

Our Impact

Report 2021/22



The background of the entire page is a close-up, slightly blurred photograph of tall, green grass, likely a wetland plant, with some darker green leaves and stems visible. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Our vision

A world in which healthy wetland nature thrives and enriches lives.

Our mission

We conserve, restore and create wetlands, save wetland wildlife, and inspire everyone to value the amazing things healthy wetlands achieve for people and nature.



As the world emerged from the global pandemic in the spring of 2021 and our natural world sprung to life once more, our wetland centres were among the first places to which people ventured. It was wonderful to offer the first glimmers of hope and to be part of a return to normality for our supporters. I know how much the solace and comfort of our wetland sites was appreciated during what was for many a difficult time.

Despite the challenges we faced early on, 2021-2022 was a pivotal and exciting year in WWT's history. We celebrated our 75th anniversary with a series of events, which culminated with the visit of His Majesty King Charles III to WWT Slimbridge. The King officially opened our Scott House exhibit, formerly the home of our founder Sir Peter Scott, and met with staff, volunteers and visitors.

And as we ended the year it finally felt like the world was listening. The global pandemic highlighted to so many the importance of nature in our lives, from those who noticed the wildlife in their gardens for the first time, to those who found nature essential for their wellbeing. Today it's clear that there's a growing appetite for nature and that people are re-connecting with the beauty and solace our blue and green spaces offer. We're seeing increased public interest in our work, and a greater awareness and understanding of the power of wetlands to help solve some of our environmental, climate and social problems.

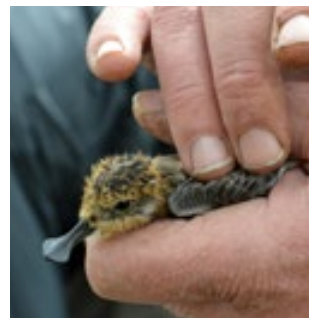
As we seek to restore our economies, health and wellbeing in the wake of the pandemic, we're calling for blue spaces to be at the heart of this recovery. Economic growth depends on a healthy, protected environment and if we fail to consider our natural world any plans for growth will be on shaky foundations. That's why we're calling for a blue recovery to help us meet the inter-connected climate, nature and wellbeing crises we're facing. By calling for bigger, better, more connected wetlands, we're helping to build a sustainable future in which wetlands will help us thrive for many generations to come.

None of this work would be possible without the focus and commitment of our employees, volunteers and partners, and the immense generosity of our members, donors and other funders. We are sincerely grateful to them all.



[Sarah Fowler, Chief Executive.](#)





**To protect, look after
and enhance nature
we need solutions that
work for people and
climate together.**

Sarah Fowler, Chief Executive.



Our ambitions

Our four ongoing ambitions, set in 2020, shape and focus our priorities. Achieving these ambitions will have vast benefits for wetlands and wetland nature and put wetlands centre stage in tackling global challenges such as climate breakdown and the collapse in nature.

Ambition one

The UK to have a bigger, better and more connected network of wetlands with over 100,000 hectares of new and restored wetland habitats; the health of existing wetlands to be improving. This network to sustain healthy wetland nature and provide nature-based solutions to urgent challenges such as the climate emergency.

Ambition two

The majority of people in the UK to value and be significantly more connected to wetlands, with at least one million people directly taking action for wetlands where they live and work.

This report summarises some of our key projects and their impact in 2021/22, but they are just part of a much wider range of activities which are delivered by our staff and volunteers around the world. Please visit our website or annual report for more information.

Ambition three

In the countries in which we work, where wetlands, wetland nature and peoples' livelihoods are threatened, to deliver community-led and sustainable solutions. Wetlands to be more effectively valued and considered in local, regional and national decision-making.

Ambition four

Key international decision makers to value wetlands. To build a global community of highly skilled individuals creating and managing wetlands and mobilising wetland support.

Ambition one

Bigger, better, more connected network of wetlands.

Leading the way for a blue recovery

In 2022 we launched the Blue Recovery Leaders Group, which comprises organisations committed to creating networks of healthy wetlands across the UK. The group's actions will tackle biodiversity loss, climate change and improve human wellbeing.



By signing the statement, the business leaders are saying that yes, they want to be part of this – they want to be part of WWT's incredibly important efforts to create more wetlands in this country.

Tony Juniper, Chair, Natural England.

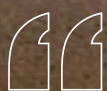
His Majesty King Charles III attended the inaugural meeting, which was chaired by Chair of Natural England Tony Juniper. Such partnerships are key to achieving our goal of creating and restoring 100,000 hectares of healthy UK wetlands.

