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2023-24

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# Annual report

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A shared world where wildlife,  
wild places and all people thrive.

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The health of the natural world is fundamental to the survival of us all. We won't stop until we realise a shared world, where wildlife, wild places and all people thrive.

Anil Kunchala (rspb-images.com)

RSPB supporter Aneeshwar Kunchala. Childhood experiences can nurture a lifelong love of nature and wildlife.

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Trigger warning:  
these pages include  
photographs of spiders.

The front cover of this report is designed by the illustrator Charlie Davis. It celebrates the closure of sandeel fisheries in English waters of the North Sea and Scottish waters after decades of campaigning by the RSPB and others. Find out more on page 14 and discover more of Charlie's work at [charliedavisillustration.com](http://charliedavisillustration.com).



# Welcome

Last autumn, the RSPB led a group of over 60 research and conservation organisations to compile the latest *State of Nature* report. The findings were stark: because of human activity the UK now has less than half of its biodiversity remaining. The evidence from the last 50 years shows that the intensive way in which we manage our land for farming and the continuing effects of climate change are the two biggest drivers of nature loss.

These sobering findings are at the heart of the RSPB's mission. It's this that drives our work for nature recovery. Big wins take time and are frustratingly rare, but they are increasingly important.

The recent decisions by the UK and Scottish Governments to close sandeel fisheries in the English waters of the North Sea and all Scottish waters was one such win. The importance of sandeels and the detrimental effect commercial fishing was having on our seabirds was recognised by the RSPB and others years ago. We have been working for more than three decades to achieve this goal but we never gave up hope. This couldn't have come at a more important time, as the latest seabird census data released at the end of 2023 confirmed the perilous state many of these species are in.

Another huge win for nature was the passing of the Wildlife Management and Muirburn Act, marking a significant moment in the history of land management in Scotland. This legislation will provide a meaningful deterrent to those who continue to break the law and kill Scotland's birds of prey.

It also gives increased powers to investigate wildlife crimes. With Scotland now leading the way, we will continue to focus south of the border to seek similar legislation in England.

I have been lucky enough to visit several of the RSPB's sites across the UK again this year. On Orkney I learned about the crucial work our team is doing to remove introduced Stoats and restore these marvellous islands for ground-nesting birds. A similar undertaking for ferrets is also underway in Northern Ireland on the island of Rathlin. These projects, both at home and increasingly in the UK's Overseas Territories, are critical for the globally important seabird populations of which the UK is custodian.

As my time as Chair of RSPB Council comes to an end, I am immensely proud of the progress that's been made. I remain deeply concerned at the scale of the climate and nature emergency but I know that, with your help and support, the RSPB will work tirelessly to deliver the positive change we all want to see.

Thank you for standing with us. For caring passionately about living in a world where people and nature thrive. We couldn't do it without you.

**Kevin Cox**  
Chair



Beccy Speight and Kevin Cox, with RSPB President Dr Amir Khan.

The year 2025 will be a pivotal year for nature. With a new UK Government in place dealing with many competing issues, they will need to be persuaded of the urgent need to address the nature and climate crisis at sufficient scale both at home and abroad.

As a society we know we need to change and adapt to build resilience. Increasingly we are seeing the impacts of a warming world in our own lives through issues such as food price rises and increasing flood risk and this is set to only worsen over time.

Because of this climate and nature interplay, agricultural policy reform remains of critical strategic importance to us in the UK. Farming accounts for some 70% of our land in the UK and the flooded fields of this past winter show how it is at the forefront of the impacts of climate change. Farmers are understandably extremely worried about a future with wetter, stormier, more unpredictable weather. The governments of the UK must ensure that there is enough funding available in agri-environment schemes to support farmers to make the changes that are required to help tackle the nature and climate emergency, and to ensure a sustainable future for farmers and food production as well as the natural world.

At the RSPB we also need to change and adapt. We are now halfway through our corporate strategy which will take us to

2030. Our vision is for a shared world where wildlife, wild places and all people thrive. For us to play our part we too must continue to adjust the way we work, shifting how we operate to respond to a changing world and making sure we lay the foundations for a sustainable future.

Climate change and the loss of nature, can feel so utterly overwhelming when viewed in its entirety. But there is definitely hope. The heartening thing is we know how to turn things around. Last year's *State of Nature* report not only showed the full extent of this loss, but it also pointed to a way forward. A way for us to restore what has been lost and build a better world for all of us. Our decision makers must act on these solutions and the promises made on the global stage. That's what it will take for us to breathe clean air, swim in clean rivers, and enjoy green spaces with abundant, thriving wildlife.

**Beccy Speight**  
Chief Executive



# About the RSPB

## Our purpose

To advance the conservation of birds, other wildlife, and the natural world, by protecting and restoring habitats and landscapes, saving species and connecting people to nature. We carry out conservation work that you can see from space, built from the ground up. We believe that the planet is facing a nature and climate emergency and that we have a moral duty to pass on the natural world in a better state to future generations.

## Our vision

A shared world where wildlife, wild places, and all people thrive. We believe we're all connected by the wonder of nature. The health of the natural world is fundamental to the survival of all species and has the right to flourish. We know that birds, other wildlife and the habitats on which these depend are interconnected. We recognise that the health and resilience of individuals, our society and the economy is dependent on the health and sustainability of the planet's ecosystems.

## How we deliver public benefits

We believe that in delivering public benefit, we are effective because we bring the breadth of our capabilities to bear on the complex challenges facing species and ecosystems. The RSPB's strategy sets out how we meet those challenges to make a difference over the current decade. Find out more in the sections 'Our highlights,' 'Our impact' and 'Forward look'.

## Royal charter

The RSPB is a non-statutory body incorporated by Royal Charter, originally granted in 1904. Together with the Statutes, it provides the RSPB's operating rules and guidelines.

## Objects of the RSPB

The objects of the RSPB as set out in its Royal Charter are to:

(1) promote the conservation of biological diversity and the natural environment for the public benefit, in particular but not exclusively by:

- conserving wild birds and other wildlife, and the environment on which they depend;
- protecting, restoring and recreating habitats. This includes raising public understanding and awareness of, and providing information on, such matters.

(2) advance education of the public in conservation of the natural environment.

## Governance

The RSPB is committed to the highest standards of governance, following the Charity Governance Code. How we apply the Code is described throughout this report, in particular on pages 88-101. By setting and reviewing strategic objectives, the RSPB's Trustees test, refine and account for the performance and delivery of the organisation and plan for new challenges as they emerge. The Trustees confirm that they have referred to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing objectives and activities.

A royal visit to the RSPB UK headquarters in Sandy in 1970.

### His Majesty, The King We are honoured to have His Majesty, The King, as our new Royal patron.

His Majesty, The King has announced his patronage of the RSPB following a review of Royal patronages conducted by the Royal Household after His Majesty's accession to the throne.

Welcoming the announcement RSPB Chief Executive Beccy Speight said: "The King has long been an advocate for conservation and the need to protect and restore our natural world both here at home and across the globe.

So, we are immensely honoured that His Majesty has chosen the RSPB to be among his Royal patronages. We look forward to the support of His Majesty in promoting the need to protect and restore both our wildlife and wild spaces."

RSPB Chair of Council Kevin Cox added: "His Majesty has been a consistent, active and inspiring champion for action to address climate change and care for our natural world over many decades. We are very honoured that the King will continue the legacy of the late Queen in her support for the RSPB."



# What we do

We are determined to realise a world where wildlife thrives.

## What we do

We work locally in the UK and around the world protecting habitats, saving species and addressing the nature and climate emergency. We do this through five main work areas: **science, species, places, people** and **policy**. We're proud that we can apply our broad capabilities to the many complex challenges facing species and ecosystems to make a positive difference.

### Science

We ground our work in a thorough understanding of the natural world. We identify the most important problems, using natural and social sciences to discover their possible causes and potential solutions.

### Species

Survival of species and biodiversity are the ultimate signs of whether conservation is working and ecosystems are thriving. That's why we protect species from direct threats, such as loss of habitat, and indirect threats, like loss of food sources.

### Places

Nature needs other nature. That's why we work to create more, bigger, better and joined up protected areas on land and at sea in the UK and around the world. We help people and nature coexist in harmony, ensuring that where people are living, nature can thrive.

### People

A thriving natural world is essential for our species and is only possible if people feel connected to and understand nature. We inspire, educate and support people young and old from every possible background to act. The more of us who get involved, the bigger, more diverse and more powerful our support for nature will be.

### Policy

To stop nature's downward spiral and to build a world where wildlife can thrive, governments must have the right ambition. Ambition that is underpinned by action, which must be framed by targets, law, monitoring and enforcement.

## How we do it

We bring people together who love birds and other wildlife, and who want to do something to restore the health and diversity of the natural world. We must also enable more people to take positive action for nature. **We act, we influence, we collaborate, and we empower.**

### We act

The natural world and the global climate are in crisis. But our evidence-based conservation work shows that birds and other wildlife will thrive if they're given a chance. We're intensifying our efforts to give nature more opportunities to recover, every single day, delivering conservation across land- and sea-scapes, protecting and restoring habitats and saving birds and other wildlife from extinction. We won't stop while the threat to nature persists.

### We influence

We use our voice to help people understand the threats facing nature, and the solutions to save it. From individuals to businesses and governments, we encourage everyone to play a positive role for nature, and help change the world for the better.

### We collaborate

We are one of the few conservation organisations that has the capacity and the expertise to make a difference on a truly global scale. When we partner with other organisations, businesses, governments and individuals, we increase the impact we have. And by working together, we will deliver results for birds, nature and the climate at an even greater scale.

### We empower

The closer people feel to nature, the more likely they are to defend and restore it. We bring people together, across countryside and cities, in person and online. From experienced naturalists to fledgling enthusiasts, we help everyone connect, champion and take action for nature. By supporting local conservation groups, projects and initiatives, we encourage everyone to get involved.

Together, we can save nature.

# Our strategy

In 2021, we launched our new strategy to 2030, to ensure the RSPB is making the biggest impact possible for nature.

## Our vision for a world richer in nature

We believe that all species have a right to exist, and that nature is fundamental to human health and wellbeing. We have a moral duty to pass on the natural world in a better state to future generations, so we want to create a world where...

*...wildlife is abundant and diverse in our towns and countryside*

*...we have a resilient, stable economy that values nature*

*...all people are living well in harmony with nature*

*...birds and other wildlife have made a comeback*

*...nature continues to be restored, enriching and sustaining the lives of people*

*...we benefit from a stable climate, and clean air and water.*

## Our six strategic shifts

We have identified six main areas where, by stepping up our efforts, we can increase our impact.

- 1 Delivering conservation at greater scale, through deeper collaborations.
- 2 Enabling more, and more diverse, people to act for nature.
- 3 Being a bolder and more influential campaigning organisation.
- 4 Becoming more relevant to the world we're trying to change.
- 5 Diversifying our income and opening up finance opportunities.
- 6 Making the RSPB the best it can be.

## 10 outcomes for nature's recovery

These are the changes we believe we all need to make happen to put nature on the road to recovery by 2030.

### People engagement

More, and more diverse, people will be engaging with the RSPB, taking meaningful action for nature and helping embed nature- and climate-positive outcomes into social, political and economic behaviour.

### UK land

At least 30% of land in each UK country will be managed primarily and effectively for nature and the climate, supported by nature positive management elsewhere, to place that 30% at the heart of resilient ecological networks.

### Species recovery

The future of 100 of the most threatened species of birds and other taxa will be more secure in the UK, UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs), the East Atlantic migration route and in other selected areas around the world.

### Seas

Threats to seabirds from unsustainable fisheries, marine development and invasive non-native species will have been minimised, and where possible eliminated, globally and in the UK.

### Global land

A network of site- and landscape-scale interventions along the East Atlantic Flyway, and in other key locations internationally, will be global exemplars of high-impact nature conservation, supporting lives and livelihoods, creating wider support for nature and helping to stabilise the climate.

### UK Overseas Territories

The conservation status of important terrestrial and marine wildlife sites in the UKOTs will be improved, environmental policy frameworks strengthened, and local partner capacity built, contributing to 30% of land and seas well-managed by 2030.

### Food and farming

The majority of UK productive agricultural land will be managed so that it is contributing positively to the recovery of nature and is supporting a net-zero economy (where the carbon emitted into the atmosphere is balanced by the carbon removed from it), as part of a vibrant domestic food economy.

### Nature positive economy

The frameworks and standards that govern investment decisions will be nature positive, transforming public and private investment and increasing the direct investment in conservation available to the RSPB and the sector.

### RSPB capabilities

The RSPB's operating model, structures, systems, values, skills and behaviours will reflect the strategic need.

### RSPB greening

Not only will the RSPB be a nature positive organisation, we will progress towards delivering a net climate cooling impact, having both reduced our operational greenhouse gas emissions and enhanced net emission removals and reductions through our land management activities.

What we do between now and 2030 is vital. We have set clear measures against these outcomes, which we use to keep ourselves focused and to track the impact of our contribution. The following stories on pages **18 to 65** demonstrate how our contribution is helping work toward achieving these outcomes.



Greater Thames Youth Action Panel pond dipping at RSPB Rainham Marshes.



# RSPB medal winners

Celebrating champions for nature



Alastair Fothergill, Beccy Speight, Dr Amanda Slevin and Dr Amir Khan.

**Wildlife filmmaker Alastair Fothergill and Climate Coalition Northern Ireland have both been honoured with the RSPB's most prestigious award, the RSPB Medal.**

The award is given in recognition of outstanding contribution to nature conservation. Alastair Fothergill is a name synonymous with wildlife filming. In 2023, he led the production of the BBC's *Wild Isles*, reaching an audience of more than 10 million viewers. The series, which was co-produced by the RSPB, WWF-UK and the Open University, highlighted the beauty of the natural world while delivering the stark truth that the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world.

Alastair was also involved in the creation of a suite of complementary films, bringing the nature crisis to businesses, finance leaders, farmers and fishers, all aimed at inspiring action.

Climate Coalition Northern Ireland has also been recognised for its successful campaigning to deliver historic climate legislation in Northern Ireland. The network of organisations and individuals represents over 300,000 people across Northern Ireland, and their collective efforts resulted in the passing of the ambitious Climate Change Act for Northern Ireland in 2022. Climate Coalition Northern Ireland member Dr Amanda Slevin collected the award on behalf of the group.

“

This medal is a timely reminder of what is possible when we work in partnership for a better future for all species who share our planet.

**Dr Amanda Slevin**, Director of the Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action at Queen's University Belfast and member of Climate Coalition Northern Ireland

# Presidents and Ambassadors inspiring change

It's been a busy year for our President Dr Amir Khan and Ambassadors as they have generously given their time, skills and expertise to support the RSPB.

The RSPB's President and Ambassadors are passionate advocates for nature who generously give their time freely to help raise the profile of the RSPB and its work using their professional skills, enthusiasm and supporter bases.

## Action for nature

Our Ambassadors spread our messages to millions of people and their support of our campaigns can be pivotal to their success. A key campaigning moment that Ambassadors supported was the Retained EU Law Bill (REUL Bill) campaign. Both Dr Amir Khan and Ambassador Deborah Meaden created videos to rally their followers to contact their MPs and ask them to protect laws that safeguard our precious natural habitats. Although the Bill passed, there were some helpful changes as a result of the campaign.

Another important campaigning moment was the Restore Nature Now rally, organised by RSPB Vice President Chris Packham in September 2023. The RSPB stood with more than 40 other conservation groups to call on all politicians to take action for nature. RSPB Ambassador Samuel West gave a compelling speech, and the rally was supported by other RSPB Ambassadors and many RSPB members and supporters. Building on this, we came together again with our members, supporters and the public for another Restore Nature Now rally in June 2024.

## Big Garden Birdwatch

Our Ambassadors threw their support behind Big Garden Birdwatch 2024, helping to promote the event. Social media posts from our Ambassadors and influencers reached up to 2.5 million followers. They also created a series of bird ID videos which received over half a million views on Instagram. Other highlights included an interview with Ambassador Indy Kiemel Greene on BBC Newsround and an iNews piece in which Dr Amir Khan discussed the benefits of birdwatching and the need for policy changes to protect wildlife. More than 610,000 people took part in Big Garden Birdwatch 2024.

A huge thank you to our President and Ambassadors.

Find out more here:

[rspb.org.uk/president-and-ambassadors](https://rspb.org.uk/president-and-ambassadors)





# People power

## A year of successful campaigning

**Continuing the RSPB's long history of successful campaigning, we were delighted to celebrate a number of significant wins for nature. Our first campaign success was over 100 years ago when our founders – a group of fearless women – spearheaded a campaign to stop a fashion for feathers. In 2024, we were delighted to celebrate another milestone campaign win, that offers a lifeline to seabirds.**

### Hope for threatened seabirds

In January 2024, Puffins, Kittiwakes, Razorbills and other threatened seabirds were thrown a lifeline, after decades of campaigning finally saw the UK and Scottish Governments close sandeel fisheries in the English waters of the North Sea and all Scottish waters.

The change in policy comes after more than 25 years of campaigning by the RSPB and others, which called out the practice as one of the key contributors to seabird decline. Many seabirds, including Puffins, rely on sandeels to feed their chicks. But climate change and overfishing have vastly depleted sandeel populations, having a devastating knock-on effect on seabirds.

In 2023, the UK Government ran a public consultation to close sandeel fishing in the English waters of the North Sea. More than 33,000 people from across the UK added their voice to our campaign and responded to the consultation. Over 10,000 RSPB supporters also responded to a similar consultation from the Scottish Government. Both consultations found overwhelmingly in favour of action to end sandeel fishing.

There's no doubt that this groundswell of support has been instrumental in putting a stop to sandeel fisheries. A huge thank you to everyone who joined with us to save our seabirds.

Although the European Union is challenging this curb on sandeel fishing, it has also been heralded as the single greatest action taken to support our most vulnerable seabirds. With the latest census finding almost half of the UK's breeding seabirds in decline, it is a vital step in the long journey to recovery.

“  
This lifeline will help to secure vital food sources for these amazing birds. Whilst many other factors continue to affect our seabird populations, including the impacts of climate change, and bycatch from fishing, we have renewed hope that sandeels will increase, and help to save our beloved Puffins and other seabirds.

**Dave O'Hara**, Senior Site Manager,  
RSPB Bempton Cliffs

# 33,000+

people from across the UK added their voice to our campaign to end sandeel fishing



The ban on sandeel fishing is a lifeline for seabirds including Puffins.





Steve Knell (rspb-images.com)

Hen Harriers will benefit from new legal protections in Scotland.

## Landmark win against bird of prey persecution in Scotland

In March, the Scottish Parliament passed a raft of measures set to herald the end of persecution of birds of prey in the country and improve the condition of upland habitats.

The Wildlife Management and Muirburn Act aims to put a stop to the illegal persecution of birds of prey, such as Golden Eagles and Hen Harriers, through the stronger regulation of grouse shooting. The Act also bans the use of snares and tightens regulations for the use of other types of wildlife traps, and gives greater investigating powers to the Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in relation to wildlife crime.

Furthermore, a new system of licences will also be introduced for muirburn — the practice of burning vegetation, usually for sporting and farming purposes. Burning on peat is particularly problematic. The UK's peat uplands are globally rare ecosystems, with the potential to lock away significant amounts of carbon, a natural solution in our efforts to tackle climate change. But burning, often for agriculture or game bird management, can cause major damage to these unique habitats.

The new legislation follows decades of campaigning, with the RSPB at the forefront of those calling for urgent change, and it is hoped that the new laws could herald the end of the persecution of birds of prey in Scotland, as well as improve the conditions of upland habitats.

“

We hope that the new licences for grouse shooting will finally provide a meaningful deterrent that will eradicate bird of prey persecution.

Andrew Midgley, RSPB Senior Land Use Policy Officer

For every £1 invested in UK hedgerow planting



£3.92 would be delivered back in benefits to the wider economy when planted in the right place

**The need to protect England's hedgerows** 2024 also saw the launch of our campaign to safeguard hedgerows in England. These form a 500,000km natural network of habitats for birds and other wildlife, including 130 priority species listed in the England Biodiversity Action Plan, such as Yellowhammers, Linnets and Bullfinches.

Healthy hedgerows can also help mitigate against climate change, as they lock up and store carbon. They can also act as natural barriers, soaking up rainwater and preventing flooding. Plus hedgerows can provide shelter and natural medicine for livestock, and have been proven to reduce windspeed which protects crops.

On 31 December 2023, the regulations that protect England's hedgerows officially ended and without new

legally binding rules, England's hedgerows and their wildlife were at risk. But thanks to the efforts of individuals and organisations across the country, including 10,000 supporters who took action as part of the RSPB's campaign, these protections were swiftly reinstated. England's hedgerows on agricultural land are again protected from cutting during nesting season from March to August each year, and will be surrounded by pesticide and cultivation free green strips to provide a home for small mammals and insects.

Thanks to everyone who helped demand the reinstatement of these regulations.



Hedgerows provide vital habitat for wildlife.

Sam Turley (rspb-images.com)



## Our highlights

# People engagement

We're determined to engage more, and more diverse, people to take meaningful action for nature, and have mobilised thousands to take action for nature in the UK and beyond.

### Mobilising new audiences with TikTok and more

It's our ambition to enable more people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with wildlife and wild places, and to make our natural world as accessible as possible. So we're pleased to report that our youth revolution has gathered pace through a number of key actions.

Young people are less likely to visit our nature reserves than other age groups and we know that cost is one of the main barriers. In November we gave young people aged 16 to 24 free access to our nature reserves where there is a charge. By removing entry charges, we hope more young people will come to explore these wonderfully wild places and connect with the great outdoors in new ways.

The scheme is a two-year pilot, but we see this as our first step towards encouraging more young people to connect and take action for nature. In the future, we're planning to create new opportunities for young people to get first-hand experiences of nature in an inspiring and mindful way.

