

Your support matters: making a difference





WE ARE FACING A CLIMATE, NATURE AND WELLBEING CRISIS.

Wetlands are the answer. Our ambition is to secure their future, and inspire everyone to value these amazing places and what they can do for people and nature.

WWT Llanelli Wetland Reserve

Together we can create a better future

With increasing concern over our climate emergency and with loss of species and their habitats at unacceptably high levels, it's vital we take action now to protect our precious wetlands, which are disappearing three times faster than forests. In our busy urbanised world, wetlands are essential for so much of what we depend on.

40% of the world's species rely on wetlands. More than a quarter of all carbon in the ground is held by wetlands.

We are immensely grateful for your support for our crucial work creating and protecting these important places. This report highlights some of things we've worked together to achieve.

'Thanks to generous support from individuals and organisations like yourselves, we are able to continue our vital work for wildlife and people to drive real change on the ground.'

Kevin Peberdy, Chief Operating Officer, WWT



A cormorant in winter at WWT Slimbridge Wetland Reserve

OUR VISION

Our vision for wetlands over the next 25 years is to **create a world where healthy wetland nature thrives and enriches lives.**

We are pioneers in saving threatened wetland wildlife, a centre for excellence in conservation science and experts in wetland management and creation.

But we can't do it alone. We need to continue to work in partnership with people like you, so that together we can inspire others to care too, and value these precious places.

From ensuring **everyone in the UK can access wetlands, to making sure decision makers understand the threats facing wetland nature**, our 25-year goals are ambitious. We must achieve them, if we are to safeguard our health and the health of our planet.

Our five key aims are to:

01

Create, restore and manage larger, more connected and more healthy wetlands in the UK

02

Move and inspire people engaging with wetlands to support wetland conservation

03

Connect people with wetlands where they live and work in the UK

04

Offer and promote solutions to conserve the world's most threatened wetland hotspots and improve the livelihoods of their people

05

Strengthen wetland conservation on priority global flyways

HOW YOUR FUNDING MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Inspiring experiences

As part of our Slimbridge 2020 project, visitors to **WWT Slimbridge can now step back in time and explore the home of Sir Peter Scott**, which has opened as a museum. Thanks to an integrated lift and rooftop terrace, **our new Estuary Tower Hide provides magnificent vistas for all** of the Severn Estuaries' internationally important tidal mudflats and birds.

Caring for wetland nature

At WWT Martin Mere, visitors welcomed the safe arrival of five greater flamingo chicks and **our otters enjoyed a new extended enclosure**. At WWT Washington **we've been improving vital habitat for our spring migrants who come to breed**.

Restoring wetland habitats

As part of the Millennium Wetlands Enhancement Project at WWT Llanelli, our livestock-handling infrastructure was greatly improved and habitat management work, including scrub control and sward lifting to loosen and improve soil structure was carried out. **We gave a boost to amphibians by creating four new ponds** and restored 400m of waterways.

Wetlands for the future

We're making our 'waterscapes' around the Severn Estuary bigger, better and more connected for wildlife. We've removed barriers to fish migration and restored seven farmland ponds.

Our reach beyond the UK

In Cambodia WWT has supported the designation of Anlung Pring Protected Landscape as the first East-Asian Australasian Flyway partnership Site in the country, further enhancing its protection and profile. Thanks to WWT's pioneering headstarting in Russia, **we've increased the number of spoon-billed sandpiper fledglings that survive in the wild each year**.

Putting wetlands centre stage

We are making the case with government and parliament for a 'blue recovery'. We are calling for wetland creation as part of the UK's recovery from Covid-19 and to address the climate, nature and wellbeing crises. UK is no longer a member of the European Union.