Group members include Berkeley Group, Severn Trent Water, Peoples Postcode Lottery, National Grid, Eversheds Sutherland, Jacobs, Cushman & Wakefield, Church Commissioners for England and Triodos Bank.



Championing blue carbon at COP26

At COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, the UK Government pledged to review evidence highlighting the carbon storage potential of wetlands such as saltmarsh. This commitment was a direct result of WWT research. Our study of intertidal habitats at WWT Steart, in collaboration with Manchester Metropolitan University, showed that such areas have a far greater capacity for absorbing carbon than previously thought and far greater scope than woodlands and forests. The findings sparked widespread interest at the meeting.



Remarkably, not only did the newly restored saltmarsh at WWT Steart Marshes store huge amounts of carbon, but the speed at which it was trapped was far higher than the current estimated rates for UK saltmarshes.

Dr Rachel Dunk, Manchester Metropolitan University.



33

young curlews
released on Dartmoor
in summer 2021

Securing the future for wading birds

WWT has a long history of conservation breeding and restoring habitats for threatened species, underpinned by our evidenced-based approach to our work. We have developed globally renowned expertise in creating and managing healthy wetland habitats. It's been a relief to resume the species work that was so restricted during pandemic, and our specialists have worked tirelessly to bring delayed projects back up to speed. Their efforts were repaid in the summer when 33 young curlews were released on Dartmoor, 43 black-tailed godwits in the Fens and 97 Corncrakes on the Ouse washes. Such efforts make a difference from habitat loss, intensive farming practices, predation and the impacts of climate change have severely affected all of these ground-nesting wading birds.

This work can only happen if habitats are managed carefully – otherwise the birds' survival is at risk. We're working with farmers and landowners, conservationists and communities to ensure that this happens. In the Severn and Avon Vale, for example, where birds are struggling to safely rear young, we're working with farmers to manage their land to support wading birds.

Managing and improving habitat

We are constantly looking for opportunities to improve wetland habitats on the land we manage. For example:

- Intercepting water run-off from our cattle sheds at WWT Slimbridge by installing a treatment wetland. The system is now home to a range of wetland species and it effectively removes any pollutants from the water, before it flows into the WWT Slimbridge reserve.

- Creating new islands in a lake adjacent to the River Wear at WWT Washington. The islands remarkably now provide safe loafing and breeding places for black-headed gulls, avocet and common tern in this urban setting.
- Installing new water sluices to the saline lagoons in the upper saltmarshes of the WWT Llanelli reserve. The sluices now help maintain the water quality and depth to improve feeding for a vast range of waterbirds.
- Restoring lakes at WWT Arundel to rebuild shorelines, prevent future erosion and provide water and islands for feeding and loafing. The lake also supports an expansion of the colony of sand martins that breed in an artificial nesting bank built by WWT.



WWT champions the birds of wild wetlands, the mud-luscious and puddle-wonderful places that curlews, lapwings, redshank, snipe, geese, ducks and many other species need to thrive. They work with farmers across agricultural landscapes, in nature reserves, along coastlines, estuaries, saltmarsh and coastal habitats – anywhere that wetland species need to thrive.

Mary Colwell, curlew champion, conservationist and author.

Ambition two

At least one million people directly taking action for wetlands.



Wetlands Can!

Wetlands Can! is designed to raise awareness of the relevance of wetlands to nature and people, and calls for the creation of 100,000 hectares of healthy UK wetland to help restore our wildlife, climate and health. It's drawn high-profile support, including from Kate Humble (WWT President) and Chris Packham (WWT Vice President). More than 6,000 of you have pledged support so far, while our [#showusyourwetlands](#) Twitter campaign has engaged new audiences. We're raising awareness of how wetlands can help tackle climate breakdown and that together we can build a movement for wetlands.



If we can get more wetlands into deprived areas it will improve wellbeing for the people who need it most.

WWT Vice President David Lindo, aka The Urban Birder.





Generation Wild

Our Generation Wild programme took off in September 2021. The aim is to connect disadvantaged children and their families with wetland nature – at WWT sites, on school grounds, in gardens and local green and blue spaces. More than 6,500 nature activities have taken place with 230 children completing ten or more actions. Those youngsters are now Guardians of the Wild! PhD students from Cardiff University are researching the impact of Generation Wild on nature connection, levels of care, concern for and action for nature, and the wellbeing benefits to participants. We're pleased to report that feedback from participants and teachers has been very positive.