We have also been engaging with more young people on social media. This year, we launched 'Bird of the Week' on TikTok. This brought in more than 18,000 new followers from just one post alone, and over 99,000 followers since. Showcasing species in a fun way fosters connection and this is vital if young people are going to safeguard nature in the future. Take a look on TikTok [@rspb](#).

**+18,000**

new followers  
from one post

**+99,000**

new followers since  
'Bird of the Week'

RSPB TikTok  
has engaged  
new audiences.



Sennen Powell

### First ever youth-led summit

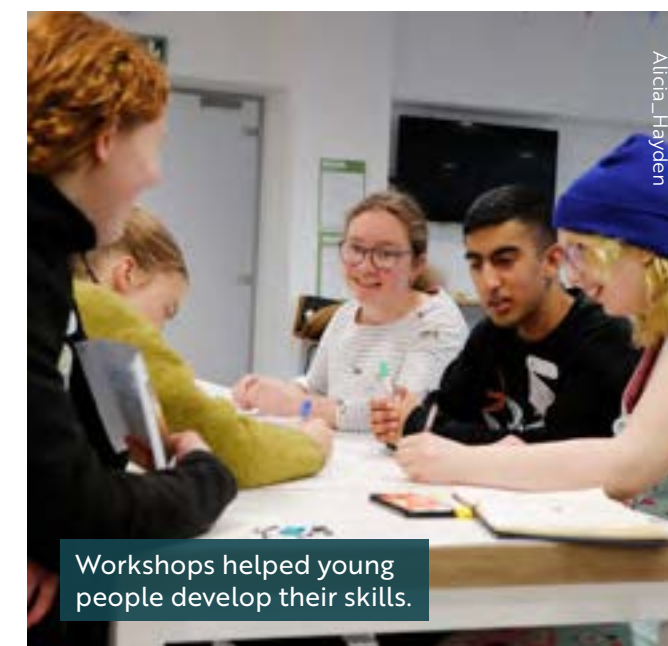
In February, we joined forces with the British Trust for Ornithology and WWF-UK to support the Youth in Nature Summit.

This weekend-long event was designed and organised by an incredible group of 15–24-year-olds, including RSPB Youth Council members Lisa, Katie, Indy, Freddie and Sennen. Participants enjoyed guest speakers, workshops, networking opportunities and more. Demand for the event was huge, with tickets selling out in less than 36 hours.

Over the two days, more than 250 young people came together at the David Attenborough Building in Cambridge to share their experiences and ideas. The attendees heard from multiple speakers who offered up advice on taking action for nature as a young person. RSPB Ambassador and wildlife presenter, Megan McCubbin, talked about her journey into conservation and discussed what 'activism' really means. Richard Benwell, the CEO of Wildlife and Countryside Link, led a talk focused on his top tips for influencing and getting your voice heard for young attendees. Youth in Nature Summit participants also heard from Ajay Tegala, a wildlife ranger and TV presenter, the RSPB,

Butterfly Conservation, Flora & Fauna, the British Trust for Ornithology, WWF-UK and others.

The summit also empowered young people to build their skills and confidence to take action for nature. Reflecting on the event, Youth Council member Lisa said: "Thanks to everyone who was involved and supported us, to the amazing speakers that inspired us all. It was great to have the space to meet with so many interesting and motivated people. I hope we can continue to collaborate in the environmental sector to fight for the future of our planet."



Alicia Hayden



## RSPB youth groups celebrate 80 years

In 2023 we were delighted to celebrate the 80th anniversary of RSPB youth groups. All across the UK, youth groups marked the momentous milestone with a range of activities from cake-baking to nest box making.

The RSPB's first youth group was the Junior Bird Recorder's Club which began in 1943. This offered young people aged 14 to 17 a chance to enjoy birdwatching in their local area, with membership costing one shilling (12p) a year. As times have changed, the youth groups too have evolved. In 1965, the RSPB launched the Young Ornithologists Club (YOC), together with a magazine *Birdlife* aimed at younger readers. In 1995 RSPB Phoenix was launched for teenagers and in 2000 YOC was renamed Wildlife Explorers. Today the RSPB has three youth magazines tailored for different ages (5–8, 8–12 and 13–18), and a network of volunteer-led youth groups, all with the aim of inspiring children to engage with, enjoy nature and take action for nature.

The importance of the RSPB's youth groups to nurture young nature champions cannot be overstated. Like many RSPB members, staff, volunteers and supporters, RSPB Local Groups Development Officer Richard Bashford believes his passion for nature and career in conservation was sparked by his

time as a youth member. Richard explains: "The YOC and my interest in nature were the gateway to some valuable work and life experiences. I am so pleased that RSPB youth groups are celebrating 80 years this year. I look around the RSPB and other conservation organisations, I speak to many passionate people about nature, only to find many of them started out in the YOC too. I am a firm believer that RSPB Youth Groups have a vital role to play to ensure children have the connection to nature I had as a child and still have today."

“  
I joined because I am really  
passionate about nature  
and wildlife.

Iona, aged 7 ¾

“  
My hope for wildlife is that  
all endangered and critically  
endangered species flourish  
again in the UK.

Thomas, aged 13



From the archives: RSPB youth group members campaigning in 1989.



The RSPB's Melanie Coath (second from right) argued the case for nature at COP28.

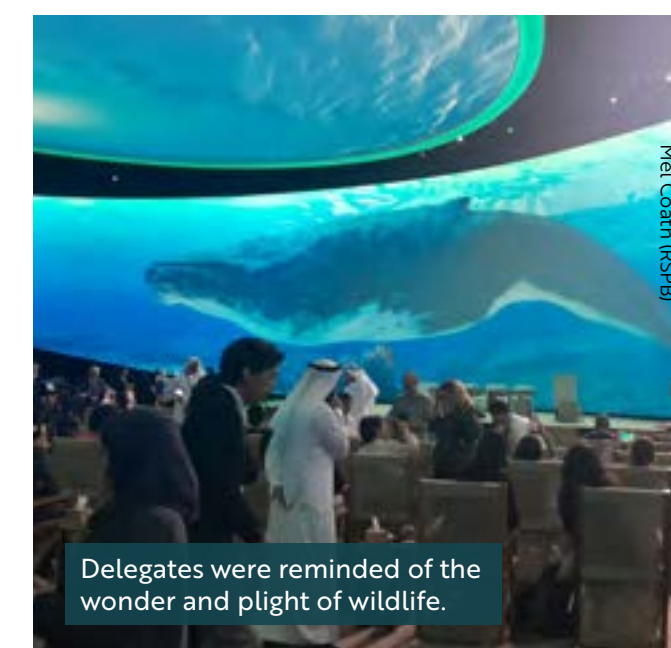
## Standing up for nature at COP28

The UN's climate change conference, COP28, took place in December 2023 in Dubai. Crucially COP28 looked at progress towards the targets to keep the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees by 2030 – the Paris Agreement that parties signed up to in 2015.

Climate change is one of the key drivers behind biodiversity loss so it is vital that we tackle it to stop wildlife extinctions. The RSPB's Head of Global Policy Melanie Coath and Senior Policy Officer Alex Mackaness attended COP28, alongside representatives from BirdLife International partners – the global partnership of national conservation organisations of which the RSPB is the UK partner. As an accredited observer, we were there to hold governments to account, working to ensure the best outcomes for nature. Our activity at COP28 focused on sharing our recommendations to negotiators from countries around the world, to support them in achieving ambitious outcomes, including for the role nature can play in tackling climate change.

After two weeks of intense negotiations, leaders finally agreed to transition away from fossil fuels. Although this falls far short of the scale and pace of change that we

and many experts say is needed to meet the Paris Agreement, outside of this deal, we celebrated some significant progress for nature. Never before has there been anything like the high-level commitments to action to tackling the nature and climate crises in tandem from world leaders, ministers and country representatives. These included aligning action on countries' climate and biodiversity commitments, a new momentum for commitments to protect 30% of land by 2030, and new pledges and finance for nature's conservation.



Delegates were reminded of the wonder and plight of wildlife.



Internationally important populations of Gannets breed around the UK.

# Saving our Wild Isles

The BBC TV series *Wild Isles* has continued to inspire audiences, while the award-winning campaign to Save Our Wild Isles has enabled and encouraged thousands of people to take action for nature in the UK.

In spring 2023, more than 10 million viewers tuned into *Wild Isles*, the stunning BBC series we co-produced with Silverback Films, WWF-UK and the Open University. Presented by Sir David Attenborough, the series highlighted the beauty of our natural world, but also delivered a stark message: the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world and we must act now to help it recover.

Having raised awareness through the TV series, we worked in partnership with WWF-UK and the National Trust to deliver the Save Our Wild Isles campaign to mobilise a diverse mass movement for nature, engaging individuals, businesses, partners and community groups to make the call for change. Here is a snapshot of what we've achieved so far:

## Save Our Wild Isles Community Fund

The award-winning Save Our Wild Isles Community Fund is a partnership between WWF-UK, the RSPB and Aviva, with Aviva giving £1 million to help community groups take action for nature locally. Through the Crowdfunder match funding mechanism, this was upped to £2.5 million going to communities, supporting 250 projects in total. These include a group in Manchester helping refugees and local people to build stronger roots to their local environment, farmers in Wales planting trees, a community garden in Northern Ireland, and a group in the Shetland Isles saving marine wildlife by tackling discarded or lost fishing nets.

## The People's Plan for Nature

The People's Plan for Nature sets out a vision for the future of nature and the actions we must all take to protect and renew it. Since creating the plan, the People's Assembly for Nature participants have continued to advocate for it in various ways including attending parliament to speak to Peers for the Planet, meeting senior civil servants at the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, and appearing on TV, radio and podcasts.

Along with other organisations, we published our own response to the People's Plan for Nature. We support the actions in the Plan – particularly the core theme of putting nature at the heart of decision-making. Areas where we are committing to review or to change what we do include doing more to champion a 'just transition' when it comes to building

a better future for nature, supporting more community mobilisation to protect nature locally, and developing panels of diverse citizens to work with us on advocacy and campaigns.

[peoplesplanfornature.org](https://peoplesplanfornature.org)

## Nature Neighbourhoods

The People's Plan for Nature showed us that people want to take action for nature in their communities, and to hold themselves and others to account. Nature Neighbourhoods is a direct response to this call. With funding from the National Lottery Community Fund and Co-op, we're working with the National Trust and WWF-UK to help 18 voluntary and community partners across the UK to mobilise their communities and lead positive change for nature and people through the creation of Nature Neighbourhood Plans.



Red Squirrels featured in the Woodland episode of *Wild Isles*.

### The #SchoolsForNature campaign

Our Schools For Nature campaign, championed by Megan McCubbin, encouraged and supported schools to share what they had learned about the wildlife in their school grounds and showcase school action to help local wildlife. The celebration was supported with a Save our Wild Isles certificate signed by David Attenborough. In 2023, over 150,000 pupils were involved across all four countries of the UK. Alongside WWF, WWT and the Woodland Trust, we will be repeating the campaign in 2024.

### Wild Weekender (28 April – 1 May 2023)

Save Our Wild Isles and the RSPB's Nature on Your Doorstep initiative (sponsored by Barratt Developments) joined forces to encourage people to help nature in their local area. We brought the UK together for the Wild Weekender to help people sow, grow, and create habitats for local wildlife. A total of 26,000 people joined events, including a web livestream with advice and demonstrations from experts on how to create thriving habitats locally.

### Saving Our Wild Isles film

As an accompaniment to the TV series *Wild Isles*, we produced a documentary *Saving Our Wild Isles* in partnership with WWF-UK, the National Trust and Silverback Films. The film shows how people are rising to the challenge to save UK nature, including efforts to restore seagrass meadows in North Wales and nature-friendly farming in Suffolk and the Yorkshire Dales. The film is

on BBC iPlayer and in the months following its launch it was viewed almost three-quarters of a million times. Community screening guides have also been created to enable people to use the film to bring their community together and make an impact for nature in their local area.

### Young Voices for Nature

Launched in summer 2023, Young Voices for Nature saw over 200 young people take part in the project which aimed to capture the stories of young people from all backgrounds and empower them with key skills in filmmaking, storytelling, and taking action for nature. The result was an inspiring 20-minute film, *Our Beautiful Wild*, which looks at what nature means for young people and how we can restore nature around us. Young people have also organised their own film screening events to spread the message out into their own communities. Watch here: [www.saveourwildisles.org.uk/community/young-voices-for-nature](http://www.saveourwildisles.org.uk/community/young-voices-for-nature)

### An award-winning campaign

The Save Our Wild Isles partnership was awarded the Inspiring Communicator Awards Innovation Award 2023, while the campaign won The Drum Social Purpose Award for Best Integrated Campaign (Not for Profit) 2023.

You can find out more about how the Save Our Wild Isles campaign is working with businesses on page 55.

[www.saveourwildisles.org.uk](http://www.saveourwildisles.org.uk)

**£2.5  
million**

raised to help community groups take action for nature locally, including £1 million from the Save Our Wild Isles Community Fund.

**10+  
million**

people tuned in to the TV series *Wild Isles*

**200+  
young people**

from across the UK engaged through Youth Voices for Nature to create an inspiring film, *Our Beautiful Wild*



## Our highlights

# UK land

We are working to make sure that more UK land is well-managed for nature. This year saw a number of initiatives and acquisitions that will bring about significant change.

### Boost for RSPB Bempton Cliffs

**Bempton Cliffs, on the Yorkshire coast, is home to one of the UK's top wildlife spectacles, when around half a million seabirds gather between March and August to raise a family on the towering chalk cliffs that overlook the North Sea.**

Thanks to the generous support of a number of philanthropic donors and The Banister Charitable Trust, we have been able to purchase an additional seven hectares of land. The £306,072 acquisition is the first land purchase at Bempton for over 30 years.

The area purchased was an intensively farmed arable field and we are working to transform it into a more diverse mosaic of meadow and scrub. Already we have been pleased to see birds including Yellowhammers, Tree Sparrows, Linnets, Skylarks and Corn Buntings feeding there.

We have also identified more than 30 types of flowering plants, including important seed-rich arable plants such as plantains, chickweed and Redshank.

A small area with low wildlife value may be used at some stage in the future as additional grassland overflow parking as it is easily accessible to the road. An option for overflow parking for peak visitor periods is vitally important to the running of this popular nature reserve.



**types of flowering plants found, including plantains, chickweed and Redshank**



Around half a million seabirds nest on RSPB Bempton Cliffs every year.

### Tir Canol drives positive change for people and wildlife

A series of initiatives aimed at ensuring a more sustainable future has been launched through the Tir Canol project in mid Wales, thanks to funding and support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Woodland Trust.

The initiatives will see local communities, landowners, farmers and conservationists come together to co-design plans for flood management, crop trials and habitat restoration, as well as a series of artistic initiatives involving local artists and traditional crafts.

The project spans an area of mid Wales largely between the rivers Dyfi in the north and Rheidol in the south, and includes RSPB Ynys-hir. The area falls within the Dyfi Biosphere Reserve area, an area recognised by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation for the diversity of its natural beauty, heritage and wildlife.

Tir Canol aims to find a way for local communities to work together to turn around declines in biodiversity and to collaboratively improve the area for people and nature. Ultimately the project could benefit populations of native wildlife such as Pine Martens and Horseshoe Bats, with the restoration and expansion of globally important habitats such as montane scrub, blanket bog, grasslands, coastal saltmarsh and living reefs.

Project partners include RSPB Cymru, the Woodland Trust, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, Tir Coed, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Cymru, Aber Food Surplus, Ecodyfi, Cambrian Mountains Initiative, Coetir Anian and Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Conservation Area.



Tir Canol will benefit wildlife including rare Pine Martens.



## New nature reserve opened in Northern Ireland

**In 2023 we were delighted to open Montiaghs Moss in County Antrim to visitors. This is a stunning nature reserve with species such as rare Marsh Fritillary butterflies, Irish Damselflies, Green Hairstreak butterflies and Cuckoos.**

Opened in May 2023, Montiaghs Moss is an area of lowland peatland that provides a mosaic of habitats including peat bog, pools, grassland, trees and hedgerows. Conservation work has been carried out and a new 500 metre boardwalk added to enable visitors to enjoy the reserve's special wildlife.

One of the most important species is the Marsh Fritillary butterfly and we have

worked closely with Butterfly Conservation, carrying out major work to try and support this vulnerable population. This has included scrub removal, rush cutting, use of cattle and ponies for grazing and the introduction of Hebridean Sheep.

Owned by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), Montiaghs Moss nature reserve is managed by RSPB NI. Funding to transform the site came from the Co-operation Across Borders for Biodiversity (CABB) project, which was supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. This project was led by RSPB NI in partnership with RSPB Scotland, Birdwatch Ireland, Butterfly Conservation, Moors for the Future and NI Water.

“

The conservation work has been successful thanks to the funding received from CABB and the continued support of local farmers, stakeholders, NIEA, volunteers and the local community, who have helped to manage the site and protect habitats for the wildlife that call the site home.

**Cathryn Cochrane**, Warden of RSPB Lough Neagh – Montiaghs Moss and Lough Beg

The new boardwalk at RSPB Montiaghs Moss nature reserve.





## Our highlights

# Species recovery

We're working throughout the UK and globally to halt species declines and secure the future for many threatened birds and other animals.

## Milestone for vulture conservation

**In South Asia, there was good news for vultures. The final cohort of Nepal's captive White-rumped Vultures was released into the wild, marking a remarkable recovery in Nepal for a bird which was almost wiped out.**

The introduction of the drug Diclofenac, used to treat cattle, since the 1990s saw tens of millions of White-rumped, Slender-billed and Long-billed Vultures disappear in a matter of 10 years, with White-rumped Vultures losing 99.9% of their population. Vultures are natural scavengers and died after consuming dead cattle treated with the drug. However, after 20 years of collaboration with Bird Conservation Nepal, the last 10 captive-reared White-rumped Vultures were released from the breeding centre. The birds were satellite tagged and released into the

world's first Diclofenac-free 'Vulture Safe Zone'. Surveys indicate that wild populations of White-rumped and Slender-billed Vultures are slowly but steadily recovering in Nepal.

Meanwhile in India, where populations have stabilised, two more drugs that are toxic to vultures were banned. This is the first drug ban in India since Diclofenac in 2006 and a positive step forward for vulture conservation.



A remarkable recovery for White-rumped Vultures in Nepal.

## Update on the impact of avian flu

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI or bird flu) has been confirmed as one of the biggest immediate conservation threats faced by multiple seabirds.

A study, led by the RSPB in collaboration with the British Trust for Ornithology, the statutory nature conservation bodies, and other conservation organisations, revealed a highly concerning picture of widespread and extensive declines. Nine of the 13 species included in the report showed decreases of

over 10% since the Seabirds Count census (between 2015 and 2021). For Gannets, Great Skuas and Roseate Terns, these declines are largely attributable to HPAI and for Sandwich and Common Terns, HPAI is the likely cause.

This study comes after the latest Seabirds Count census described on page 40. We are continuing to monitor the situation, as well as working to tackle the many threats facing seabirds including climate change, marine development and unsustainable fishing to help increase the birds' resilience.



Huge numbers of Knots and other birds winter at RSPB Wallasea Island.

## Record bird numbers at RSPB Wallasea Island

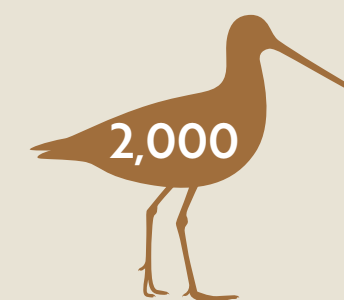
**December 2023 saw the highest ever number of waterbirds at RSPB Wallasea Island in Essex. A total of 38,000 birds, including Teals, Shovelers and Wigeons, were recorded during the monthly Wetland Bird Survey, beating a previous record of 32,770 from January 2020.**

The survey also recorded the highest ever numbers of some individual species, including 700 Avocets and over 2,000 Black-tailed Godwits. These fantastic results are thanks to the creation of over 650 hectares of lagoons, mudflats, saltmarsh and coastal grassland, between 2015 and 2018, which are now fulfilling their promise of supporting thousands of feeding and roosting waterbirds.

This habitat creation was part of the Wallasea Island Wild Coast Project that saw three million tonnes of soil, from the Crossrail scheme in London (the excavation of a railway tunnel from East to West

London for the Elizabeth Line), being used to raise land levels before the sea wall was breached in July 2015.

The habitats at Wallasea have been carefully designed with the aim of providing valuable habitat for wildlife both now and in future decades, as the climate continues to warm and sea levels continue to rise. The areas of intertidal habitat created also help compensate for previous losses of this type of habitat. This landmark conservation and engineering project remains one of the largest of its type in Europe.



Black-tailed Godwits, the highest number recorded

“

**It highlights the power of people coming together to help nature, so we'd like to say a huge thank you to our wonderful surveyors who help us count the birds each year.**

**Rachel Fancy**, RSPB Site Manager for Wallasea Island



# The State of Nature

More than 60 wildlife charities and conservation bodies collaborated to produce the landmark UK State of Nature report. Coordinated by the RSPB on behalf of the many organisations involved, this latest stocktake of UK nature reveals a number of worrying declines.

State of Nature 2023 documents the shocking declines in the abundance and distribution of wildlife across the UK. The report found that almost 1,500 species are now threatened with extinction from Great Britain. A total of 281 are at risk of extinction from the island of Ireland. Many of the most important habitats for wildlife are in poor condition and species are vanishing from places where they used to be seen.