New Estuary Tower at
WWT Slimbridge Wetland Reserve

SUCCESS STORIES FOR 2019/20

In Somerset

91
LEAKY DAMS +
10 NEW WETLANDS

installed as part
of Natural Flood
Management measures

Rare sedge, the
triangular rush-club,
thrives at WWT Arundel
after the reserve team
translocated

400
PLANTS

UK CRANE
POPULATION
REACHES HIGHEST
LEVEL in 400 years

20,000
LIGHT BELLED
BRENT GEESE

counted on Strangford
Lough areas wardened
and protected by WWT
at Castle Espie

Over
185,000
MEMBERS

and a total of
1,008,221 visitors
in 2019

Over
1,000
PASSIONATE
VOLUNTEERS
supported our cause

WWT Washington
welcomed
50 AVOCETS
for the breeding season,
the highest number ever
recorded

43,000
YOUNG PEOPLE
visited through our
school visit programme
bringing them closer to
nature

67,000
PEOPLE
used our learning hub to
help home schooling

21 species of
DRAGONFLY AND
DAMSELFLY
recorded at WWT Steart
Marshes, a site of priority
importance for dragonflies

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE

How birdwatching helped me through cancer

Waltraud Englefield, birdwatcher and nature lover

'The day I received my cancer diagnosis, I packed my binoculars and went straight to my nearest wetland centre. First stop was coffee and cakes. Then my husband and I walked three times around the place trying to process what had happened. It really helped with the initial shock. As we stopped at one of the bird hides a kingfisher landed showing off in all her beauty, turning this way and that as if to say: 'You'll be alright, you know!' That was when I got the idea of starting a new bird list. I decided to call in the 'Big Pink List' and run it for a year. It was a tremendous help and gave me a way to take back control. It motivated me to go outside and helped me cope with the pain, anxiety and exhaustion.'

'Nature is there, whatever goes on in your life and I can always take great comfort from this.'

Protecting the kingdom of wetlands

Saber Masoomi, WWT co-coordinator, Cambodia

'Working with communities is one of the best parts of my job. It's inspiring seeing the next generation of conservationists emerging. It gives me hope for the future of Cambodia and its wetlands. Our eco-tourism project has been very successful in bringing local people together and introducing an alternative way to make a living. We also have an education scheme at our site and are in the process of developing a programme for high school children. A big part of my job is to share our experiences and showcase the importance of strong partnerships and collaborations with the government, NGOs and communities.'

'It's an exciting time in Cambodia. Things are moving fast, politically and economically and there's a real feeling that the next generation are ready for change and keen to learn.'



Saber Masoomi



Lobbying MPs for a greener future after Brexit

ADVOCATING FOR WETLANDS

Our policy and advocacy work is critical to realising our vision of a world where healthy wetland nature thrives and enriches lives. Thanks to on-going support, we are able to make the case for wetland creation and protection.

Making our voice heard

WWT staff and volunteers joined thousands of constituents in London to support stronger action to address climate change and wildlife loss. This included meeting with constituency MPs for five of our centres.

Campaigning for curlews

After pressure from a coalition of conservation organisations, including WWT, the French Government reversed its decision to allow the shooting of curlew for three weeks in August 2019.

Coalition working

WWT works alongside many other national organisations to ensure our wetlands and their wildlife are protected. WWT is a member of the Greener UK coalition, The Climate Coalition and Wildlife and Countryside Link.

Environmental Bill

WWT London Wetland Centre hosted the launch of the Government's flagship Environment Bill. We continue to press for improvements to this crucial piece of legislation to ensure wetlands are protected into the future.

GIVING WILDLIFE A HEAD START

A slippery ladder to success

We're making excellent progress to improve the fortunes of the critically endangered European eel. At WWT Slimbridge we've created 'eel ladders' to make it easier for them to access our wetland reserve.



Madagascar pochard at Lake Sofia

Breeding bonanza

In Madagascar two broods of Madagascar pochards were discovered at Lake Sofia. The young birds – unexpectedly early offspring of our captive-bred ducks, released in 2018 - are surviving well thanks to our lake restoration efforts and supplementary feeding.

Hope for a bird on the brink

Fifty-one curlew chicks have been reared and released (headstarted) into the Severn Vale to increase the numbers of the fragile population that struggle to safely raise their young. We're also gaining a much better understanding of the threats curlews face and building strong support amongst stakeholders such as land managers.