**Almost 500 classes from
239 schools have signed up,
involving more than
5,400 children.**

75%

of UK children spend
less time outdoors than
prison inmates*

*Persil 'Dirt is Good' campaign

Engaging supporters at our wetland sites

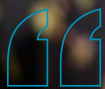
Our ten wetland sites play a crucial role in inspiring action for wetlands. Our founder Sir Peter Scott believed that people will only support what they love and will only love what they understand and experience and this remains a key principle of our work. Our wetland sites provide an amazing wetland experience, offering visitors a unique opportunity to interact with wetland nature.

- The Slimbridge 2020 project which celebrates the legacy of our founder, was completed after being delayed by the pandemic. It includes a large aviary featuring some of our UK's most elusive

wetland birds, an outside theatre space and an exhibit which brings alive WWT's work on conservation breeding and working with local communities.

- WWT Arundel opened an exhibit featuring Dalmation pelicans, once a UK species when wetlands were more widespread and an aviary featuring sea ducks.
- WWT London hosted a new light experience celebrating wetland wildlife and an opportunity to visit wetlands at night. A brand new way of sparking that love for wetlands.





Thanks to the dedication and support of an amazing group of volunteers, we are well on our way to creating a vibrant and accessible wetland that is rich in wildlife and valued by everyone.

Joe May, Bridgwater Blue Heritage Project Manager.

Restoring wetlands in Bridgwater

Our restoration of wetlands in Bridgwater, Somerset, has boosted wildlife, helped local people deal with climate change impacts, and improved health and well-being. Thanks to funding from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, we've begun the restoration of the Meads, a rare urban floodplain grazing marsh encapsulated into urban Bridgwater. By creating new wetland features such as scrapes and new reedbeds, it is hoped the site can retain more surface water, especially in the summer.

The development of a cinema and other commercial outlets in the nearby Brewery Fields now includes a mini nature-rich SuDS in the form of a large swale, planted with over 8,000 native wetland plants, which help to trap silt, take up hydrocarbons from the car park and provide an amenity feature for people while increasing pollinator resources locally. This will be an active educational resource for adults and children.



Ambition three

Community-led and sustainable solutions for wetlands around the world.

We focus our overseas work on hotspots of wetland biodiversity where climate change and unsustainable development pose significant threats and where we know we can make a substantial, lasting difference. Our aim is to build the foundations for long-term, climate-resilient conservation management by local communities, alongside protecting and improving wetlands and native wetland wildlife. This year, despite Covid restrictions, we've been making impact through our local teams and partners which has enabled them to continue on-site work.

Madagascar

We and local partners Madagasikara Voakajy won a UK Darwin Initiative grant which is funding a three-year, community-based project at Lake Tseny, the most intact wetland in the Port-Bergê Key Biodiversity Area. Over-exploitation and soil run-off from farming and forestry have left many wetlands in this area in poor condition. Yet the lake is still home to at least eight threatened species, including the pinstripe damba fish, found nowhere else, and to 5,000 people, most of whom depend on the lake's natural resources for their livelihoods and wellbeing.

Our work continues at Lake Sofia where we and project partners have secured community rights to manage the lake's natural resources. A further 35 Madagascar pochard, the world's rarest duck, were released onto Lake Sofia in October and November 2021 by local team partners. Habitat improvements have enabled species recovery since birds were released in 2018. Further success has come from our enviro-education programme based around highland plateau wetlands, which has reached 30,000 students.

Our local partners are taking over the Madagascar pochard rear-and-release programme and we have been working to ensure there is a support network for the transition.

Cambodia

We have completed further, more detailed work to assess the condition and value of wetlands in the Cambodian Lower Mekong Delta (CLMD). This has included mapping land use, assessments of habitats and their value to local people, appraisals of the habitats' conservation status and of what conservation action is already in place. Our report to the Cambodian Government included recommendations for actions needed to protect Cambodia's remaining wetlands and to deal with threats from intensive farming in the wetlands.

We've also been working with local community groups to restore 25 hectares of grassland and five hectares of flooded forest at Boeung Prek Lapouv, one of the largest remnants of seasonally inundated grasslands in the CLMD. The grasslands are renowned for their many rare birds, including the sarus crane that comes here to forage. The flooded forest is also an important part of the ecosystem, providing valuable fish nurseries and carbon storage.

25

hectares of grasslands
and five hectares
of flooded forest
restored in Cambodia



Ambition four

A global community creating and managing wetlands and mobilising wetland support.