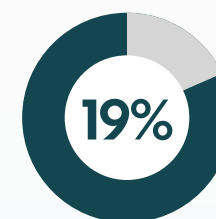
However, the report also shows that we have a good understanding of what's driving change and that many of our conservation actions are having a positive impact. But it will take all of us working together to halt and

reverse the decline in nature. As well as targeted conservation work to improve species status, we need to increase nature-friendly methods of farming, forestry and fishing. We also need to strengthen ecosystem restoration, and expand and manage protected areas. These areas cover just 11% of UK land and most are not currently in a favourable condition for nature. Of course, these efforts must be balanced with ensuring that people's needs for food, energy and access to nature are met. But unless we act now, all nature, including us, will feel the effects.

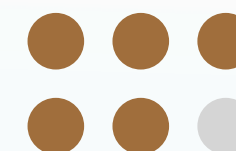
State of Nature uses the latest and best data from biological monitoring and recording schemes, collated by the incredible work of thousands of skilled people, most of whom are volunteers, to provide a benchmark for the status of our wildlife. More information, as well as country-level data can be found here: [stateofnature.org.uk](https://stateofnature.org.uk)

**A huge thank you to everyone involved.**

## Key findings



Across the UK species studied have declined on average by 19% since 1970



Nearly one in six species are threatened with extinction from Great Britain

**151**  
of 10,008

species assessed have already become extinct since 1500

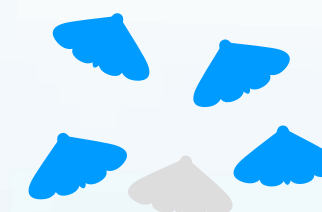


Across Great Britain over half of flowering plant species are found in fewer places than they were in 1970



**decrease**

in UK distributions of pest control species



18% decrease in UK distributions of pollinator species

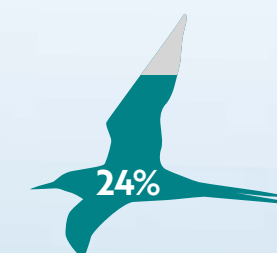


of 6,557 species assessed across UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies are threatened with global extinction



**13% decrease**

in UK distributions of 4,979 invertebrate species on average since 1970



drop in the abundance of 13 UK seabird species since 1986; that figure is a worrying 49% for 11 seabird species in Scotland





### **Water Voles return to the Lake District**

Over the last century, Water Voles have disappeared from 94% of our rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands, with habitat loss, pollution and the spread of invasive, non-native American Mink to blame. However this year saw the return of Water Voles to Wild Haweswater in Cumbria as a result of a partnership project between Eden Rivers Trust, The Environment Agency and the Cumbria Connect programme. Led by the RSPB, Cumbria Connect seeks to restore 33,000 ha of upland landscape through a partnership with United Utilities, Lowther Estates and Natural England.

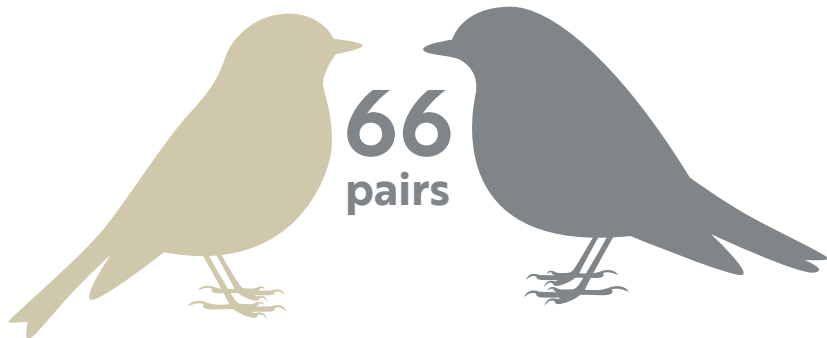
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We are thrilled to witness the Water Voles’ return to Wild Haweswater, a testament to 12 years of dedicated landscape recovery in collaboration.

**David Morris,**  
RSPB Area Manager for Cumbria



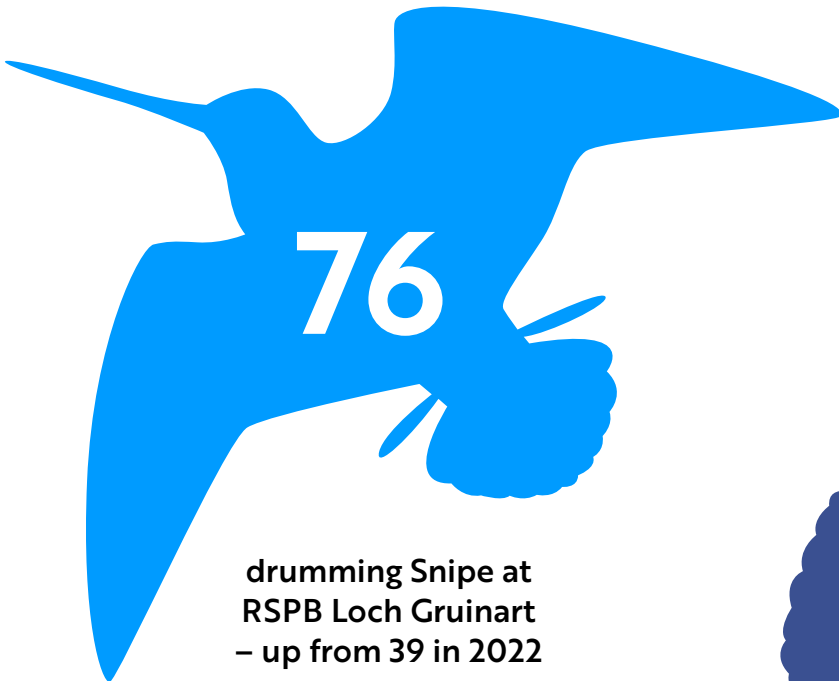
# Counting success

We care for more than 200 nature reserves across the UK, with many of them providing habitats for rare and special wildlife. Here is just a selection of how our work has had an impact on our nature reserves and beyond:

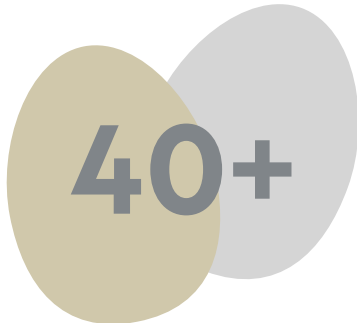


66  
pairs

of Pied Flycatchers at RSPB  
Coombes Valley following  
habitat improvement



drumming Snipe at  
RSPB Loch Gruinart  
– up from 39 in 2022



Little Tern chicks fledged at  
Chesil Beach in Dorset  
– up from three in 2021



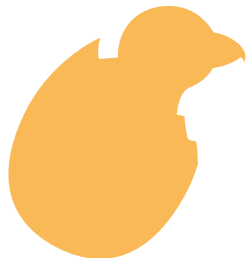
43  
pairs

of Curlews at RSPB  
Lower Lough Erne Islands Reserve



19

Wildcats were released into  
the Cairngorms thanks to  
Cairngorms Connect

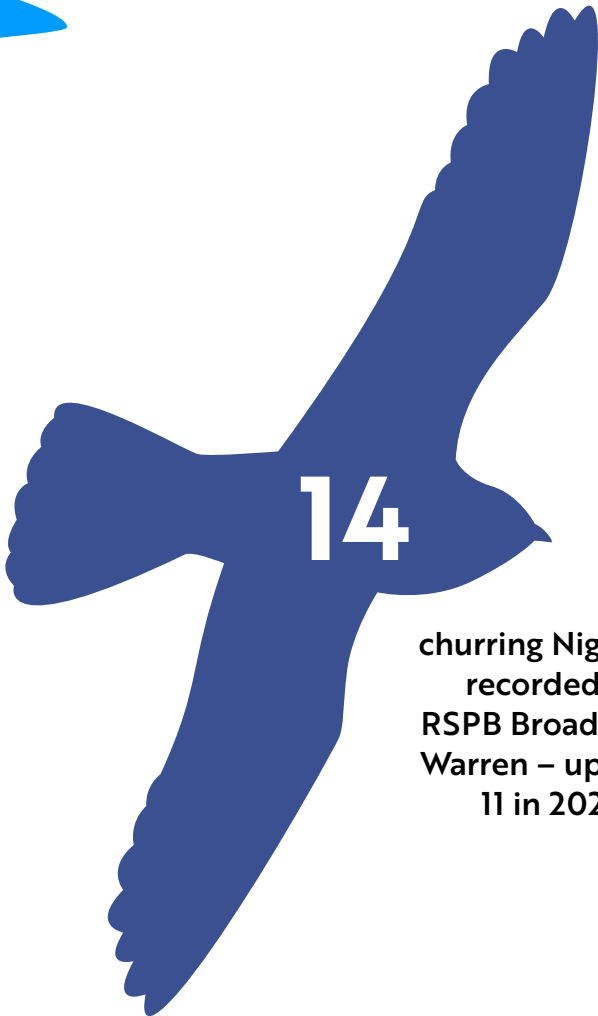


One Golden Eagle chick fledged on the Isle  
of Hoy – the first time these birds have bred  
there successfully in more than 40 years



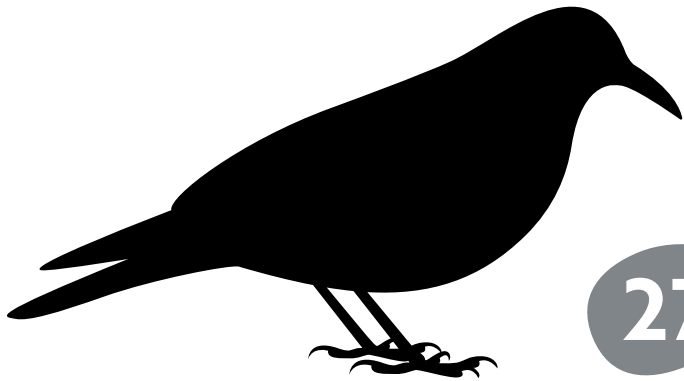
70,000

indigenous seedlings planted in  
the Taita Hills in Kenya to help  
restore 44 hectares of forest



14

churring Nightjars  
recorded at  
RSPB Broadwater  
Warren – up from  
11 in 2022



27

Chough chicks fledged at  
RSPB South Stack



33

pairs of Stone-curlews  
on RSPB reserves  
– the highest ever!



## Our highlights

# Seas

We're working in the UK and globally to tackle threats to seabirds including from unsustainable fisheries, marine development and invasive non-native species.

### Fishing in deeper waters could help prevent seabird deaths

Globally, hundreds of thousands of seabirds are accidentally caught as 'bycatch' in fishing nets and drown every year. A research paper published in October 2023 describes a change in fishing techniques that could help.

To try to solve the problem of seabird deaths through bycatch, we have worked with BirdLife partners in several countries for many years. In 2022, we began a trial in the Icelandic Lumpfish fishery, with support from the Marine Stewardship Council's Ocean Stewardship Fund. This used a specially adapted buoy that we hoped would repel birds from diving near fishing nets. Reporting on the trial, Birdlife's Bycatch Programme Manager Yann Rouxel, RSPB Conservation Scientist Steffen Oppel and colleagues explain that the use of the buoys didn't reduce the bycatch of seabirds. However, while analysing the data, the RSPB team discovered that most of the seabirds were actually caught in relatively shallow waters. Fishers who

set the nets in deeper waters generally returned with few or no birds caught.

The RSPB team then simulated what would happen if they fished in slightly deeper waters. By carefully reallocating some of the fishing effort from shallower to deeper waters, they found that the fish catch could be maintained, but the bycatch could be virtually eliminated if the fishery was restricted to waters from 50m and deeper. This simple measure could reduce the annual death toll of the Icelandic Lumpfish fishery from over 8,000 seabirds every year to almost no seabird bycatch at all. This measure would be particularly helpful for Iceland's Black Guillemot population which is currently classified as Endangered.

More research is required to fully understand the impact of the measure on fishing sustainability and on other marine wildlife. However, it seems hopeful that a relatively simple management measure could reduce bycatch and allow seabirds to fish without the risk of being caught in nets in the Icelandic Lumpfish fishery.

Deeper fishing in the Icelandic Lumpfish fishery could reduce bycatch from as many as

8,000

seabirds every year to almost

0



Modified fishing gear could dramatically reduce bycatch.

### Trial shows benefits of modified nets in Chilean fishery

The Albatross Task Force, led by BirdLife International and the RSPB, is an international team of experts on a mission to reduce seabird bycatch by 80% in some of the world's deadliest fisheries.

Between 2021 and 2023, the Albatross Task Force has been working to reduce Pink-footed Shearwater bycatch in Chilean purse seine fisheries, with the support of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This fishery, which is comprised of around 500 artisanal vessels fishing for anchovies and sardines, operates along the Humboldt Current. This is one of the most productive marine ecosystems in the world, with Chilean waters also home to numerous seabirds. However, this often leads to deadly interactions.

Between 2015 and 2017, over 1,500 Pink-footed Shearwaters – locally listed as Endangered and globally Vulnerable by the

International Union for the Conservation of Nature – were reported killed each year in this fishery. To solve this problem, Albatross Task Force Chile and the BirdLife International Marine Programme (hosted by the RSPB) collaborated with the fishing industry and local net makers, to develop a more 'seabird friendly' modified version of the purse seine gear, the types of nets typically used. These modified nets are known as MPS (modified purse seine).

In 2023, the modified nets were put to the test, through at-sea trials within the Chilean purse seine fishery. The results are promising, suggesting that modified nets could reduce seabird bycatch risks by 74%, and reduce the risk of mortality in birds caught in bycatch by up to 80%. So far, just a fraction of the purse seine fleet in Chile is equipped with MPS (around 1%), but we hope to secure more funding to further support the artisanal fleet to transition towards more sustainable practices.



## Seabirds Count shows action helps recovery

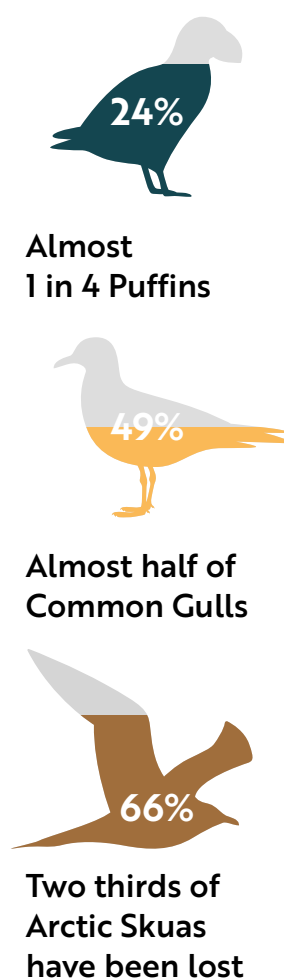
A comprehensive census on the health of Britain and Ireland's breeding seabird species published in November 2023, found that almost half of the seabirds that commonly breed here have declined. However, it also highlighted successes where conservation actions have led to rises in seabird numbers.

Since the late 1990s, almost one in four (24%) Puffins have been lost (at sites with comparable survey methods) and almost half (49%) of Common Gulls. Arctic Skuas, which breed in the north of Scotland, have declined by 66%. The reasons for the declines vary but the main ones are: a lack of food caused by climate change and overfishing; poorly sited marine industry development; predation by invasive rodents and mammals; and disease. It is also important to note that these figures relate to the period before the spread of avian flu. Many seabirds have since been severely affected by this disease, as described on page 30. However, there is also good news. Some species such as Guillemots, Great

Cormorants and Sandwich Terns seem to have stable populations overall. And some species have increased, often thanks to conservation actions. One of our rarest seabirds, the Roseate Tern, has increased by 152% because of work to protect good breeding sites, reduce predation and limit human disturbance. Manx Shearwater numbers have also risen in places such as the island of Lundy in the Bristol Channel, Ramsey off the Welsh coast and the Isles of Scilly. The removal of rats, which eat seabird eggs and young, has been key to this turnaround (see page 41).

*Seabirds Count* was the biggest survey of breeding seabirds in Britain, Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Isles for almost 20 years, and involved more than a thousand volunteers and professional surveyors visiting nearly 15,000 breeding sites between 2015 and 2021. The census was led by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee with input from other partner organisations, including the RSPB.

[jncc.gov.uk/seabirdscount](https://jncc.gov.uk/seabirdscount)



## Nine-decade high for seabirds on Lundy

The 2023 breeding season saw more seabirds nesting on Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel than at any time since the 1930s, with more than 40,000 birds breeding there.

Around 25,000 Manx Shearwaters – 90% of England's breeding population – as well as 1,335 Puffins and 161 pairs of Storm Petrels nested on Lundy. It's a remarkable turnaround. A survey back in 2000 showed a very different story, with just over 7,000 birds. Puffins were close to local extinction, with only 13 birds, and there were no Storm Petrels.

In 2002, the RSPB, Natural England, the Landmark Trust and the National Trust joined forces to bring the seabirds back to Lundy. Evidence showed that rats, introduced accidentally by ships visiting the island or from shipwrecks, were the biggest threat to seabirds. Manx Shearwaters and Puffins, for example, nest on the ground, making their chicks easy prey for rats.

After a programme of careful conservation work, the island was finally declared completely rat-free in 2004. Since then, the project team has worked hard to stop rats from returning to Lundy on boats, and regular monitoring is also undertaken to see how the seabirds are faring.

The turnaround in the seabirds' fortunes shows the importance of biosecurity measures to protect seabird breeding grounds from invasive, non-native species. Biosecurity measures are in place at a number of other islands around the UK, including Skomer, Skokholm and Ramsey, as well as on other Special Protection Area islands. However wider improvements are needed, and biosecurity must become an integral part of the conservation management of all seabird islands.



Mike Read (rspb-images.com)



Drew Buckley (rspb-images.com)





Our highlights

## Global land

Working with local partners, we're delivering high impact conservation along the East Atlantic migration route and other key locations to help conserve wildlife and support livelihoods.

### Dense forest favoured by gibbons

Researchers working in the Harapan Rainforest in Sumatra have found a higher concentration of endangered Agile Gibbons (*Hylobates agilis*) living in high, dense forest, potentially indicating that this is their preferred habitat.

The RSPB has been working with BirdLife International and local partners since 2002 to protect Hutan Harapan, almost 100,000 hectares of lowland rainforest on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, an area that is home to critically endangered species including Sumatran Tigers and Helmeted Hornbills. However the area is threatened by deforestation.

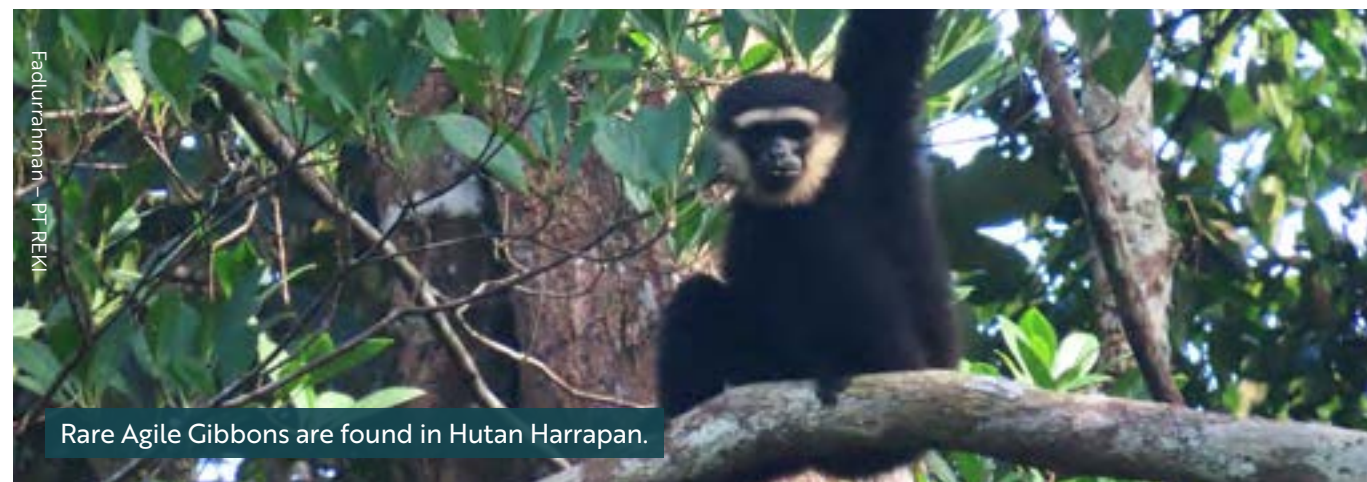
The gibbons, which are known as Owa in Indonesian and Ungko in the local language, are endangered, with habitat loss a key reason behind their decline. As well as revealing the animals' preference for high,

dense forest, the research identified 28 species of tree in the Harapan forest that provide food for the gibbons. Seven of the trees are 'pioneer trees' and as such are crucial for forest regeneration.

Agile Gibbons are known for their 'great calls', or singing bouts when pairs of males and females call out to defend their territory. The research found that calling was highest in Harapan in the early morning.



species of tree provide  
food for gibbons



Rare Agile Gibbons are found in Hutan Harrapan.



Mallo Samah farming cocoa in the Golahun Community, Gola Rainforest.

### Finding cocoa's sweet spot as new project launches

A new agroforestry project in the Gola landscape of Sierra Leone was launched in February 2024, with the aim of improving the livelihoods of cocoa farmers, protecting the region's wildlife and ensuring carbon benefits.

Gola Rainforest National Park is part of a internationally important biodiversity hotspot and home to many globally threatened species, including charismatic birds like the White-necked Picathartes and mammals such as Diana Monkeys. The region's farmers are also some of the poorest in the world. Most people living in the villages on the edge of the forest are subsistence farmers. Although cocoa is a vital crop, farmers are susceptible to fluctuating market prices.

