge for fish and river invertebrates. Meanwhile a grip system is a series of shallow ditches designed to increase the volume of rain and floodwater retained in habitats around rivers, such as marshes.



The Bury Water Meadows group will continue to manage the new habitats for wildlife.

## WINTER EVENTS CONNECT MORE PEOPLE WITH NATURE

One of our 2030 goals is to inspire and enable 1 in 4 people in Suffolk to take meaningful action for nature and climate. To help ignite people's curiosity and love for nature, we host an array of events, workshops and courses all year round, even during the cold dark days of winter.

By delivering memorable experiences in nature for people, we hope to create a Suffolk filled with nature-loving communities that are taking action for wildlife.



At Bradfield Woods we took visitors on a magical solstice lantern walk through the ancient woodland whilst at Knettishall Heath we set up an elf hunt for families to enjoy whilst exploring the reserve trails.

In Ipswich, the team visited a care home to create wildlife homes with residents whilst at Foxburrow, our forest fun days unlocked the secrets of our wintering woodlands.

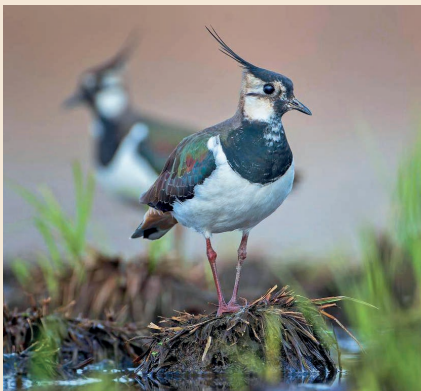
OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

## WETLAND RESERVES HOST VAST NUMBERS OF WINTERING WADERS

Wetland habitat creation can bring spectacular results with vast numbers of wading birds finding refuge amongst newly made ponds, pools, scrapes, mudflats, and marshes.



At Carlton Marshes we have had some of our highest ever winter counts including flocks of 1,500 black-tailed godwit, 1,255 wigeon, and 1,020 pink-footed geese.

Elsewhere, Trimley Marshes recorded a 'spring' of 1,622 teal and a 'parcel' of 457 oystercatchers, Lackford Lakes recorded a 'wisp' of 78 snipe, and Lound Lakes recorded a 'congregation' of 24 great white egrets.

Lapwing is one of the indicator species for our wetland habitats and we are seeing some thrilling successes. The largest 'deceits' of lapwing counted at reserves include 2,000 at Carlton, 1,147 at Trimley Marshes, 234 at Mickle Mere, 133 at Dingle Marshes, and 128 at Lackford Lakes.

## A NEW NATURE RESERVE IN THE LOWER WAVENEY VALLEY

Just a few months after the success of Martlesham Wilds, we took the bold decision to buy another substantial piece of Suffolk for nature. The prospect of undergoing two major reserve purchases in such a short time was a daunting one for us as a local charity. However, with our ambition for a wilder landscape with larger, more connected networks of habitat, it wasn't an opportunity we could ignore – and so Worlingham Marshes was born.

In February, we were thrilled to announce a £2 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to put the land purchase within our reach and support habitat creation and community engagement.

As we get to know Worlingham Marshes highlights include kingfisher, short-eared owl, marsh harrier, Norfolk hawk, and rare marsh flora. Our team on the ground has built relationships with local farms and communities to extend the impact of our newest reserve.

Our £775,000 fundraising appeal is now over halfway – thank you.



## LANDSCAPE RECOVERY PROJECT IN SOUTH WEST SUFFOLK BEGINS



With our Waveney and Little Ouse Landscape Recovery project making great progress to restore historic floodplains in north Suffolk, in March we were delighted to secure funding for a second project – connecting Constable country.

The project is a collaboration with the Stour Valley Farm Cluster and the Wool Towns Farm Cluster to restore woodlands and connect wildlife habitats throughout Constable and Gainsborough country, extending through the Stour, Brett and Box valleys.

The project will focus on three areas of activity:

Firstly, to recover, restore, and reconnect woodland sites across the valleys to support struggling species such as hazel dormouse, nightingale, turtle dove, great crested newt and specialist flora.

Secondly, to establish a programme of sustainable deer management, as high numbers of some species are impacting woodland conditions.

Thirdly, to support participating farms to further develop their sustainability and biodiversity with low-impact farming methods.