We want to ensure that key decision makers value wetlands and to build a global network of partners.

Wetlands play a major role globally. It is essential that they are recognised when critical decisions are being made and that we develop skills in wetland creation, restoration and engagement where they are needed most.

- We have launched the Star Wetland Centre Awards to establish and promote best practice for wetland centres around the world. The awards are open to all 350 wetland centres belonging to Wetlands Link International.



- Our World Wetland Network Citizen Science Survey informs global policymaking and highlights the sheer scale of the multiple pressures facing wetlands at a global level.
- We continue to influence the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and to ensure that wetlands feature prominently in its goals and targets. We made presentations to delegates at the 2021 World Conservation Congress in Marseille and COP26, keeping wetland solutions on the agenda and highlighting to policymakers the wide-ranging benefits of wetlands such as saltmarsh in storing carbon.
- We hosted several international training courses covering wetland conservation and restoration and good practice in designing and managing wetland centres. A pilot for our School of Wetland Conservation is due to be launched at the Ramsar COP in November 2022.
- We chaired the IUCN National Committee's revitalised UK Protected Areas Working Group, which independently advises the UK Government on its aspiration to protect 30% of UK land and 30% of its seas by 2030.

Influencing decision makers over lead shot

Following the ban of lead shot use in and around EU wetlands in January 2021, WWT is playing a pivotal role in pushing for the wider ban. We have been providing policymakers with irrefutable evidence of the effects and extent of lead pollution. We are working on the issue with an international coalition and rallying key stakeholders, including the public, to pressure politicians across Europe.



Spreading the word for wetlands

To deliver our four ambitions we need to engage and inspire more people.

Wetlands are key to tackling climate breakdown and as the world's leading wetland charity we play a key role in raising awareness of this globally. Wetlands have superpowers, from cooling cities, storing carbon and preventing flooding, to making us happier and healthier. We must raise the profile of these amazing habitats.

Strengthening our partnerships

WWT and the National Garden Scheme began an exciting new partnership to promote the importance of creating mini wetlands in our gardens. The project highlights the fact that even a small garden pond can make a difference to garden wildlife and to the wider landscape. By showing that simple changes can make a difference the partnership will inspire people to take action for wetlands.



Whatever its form, water is vital for gardens and the wildlife they attract. It is our hope that this partnership with WWT will help highlight and promote the benefits that wetlands, wet spaces and water brings and that together we can encourage more people to create and experience wetlands.

George Plumptre, Chief Executive, National Garden Scheme.



Our diversity ambassadors

Nature is for everyone – that's the message we will spread as we start work with our two new WWT ambassadors, Ollie Olanipekun and Nadeem Perera of Flock Together. Flock Together is a birdwatching collective dedicated to ensuring people of colour feel welcome in our green and blue spaces.



We are delighted to be working with WWT because it shares our philosophy and is keen to make wetlands accessible to all through initiatives such as its Generation Wild programme.

Nadeem Perera.



We are really looking forward to working together to bring younger and more diverse birders to WWT and to nature generally and are honoured to become the charity's first ambassadors.

Ollie Olanipekun.

The Times and Sunday Times Christmas Appeal

In November 2021 we were chosen by The Times and Sunday Times for their Christmas Charity Appeal. Over three months, the newspapers published 17 articles showcasing the depth and breadth of our work and reaching an average daily readership of 1.04 million people. The stories were accompanied by 11 segments on Times Radio, which attracts 637,000 listeners each week. The appeal reflected the power our stories have to raise our profile and win wider support: £400,000 was raised and almost 1,280 new donors engaged.

1M

reached daily

£400,000

raised

1,280

new donors engaged



We have been overwhelmed by the response to The Times and Sunday Times Christmas Appeal – the amount it has raised has been amazing and, importantly, it has helped raise the profile of wetlands and how important they are for wildlife, people and our planet.