Funded by Jersey Overseas Aid, this new agroforestry project will support local cocoa farmers to increase their food security and develop additional income streams that complement existing cocoa production in the region. Once successfully scaled up, this project has the potential to support 3,000 cocoa farmers and their families in generating more secure and sustainable income. It is also hoped that, by improving livelihoods, there could be a reduction in deforestation in the national park's buffer zone, where some forest is still occasionally cleared to grow crops.

The aim is to establish sustainable approaches to agroforestry that effectively balance the needs of people, nature and the climate. The RSPB has been working with partners in the region for over a decade and in 2015 Gola Rainforest Conservation was founded as a partnership between the Government of Sierra Leone, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, the RSPB and the people of the seven Gola Chiefdoms.



A White-necked Picathartes in Gola.





The Greenland breeding population of Barnacle Geese migrate to Scotland and the west of Ireland for winter.

## £3 million partnership to benefit African-Eurasian Flyway

The RSPB and Birdlife International have begun work on a £3 million partnership with the Ecological Restoration Fund to help protect landscapes and billions of birds along the African-Eurasian Flyway.

Stretching from the Arctic to southern Africa, the African-Eurasian Flyway is one of four great global pathways used by hundreds of millions of migratory birds every year, many of which stop off in the UK, such as Barnacle Geese, Dunlins and Wigeons.

All along the flyway, threats such as habitat destruction and degradation, illegal hunting and climate change threaten the future of some of the flyway's most important sites and the birds that rely on them. However the £3 million from the Ecological Restoration Fund will enable the protection of biodiversity hotspots and the rejuvenation of degraded landscapes, increasing efforts in key countries such as Iceland, Ghana and South Africa, and in important landscapes such as the East Coast Wetlands in England and the Gola Rainforest straddling the Liberia and Sierra

Leone border. The fund will also benefit migratory songbirds, who move between Europe and West Africa in their billions twice a year.

The fund will be used to tackle threats including habitat destruction and degradation, illegal hunting and climate change, and to foster cultural, social and economic opportunities for local communities.

Welcoming the news, RSPB Executive Director Global Conservation Katie-jo Luxton said: "We are very excited by this new international programme which will see people from many different countries working together to share knowledge and support action for nature and climate at scale. Our birds know no borders, so it's imperative that we collaborate to find solutions to the challenges they face."

## Supporting Senegal's future ornithologists

Senegal in West Africa is globally important for migrating birds thanks to its vast estuaries and savannahs. However with very few ornithologists in the country, there is a need to build capacity and nurture more expertise.

The last year saw a major milestone with the first intake of students on a new Master's course in ornithology. The first cohort of students have since completed their first year of studies and a new intake has joined them. Coordinated by the RSPB and supported by the AG Leventis Foundation and Vogelbescherming Nederland (VBN), this course is training the next generation of French-speaking ornithologists in the region. Importantly the course will equip the students with field-based ornithological skills.

This project is running alongside our ongoing capacity-building work with the Senegalese BirdLife partner Nature-Communautés-Développement, work supported by the Darwin Initiative. The goal is that by 2030, Nature-Communautés-Développement will be a strong, financially stable, well-governed and locally-led organisation with significant public support, and delivering effective conservation work to the benefit of migratory and non-migratory wildlife.



Senegal hosts thousands of migratory waterbirds in winter, including Black-tailed Godwits.



## Our highlights

# UK Overseas Territories

Our ambition is to improve the conservation of important terrestrial and marine wildlife sites, contributing to 30% of land and seas well-managed by 2030.

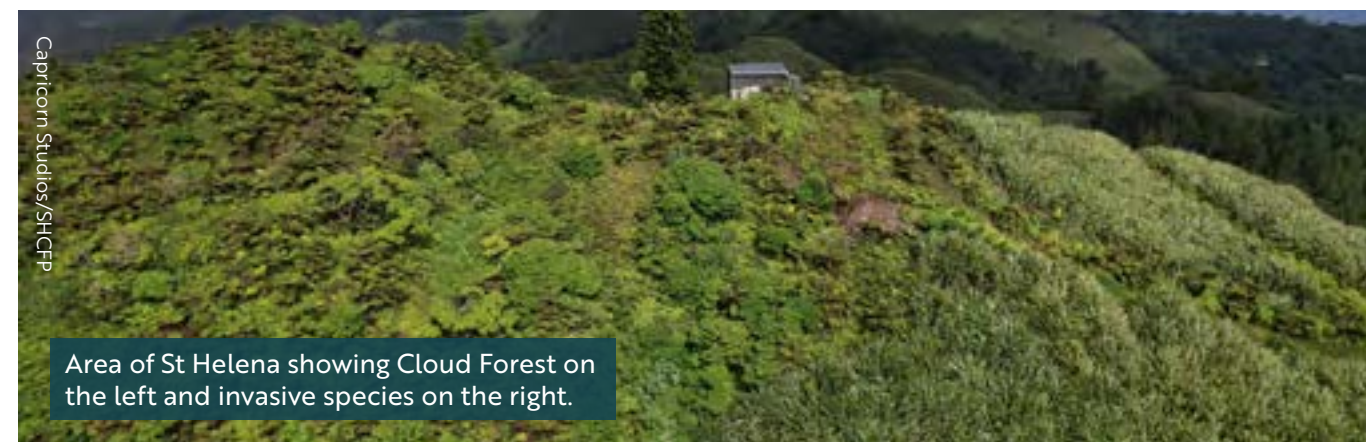
### Cloud forest project boosting wildlife and water security

St Helena, a UK Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic Ocean, is one of the most important sites for wildlife on British soil. The island's fragments of cloud forest total just 16 hectares, scattered across the Peaks National Park, yet this habitat is also the main source of fresh water, with the native plants of the cloud forest capturing water from mist. Ongoing research suggests mist capture contributes an incredible 60% of the island's fresh water.

Invasive plant species are a constant threat to St Helena's cloud forest habitat. They out-compete the island's native plants causing degradation and fragmentation of habitat. They also cause more rapid run off, as opposed to the peaty soils associated with the native habitat which retain water for longer. Thanks to funding from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the St Helena Cloud Forest Project is working to remove invasive plant species

from key water catchment areas, rejuvenate and restore areas of endemic cloud forest, connect fragmented sections, and create new areas of habitat. This work is being led by project partners the St Helena Government, St Helena National Trust and local water utility company Connect Saint Helena. As St Helena is a volcanic island, the project has also involved geophysical surveys to look at the amount and sources of water available, different types of water flow, and water loss.

Our work to restore St Helena's cloud forest has the potential to provide a more sustainable cost-effective solution to water security, in the longer-term, than alternative solutions such as dams, additional reservoirs or desalination. The project is also crucial to protecting and restoring the island's cloud forest habitats and the wildlife that's found there. As well as providing increased water security, the project will benefit local people through education and eco-tourism. Find out more here: [bit.ly/cloud-forest-project](https://bit.ly/cloud-forest-project)



Area of St Helena showing Cloud Forest on the left and invasive species on the right.

Capricorn Studios/SHCFP



Major milestone in efforts to save the Critically Endangered Wilkins' Bunting.

Peter Ryan

### Critically Endangered Wilkins' Bunting given new hope

2024 marked the end of a three-year Darwin Plus and John Ellerman Foundation funded project in Tristan da Cunha, where we have been working to save a Critically Endangered bird species, the Wilkins' Bunting.

Tristan da Cunha is a remote group of islands in the South Atlantic Ocean situated over 2,000km to the south of St Helena. Much like Darwin's famed finches of the Galapagos, birds across the islands of Tristan da Cunha have similarly evolved into separate species with distinct niches. The Wilkins' Bunting is only found on Nightingale Island and has evolved to specialise on the fruits of Tristan's only native tree, *Phylica arborea*, using its large, powerful bill to crack the fruits open to get to the seeds inside.

However, the accidental introduction of an invasive scale insect has devastated the *Phylica* trees that the birds depend on. The insects infest the *Phylica* trees and by secreting honeydew, they encourage the growth of a sooty mould which can completely smother and kill the trees. In 2019 two major storms hit the island. With the trees already weakened by the insects, an estimated 80% of the island's forest was lost during these weather events.

Wilkins' Buntings are Critically Endangered, so to prevent the first global bird extinction on British soil for over 60 years it was necessary to intervene. In 2020 we began work to find a suitable biocontrol agent to tackle the insects. We have now established a tiny wasp species on the islands and the *Phylica* trees are starting to recover. Tree numbers have also been bolstered by the establishment of a *Phylica* nursery, providing healthy trees to reforest the islands. In February 2024, a survey estimated there to be 60 to 90 breeding pairs of Wilkins' Buntings. While the birds remain at risk, thanks to this project and ongoing monitoring their future is now looking much brighter.



Horticulturists Kelly Swain and Natasha Glass.

Natasha Glass





St Helena is home to hundreds of species that exist nowhere else on earth.

## New spider species found on St Helena

### New species of wolf and pirate spiders have been found on the remote isle of St Helena.

Thanks to research through the St Helena Cloud Forest Project funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with support from the RSPB and the Species Recovery Trust, scientists are learning more about St Helena's unique wildlife.

Lying 2,000km off the coast of West Africa, St Helena's remote island location means that it is home to hundreds of species that exist nowhere else on earth. A research group led by British arachnologist Danni Sherwood discovered three new species while studying the spiders of the island.

The first of the new species is the Mt Vesey Waterfall Wolf Spider (*Hogna veseyensis*), a remarkable species which is only known to live under water-logged rocks and the rock face of the Mt Vesey Waterfall, within the Peaks National Park. It probably has one of the smallest known ranges of any invertebrate in the world.

The second new species is the Mole Spider (*Molearachne sanctaehelenae*). This spider is also a wolf spider, but unlike almost all other species, it makes many underground tunnels and mounds on the ground of its semi-desert home and has very small eyes. The final new species is the Daryl Wolf Spider (*Dolocosa joshuai*), which occurs only on Horse Point and Prosperous Bay Plain, the arid parts of the island. This new



A new species, the Mt Vesey Waterfall Wolf Spider.



Conservationists Perry Leo and Liza Fowler carrying out research.

species was named after Daryl Joshua, a young conservationist working for the St Helena National Trust.

The researchers also recorded two species of pirate spiders, so named for their habit of raiding other spiders' webs. Although first discovered in the 1960s, the spiders were deemed invasive and of the same species. The new research shows that they are in fact two separate species and endemic to St Helena. The two species have been named *Ero lizae* and *Ero natashae* after St Helena National Trust invertebrate conservationists Liza Fowler and Natasha Stevens in recognition of their years of work protecting the island's wildlife.

[sthelenatourism.com/st-helenas-cloud-forest-project](https://sthelenatourism.com/st-helenas-cloud-forest-project)



Mt Vesey waterfall where access can be difficult.





Our highlights

# Food and farming

With farmland birds declining by 59% since 1970, we're determined that more agricultural land should contribute positively to nature's recovery, supporting people and wildlife.

## New hope for Turtle Doves

**Globally threatened, Turtle Doves have been hit hard by changes in UK farming practices, as well as unsustainable hunting in south-west Europe. But work on their breeding grounds in the UK and their migratory route means the future is looking brighter for these beautiful birds.**

Operation Turtle Dove is a UK initiative which aims to improve breeding habitat and food availability for the birds here. A partnership between the RSPB, Natural England, Pensthorpe Conservation Trust and Fair to Nature, it has led to the creation of 620 foraging and supplementary feeding sites for Turtle Doves in 2023. Record numbers of farmers, land managers and volunteers have got involved, including over 260 farm holdings – covering over 68,500 hectares – plus a further 107 land managers and an army of dedicated volunteers.

Meanwhile, Turtle Dove hunting in France, Spain and Portugal was again banned in 2023, following on from bans in 2021 and 2022. All UK breeding Turtle Doves migrate

via these countries. Each year of the ban is estimated to have saved the lives of one million birds from the western European population. The decision is part of an Adaptive Harvest Management mechanism adopted by the European Commission.

Mike Shurmer, Head of Species for RSPB England explains: "We are hopeful that these efforts on the breeding grounds, alongside effective conservation at scale across the whole of the Turtle Dove migration flyway, will have helped us to turn a corner for this bird. Ten years ago, the prospects for Turtle Doves looked bleak. But, through collaboration, focus, and persistence we have developed and implemented the evidence base, changing this completely."

[operationturtledove.org](https://operationturtledove.org)

# 1,000,000

**Turtle Doves saved each year thanks to hunting bans**

## Supporting nature-friendly farming

We continue to advance our advocacy work at pace, demanding government subsidies that support farmers to carry out their business in a nature-friendly way. That way, farming and nature both come

out on top. We know that our advocacy work can achieve fantastic results. Just recently, our campaign on hedgerows was successful in securing important legislation to protect these vital habitats in England (see page 17).

“

It's amazing to hear about birds returning to breed in parts of southern and eastern England after the hard work and dedication of so many land managers and communities.

**Rebecca Pringle**, Senior Ornithology Specialist, Natural England

Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)



Farmers, land managers and volunteers are working to help Turtle Doves.



## Work with farmers boosts wader numbers in Orkney

Wading birds, including Lapwings, Curlews and Oystercatchers, are facing large declines in their breeding populations across the UK. In Orkney they are faring better than in many places but are still under threat.

RSPB Scotland is working with landowners to improve habitat for the birds and boost their breeding success. In one site in Rousay in Orkney, the RSPB is working with the landowner and local farmer. Measures include livestock fencing, targeted grazing and the creation of new wetland features, such as scrapes or shallow pools.

In previously unmanaged areas cattle have been introduced. Through grazing, the cows create areas of shorter and longer vegetation, providing places for wading birds to feed and nest. The longer 'tussocks' are particularly important as these provide nesting habitat as well as cover from predators. Additionally, invertebrates are attracted to the cow pats, increasing biodiversity and proving feeding opportunities for the wading birds. Farmer Stuart Sailor said: "We can see the cattle actually improving the land here. I like this win-win situation. We get the grazing and they actually improve the land."

In just one year the work has shown real results. There were 12 breeding pairs of Lapwings compared with none prior to the work, and a similar increase in breeding Curlew numbers. Redshanks and Snipe have also moved into the site and there has been a 204% increase in breeding pairs of Oystercatchers.

The Northern Island Landscape project was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Nature Restoration Fund. It brings together Orkney Islands Council, NatureScot and Highlands and Islands Enterprise as well as local community groups.

Conservation efforts have seen a 204% increase in Oystercatchers.

## A Guide to Nature Positive Dairy Farming

RSPB NI, the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland and its member organisations Dale Farm, Lakeland Dairies and Leprino Foods, alongside the Nature Friendly Farming Network have worked in collaboration to produce *A Guide to Nature Positive Dairy Farming*.

With a network of over 3,000 farms, the dairy sector commands a substantial portion of Northern Ireland's agricultural land, providing a unique opportunity to champion nature-friendly initiatives. *A Guide to Nature Positive Dairy Farming* provides a comprehensive roadmap towards nature-friendly farming practices within the dairy industry.

RSPB NI worked with the dairy sector to undertake a series of farming workshops and testing on five representative dairy farms to outline a comprehensive menu of practical measures which can be taken to support nature positive farming.

Welcoming the work, Ian Stevenson, Chief Executive of the Dairy Council Northern Ireland said: "The Dairy Council has been working with RSPB NI over the last year, to develop these guidelines for farmers. By identifying what farmers are already doing, a series of practical measures have been

developed, to allow farmers to enhance biodiversity on their land, creating positives for both the farm and the environment, which is the bottom line at the end of the day."

Dr Jonathan Bell, RSPB NI Head of Land and Sea Policy added: "This work has been well-received by the dairy industry and farmers, who want to take steps towards managing their farms better for nature. The project has helped identify what is possible, even on our most intensively farmed land; a set of practical actions all dairy farms can take to help turn the tide on nature's decline. We believe, with the right policy tools and financial support, the dairy industry can become leaders in Nature Positive practices."

[bit.ly/nature-positive-dairy-farming](https://bit.ly/nature-positive-dairy-farming)

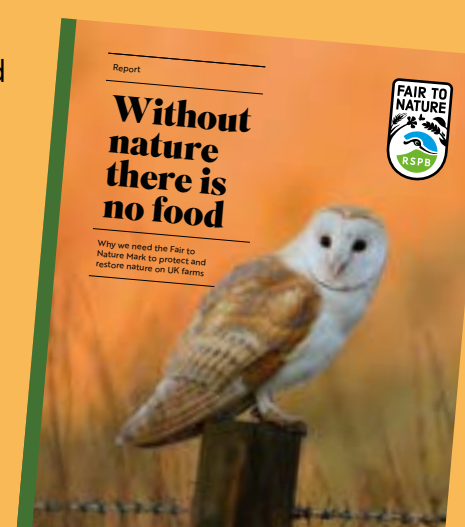


## Without nature, there is no food

The new *Without Nature, There is No Food* report from RSPB Fair to Nature, published in January 2024, shows how nature underpins food and farming, and how the RSPB Fair to Nature certification can help people help nature when buying food. Products

certified as Fair to Nature contain ingredients sourced from farms that meet a rigorous set of criteria, including managing 10% of their land for nature, by providing good quality wildlife habitat.

[bit.ly/nature-food-report](https://bit.ly/nature-food-report)





## Our highlights

# Nature positive economy

We're working with businesses to help them take more action for nature, and to encourage the transition to a nature positive economy.

### Leading the way for a nature positive economy

**We have continued to step up our policy and advocacy work on ensuring the transition to a nature positive and net zero economy.**

We have engaged more visibly around key economic events, such as the UK Government's Spending Review and the Budget, setting out how we need a detailed and well-resourced plan for government investment in nature and the fiscal rules that facilitate it.

Increased private sector investment in nature is also critical and we have fed into work and consultations being led by the British Standards Institute, including representation on their Advisory Group for standards on biodiversity. There has also been positive progress with the launch of the Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures. The taskforce is a

market-led and government supported initiative that provides organisations with a disclosure framework to act on their nature-related dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities, and we are leading work reviewing the underlying biodiversity metrics.

The Business Conservation Advice team continues to partner directly with businesses to help them on their nature positive journey. These include leading organisations such as idverde, Lightrock Power, Openreach, The Royal & Ancient, CEMEX and Barratt Homes. In partnership with these organisations, we have hit a new milestone of over 10,000 hectares of land now well-managed for nature.

## Over 10,000

**hectares of land now well-managed for nature thanks to the RSPB's Business Conservation Advice team**



Our partnership with Barratt Homes is helping to create wildlife-friendly spaces on new developments.



A discussion sparked by *The Business of Nature*.

### Save Our Wild Isles brings businesses on board

**As part of the Save Our Wild Isles campaign, we collaborated with WWF-UK and the National Trust, along with Silverback films, to create four films to inform, educate and inspire the business audience.**

These are: *Banking on a Wilder Tomorrow* for the finance sector, *Hungry for Change* on food and farming, *Catch-22* on the marine environment, and *The Business of Nature*, about how all businesses need to work together for nature. The films featured business leaders including Deborah Meaden, Dame Sharon White from the John Lewis Group, and Bevis Watts, CEO of Triodos Bank. Since launching the films, we have:

- Received 300 requests for Save Our Wild Isles business films screenings from a wide range of companies, including PepsiCo, PwC, the Crown Estate and Tesco
- Provided support and speakers for over 100 screenings
- Engaged with 45,000 people at our events
- Reached 30,000 views on YouTube.

Two of the films have won awards: *Hungry for Change* won the Greener Living Short Film award at the Global Sustainability Film Awards 2023 and *The Business of Nature* won Silver in the longform category at the Smiley Charity Film Awards 2023. The films were also a finalist for the Nature and Biodiversity Project category at the 2023 edie Awards, run by the edie network for sustainable business.

The response from the business community has been overwhelmingly positive, leading to new partnerships and opening new opportunities to talk to businesses and attend conferences, both as the RSPB and as partners with WWF and National Trust. We have also taken the films to some of the biggest sustainability conferences in the UK, including Business Green Net Zero and Blue Earth Summit.

To show the Save Our Wild Isles businesses films at your workplace, visit: [www.saveourwildisles.org.uk/business/host-a-screening](https://www.saveourwildisles.org.uk/business/host-a-screening)

“

Farmers can't solve these big problems alone. Big businesses like ours can drive systemic change that benefits our business as well as individual farmers.

PepsiCo Employee



## Co-op and the RSPB join forces for peatland

In 2023 Co-op and the RSPB joined forces in a three-year strategic partnership to protect UK peatland, starting with a £1m investment from the sales of compostable carrier bags in its stores. Co-op's initial investment is supporting the ongoing restoration and long-term management of areas of internationally important, RSPB-owned upland peatland in Scotland and Wales, equivalent in size to around 400 football pitches.

The UK's peat uplands are globally rare ecosystems, and when healthy are able to lock away significant amounts of carbon, a natural solution in our efforts to tackle climate change. As well as restoring and maintaining healthy peatland, the Co-op-supported projects will deliver additional environmental benefits. These include the protection of natural habitats for wildlife, and potentially improving water quality and reducing flood risk by regulating water flow. Find out more at [rspb.org.uk/corporate-partnerships/co-op](https://rspb.org.uk/corporate-partnerships/co-op)

“

Our pioneering partnership with the RSPB will play a part in helping to avoid carbon emissions through repairing vital peatlands to increase carbon stores and support our work to prioritise action where we are able to make the most impact.

**Joe Hulme,**  
Senior Climate Change Manager, Co-op





## Our highlights

# RSPB capabilities

To meet our ambitions for nature, we need to be the best we can be, with an operating structure and capabilities that help us achieve our strategic objectives.

### Safeguarding training course wins award

The RSPB's Safeguarding eLearning module has won the Bronze Award in the Excellence in Learning Design – Non-Profit/Charity category at the prestigious Learning Technologies Awards.