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH





**We are championing the goal of 30% of Suffolk's land and seas to be connected and well managed for nature.**



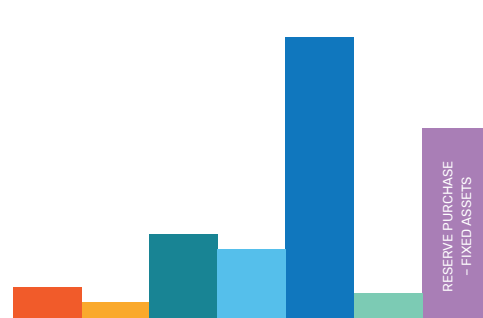
# Financial summary

## Overview of Suffolk Wildlife Trust's income & expenditure for the financial year to March 2024.

Total income  
£8,442k



Total expenditure  
£7,980k



### INCOMING RESOURCES

£000s

Members' subscriptions & donations	2,629
Fundraising & grants	3,386
SWT Trading company income	924
Learning & other income	598
Legacies	792
Investment income	113
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>8,442</b>

### RESOURCES EXPENDED

£000s

Membership	372
Fundraising & grants	240
SWT Trading company costs	928
Learning activities	788
Nature reserves & conservation	3,020
Support, management & admin	444
<b>Total resources expended*</b>	<b>5,792</b>

Unrealised gain on investments 2

**Net incoming resources 2,652**

Fund balances brought forward 28,902

**Fund balances carried forward\*\*\* 31,554**

### ANALYSIS OF GROUP NET ASSETS

#### Fixed assets

Nature reserves acquired this year	2,188
Nature reserves (1 April 2024)	19,037
Tangible assets incl visitor centres	3,835
<b>Net current assets**</b>	<b>6,494</b>
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>31,554</b>

\* Expenditure excludes funds spent on land and centres, which is shown in fixed assets

\*\* Includes unrestricted and restricted funds

\*\*\* Includes £7,199k of unrestricted funds (2023: £7,667k)

The timing of grant and legacy income is often before expenditure, and so not always in the same financial year. For larger projects, expenditure can span multiple years.



### TRUSTEES' STATEMENT

The figures above are extracted from the audited annual accounts of Suffolk Wildlife Trust. For a full understanding of the financial affairs please view the audited accounts which are available on our website or can be requested from Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Brooke House, Ashbocking, Ipswich IP6 9JY or are available from the Charity Commission or the Registrar of Companies.

At the beginning of each year the Trustees calculate a target level of free reserves equating to 6 months of the budgeted establishment and core staff costs for the coming year. For the current year the target free reserves equate to £2,003k. Reserves above the previous year's target were maintained throughout the year. Funds above this level can be designated to specific projects, particularly the acquisition of land as nature reserves and advisory and engagement activity to support the delivery of our 2030 strategy to Bring Nature Back.

Calum Thomson, Hon Treasurer

# Thank you to all our volunteers



Volunteer of  
the year 2023,  
Michael Chinery.

Over the past year,  
over **1,100**

volunteers  
gave over

**63,000**

hours of time  
to the Trust



## Volunteers are involved in everything we do at the Trust.



**Our amazing team of volunteers are involved with managing nature reserves, monitoring habitats, welcoming visitors, leading walks, checking livestock, sharing their love of nature with children, delivering magazines, championing species recovery, giving wildlife advice and fundraising – thank you to them all.**

Over the past year, over 1,100 volunteers gave over 63,000 hours of their time to help us in our mission to bring nature back. The scale and breadth of volunteer activity is what makes Suffolk Wildlife Trust so special – and so impactful.

## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR 2023

Each year we recognise a volunteer or group who has made an outstanding contribution to wildlife in Suffolk. The worthy recipient of this year's Volunteer of the Year award is Michael Chinery, in recognition of his vast contribution to the Trust, ecology, and his role with the Haverhill Wildlife Group.

Michael studied at the University of Cambridge where he graduated in Natural Sciences. Two years later, he became Assistant Editor for the magazine *Understanding Science* then *Animals* magazine, which is now *BBC Wildlife*.

In 1967, Michael and his wife moved from London to Suffolk, where he



Our volunteers ensure the Trust is rooted in our local communities.

Their energy and commitment helps to make Suffolk Wildlife Trust the vibrant, ambitious and grounded charity that nature need us to be.



became a freelance writer and editor and would regularly visit the University of Cambridge library for research. He has gone on to author, co-author and edit a huge number of wildlife books and articles – particularly on insects – and has inspired a generation of interest in wildlife.

## Michael joined the Trust in 1967 just 6 years after it started.

With his move to Suffolk, Michael joined the Suffolk Trust for Nature Conservation, which was still in its

infancy – and later became Suffolk Wildlife Trust. During his time with the Trust, Michael edited the supporter’s newsletter, was on the Trust’s publicity committee and on the Board.