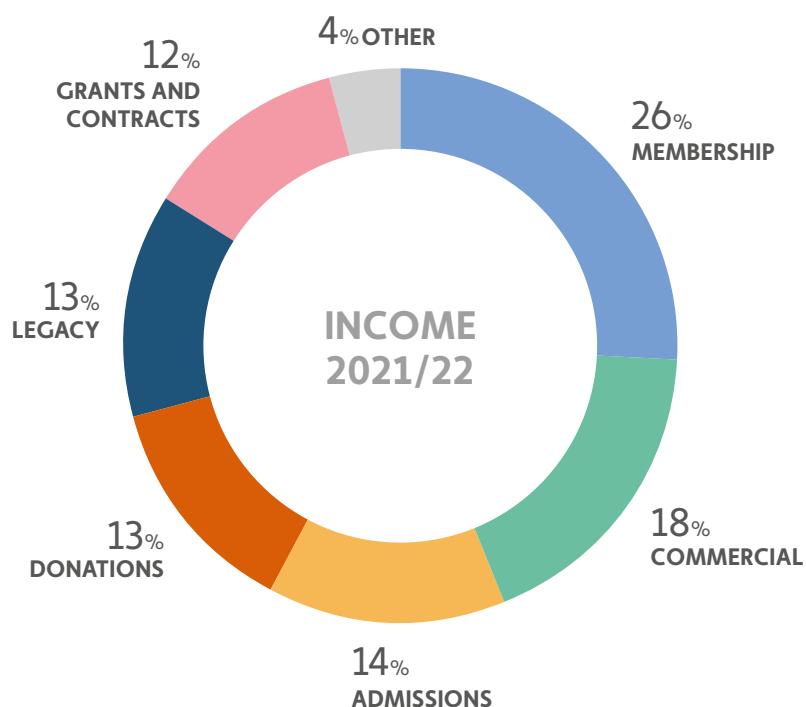
Peter Lee, Head of Philanthropy, WWT.



Financial information 2021-22

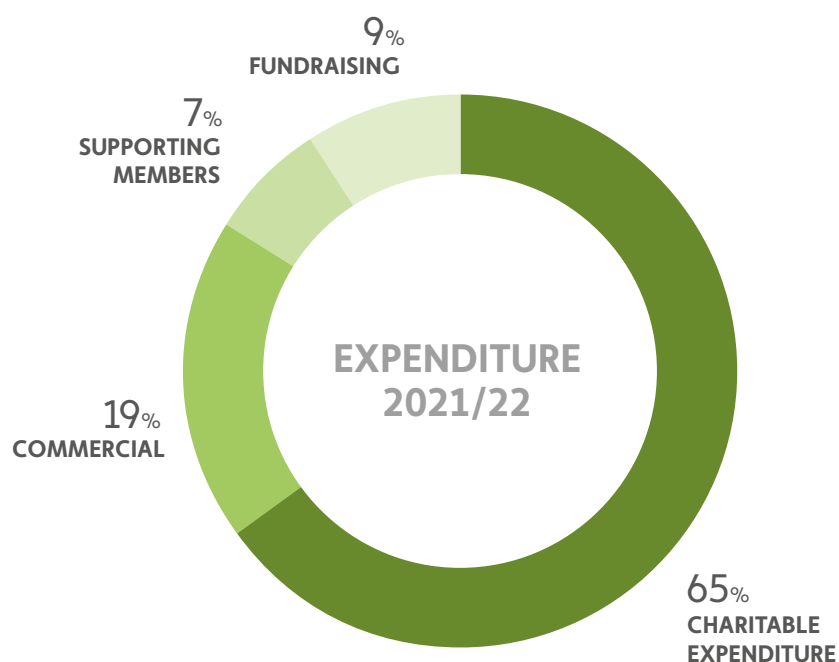
Total income was £27.0m in the year, an increase of 29% on the previous year's £20.9m – a year that was affected by COVID-19. The year before, 2019/20, was mostly pre-pandemic and income was £25.7m, so 2021/22 saw an improvement of 5% on pre-pandemic levels, which is a significant increase.

INCOME	£'000
MEMBERSHIP	7,077
COMMERCIAL	4,768
ADMISSIONS	3,868
DONATIONS	3,615
LEGACY	3,470
GRANTS AND CONTRACTS	3,190
OTHER	1,022
TOTAL INCOME	£27,010



Total expenditure recovered to £24m from £20.4m in 2020/21. In the prior year, following site closures in March 2020, a prudent approach was taken and non-essential expenditure was put on hold where possible.

EXPENDITURE	£'000
CHARITABLE EXPENDITURE	15,634
COMMERCIAL	4,547
SUPPORTING MEMBERS	1,677
FUNDRAISING	2,107
OTHER	64
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£24,029k
OPERATING SURPLUS	£2,981k



We are very grateful to everyone who has supported our work and has enabled us to make such an impact.

If you'd like to support us, please get in touch. Whether you're interested in an existing project or enabling us to develop all the exciting work we have planned, from wellbeing programmes to new urban wetlands, we'd love to hear from you.

**Together we can help secure the future for wildlife,
for wetlands and for us.**

wwt.org.uk/wetlands-can



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