The Safeguarding Level 1 training is for all paid employees as well as certain volunteer roles, and is designed to ensure the welfare of vulnerable people and others who encounter the RSPB.

The Learning Technologies Award Judging Panel described the Safeguarding eLearning as: "A highly effective compliance module that has delivered on its intended aim – to raise issues around safeguarding". They added: "This module shows how good

learning design can overcome the constraints of a tight budget and limited production tools. Hopefully this well-deserved Bronze award will encourage the team to go from strength to strength".

Protecting all people from harm is a top priority for the RSPB, and good safeguarding practices underpinned by award-winning safeguarding training allows us to enable more, and more diverse, people to act for nature.

**"This module shows how good learning design can overcome the constraints of a tight budget and limited production tools."**

### Six new members join the RSPB Youth Council

The RSPB Youth Council is an active group of young people, aged 16 to 24, with a strong passion for nature. Last year, we recruited six new members following an inclusive process which saw 145 applicants. The Council now includes 15 members, with young people from all four countries of the UK and with a wide range of skills, experiences and interests.

Council members have also been given a greater representation in RSPB decision-making. As well as having regular meetings with RSPB Chief Executive Beccy Speight and Chair Kevin Cox, members sit on a number of RSPB Advisory Committees, including Communications and Engagement, Conservation, and Commercial and Partnerships.

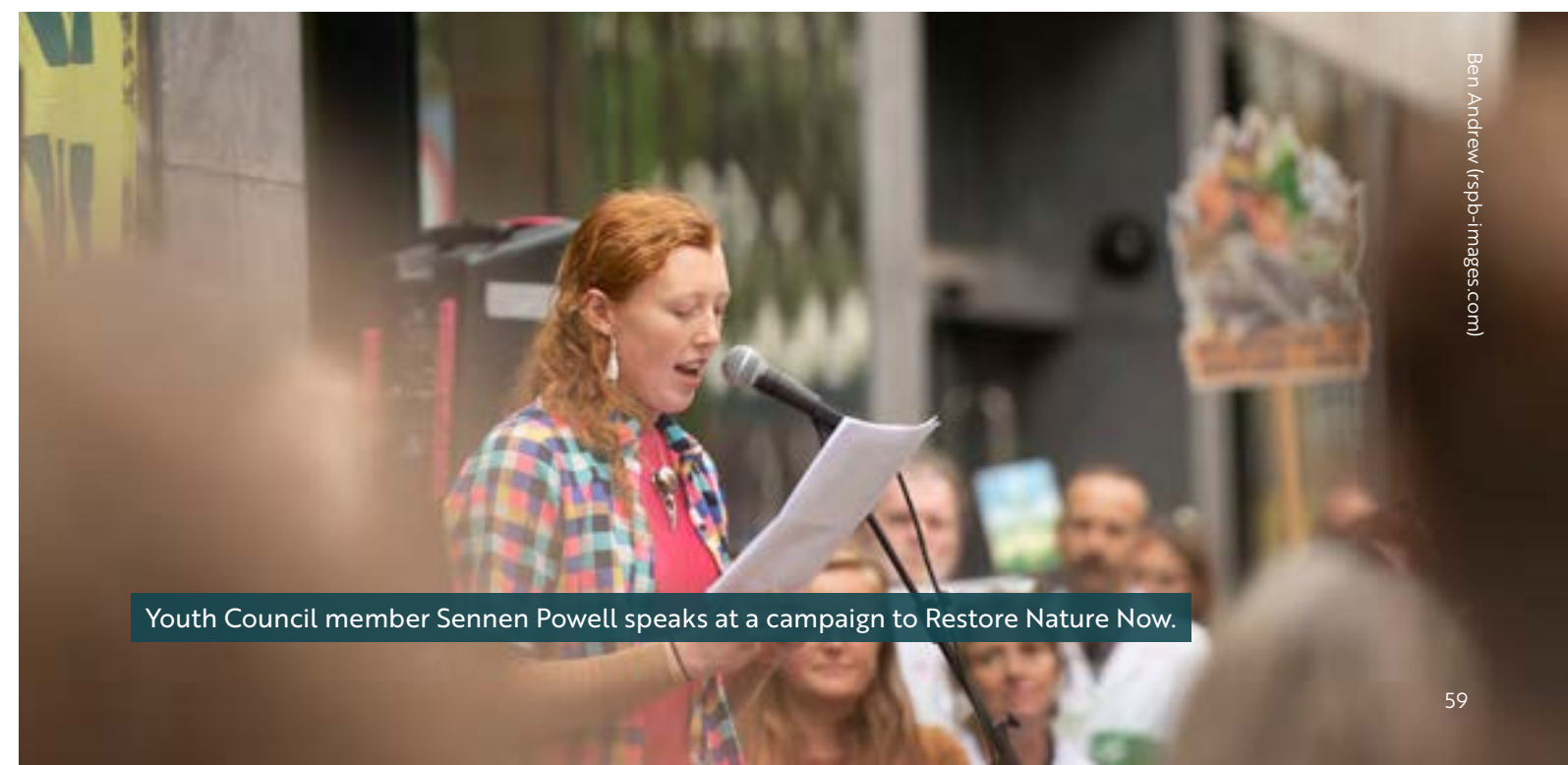
The increased involvement of the Youth Council is bringing huge benefits. As well as playing a key role in the Wild Isles Young Voices for Nature film, *Our Beautiful Wild* (see page 25), the Council's ongoing work is helping to guide strategy, drive projects and widen the RSPB's appeal to new and younger audiences.

**"Being a part of the RSPB committees has been a fantastic experience for the Youth Council, allowing us to have a say within important discussions. As a member of the conservation advisory committee, I have learnt more about the RSPB's global projects and have felt valued as a youth representative."**

**Alfie Davis**, Youth Council member



**Bronze Award in the Excellence in Learning Design**



Youth Council member Sennen Powell speaks at a campaign to Restore Nature Now.



## Working towards greater ethnic diversity

As part of our ongoing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion work, we are continuing our journey towards building an RSPB where everyone can thrive.

To achieve our vision of creating a world richer in nature, we know we need more people, and more diverse people, to act. Yet, people from ethnically diverse backgrounds are significantly under-represented in the UK conservation workforce, disproportionately affected by climate change, and often not involved in conversations around responses to the nature and climate emergency.

In February 2023, The RACE (Radical Action for the Climate Emergency) Report, was published. This is an external report led by a diverse partnership to encourage UK environmental charities and their funders to tackle the ongoing lack of racial diversity in the sector. We have been voluntarily involved since the start of the initiative in 2022.

At the RSPB, ethnic minority representation of our paid workforce currently stands at 2.8%. This is significantly below the average of 6% amongst 137 environment organisations participating in the RACE Report, and we are determined to change this. We also recognise from the report that people of colour may feel isolated and less able to be themselves at work.

We are committed to bringing about positive change and to tackle these issues we are focusing on:

- Education and action: rolling out race equity learning opportunities across the organisation so that our people have access to tools, skills and knowledge.
- Support and wellbeing: improving access for people to raise concerns; strengthening our health and wellbeing support.
- Development and progression: removing barriers that prevent equity of career progression for our employees of colour.
- Sharing knowledge and understanding: capturing, sharing and embedding examples of best practice across our organisation and the wider sector.

We have also set up a dedicated taskforce to help us move further and faster towards removing the barriers within the RSPB that produce racial disparities.

As our Chief Executive Beccy Speight explains: "We know there is still much more we need to do, and we are implementing the interventions needed to widen opportunities for people of colour to access and have a meaningful say and part in the future of conservation. We are determined to get this right because it will take all of us to turn the tide for nature."

“

We know there is still much more we need to do, and we are implementing the interventions needed to widen opportunities for people of colour to access and have a meaningful say and part in the future of conservation.

**Beccy Speight**, Chief Executive



We need more, and more diverse, people to act for nature.



## Our highlights

# RSPB greening

We are working to ensure that the RSPB is a nature positive organisation and moving towards having a net climate cooling impact.

This year, we initiated an overarching Greening Programme, updated our Environmental Policy, improved our environmental and carbon monitoring, and developed a holistic climate response model, LARK.

We have continued to make great progress through our Environmental Management System (Green Dragon) certification, which is awarded to organisations taking steps to reduce their environmental impact. We have reached Level 3 in Scotland, Wales, North and East England, Northern Ireland and UKHQ. We have also committed to embed our Environmental Management System sooner than our previous ambition date and are aiming to be fully accredited to Level 5 by 2025/26.



**Green Dragon recognises effective environmental management**

### Greening initiatives

We have introduced a digital version of *The RSPB Magazine*, cutting paper use, reducing waste and third-party emissions. We reduced plastic use by switching to paperboard membership cards from a polyester blend, adopted a cup recycling scheme for our Food and Beverage offerings and worked with 'Too Good to Go' to reduce food waste. We have developed more partnerships with suppliers sharing RSPB sustainability and ethical values, including plastic-free packaging that is recyclable, compostable or reusable.

We have also improved the sustainability of products sold in our shops, including removing plastic packaging from RSPB greetings cards, selling our first second-life plastic bird feeder, reducing packaging used by our key suppliers, adopting clear information on packaging recycling on our optics and accessories range, and launching vegan suet cakes with a lower carbon and land use impact.

Greening initiatives introduced on reserves include battery operated power tools, renewable oil for chainsaws, replacing lights with LEDs, donating old furniture and stationery to others, installing more EV charging points and repairing hides with old pallets.

### RSPB Greenhouse gas emissions 2023/24

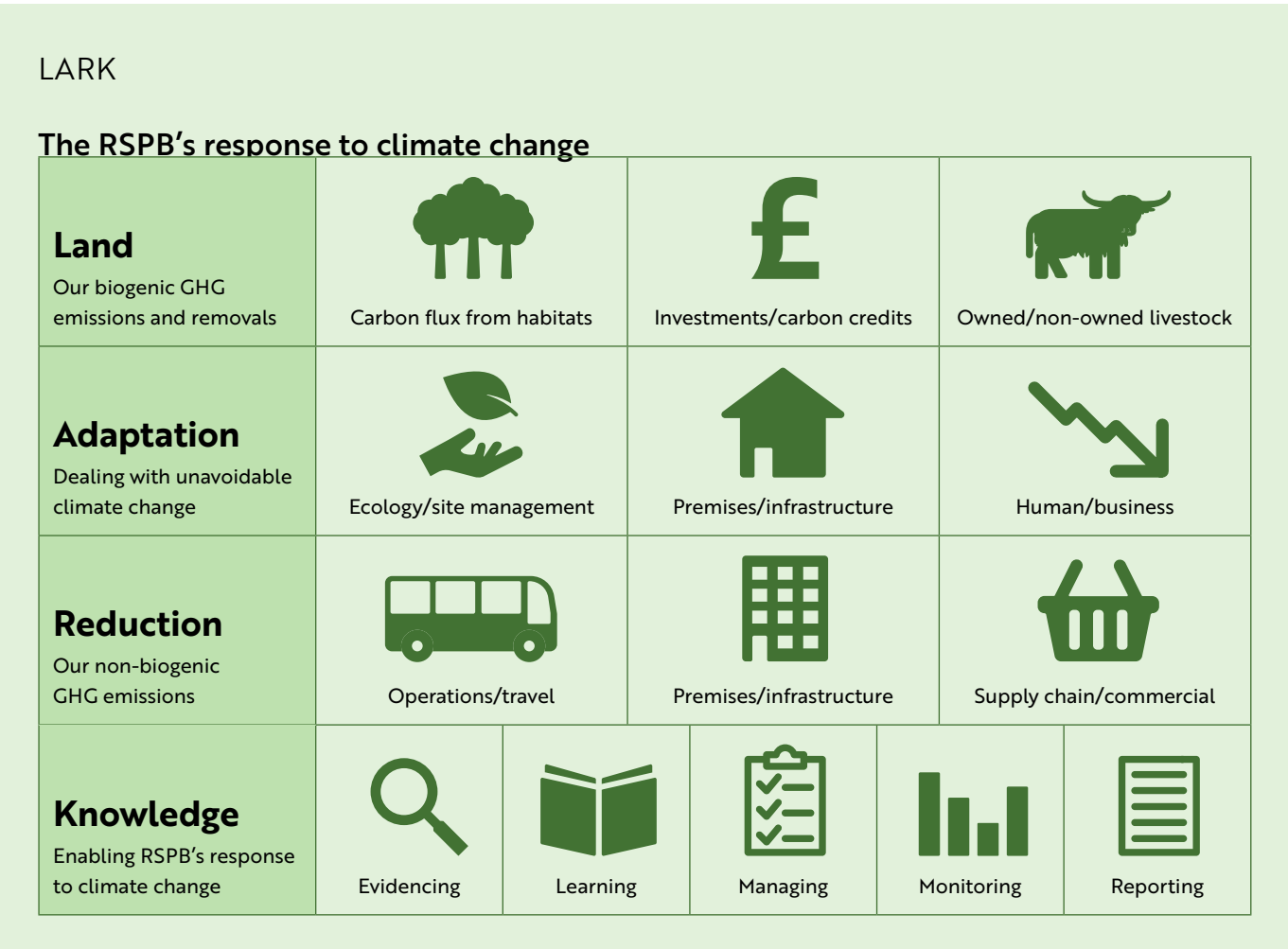
	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
<b>Energy consumption (KWh)</b>				
Electricity	3,501,268	3,238,498	2,920,504	2,505,424
Gas, LPG and oil	2,463,952	2,668,771	2,248,614	2,275,943
Transport fuel – fleet cars	2,907,211	2,908,171	2,783,174	1,145,835
Reserves' machinery	1,695,502	1,494,818	1,183,152	1,644,261
Other – woodfuel	1,166,624	1,486,401	505,645	451,070
Other – renewables (PV and wind)	1,951,628	*1,875,527	753,280	1,126,845
<b>Total KWh</b>	<b>13,686,185</b>	<b>13,672,186</b>	<b>10,394,369</b>	<b>9,149,378</b>
<b>Emissions (tCO<sub>2</sub>e)</b>				
<b>SCOPE 1 (S1)</b>				
Combustion of gas, LPG and oil for heating	463	527	454	493
Combustion of fuel for machinery on reserves	421	367	451	275
Combustion of fuel for fleet transport	693	700	631	
Combustion of woodfuel for heating	11	14	8	7
<b>Total tCO<sub>2</sub>e (S1)</b>	<b>1,588</b>	<b>1,608</b>	<b>1,544</b>	<b>775</b>
<b>SCOPE 2 (S2)</b>				
Purchase of electricity (location based, LB)	708	626	643	584
Purchase of electricity (market based, MB)	80	115	232	186
<b>Total tCO<sub>2</sub>e (S1/2 MB)</b>	<b>1,668</b>	<b>1,723</b>	<b>1,776</b>	<b>961</b>
Intensity ratio: Total tCO <sub>2</sub> e/staff (S1/S2 MB)	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.5
<b>SCOPE 3 (S3)</b>				
1. Purchased goods and services				
**Contractors on reserves		604	598	
Other goods and services	72,105	77,751		
3. Fuel- and energy-related activities				
Transmission and distribution (market based)	7	11	21	
Well to tank (market based)	1,029	696	84	
5. Waste generated in operations				
Waste management	19	4	7	
Water supply and treatment	4	5	2	
6. Business travel				
Grey fleet - Staff	616	1021	261	120
Public transport - Staff	729	818	562	1149
Grey fleet - Volunteer	121			
Public transport - Volunteer	3			
7. Employee commuting				
Emissions for commuting - Staff	1,339			
Emissions for teleworking - Staff	528	405		
8. Upstream leased assets	69			
9. Downstream transportation/distribution	234	221	372	
10. Processing of sold products	479	697	711	682
<b>Total tCO<sub>2</sub>e (S3)</b>	<b>77,281</b>	<b>82,233</b>	2,618	1,951
Carbon offsets and carbon units tCO <sub>2</sub> e	0	0	0	0
<b>Total annual emissions tCO<sub>2</sub>e (all scopes) LB</b>	<b>79,577</b>	<b>84,467</b>	<b>4805</b>	<b>3310</b>
<b>Total annual emissions tCO<sub>2</sub>e (all scopes) MB</b>	<b>78,949</b>	<b>83,956</b>	<b>4394</b>	<b>2912</b>
***Intensity ratio: total tCO <sub>2</sub> e/staff (All scopes) MB	31.8	33.2	1.9	1.4

\* Adjusted figure

\*\* Included now in 'Other goods and services' category

\*\*\* Volunteer travel excluded from ratio to ensure data boundaries match (if included the metric remains at 31.8t). Metric will be based on workforce FTE (staff and volunteers) from 2024/25.





**Driving change through LARK**  
Under the memorable acronym – LARK – we have pulled together the key pillars of our climate change response, which the new Greening Programme manages. LARK, representing Land, Adaptation, Reduction, Knowledge, directly links to our recent Environmental Policy commitments and will underpin new targets being developed as part of our path to Net Zero.

**Land**  
How land is managed affects the climate, both positively and negatively. Land management for nature often benefits the climate too, for example through nature-based climate solutions. Significant habitat restoration and creation projects at various nature reserves, from Lake Vyrnwy to Yell, are already reducing greenhouse gas emissions from our land. We estimate that

our major restoration activities in 2022-23 alone increased the net climate cooling effect of land that we manage by around 14,300 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year.

**Adaptation**  
The Greening Programme has established an adaptation working group to coordinate a more holistic RSPB adaptation response (across reserve management, infrastructure and operations). The Group will prepare a report for submission to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) by end of 2024 describing our level of climate change preparedness, which will help inform the next national Climate Change Risk Assessment. The RSPB undertakes on-the-ground adaptive management on our nature reserves. For example, at Wallasea in the last year, we raised the height of bird nesting islands in

one of the main lagoons. This enables water levels to be kept higher at the start of the breeding season, thereby making it easier to prevent the lagoon from drying out too quickly and salinities from rising too high during periods of exceptionally dry weather in spring, which we have been experiencing more frequently in recent years.

**Reduction**  
We have started the development of an ambitious GHG (greenhouse gas) reduction plan, to provide a clear path for the RSPB to reach a net zero emissions position. This plan will cover every aspect of our operations from strategy, governance and leadership to energy use and travel, purchasing and suppliers. The plan will be operating by early 2025, with continuous adaptive management to ensure we stay on track. We will be transparent and open in publishing the plan and our progress towards targets.

**Knowledge**  
The table on page 63 'RSPB Greenhouse gas emissions 2023/24' presents the annual energy use and associated carbon emissions from RSPB business operations. We have improved data quantity and quality across many categories (eg by expanding the

sources of energy data for sites). It includes additional categories (eg commuting and volunteer travel) compared with previous years, and this reflects our move towards a full inventory of emissions. This will be available for next year's Annual Report where we will also report progress and present further case studies against all the pillars of LARK.

Despite bringing in more GHG categories, our reported Scope 1 and 2 emissions have reduced by 3% since last year, and our Scope 3 and 'All Scopes' emissions both reduced by 6%. Comparing this year to our existing 2020/21 baseline is unhelpful due to data quality and completeness and the impact of covid on that year. Our baseline year is currently being reviewed. Notably, since last year, emissions from RSPB staff business travel have reduced by 27% due to an overall reduction in business mileage, along with clear shifts from petrol or diesel to hybrid and electric vehicles, and from air travel to rail and/or ferry usage.





## Our impact

## England

David Slater (rspb-images.com)



Black-winged Stilt



Hosting BBC Springwatch and Winterwatch at our wonderful Arne reserve was a fantastic opportunity to inspire millions of viewers with the wonders of nature at peak times when the reserve teems with wildlife. Our nature reserves offer a rich variety of habitats across the country, and it has been hugely encouraging to see so many species breeding and thriving across our sites this year.

**Michael Copleston**  
Director, RSPB England

### Record number of Black-winged Stilts fledged on RSPB England nature reserves

A total of 13 Black-winged Stilt chicks fledged from RSPB nature reserves in 2023. This is the equal highest number of stilts ever fledged in Britain, a number also reached in 2017.

Severe drought in south west Europe, exacerbated by the unsustainable use of water for agriculture in some areas, saw a larger than usual movement of waterbirds into Britain, including Black-winged Stilts, Purple Herons, Night Herons and Great Reed Warblers. Many arrived on RSPB nature reserves, including a number of Black-winged Stilts that nested. As is

typical with stilts, the birds moved about a lot between sites. In total there were nine nesting attempts, probably involving eight different pairs. Four of these fledged a total of 13 chicks. Two pairs at Frampton Marsh fledged two and four young, one pair out of three at Worth Marsh fledged four young, and one pair at Edderthorpe Flash fledged three young. We are aware of only two other nesting pairs in the UK in 2023, neither of which were successful.

Thank you to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for supporting our work to support Black-Winged Stilts and other wetland birds.

### The BBC's flagship nature programme returned to RSPB Arne

Chris Packham, Michaela Strachan and the team headed to RSPB Arne nature reserve in Dorset for Springwatch 2023 and again for Springwatch 2024.

Located on the banks of Poole Harbour, RSPB Arne is a spectacular place to visit, with its habitats of heathland, woodland, freshwater wetlands and mudflats that are home to a huge amount of wildlife, including all six of the UK's native reptiles. Special wildlife highlighted during the programmes included Nightjars, Hen Harriers, Spoonbills and Avocets. A White-tailed Eagle also made an appearance, flying over the BBC's production village.

Local volunteers and residents were able to enjoy a special insight into the show thanks to a community event. RSPB volunteer Pam Bowyer-Davis enjoyed the experience: "It was lovely to hear from the whole BBC team, including the people behind the scenes who make it happen. I also enjoyed getting selfies with all the presenters!"

Another RSPB volunteer Denise Exon delighted in meeting one of her heroes: "I was out volunteering when I bumped into Chris Packham and had an impromptu chat about wildlife. It doesn't get much better!"