Michael was an early member of the Haverhill Wildlife Group, eventually organising the group from 2013 until stepping down in 2023.

Our sincere thanks to Michael for his many years of support and for sharing his knowledge and passion for wildlife, in Suffolk, and beyond.

## Our nature reserves

Thanks to the support of our members and volunteers we care for 7,202 acres (2,915 ha) of Suffolk across our 50+ nature reserves.



**585**  
acres  
(237ha) ancient woodland



**522**  
acres  
(211ha) valley fen



**2797**  
acres  
(1132ha) wetland & reedbed



**693**  
acres  
(281ha) coastal & intertidal



**179**  
acres  
(73ha) species rich grassland



**942**  
acres  
(381ha) heathland & acid grassland



**478**  
acres  
(193ha) other habitats



**1006**  
acres  
(407ha) rewilding

MICHAEL CHINERY; JILL CHINERY; WOODLAND VOLUNTEER: TWT; JUSTIN & ELLY ZANTBOER; JOHN FERGUSON; SOIL SAMPLING: JESSE WALKER

# The lasting impact of legacy gifts



A kind legacy gift from Pam & George Ford contributed to the land purchase and habitat creation at Martlesham Wilds in 2022.

When Worlingham Marshes was put up for sale, we had to act quickly. Once again, the legacy from Pam & George Ford, enabled this. Their gift unlocked the £2 million Heritage Fund grant by giving confidence that we could raise the match funding needed for the land purchase.



**The generosity of people who have left a gift to Suffolk Wildlife Trust in their Will is etched into the history of many of our nature reserves.**

**Legacy gifts unlock the wilder, nature-rich landscape we want for Suffolk.**

As we work to bring nature back where it has been lost from our towns and countryside, nature reserves are the ecological hotspots that anchor this county network of habitats.

**This year, we remember with gratitude our many friends and supporters who have remembered the Trust in their Will:**

Priscilla Abbott  
Rosemary Arthur  
George Batchelor  
Miriam Bennett  
Patricia Buck  
Ramon Cook  
Theodore Cutting  
Adam Denyer

John Forbes  
Margaret Forbes  
Diana Haycock  
Margaret Heath  
Richard Hegerty  
Shelagh Herring  
Shirley King

Clifford Kirby  
Alan Lam  
Robert Malster  
Rosemary Martin  
John Middleton  
Ivan Mulley  
Judith Roberts

Diana Steel  
Philip Strachan  
Anthony Stocker  
Hazel Tredgett  
Gordon Turner  
Patricia Vieira  
Peter Willis



**Pam & George Ford**



The many expansions of Arger Fen & Spouse's Vale have been made possible thanks to the cumulative impact of legacy gifts over three decades.

From 1991, the generosity of sisters Edith and Frances Vale created and consequently grew this beautiful reserve.

Over subsequent years up to 2021, the wonderful kindness of Douglas Maule, Anthony Wheeler, Gerald Ford and Anne Walton each enabled us to make further land purchases to grow the reserve into the 286 acre wildlife haven we all enjoy today.



STEVE AXIWARD

# Thanks to grant givers and businesses



SOPHIE FLUX

**Harwich Haven Authority Wild Work Day at Trimley Marshes.**

## GRANT FUNDERS

- Anglian Water
- Biffa Award
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- Grimwade Charitable Trust
- Hamamelis Charitable Trust
- Leslie Mary Carter Charitable Trust
- National Heritage Lottery Fund
- NWG Living Water Branch Out Fund (and their Blue Spaces Fund)
- Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts
- Steel Charitable Trust
- Simon Gibson Charitable Trust
- Suffolk Coast & Heaths National Landscape
- Suffolk Community Foundation
- Suffolk County Council

## INVESTORS IN WILDLIFE PARTNERS

- Axter
- okoHaus UK Limited
- Maritime Transport
- Harwich Haven Authority
- Suffolk Building Society

## GOLD MEMBERS

- Chassis Cab
- J McCann and Co Limited
- Treatt PLC
- UK Power Networks
- Roger Balmer Design



**okoHaus Wild Wellbeing Day at Foxburrow.**


**As we strive to do more for nature, our business community has a vital role to play.**



**Edith & Frances Vale**



CHARLIE ZAKSS



**Our vision is for a wilder Suffolk,  
where nature is thriving and abundant,  
because everyone is doing more to help.**

Thank you for your part in this.



**Suffolk  
Wildlife Trust**

Registered charity no 262777

**Suffolk Wildlife Trust**

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We are proud to be part of a UK-wide network of Wildlife Trusts, working together to bring nature back.