Godwit numbers grow

Project Godwit has gone from strength to strength with 112 chicks being headstarted since 2017. After 3 years' of headstarting, the breeding population in the Fens has grown by over 28%. The project is also improving wetland habitat at both the Ouse and Nene Washes and using godwits to inspire school children to value their special local wetlands.



Black-tailed godwits in flight

CREATING BLUE SPACES

Wetlands are crucial in turning the tide on some of the biggest issues of our time: biodiversity loss, climate change and human health and wellbeing. By building a network of blue infrastructure we can create a world where wetland nature thrives and lives are enriched.

Wetlands for wellbeing

WWT's research into the health and wellbeing benefits of spending time in wetlands shows that getting people closer to wetland nature enriches lives.

The results of our 'blue prescriptions' pilot have been phenomenal, showing major reductions in stress and anxiety among the participants. **They experience an average 40% anxiety reduction and 31% mental wellbeing increase.**

Wetlands for carbon storage

Climate change is a grave threat facing us all. At WWT we're using our expertise to show how wetlands can play a vital part in our fight against this emergency.

Coastal wetlands such as **mangroves, saltmarshes and sea grass beds sequester carbon as much as 40 times faster than tropical forests**, while saltmarshes alone store millions of tonnes of carbon every year.

'The science is clear, wetlands are the most effective carbon sinks on our planet.'

Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, January 2019

Research shows WWT Steart Marshes in North Somerset is rapidly sequestering and storing carbon.

'We estimate that between 2014 and 2018, 30,000 tonnes of carbon have been buried at the site.'

Dr Hannah Mossman, Senior Lecturer of Ecology, Manchester Metropolitan University



Wetlands for flood protection

As climate change increases the severity of extreme rainfall events, flooding is now one of the UK's top climate change risks. At WWT we're building a body of evidence to show that a network of natural flood management (NFM) interventions can build flood resilience and support wildlife.

'NFM is a very natural and affordable approach that helps reduce localised flood risk and has many other benefits too. The wetlands, ponds, woodlands and other interventions we have created also improve local drought resilience, biodiversity, ecosystem connectivity and sequester carbon.'

Carina Gaertner, Project Manager (Rural Catchments), WWT

ENGAGEMENT FOR ALL

Everyday we encourage children and adults of all ages and abilities to learn about, engage with and care for the natural world.

Inspiring tomorrow's conservationists

Visitors to WWT Martin Mere can now get up close to lots of aquatic life thanks to our brand new Pond Zone. The area, made up of four raised ponds and an existing natural pond, is teeming with insects and amphibians and perfect for pond dipping.

'This new Pond Zone will provide fascinating close encounters with nymphs, water boatmen and dragonflies, offering our visitors the chance to learn more about animals who thrive in these environments.'

Nick Brooks, Martin Mere Centre Manager

With a clear focus on water and sustainability, our new Discovery Centre at WWT London Wetland Centre encourages families to explore wetlands and use water wisely in cities.

Wetland detectives

Extensive new wetlands have been created in Prince of Wales Park in Enfield, and Salt Hill Park in Slough, where we have continued to engage and involve the whole community.

'We'd noticed the river was getting choked up, so as soon as there was an opportunity to do some voluntary work and help out, we thought: there's a really good idea.'

Lynn and Stuart Gabrielson, Salt Hill Stream, Slough

Inspiring future generations

During 2019 we had a total of **13,172 unique page views of our Learning Zone by teachers** and other educational professionals to access resources aimed at teaching young people about wetlands and wetland wildlife. In the same year we had **a total of 42,327 visitors by 1,124 education establishments.**

'Easiest trip to organise and best response from staff I have had in 20 years of teaching.'

Heather Grant, teacher at St Barnabas School, after a visit to WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre





WWT Limited is a charity (1030884 England and Wales, SCO39410 Scotland) and a company limited by guarantee (2882729 England). VAT number 618368028.

Thanks to our fantastic partners and supporters we've been able create new experiences at our centres, continue with our vital conservation work and influence policy makers at the highest level. We are sincerely grateful for all of your generous support that enables us to achieve so much for wetlands, their wildlife and the people who rely on them.

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