Sam Turley (rspb-images.com)

RSPB Arne hosted the BBC's 'Watches'.



## Our impact

## Northern Ireland

Cinematic Sky

Sand art at Portrush.



Thank you for your ongoing support during a roller-coaster year, from the first ever NI peatland restoration registered under the Peatland Code and saving seabirds by eradicating invasive species from Rathlin, to poisoned White-tailed Eagles in the Antrim Hills and avian flu at Belfast Window on Wildlife. And with the return of the Stormont Assembly, we are more determined than ever to secure the legal and policy changes needed to secure nature's recovery.

**Joanne Sherwood**  
Director, RSPB Northern Ireland

Rathlin has the largest population of breeding Guillemots in the UK and Ireland.

Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

**LIFE Raft for Rathlin gathers pace**

**The seabirds of Rathlin Island are one step closer to a more secure future thanks to the ongoing LIFE Raft project.**

Rathlin Island is home to Northern Ireland's largest seabird colony, with Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills and others breeding there every year. Yet non-native invasive Ferrets and Brown Rats are driving declines in many seabirds. Puffin numbers, for example, have dropped by 74% since 1999.

Led by the RSPB and the Rathlin Development Community Association, the multi-partner project aims to eradicate Ferrets and Rats from the island and decrease the likelihood of their return. This attempt to eradicate Feral Ferrets is a world first. It will also be one of the largest islands in the world to be cleared of Rats without the use of helicopters and one of the most populous islands to be restored.

Since October 2023 over 600 Ferret traps have been activated. At just five months in, the team estimated that there were only a few Ferrets left. Intensive monitoring is now underway: detection dogs, trail cameras, even drones are part of the search effort. The team are also starting to focus on Rats. This means making thousands of bait stations, removing tonnes of Rat harbourage, and recruiting over 20 staff and residential volunteers. The project is set to run until 2027, by which time it is hoped that all Ferrets and Rats will have been removed.

LIFE Raft is funded by EU Life, National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Rathlin Development and Community Association, the Garfield Weston Foundation, the RSPB and generous individual donors.

**Plight of Puffin highlighted by sand art**

A stunning sand art installation shone a light on the fragility of Northern Ireland's seabirds. Together with local artists UV Arts and the community, RSPB NI created the piece of work on the East Strand of Portrush beach as part of November's Swell Festival.

The event brought the community together to highlight how Puffins are at risk of being lost from our shores, with RSPB volunteers and staff on hand to urge people to work together so that nature doesn't disappear.

UV Arts described the events as one of their highlights of 2023 and one of the most poignant projects they worked on.

“

We want to raise awareness. The artwork created simply washes away, taken by the sea – we can't let this happen to our local wildlife.



## Our impact

## Scotland



Peter Cairns (rspb-images.com)

Osprey



Your unwavering support for decades of our campaigning work secured an amazing win with the passing of the Wildlife Management and Muirburn Bill. This landmark legislation will hopefully herald an end to raptor persecution and massively benefit upland habitats. We are also incredibly grateful for the generous support of our appeal to meet the challenges of the Cannich Wildfire which ripped through our Corrimony Reserve, which will fund woodland restoration.

**Anne McCall**  
Director, RSPB Scotland

### Safeguarding Orkney's unique and rare wildlife

The Orkney Native Wildlife Project is an ambitious partnership seeking to safeguard the archipelago's native birds and animals.

Orkney is an incredibly rich haven for nature and home to nationally and internationally important populations of wildlife. This includes many species of ground-nesting birds, 15% of the UK's Hen Harriers, around 6% of our breeding seabirds, waders including Curlews, Lapwings and Oystercatchers, and the Orkney Vole, a distinct sub-species found nowhere else in the world. However invasive non-native Stoats threaten these populations.

Set up in 2019, the Orkney Native Wildlife Project seeks to protect Orkney's unique wildlife through the largest Stoat

eradication in an inhabited landscape anywhere in the world. Thanks to a network of over 8,000 lethal humane trap boxes, Europe's first Stoat detection dogs, a team of professional trappers, and the support of local volunteers, the project has removed over 6,000 Stoats from Orkney since 2019.

The ultimate ambitions are to return Orkney's islands to their natural Stoat-free status and ensure a biosecure future for the area by preventing any future colonisation.

The Orkney Native Wildlife Project is a partnership between RSPB Scotland, NatureScot and Orkney Islands Council, with generous support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the EU's LIFE programme and the Nature Restoration Fund.

[orkneynativewildlife.org.uk](http://orkneynativewildlife.org.uk)

### Supporters rally to restore Corrimony after wildfires

Birds are back breeding in our Corrimony nature reserve, marking a remarkable recovery following devastating wildfires the previous year.

In May 2023, a catastrophic wildfire began in the Highlands near Cannich to the southwest of Inverness spreading to Corrimony. Set in stunning moorland and Caledonian forest, the nature reserve is a treasure trove of iconic species including Black Grouse, Scottish Crossbills, Crested Tits and soaring Golden Eagles.

However the fire destroyed great swathes of precious habitat, undoing 20 years of careful woodland restoration. This was despite staff from Corrimony and nearby nature reserves, fire crews, helicopter teams, neighbouring landowners and others working round the clock to extinguish the

blaze. The fire also destroyed a vital deer fence, enabling the animals access to the nature reserve, where they began to graze on any surviving saplings.

Following an appeal for help, RSPB members, supporters and philanthropists sprang into action. Thanks to their generous gifts of over £200,000, as well as support from Barratt Homes and Trees for Life, we have been able to set about restoring the habitat. Over the past year we have re-erected the deer fencing and in early spring 2024, we began planting saplings to replace those destroyed. We have also purchased specialist fire management equipment to ensure that we are able to respond quickly both on our own and neighbouring lands should a wildfire occur again. Climate change and hotter drier summers mean that such incidents are sadly likely to be more frequent across the Highlands in coming years.



## Our impact

## Wales

Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)



Pied Flycatcher



Over the next year, we'll launch exciting projects and partnerships that will help inspire and empower our supporters while also tackling the nature and climate crisis. We have ambitious targets to reverse the decline of some of our most endangered species and habitats, from the Black Grouse of the north east to restoring damaged peatlands of mid Wales. We'll also be campaigning for a Sustainable Farming Scheme that works for both people and nature.

**Alun Prichard**  
Director, RSPB Cymru

### Natur am Byth! to recover wildlife in Wales

Choughs, Curlews, Water Voles and many more species are set to benefit from Natur am Byth, a flagship Green Recovery project for Wales.

Natur am Byth is a large-scale species recovery programme, led by Natural Resources Wales, with RSPB Cymru and a further eight other nature charities also contributing to the project. Over the next four years, the project will aim to halt the extinction of 42 species in Wales and reverse the decline of a further 25 through habitat restoration.

RSPB Cymru are leading on the Pen Llŷn ac Ynys Môn project within the wider Natur am Byth programme. Both the Llŷn Peninsula and island of Anglesey (Ynys Môn) have an impressive suite of habitats and wildlife. RSPB South Stack on Ynys Môn, for example, supports rare Choughs, Adders and Spatulate Fleawort, a plant found nowhere else. Working with land managers, local communities and volunteers, we'll raise awareness of and improve the habitat for 17 target species in the target areas.

Our efforts will be focused mainly on coastal heath, sand dunes and fens, and we will deliver species recovery through habitat management, monitoring, collaboration with local land managers and training events.

Thanks to players of the National Lottery, over £4.1m from the Heritage Fund was awarded to the partnership in June 2023.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

Curlews will benefit from Natur am Byth!

### Restoring the Celtic rainforest

Wales is home to a number of ancient woodlands known as the Celtic rainforests. Thanks to the relatively mild and wet climate and clean air, these temperate rainforests provide habitat for a vast array of rare wildlife, from lichens and mosses to Dormice and Pied Flycatchers.

These are truly special places but are thought to be more threatened globally than the more famous tropical rainforests. In many areas, invasive plants such as

*Rhododendron ponticum* have taken over, out competing native plants.

Funded by the EU-LIFE fund and the Welsh Government, we're working as part of the Celtic Rainforests Wales project to protect rainforests across Wales, including our nature reserves along the Mawddach Estuary and Gwenffrwd Dinas. Here, we are trying to get the rainforests back in top condition in several ways, including removing non-native invasive plants, thinning trees and introducing conservation grazing.



## Ein Llwyddiannau

## Cymru

Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Mwsogl



Dros y flwyddyn nesaf, byddwn ni'n lansio prosiectau a phartneriaethau cyffrous a fydd yn helpu i ysbrydoli a grymuso ein cefnogwyr ar yr un pryd â mynd i'r afael â'r argyfwng natur a hinsawdd. Mae gennym dargedau uchelgeisiol i wrthdroi dirywiad rhai o'n rhywogaethau a'n cynefinoedd sydd mewn perygl, gan gynnwys Grugair Ddu y gogledd-ddwyrain ac adfer mawndiroedd sydd wedi'u difrodi yng nghanolbarth Cymru. Byddwn ni hefyd yn ymgyrchu dros Gynllun Ffermio Cynaliadwy sy'n gweithio i bobl ac i fyd natur.

**Alun Prichard**  
Cyfarwyddwr, RSPB Cymru

**Natur am Byth! i adfer bywyd gwyllt yng Nghymru**

**Bydd Brain Coesgoch, Gylfinirod, Llygod y Dŵr a llawer mwy o rywogaethau yn elwa o Natur am Byth, sef prosiect blaenllaw Adferiad Gwyrdd ar gyfer Cymru.**

Rhaglen adfer rhywogaethau ar raddfa fawr yw Natur am Byth, ac mae'n cael ei harwain gan Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru. Mae RSPB Cymru ac wyth elusen arall yn cyfrannu at y prosiect hefyd. Dros y pedair blynedd nesaf, bydd y prosiect yn ceisio atal difodiant 42 o rywogaethau yng Nghymru, ac yn ceisio gwrthdroi'r dirywiad o 25 o rywogaethau eraill drwy adfer cynefinoedd.

Mae RSPB Cymru yn arwain y prosiect ym Mhen Llŷn ac Ynys Môn o fewn y rhaglen ehangach Natur am Byth. Mae gan Ben Llŷn ac Ynys Môn gyfres drawiadol o gynefinoedd a bywyd gwyllt. Er enghraifft, mae RSPB Ynys Lawd ar Ynys Môn yn cynnal Brain Coesgoch a Gwiberod prin, a Chweinllys Ysbodolaidd, sy'n blanhigyn nad oes modd ei weld yn unman arall. Gan weithio gyda rheolwyr tir, cymunedau lleol a gwirfoddolwyr, byddwn ni'n gwella ac yn codi ymwybyddiaeth o'r cynefin ar gyfer 17 o rywogaethau targed yn yr ardaloedd targed.

Bydd ein hymdrechion yn canolbwyntio'n bennaf ar rostir arfordirol, twyni tywod a ffeniau, a byddwn ni'n adfer rhywogaethau drwy reoli cynefinoedd, monitro, cydweithio â rheolwyr tir lleol a chynnal digwyddiadau hyfforddi.

Diolch i chwaraewyr y Loteri Genedlaethol, dyfarnwyd mwy na £4.1m o'r Gronfa Dreftadaeth i'r bartneriaeth ym mis Mehefin 2023.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

Bydd Gylfinirod yn elwa o Natur am Byth!

**Adfer y goedwig law Celtaidd**

**Mae Cymru'n gartref i sawl coetir hynafol, a elwir yn goedwigoedd glaw Celtaidd. Diolch i'r hinsawdd gymharol fwyn a gwlyb a'r aer glân, mae'r coedwigoedd glaw tymherus hyn yn darparu cynefin ar gyfer amrywiaeth eang o fywyd gwyllt prin, gan gynnwys cennau, mwsoglau, Pathewod a Gwybedogion Brith.**

Mae'r rhain yn lleoedd gwirioneddol arbennig, ond y gred yw eu bod dan fwy o fygythiad yn fyd-eang na'r coedwigoedd glaw trofannol enwog. Mewn sawl ardal, mae planhigion ymledol fel *Rhododendron ponticum* yn trechu planhigion cynhenid.

Rydym yn cael ein hariannu gan gronfa EU-LIFE a Llywodraeth Cymru, ac rydym yn gweithio fel rhan o brosiect Coedwigoedd Glaw Celtaidd Cymru i ddiogelu coedwigoedd glaw ledled Cymru, gan gynnwys ein gwarchodfeydd natur ar hyd Aber Mawddach a Gwenffrwd Dinas. Yma, rydym yn ceisio cael y coedwigoedd glaw yn ôl i'w cyflwr gorau mewn sawl ffordd, gan gynnwys cael gwared ar blanhigion ymledol, teneuo coed a chyflwyno'r broses o bori er lles cadwraeth.



# Forward look

Our strategy demands that we deliver bigger, more joined up conservation to drive the pace and scale of change that nature so desperately needs.

Despite the many challenges, we will continue to deliver world class conservation both in the UK and internationally to deliver our strategic outcomes and our strategic shifts.

The global and domestic financial situation continues to put huge pressure on our organisation, and we are working harder than ever to ride the tide of economic uncertainty. Politically, there are many uncertainties internationally and closer to home. In the UK, the wider operating environment continues to be challenging and will be dominated by the 2024 general election and its outcome. Environmentally there's potential for UK farming policies to bring about seismic changes. Meanwhile, marine environments face increased pressure as policymakers look to increase renewable energy and onshore grid developments.

This report describes how progress towards our 2030 strategy has delivered impact for nature in 2023–2024. We will continue to drive positive change through our priorities for 2024–2025.

We conducted a full review of our Outcome measures (page 11). This concluded that we continue to be successful in moving forward in our conservation goals. The

review also highlighted that to achieve the scale of impact needed, we must focus on driving systemic change to benefit nature. As an organisation we will continue to work efficiently and effectively to deliver our strategic outcomes. Our areas of focus for the next 12 months are outlined here. The specific actions to achieve these goals are outlined in our detailed Corporate Plan.

## We will maximise our impact for nature by:

- Focusing on the opportunities to reshape frameworks and finances to enable and support the transition to low-carbon, nature-friendly farming in the UK.
- Building support amongst the public for nature-friendly farming and to use this support to put pressure on decision-makers to change the financial and policy frameworks. We will do this through powerful partnership campaigning and advocacy.
- Delivering conservation impact at scale through our growing programme of UK and global landscape-scale partnerships, unlocking major funding to restore species and habitats, enabling communities to act for nature and inspiring hope that change is possible.

- Extending our business engagement opportunities, with new partnerships that enable greater delivery for nature on the ground. Supporting the development of high standards in new nature markets, scaling up our work in Conservation Investment, and supporting systemic change towards measurable Nature Positive practices in the private sector.
- Building agility into our People Engagement and our Policy work to respond quickly to the outside world.
- Mobilising more, and more diverse, people to act for nature, keeping nature in the public eye as an issue of concern.
- Continuing to build capacity in our international partners, supporting them to lead and grow sustainably, working closely with Birdlife International and raising further the profile of our international work.
- Supporting the UK to deliver its contribution towards the Global Biodiversity Framework targets, through a range of science, policy, species recovery and the restoration of land for nature and climate at landscape scale. We will continue to develop powerful research collaborations that help supply evidence-based solutions to the climate and nature emergency.

## Delivering our strategy sustainably

To achieve all this, we act as an organisation that is high in energy, ethical impact, sustainability and inclusivity. This will enable us to build on income opportunities, deliver cost savings and ensure our resources are focused on where they are most needed. Put simply, we want to continue to maximize the impact we have for every pound we spend on our conservation work.

## To do this, we will:

- Act with focus – putting our efforts and resources where they have the greatest impact.
- Act with efficiency – working together even more effectively to deliver our work.
- Grow our income even faster – accessing new and developing opportunities to transform how we fund our work.
- Prioritise our ambitions to drive equity, diversity and inclusion through all that we do.
- Stay true to our shared values of courage, collaboration, clarity and connection to continue to be a world class conservation charity.

A cover crop of Borage in England.



# Thank you and acknowledgements

We wish to thank all our members, volunteers, partners, supporters, donors and funders. None of what we do would be possible without you. Thank you!

## President and Vice Presidents

Thank you to our President, Vice Presidents and Ambassadors who give their time freely to support the RSPB. (Read more about our Ambassadors on page 13.)

### President

Dr Amir Khan

### Vice Presidents

- Dr Elizabeth Andrews MBE DL
- Sir David Attenborough OM GCMG CHCVO CBE
- Nick Baker
- Dr Mike Clarke
- Adrian Darby OBE
- Ian Darling FRICS OBE
- Kate Humble
- Professor Sir John Lawton CBE FRS
- The Earl of Lindsay
- Sir John Lister-Kaye Bt OBE
- Miranda Krestovnikoff
- Professor Ian Newton OBE FRS FRSE
- Bill Oddie OBE
- Professor Steve Ormerod FCIEEM FLSW
- Chris Packham CBE
- Julian Pettifer OBE
- Sir Graham Wynne CBE
- Baroness Young of Old Scone

### Members and supporters

We are always grateful for the incredible loyalty shown by our members and supporters and we wouldn't have been able to deliver the successful projects that are showcased in this Annual Report

without them. Nature is in crisis but with their help we are able to demonstrate just what can be achieved when we join together to deliver outstanding conservation work at scale. Together we are connecting more people to nature, bringing species back from the brink of extinction, managing land and influencing the policies that protect nature.

Members continue to support our mission to save nature by donating, giving their time and talents through volunteering, supporting RSPB campaigns, and by bringing RSPB projects to life on the ground through RSPB local groups. Giving time, money, voice and actions are all greatly appreciated and crucial to helping save nature. We couldn't do it without you.

### Volunteers

Volunteers are at the heart of what we do. Without their help, our work would be greatly diminished. Volunteers founded the RSPB in 1889, and they're still fundamental to our work today. They carry out a variety of roles, from practical conservation and field surveys, to donating their professional expertise, from barristers, project managers and surveyors to running the RSPB as members of our Council. In addition, more than half a million people take part in citizen science projects each year, such as Big Garden Birdwatch.

Volunteers enhance our work by bringing valuable skills, experience and energy, as

well as their gift of time. They champion the cause and often challenge opinions and perspectives in their own communities, whilst demonstrating passion and commitment to our mission. Our ability to speak out for nature depends upon the support of our volunteers and the donation of their time and talents. They are an established, valued and integral part of the RSPB.

We have around 13,500 volunteers, who make up 83% of our workforce. The activities of every single one of our volunteers is crucial for our work and the RSPB – thank you.

### Community groups

We have a network of community groups across the UK for both young people and adults alike – our Wildlife Explorer groups and our Local Groups.

These groups form a thriving, active, engaged and valued network that delivers impactful work in communities to save nature. Run by some of the RSPB's most loyal and passionate volunteers, our groups allow the RSPB to have an active presence across the UK. Local Groups are an integral part of the organisation and members contribute their skills, time and energy to act for nature.

Our volunteer-led Wildlife Explorer groups inspire and empower hundreds of young people across the UK to become advocates for nature, both now and in the future, and

enable them to share their passion with others to grow a movement of people taking action for nature. This year marked the 80th anniversary of our youth groups (see page 20) and we are grateful to the many volunteers inspiring young people to engage with and advocate for nature.

### Legacies

Money left to us in legacies makes a vital contribution to our work to save nature every year. Whilst it's impossible to thank every single one of our legators, we'd like to mention the following people:

- Mr Jack Alfred Bailey and Mrs Audrey Jean Bailey
- Mrs Elizabeth Bailey-Marsden
- Mrs Barbara Joan Blake
- Mr John Scott Burdon
- Mrs Eugenie Mary Dorothy Bustard
- Mr Kevin Peter Cornforth
- Dr Barbara Ashley Croft
- Miss Barbara Clair Davis
- Mr James John Dunbar
- Mr Kenneth Harrison
- Mr Philip Robert Hastie
- Mrs Elsie Elizabeth Hughes
- Mr David Joy
- Mr Geoffrey Malcolm Lapworth
- Mrs Maureen Lees
- Mrs Joyce Enid Luck
- Miss Maureen Barbara Masland
- Mrs Margaret Letitia Matthews
- Ms Margaret Felicity Portlock
- Edith Randall
- Mr Brian Alan Reader





- Ms Maureen Rowe
- Mrs Patricia Schofield
- Miss Freda Shipley
- Mr Peter Sidney
- Mr Stephen William Sims
- Mr Roy Sidney Skelton
- Mrs Sylvia Noreen St John
- Dr James Denis Summers-Smith
- Mrs Nina Watkins
- Mrs Sheila Cameron Whitlock
- Miss Margaret Ruth Temple Wigan
- Mr Derrick Desmond Wilby

### **Charitable trusts, non-governmental organisations and individual donors**

We'd like to give a special mention to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, for their thoughtful and generous support of the RSPB and all its partners on large-scale projects across the UK, including the Pesticide Collaboration, Natur am Byth, Nature North, Lowland Peatland Bog Recovery, Tir Canol and Species on the Edge.

We'd also like to extend special thanks to two other landscape-scale restoration partners: the Wyss Foundation, for their support of the Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative in western Kazakhstan, recently named a UN World Restoration Flagship project; and the Ecological Restoration Fund, partnering with the RSPB and BirdLife International to restore and protect key habitats along the African-Eurasian Flyway.

Once again, our individual philanthropic supporters have been extremely generous, making donations towards a wide range of projects, from surveying bryophytes in Wales to large-scale habitat management at Haweswater, Cumbria. The Bampton land acquisition was the Philanthropy Team's flagship appeal this year, raising over £250k, as detailed on page 26.

Sincere thanks to new donors Christine and Geoffrey Grimes, who decided to make a significant gift to enable us to replace Lower

Hide at our Leighton Moss reserve. And a special mention to the Trustees of the Ichthius Trust who are long-term supporters of the work of the RSPB. We are very grateful for their faith and commitment.

We are grateful for the support received and would particularly like to acknowledge the following:

- Mrs Betty Albon
- Mr Alan Alderson and Ms Sandra Allen
- Dr Roger Allport
- A J H Ashby Will Trust
- Lars Atkin
- Dr Sheila Harri-Augstein and her husband The Late Dr Joachim Augstein
- Miss Jane Bailey
- The Banister Charitable Trust
- Caroline and William Barnes
- Robert Barr's Charitable Trust
- Mr D Benham
- The Bentley Family Trust
- The Big Give Trust
- BirdLife International
- Blue Nature Alliance
- Mr Jim Boswell
- The Miel de Botton Charitable Trust
- British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)
- Brown Forbes Memorial Fund
- The Brown Source Trust
- CAF America
- CAF (Charities Aid Foundation)
- The Cairngorms Trust
- Cambridge Conservation Initiative (CCI)
- The Carman Family Foundation
- The Chabot Family Fund
- The Chapman Charitable Trust
- Charities Trust
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust Ltd
- Conservation International (CI)
- The Ernest Cook Trust
- Drs John and Hinke Couchman
- The Crown Estate (through the Offshore Wind Evidence and Change Programme)
- Ida Davis Family Foundation
- Ms E Desmond
- Dunn Family Charitable Trust
- Arthur Ronald Dyer Charitable Trust

- Ecological Restoration Fund
- The Pamela Edmundson Connolly Charitable Trust
- Mrs Lynne Ellis
- John Ellerman Foundation
- Endangered Landscapes and Seascapes Programme (ELSP)\*
- Environmental Resources Management (ERM) Foundation
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- European Climate Foundation
- The Finborough Foundation
- Fondation Segré
- Ms Nic French
- Mr Royston Furley
- The Gannochy Trust
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Horace and Helen Gillman Trusts
- The A B Grace Trust
- Grant Charitable Trust
- Green Action Trust
- Mr Charles Glanville
- Global Environment Facility (GEF) Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration Impact Program (FOLUR)
- The Golden Bottle Trust
- Dr John Gowenlock
- Geoffrey and Christine Grime
- The William Haddon Charitable Trust
- Richard Hale
- The Daphne Hamilton Trust
- The Hasluck Charitable Trust
- The Helvellyn Foundation
- Henocq Law Trust
- Jonathan and Florence Heyhoe
- Highlands and Islands Environment Fund (HIEF)
- The Corton Hill Trust
- HSBC Bank Trust / HSBC Trust Company (UK) Limited
- The Ichthius Trust
- Marie Jarvie in memory of Steve Chastell
- Jersey Overseas Aid
- Richard Johnson, deceased
- Kusuma Trust
- Peter A Lawrence (Betty and Nancy Liebert Trusts)
- Robert and Elizabeth Lee

- A. G. Leventis Foundation
- Lincoln Local Group
- The Linder Foundation
- The Linley Shaw Foundation
- Ludlow Trust Co Ltd
- Helen Lumley
- Irene Anne MacDonald Charitable Trust
- Stephen and Carolyn Martin
- Julia Maynard
- Robert McCracken KC
- The Elizabeth C F McGregor-Dziniak Charitable Trust for Animals
- Gil and Julie McVean
- Mentor Mon Cyf
- The Gerald Micklem Charitable Trust
- Mr Mark Mills
- Ian Morrison
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Natural History Museum
- The National Trust
- The Natural Trust
- The Nature Trust (Sandy)
- NHS Lothians Charity
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Ms Barbara Palmer
- Partnerships for Forests Programme - UK FCDO
- Peacock Charitable Trust
- The Penchant Foundation
- Mr Michael Percival
- The Planeterra Foundation
- The Players of the People's Postcode Lottery
- Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation
- Miss Marjorie Purser Charitable Trust
- Q Charitable Trust
- Robin Rigg Windfarm Community Fund
- The Maurice Henry Roe Charitable Trust
- Helen Roll Charity
- The Rufford Foundation
- The Ryde Family
- Seacology
- Shetland Islands Council's Coastal Communities Fund
- Scottish Environment Link
- Kathleen Beryl Sleigh Charitable Trust
- The Peter Smith Charitable Trust for Nature



- South Georgia Heritage Trust
- Derek and Clare Stevens Trust
- Sustainable Fishery Partnership
- John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust and The Swire Charitable Trust
- Teesside Environmental Trust
- Gillian Tucker
- Mr K and Mrs C Turner
- UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH)
- University of Cambridge Centre for Landscape Regeneration
- Christine and David Walmsley
- Rosemary Warburg
- Susanna Watson
- Whitley Animal Protection Trust
- The Wildlife Trusts
- Colin Williams Charitable Trust
- J & J R Wilson Trust
- The Woodland Trust
- World Wildlife Fund
- Sophia Elizabeth Wrightson, deceased
- Wyss Foundation
- The John Young Charitable Settlement

\*The Endangered Landscapes and Seascapes Programme is a partnership between the Cambridge Conservation Initiative and Arcadia, a charitable foundation that works to protect nature, preserve cultural heritage and promote open access to knowledge.

We would also like to acknowledge supporters who wish to remain anonymous, who have generously contributed towards our work.

### Celebrities and influencers

We'd like to thank the following people for supporting our campaigns, events and projects, and for helping to raise the profile of the RSPB:

- Jack Baddams
- Bill Bailey
- Mya Bambrick
- Sam Bentley
- Leif Bersweden
- Hannah Bourne-Taylor

- Carl Bovis
- JJ Chalmers
- Dr Mya-Rose Craig
- Mike Dilger
- George Hassall
- Aneeshwar Kunchala
- David Lindo
- Kate MacRae
- April Mayne
- Dara McAnulty
- Jim Moir
- Stephen Moss
- David Oakes
- Lev Parikian
- Sophie Pavelle
- Nancy Sorrell
- Alison Steadman
- Hannah Stitfall
- Michaela Strachan
- Iolo Williams
- Hamza Yassin

### Youth Council

- Alfie
- Emily
- Freddie
- Indy
- Jannis
- Kabir
- Katie
- Lisa
- Luke
- Natasha
- Sennen
- Thomas

### Landfill Communities Fund and Scottish Landfill Communities Fund

We are grateful for funding support from the following organisations through the Landfill Communities Fund and the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund:

- Alpha Resource Management Ltd
- Enover Community Trust
- FCC Communities Foundation Ltd
- Lancashire Environmental Fund
- SUEZ Communities Fund
- Teesside Environmental Trust

### Business supporters

The RSPB enjoys successful partnerships with business supporters to our mutual benefit.

We would particularly like to acknowledge the following:

- ADM
- The Ardmore
- Baillie Gifford
- Baringa Partners LLP
- Barratt Developments Plc
- Beam Suntory UK Ltd
- Bellrock Group
- Broadshore Wind
- Cemex UK Ltd
- Clifford Chance LLP
- Co-op
- The Co-operative Bank
- Cotswold Outdoor, Runners Need and Snow+Rock
- Dogger Bank Wind Farm
- DPDgroup UK
- Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
- Ecotalk
- Ecotricity
- Edinburgh International Conference Centre Ltd
- Elemis
- Ella's Kitchen
- The Famous Grouse
- Fieldfisher LLP
- GreenPower
- Hafren Dyfrdwy
- HCR Hewitsons LLP
- holidaycottages.co.uk
- Hurtigruten Group Ltd
- The James Hutton Institute
- idverde UK
- Kingfisher Plc
- The LEGO Group
- Lightrock Power
- Lush Ltd
- Marks & Spencer
- Marshalls plc
- Morgan Sindall Group Plc
- Neart na Gaoithe Offshore Wind Ltd
- Norfolk Coast Partnership
- Northern Ireland Electricity Networks

- Northumbrian Water Group
- Ørsted Wind Power A/S
- Parkdean Resorts
- Planet Wild
- PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited
- The Pure Edit Ltd
- R&A Championships Ltd
- Russell & Co
- ScotRail
- Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Ltd
- ScottishPower
- Scottish Power Renewables
- Scottish Water
- Seagreen Wind Energy Ltd
- Severn Trent Boost for Biodiversity Fund
- Severn Trent Water Ltd
- Smith & Sons (Bletchington) Ltd
- SMS Corporate Services Limited
- Southern Water
- South Western Railway
- SSE Renewables
- St Davids Gin & Kitchen
- Tarmac Trading Ltd
- Triodos Bank UK
- Turcan Connell
- UBS Optimus Foundation Singapore Ltd
- United Utilities Plc
- Weird Fish Ltd
- Wessex Water Services Ltd
- Whitbread Group PLC
- Yorkshire Water

### National Lottery Heritage Fund

The RSPB is indebted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for their support through their exceptional administration of Defra's Green Recovery Challenge Fund. We are also very appreciative of their extended and generous support for the Orkney Native Wildlife Project, helping to safeguard the unique and internationally important native wildlife of Orkney; the Giving Nature a Home in the Dearne Valley project; and the funding provided for projects across all four UK countries.



### National Lottery Community Fund

In 2024, thanks to a large grant award from the National Lottery Community Fund, the RSPB began leading a partnership project called Nature Neighbourhoods. Connecting communities across the whole of the UK to take action on the burgeoning nature and climate crisis, the project will enable and upskill more community leaders and help them to mobilise their communities and lead positive change through the creation of Nature Neighbourhood Plans. Funding from The National Lottery Community Fund truly showcases how communities can work together with the RSPB to benefit both nature and people.

### Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Special thanks to Defra for their support through the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF), providing over £5 million in funds to support projects in England. GRCF allowed the RSPB to deliver projects restoring nature and wildlife, introducing new nature-based solutions on our project sites and connecting even more people with nature. We also would like to thank Defra for their support through the Environmental Land Management Scheme – Landscape Recovery.

### Support from statutory sector and other public bodies

We are grateful for co-operation and support from organisations of many kinds, and would especially like to thank the following:

- Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Peatland ACTION funding provided by the Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Clackmannanshire Council
- Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar
- The Darwin Initiative – funded by the UK Government
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) - The G7 Environmental Legacy Fund
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland (DAERA)
- Environment Agency
- EU Protected Areas Management Support (PAPFor)
- European Commission – DG Environment
- European Commission – LIFE
- European Commission – Thematic Programme for environment and sustainable management of natural resources, including energy (ENRTP)
- European Regional Development Fund managed by NatureScot
- Falkirk Council
- Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN)
- Fife Council
- Forestry and Land Scotland
- Friends of South Georgia Island
- Glasgow City Council
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund
- Investment Ready Nature Scotland - Delivered through collaboration from NatureScot, Esmée Fairbairn and the National Lottery Heritage Fund
- IUCN Species Survival Commission
- Jersey Overseas Aid Commission
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)
- Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW, Credit Institute for Reconstruction), Germany
- Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park
- National Grid
- National Highways England
- National Lottery Community Fund
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- National Lottery Heritage Fund – Landscape Partnership Scheme

- NLHF Nature Networks on behalf of the Welsh Government
- NLHF – The Queens Jubilee New to Nature Fund, supported by Groundwork UK
- National Peatland Action Programme (NPAP)
- Natural England
- Natural England – Action for Birds in England partnership
- Natural England - Species Recovery Programme Capital Grants Scheme
- Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
- Natural Resources Wales/Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
- NatureScot
- NatureScot – Better Places Fund (BPF)
- NatureScot – Peatland ACTION Fund
- North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- Office for Environmental Protection
- Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)
- Scottish Government and VisitScotland's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF)

- The Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, managed by NatureScot
- Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund
- Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP)
- Stirling Council
- The Suffolk and Essex Coasts and Heath's National Landscape
- Sussex Ornithological Society
- Sustrans Scotland
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Levelling Up via Ceredigion County Council
- The United Nations Environment Programme/Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (UNEP/AEWA)
- USAID: West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development (WABiLED)
- The Welsh Government
- The Welsh Government's Local Places for Nature Challenge Fund, administered by WCVA in partnership with Powys Nature Partnership and Powys County Council



**Volunteers on the rise in NI**  
RSPB Northern Ireland welcomed more than 500 volunteers last year, an increase of 15% from last year. Volunteers play a vital role at the RSPB and we could not achieve what we do without them. Thank you! See pages 78-79 for more.



A huge thank you to you, our many members, supporters and volunteers.

**Without you, we could not do what we do.**



# Governance

The RSPB has a clear and effective governance structure.

### Governing body

The RSPB’s overall governing body is the RSPB Council. This is composed of up to 18 Council members (Trustees), and following the most recent governance review Council has accepted a recommendation to operate with 12 members. The RSPB Council has overall responsibility for the conduct of the RSPB. It also ensures that the RSPB operates in accordance with the Royal Charter, statutes, byelaws and the law. It is supported by several committees that all have specific roles, defined by their formal terms of reference.

Each committee meets several times a year, and other subcommittees are established from time to time. The honorary positions of President and Vice President, and our Ambassadors, are not Council members and are not involved in making or influencing Council decisions.

### Leadership and effectiveness

The RSPB Council works as a team, with a balance of skills, knowledge and experience, in order to be as effective as possible, in alignment with the Charity Governance Code.

Every year, the skills, knowledge, experience and diversity our Trustees bring to the Council are reviewed alongside the effectiveness of the Council. Trustee and committee vacancies are advertised on the RSPB website, online and through specialist search agencies. The appointment process is rigorous and is managed by the Council’s Nominations and People Committee.

Information is provided about the RSPB and Trustees’ duties to people who express an interest in being a Trustee, before there

is formal confirmation of a willingness to serve. Trustees are elected on the recommendations of the Nominations and People Committee, and Council, and voted for by members at the AGM. Once elected, Trustees receive a briefing pack outlining their role, duties and accountabilities, with information about the RSPB and its policies, structure and work. We hold induction sessions for each new Trustee, to support them with understanding their roles and responsibilities and the RSPB’s strategy and operations. Trustees are also offered opportunities to learn more about the RSPB’s work, such as individual meetings with staff, visits to nature reserves and training on important work areas.

Trustees, nominated trustees and senior staff complete a register showing their interests and related party transactions. This is updated each year, and whenever any changes occur. Terms of office for each member of Council are published on the RSPB website.

As part of the induction, continuing training and annual appraisal for all Trustees, staff and volunteers, information is provided on:

- Our codes of conduct – the values, rules and principles that we expect our staff, volunteers and Trustees to follow.
- Our ethical principles – how we want to engage with the world.
- Our brand – how we want our supporters, stakeholders and the wider public to think about us.
- Our values and behaviours – how we work and relate to each other.

## RSPB council



**Kevin Cox**

Council Chair

- Finance
- Nominations and People
- Communications and Engagement



**Robert Cubbage**

Treasurer and Finance Chair

- Audit and Risk
- Nominations and People



**Kerry ten Kate**

Conservation Advisory Chair

- Nominations and People
- Commercial and Partnerships



**Jim Sloane**

Commercial and Partnerships Chair

- Finance
- Audit and Risk
- Nominations and People



**John Mason**

Audit and Risk Chair

- Committee for Scotland



**Dr Vicki Nash**

Committee for Scotland Chair

- Nominations and People



**Judith Annett**

Committee for Northern Ireland Chair

- Conservation Advisory



**Keith Jones**

Committee for Wales Chair

- Committee for Northern Ireland



**Dr Ben Caldecott**

- Commercial and Partnerships



**Jim Lowther**

- Audit and Risk
- Finance



**Professor William Sutherland**

- Conservation Advisory
- Committee for Wales



**Veronica Pickering DL**

- Committee for England



**Lord John Randall**



**Linda Grant**



**Ghazala Koosar**

Committee for England Chair

Kevin Cox is stepping down as Chair at the RSPB AGM in October 2024. Linda Grant stepped down in October 2023 and Ghazala Koosar stepped down in February 2024. We thank them for their huge contributions to the RSPB. For further information on the structure and operation of Council, please see [rspb.org.uk/council](https://rspb.org.uk/council)



# Supporting Committees

Following the implementation of the latest governance review, Council is supported by the following committees:

## Scrutiny and stewardship

- **Finance Committee:** assures the integrity of financial plans, reporting and controls.
  - Six members (of whom four are Council members).
- **Audit and Risk Committee:** provides scrutiny of the adequacy of the governance, risk and associated control framework, giving assurance that those arrangements are effective and comprehensive.
  - Six members (of whom four are Council members).
- **Nominations and People Committee:** develops and maintains procedures for making recommendations on appointments to Council, to ensure a diverse membership and range of skills and review succession plans for current members of Council, and seeking assurance of the good stewardship of the RSPB workforce.
  - Six members (of whom all are Council members).

## Support and advice

- **Conservation Advisory Committee** provides independent insight, advice and guidance on conservation strategy,

approaches, policy and programmes, and advises Board and Council on positioning, risks and opportunities related to specific projects or policy issues.

- **Communications and Engagement Advisory Committee** provides advice to Board and Council on matters pertaining to the RSPB’s communications, campaigning and engagement with stakeholders across all relevant channels.
- **Commercial and Partnerships Advisory Committee** provides advice to Board and Council on matters pertaining to commercial and partnership opportunities and activity.
- **Country Advisory Committees** in each UK nation provide insight on the views and interests of stakeholders relevant to the current and future strategy and the work of the RSPB in the country. The committees advise and assist the country staff in the promotion of interest in the work of the Society, including membership and fundraising opportunities, and help develop the influence and the policy agenda of the Society.
  - In all cases, membership is eight members (two of whom are members of Council), plus up to four guests invited to support areas of strategic focus.
  - Youth Council members participate as members of advisory committees.



### Wild Dundee

People across Dundee have connected with nature through the Wild Dundee project. As well as events highlighting the city’s wildlife (pictured), the project included nature-focused workshops with drugs and alcohol rehabilitation groups, and a partnership with students at Abertay University to create an Osprey migration video game.

# Statement of Trustees’ Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounts. These should show and explain the RSPB’s transactions and be able to disclose the charity’s financial position at any time. These should also ensure the financial statements comply with reporting and legal regulations, and meet the charity’s constitution, as set out in the Charter and Statutes.

Charity law in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland requires Trustees to prepare financial statements each financial year. These must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and the group, and of the income and expenditure of the group for that period. They are responsible for preparing the Trustees’ Report, and financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland, known as FRS102.

When preparing these statements, the Trustees must:

- Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently.
- Follow the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP).
- Make reasonable judgements and estimates.
- State whether they have followed applicable accounting standards, subject to any exceptions which are disclosed and explained.
- Prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

Trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the RSPB’s assets, and for taking reasonable steps to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

# Oversight of remuneration

All RSPB staff, including the Chief Executive and Executive Board, are covered by the same remuneration policy. This is based on externally benchmarked salary bands. This policy is approved by the RSPB Council and is subject to review.

The salary of the Chief Executive is overseen by the Nominations and People Committee, which is chaired by the Chair of Council. The performance of the Chief Executive is subject to a formal appraisal process against previously agreed measures, and this is

discussed at an annual appraisal meeting. Recommendations for pay progression are made in line with the RSPB’s pay policy for staff.

The Chief Executive is responsible for overseeing the salaries of the Executive Board, in line with the same policy.





Left to right: Russell Powell, Rebecca Munro, Katie-jo Luxton, Beccy Speight, Emma Marsh, James Robinson.

## Executive Board

The Board is responsible for the management of the RSPB, headed by the Chief Executive. Executive directors of operations; global conservation; digital technology and communications; income and conservation investment; and finance, governance and strategy sit on the board.

“

I became the RSPB's Chief Executive in August 2019. My role is to lead the organisation, build relationships with key partners, represent our views externally and work with the Council and Executive Board to develop our forward direction and ensure we deliver that plan. I believe I am in the best possible place to make a real difference for birds, the natural world and people in the context of the nature and climate crisis. I feel fortunate to work with a great team of staff, volunteers, members and supporters to do just that.

**Beccy Speight**, Chief Executive

“

I have been Chief Operating Officer since August 2023. I work with country teams to implement the RSPB's strategy across the UK, lead organisational improvement, and oversee the ways we support and motivate our staff and volunteers to meet our ambitions. My previous roles in the organisation include Country Director for RSPB Northern Ireland, Head of Nature Policy, and Regional Director for Eastern England.

**James Robinson**, Chief Operating Officer

“

I lead the RSPB's mission to save species, protect habitats and restore landscapes to help end the nature and climate crisis, and I've held my current position since November 2021. Prior to this, I was Director of RSPB Cymru for 12 years, leading the delivery of the RSPB's strategy for Wales.

**Katie-jo Luxton**, Executive Director, Global Conservation

“

I work with colleagues across the RSPB to bring in funding and resources to deliver our strategy and help close the funding gap for nature more widely. This includes engaging and growing the RSPB's membership; partnering with businesses to support our work and transition to a nature positive economy; running our commercial operations; and deploying conservation investment to achieve landscape-scale nature restoration.

**Rebecca Munro**, Executive Director, Income and Conservation Investment

“

I became the Executive Director for Digital Technology and Communications in August 2022. I'm focused on ensuring the RSPB makes the biggest possible difference for nature and people across those functions. I joined the RSPB in 2016 as Regional Director in the Midlands, and from 2019 as the Director for RSPB England.

**Emma Marsh**, Executive Director, Digital Technology and Communications

“

I joined the RSPB in February 2023, from the National Trust. I lead on ensuring the RSPB is financially sustainable, well-governed and is on course to meet the aims laid out in its strategy. As Europe's largest nature conservation charity, we're very grateful for the support we receive. We want to spend every penny in a way that helps further our cause. We do this by working with colleagues and external partners to ensure we achieve good value for the money we spend. We do so in a controlled way and so that we are aligned to our strategy.

**Russell Powell**, Executive Director, Finance, Governance and Strategy

Please note that Rebecca Munro stepped down from the position of Executive Director, Income and Conservation Investment, in December 2023 with Jo Coker taking over as Interim Executive Director. Shaun Thomas stepped down in October 2023, with James Robinson replacing him. In May 2024, Andrew Cook took up the role of Executive Director, Income and Conservation Investment.



# Integrity

The RSPB's Council has ultimate responsibility for the charity's funds and assets, as well as our reputation. Each Council member must adhere to a Code of Conduct, and endorse the RSPB's five Ethical Principles. These are based on the National Council for Voluntary Organisations' (NCVO) ethical principles for the charity sector, and incorporate the principles of the United Nations Global Compact.

1. **Beneficiaries first:** the interests of our beneficiaries and the cause we work for should be at the heart of everything we do (page 94).
2. **Environment:** nature needs us now more than ever. This means we continually need to adapt and change the way we work to achieve our vision of a world richer in nature (page 94).
3. **Integrity:** we should always uphold the highest level of institutional integrity and personal conduct (page 95).
4. **Openness and accountability:** we create a culture where our supporters, staff and volunteers, our institutional partners, as well as the public, can see and understand how we work, how we deal with problems when they arise and how we spend our funds (page 95).
5. **Right to be safe:** every person who volunteers with, works for, or comes into contact with us, should be treated with dignity and respect and feel that they are in a safe and supportive environment (page 95).

## I. Beneficiaries first

To ensure we have the greatest impact for nature, we:

- Carry out our work to provide the greatest impact for people and nature with integrity, regardless of whether this might initially be deemed to have a negative impact on the RSPB's reputation, leadership or operation.
- Encourage trust in the RSPB by considering scientific evidence as part of how we operate, and by listening and responding to our beneficiaries. This facilitates engagement and communication.
- Ensure that all relevant policies and procedures are drawn up with our beneficiaries in mind.
- Work with organisations and individuals whose goals and values are consistent with our work, while exercising due diligence in understanding the ethical standards of partners and individuals.

## II. Environment

Our conservation work has a huge impact for nature. We preserve and restore natural habitats for people and wildlife.

To ensure we have the greatest positive impact, we're working to reduce the footprint of all our operations, through our systems and policies (see pages 62-65). For environmental management we:

- Take a precautionary approach to environmental challenges (UN Compact principle 7).
- Promote greater environmental responsibility (principle 8).
- Encourage the development of environmentally friendly technologies (principle 9).

## III. Integrity principle

To uphold the highest level of institutional integrity and personal conduct, we:

- Ensure the appropriate systems are in place to ensure decisions are well-considered and free from any conflict of interest. This includes our decision-making, assurance and project management frameworks (see page 96).
- Ensure our resources are managed in a responsible way, and our funds are properly protected, applied and accounted for. This includes policies and procedures to combat bribery, fraud, corruption and extortion. We also ensure the systems and processes are in place to enable our expenditure to be audited, meaning that money, funding and grants can be tracked from receipt to expenditure.
- We work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery (UN Compact principle 10).

Anti-bribery and anti-money laundering policies are built into our procurement policies.

## IV. Openness and accountability

We try to create a culture where RSPB supporters, staff, volunteers, institutional partners and the public can see and understand how we work, how we deal with issues, and how we spend our funds.

Through the RSPB Magazine, our website ([rspb.org.uk](https://rspb.org.uk)) and wider communications, we strive to keep you informed and involved about our projects and activities. This means we operate in an open and transparent way within our legal and regulatory requirements. We want to share information about how we work and ensure it can be accessed easily.

## V. Right to be safe

Every person who volunteers, works, or is in contact with us, should be treated with dignity and respect and feel that they are in a safe and supportive environment (UN Compact principles 1 and 2). This means we:

- Stand against and have a clear approach to prevent abuse of trust and power, including bullying, intimidation, harassment, discrimination or victimisation in all our activities. See also page 98.
- Create a culture that supports the reporting and resolution of concerns about abuse of any kind of inappropriate behaviour.
- Ensure that anyone working or volunteering for us understands their expectations, and provide the relevant training to support them in meeting their responsibilities.
- Ensure that anyone who works or volunteers for us has access to proper support and advice if they experience or witness unacceptable behaviour, raise a concern or make an allegation about the actions of others, or don't feel safe.
- Stand against all forms of forced and compulsory labour and for the effective abolition of child labour (UN Compact principle 5).

## Modern Slavery Act (2015) and the RSPB

A full statement of the steps we take to prevent slavery and human trafficking taking place in our business and supply chains can be found at [rspb.org.uk/slavery-act](https://rspb.org.uk/slavery-act) (UN Compact principle 4).



# Decision making, risk and control

We strive for decision-making processes that are rigorous and efficient, incorporate effective delegation, and are informed by assessments of risk and control.

**Decision making**

RSPB Council delegates authority to the Chief Executive and to the employees for certain activities. There’s a detailed schedule of delegation, and systems and policies are in place to monitor these delegations.

**Risk**

The Trustees are accountable for identifying and managing the major risks facing the charity, working with the Executive Board. Risk management is considered in every aspect of the RSPB’s work. In response to the recommendations set out in the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102), Trustees regularly consider risk management in a broad and strategic manner, considering all relevant internal and external factors that might alter or undermine the capacity of the charity to fulfil its charitable objectives, its mission and its strategy. Risk registers, risk mapping and internal audit provide comprehensive assurance of the following areas of risk and control:

- delivery of our strategy and projects, with a particular focus on environmental impact;
- our environmental footprint and credentials;
- our reputation;
- our responsibility to staff, volunteers, supporters and visitors, and, in particular, to safeguard the wellbeing of vulnerable individuals;
- our compliance with relevant law and regulation;

- management of our financial, physical and intangible assets, including land, buildings, data and technological assets;
- retaining and building know-how delivering good governance and embodying a positive, inclusive and ethical organisational culture;
- protecting and growing our income.

Our risk review process assesses each of the major risks and the effectiveness of the arrangements for managing them. The resulting report is scrutinised by Council via its Audit and Risk Committee every quarter, and in greater depth by Council once each year. Following the most recent review in April 2024, the Trustees confirmed that they are satisfied with such arrangements and identified several strategic risks for the year ahead that represent, by their nature, both opportunity and challenge. The RSPB will work to limit the negative impact on the delivery of our charitable objectives and to secure all possible positive outcomes in line with our overall risk appetite.

**Control**

The RSPB has a clear framework for monitoring its impact, progress and approach to risk management. Risk registers cover the full range of financial and non-financial risks and we operate the ‘three lines’ model for risk control and monitoring. This separates execution from control policies and from audit, and maps and rates the control framework. Council approves a plan for internal audits, and a full review of external audit service provision is undertaken periodically with the active involvement of suitably experienced Trustees. The Audit and Risk Committee meets in private with external auditors once a year.

Risk description	Risk response
Environmental challenges	
In the climate and nature crisis, the threats to nature continue to grow, yet attention is overshadowed by the climate emergency.	We are focused on addressing the nature and climate emergencies and raising awareness of the role of nature in the climate crisis.
Some people are disconnected from nature and unaware that it's in crisis, or aware but not motivated to take action. In some cases relationships between people, nature and climate lead to a real or perceived conflict between people and nature.	We undertake activities to help people connect with nature, including education, reserves events, wide-scale communications and engagement activities, such as Big Garden Birdwatch and the collaboration with the Natural History Museum in 2024.
The RSPB supports renewable energy that is delivered with a nature positive approach. If growth in renewables, particularly wind energy, and updates to onshore grid infrastructure, happen without effective strategic mitigation and compensation, this could cause significant harm to birds, other species and habitats. Given limited resources, we might not engage with some potentially damaging projects.	Renew efforts to get UK governments to take a strategic approach to siting and mitigation, through revised sectoral marine plans and better spatial planning on land to avoid most sensitive sites. Continue engagement with individual projects and the offshore wind sector in particular. Further develop and urgently advocate for rapid delivery of positive measures to improve resilience of species and habitats.
Failure to influence public and political views on food and farming resulting in damaging land management practices and a reduction in funding available for nature-friendly farming in some UK countries.	We advocate for environmentally sensitive farming through our policy influencing work and campaigns. We engage with other organisations working in this area locally and UK-wide. We will continue to deliver advocacy and communications in partnership to champion the importance of nature for food security.
Technology and cybersecurity	
The cost and complexity of the technological infrastructure that the RSPB work depends on will continue to increase. We contend with requirements to upgrade or replace older systems, issues of connectivity in remote areas, and protecting from cyberattack.	Our approach will be prioritised based on risk and strategic need. Increased costs will be managed by onboarding new technology as legacy tech is retired, while focusing on simplification of our technology estate. The cybersecurity will continue to be upgraded.
Income	
Continued reduction in disposable income and competition for funding means that existing sources of income are subject to significant volatility. New income sources have their own volatility and include an increase in restricted funding. New opportunities also bring potential reputational risk as well as benefits.	The RSPB Council pays close attention to the RSPB income strategy, bearing in mind the policy on financial reserves. New income opportunities are continuously explored, with all new arrangements subject to review by our Ethical Gifts Board, and major changes reviewed by Trustees.
Costs	
Higher core costs resulting from inflationary pressure increases the cost of meeting core obligations significantly.	Management is placing an increased focus on the management of the core cost base, cost control and procurement.
Wellbeing	
Workforce wellbeing, which is monitored through various channels including formal surveys. Ongoing cultural change is required to support staff, many of whom are hybrid working.	Developing additional tools and support to enable line managers to ensure good working relationships, creative collaboration opportunities and wellbeing in the workplace.



# Inclusion

## Our commitment to inclusion

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) underpins the work we do to save nature. We're continuing our work to ensure that the RSPB is an organisation where everyone can thrive, as well as to break down barriers faced by different communities when accessing nature.

## Accessibility on nature reserves

To improve accessibility for visitors and our workforce, we have completed a successful trial of accessibility changes at several of our nature reserves. These will help inform our approach to access. The trial included testing of:

- Standardised and high-quality information available in advance and on arrival to inform decisions about how people with access needs can enjoy our spaces.
- Staff training to increase confidence in welcoming visitors with a wide range of access needs.
- Resources including photo and video guides, communication cards, sensory trails and targeted events, which are designed to make more people feel welcome and included at our reserves.

As part of a redesign of our reserve maps, we've also developed an access version which will be produced for all our larger reserves. This version includes marking features such as gradients, steps, and potential barriers like stiles or cattle grids that may affect people with access needs. Trail descriptions will be factual rather than subjective to allow visitors to make up their own minds about how they explore the nature reserve.

## Inclusive working practices

For our workforce we piloted and subsequently started the roll-out of training and resources to make the way we communicate work effectively for everyone.

In March 2024, we launched the RSPB's new Reasonable Adjustment Information Hub, including a Reasonable Adjustment Passport and Neurodiversity Guidance and resources to support line managers. This work aims to ensure that everyone in our workforce can thrive by removing barriers or disadvantages in the workplace.

The passport complements our inclusive recruitment work to drive a wider diversity of talent in our recruitment processes, by making sure the recruitment journey is as accessible, inclusive and attractive as possible.

This year, we also refreshed our foundational EDI materials to support colleagues to create more inclusive working practices at the RSPB. This includes creating a greater understanding of how EDI supports our mission and ability to meet our strategic aim of enabling more, and more diverse, people to act for nature.

# Caring for our supporters

Volunteers are at the heart of what we do and achieve. Without their help, our work would be greatly diminished. Volunteers founded the RSPB in 1889 and they are still fundamental to our work today. They carry out a variety of roles, from practical conservation and field surveys, to providing highly specialist skills, raising funds and running the RSPB as members of Council. Last year, we welcomed over 3,000 new volunteers to the RSPB. In total our volunteers donated over one million hours of time. Many take on more than one role and nearly 90% would recommend volunteering with us to a friend or family member. In addition, more than 610,000 people took part in the RSPB's citizen science project, Big Garden Birdwatch 2024, recording 9.7 million birds.

Our ability to speak out for nature depends on the support of our volunteers. As described above, their activities are crucial to our work and the RSPB seeks volunteer involvement wherever appropriate. Volunteers are an established, valued and integral part of the RSPB. They enhance our work by bringing valuable talents, skills, experience and energy, as well as their gift of time. Volunteers also champion the cause and often provide friendly challenge and new perspectives while showing passion and commitment to our mission.

We also provide services to our members and supporters, responding to more than 225,000 enquiries each year and sustaining our relationships with around two million members, supporters and volunteers. Members receive a quarterly magazine, and we send email newsletters to our supporters, including the fortnightly Notes on Nature email which reaches 1.2 million readers, and our regular campaigning newsletter, which is

sent to 70,000 people. Between April 2023 and March 2024, our website was viewed by 6.7 million users who looked at more than 24 million pages.

## Safeguarding

We want everyone to enjoy their involvement with the RSPB, and know that we must operate safely, with safeguarding as the top priority. We are committed to safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable people, and anyone who encounters our organisation, through:

- Our Safeguarding Policy, which is kept under review to ensure it is meeting the needs of the organisation.
- Safeguarding training for our workforce (including our volunteers) which is currently being revised and updated.
- A comprehensive Speak-up Policy to protect our workforce.
- Our Whistle-blowing Policy and independent helpline which is supported by an anonymous reporting capability.
- Our Bullying and Harassment Policy.
- Anti-harassment training delivered to our workforce by an expert partner.
- Bespoke lone traveller training delivered via expert partners to those that work internationally, equipping them to operate in high-risk environments appropriately.
- Membership of external safeguarding groups to ensure we are doing the right things in the right way.

We take steps to ensure our safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and regulatory requirements wherever we operate as a charity. And to ensure that these steps are robust, we report regularly on safeguarding issues to our Trustees. See our Safeguarding Policy at [rspb.org.uk/safeguarding](https://rspb.org.uk/safeguarding)



# How we generate funds to save nature

We're grateful to receive most of our funds from individuals. This comes in a range of different ways, such as appeals, raffles, lotteries, community fundraising, legacies and membership.

We work hard to build long-lasting relationships with grant funders, trusts and corporate organisations. Much of our conservation work also generates vital income, which further supports our work to save nature. This includes funds raised through land and farming, and the sale of our research to other organisations.

Our loyal RSPB shop customers help fund our work through the purchase of bird food products, binoculars and telescopes, and educational materials. RSPB members and supporters are the foundation of everything we do, and our work to save nature is only possible thanks to their ongoing support.

Protecting and restoring habitats, saving species and helping end the nature and climate emergency is the key motivation behind our work. We're dedicated to inspiring every generation to have a lifelong commitment to the natural world.

Our commitments to our members and supporters are:

- We always look to improve how we work and welcome your feedback.
- We fundraise in a fair and responsible way and ensure funds are spent in the most effective way to save birds, other wildlife, and the places they call home.

- We endeavour to always show our gratitude for your money, time and the action you take for nature.
- We also share the latest news of what we're achieving thanks to you, and give you control over how you hear from us, whilst managing the cost of doing so.

To achieve our objective to save nature, we carry out fundraising activities. We do this with RSPB staff, volunteers and the help of carefully selected professional fundraisers and commercial participators. Professional fundraisers are fundraising agencies or third-party service providers who act as agents in raising funds on behalf of the RSPB. Commercial participators are usually businesses who encourage the sale of their goods or services on the basis that the RSPB will receive funding as a result. In all cases, we have contractual arrangements with these fundraising partners that set the standards and obligations that our fundraising activities must meet.

We regularly monitor the quality of all telephone marketing calls and conduct 'mystery shopping' surveys with our face-to-face fundraisers. We ask all new members for feedback to understand their experience of joining us, and this also identifies any areas for improvement. Our Local Group network also takes part in fundraising activities. We give group committee members full training and guidance in how to fundraise with the public as part of a group activity.

As part of our promise, we ensure that fundraising is conducted to the highest quality and that practices and procedures are in place and closely adhered to – particularly in protecting individuals who may be in vulnerable circumstances. RSPB staff complete mandatory training including safeguarding and fundraising compliance. Our face-to-face fundraisers have full training in talking about the RSPB cause in a transparent and straightforward way to the members of the public they meet. The RSPB is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and the Data and Marketing Association. We are also signed up to the Fundraising Preference Service to enable individuals to opt out of receiving fundraising communications from us. Alongside our high standards, where possible, we look to go beyond the Fundraising Regulator Code of Practice to ensure that supporters have the best possible experience in our fundraising efforts. We also encourage our fundraising service providers to sign up to the Code, and we ensure that they understand the RSPB's promise to our supporters.

The RSPB complies with the Data Protection Act and the Information Commissioner's guides and code. RSPB members and supporters have the opportunity to express their preferences on how they are contacted, with the opportunity to change these at any time.

We endeavour to provide an exemplary service, to be transparent about our communication aims and to provide appropriate opportunities for engagement. Like others, we do not always get this right. We provide our complaints policy on our website and this clearly explains how a complaint can be made. Each complaint is fully addressed and improvements are made to allow us to retain supporter trust and improve our service. Last year we received 172 complaints about our fundraising activities communicated by phone, post, email, SMS, face-to-face, and via TV or radio.

## Award-winning nature reserves

RSPB Loch Leven (pictured) received the Inclusive Tourism Award at the Central and East Scotland Thistle Awards 2023. Meanwhile, RSPB Minsmere was named winner of the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism award at the East of England Tourism Awards 2023.



# Financial review 2023-24

We have continued a planned spend down of our financial reserves to bring them in line with levels set by Council, which has enabled increased spend on a number of large conservation projects. To support this, we have increased staff numbers by 4.6% to provide the capacity for this higher level of work. However, we have also seen the impacts of global economic uncertainty, primarily through high inflation rates on our cost base, but also the cost of living crisis. We continue to actively monitor our financial position to ensure reserves remain within Council policy.

The support and commitment of our members and supporters remains strong and gives a sound financial base to meet the ongoing challenges of the nature and climate emergency both in the UK and internationally.

We remain financially resilient and in a good position to navigate the current economic outlook.

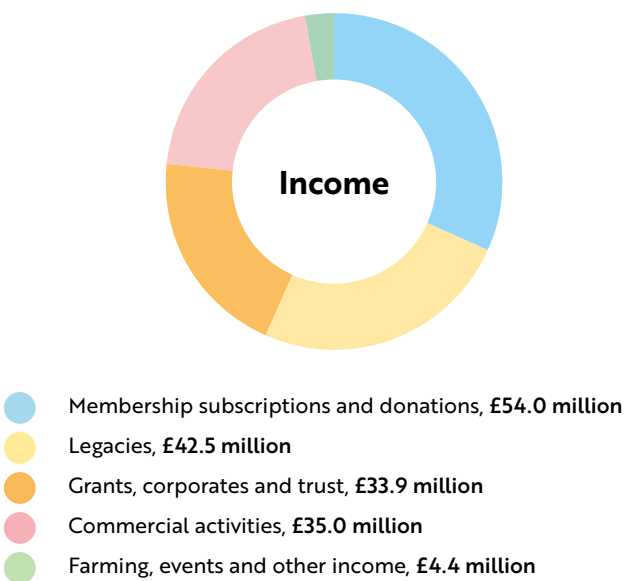
**Summary**

Another year of income growth, up £5.2 million (3.1%) to a record £169.9 million. Charitable expenditure increased by £4.7 million (3.9%) and together with costs of raising funds falling by £1.5 million and unrealised investment gains of £2.9 million, led to a surplus for the year (before the actuarial loss in respect of the pension scheme) of £4.7 million. We finished the year with free financial reserves of £42.0 million which represents 13 weeks'

expenditure cover and is within the range set by Council. We will continue to plan prudently as we manage our reserves in the light of the current economic outlook, mindful of the range set by Council.

Total financial reserves decreased by £6.8 million, being Net Income of £4.7 million and an actuarial loss in respect of the Defined Benefit Pension Scheme of £11.6 million. Cash and investments decreased by £3.4 million to £53.0 million but leaving a good level of liquidity as we continue in a period of uncertain economic times.

The £5.1 million increase in the Pension Scheme liability reflects the annual updates to the valuation assumptions used to calculate the liability, with the main changes being a reduction in the value of scheme assets caused by an increase in gilt yields. The Defined Benefit Pension Scheme was closed in 2017 and changes to the liability reflect macro-economic changes outside our control. The deficit recovery payments in respect of this liability are determined by triennial valuations undertaken by the pension trustees. The latest triennial valuation reflects the funding position as at 1st April 2021 and resulted in annual payments of £7.5 million. The next valuation as at 1st April 2024 is due later this year.



**Income**

Overall, total income increased by £5.2 million (3.1%) to £169.9 million which, in the context of the current operating environment, highlights the tremendous support we receive from our members and supporters.

Membership subscriptions and donations increased by £1.0 million to £54.0 million driven by a £0.9 million increase in donations, particularly pleasing following last year's fall. New member income increased by £0.3 million offset by a similar decrease in retention income and gift aid. Membership retention rates, however, increased to 90.5%. Total members at the end of the year showed a slight increase and remained at 1.15 million. RSPB membership is a key part of our income diversity and enables us to speak with confidence and authority when we undertake our advocacy work.

Legacy income decreased by £1.7 million to £42.5 million from record breaking levels in 2022-23. However, legacies notified but not

yet recognised have risen by £6.7 million over the year. This reflects the trust our supporters have that we will use this income to invest in large scale conservation projects for the benefit of future generations.

Grants, corporates and trusts income at £33.9 million remained at 2022-23 levels. An increase in grant income of £1.9m was offset by £1.9m lower corporates and trusts income. This has been used to support a wide range of large-scale projects both in the UK and internationally, including Rathlin Island Restoration (£1.4m), Orkney Native Wildlife (£1.3m), Lake Vyrnwy (£1.1m), Cairngorms Connect (£0.9m), Curlews in Crisis (£0.9m) and St Helena Cloud Forests (£0.8m).

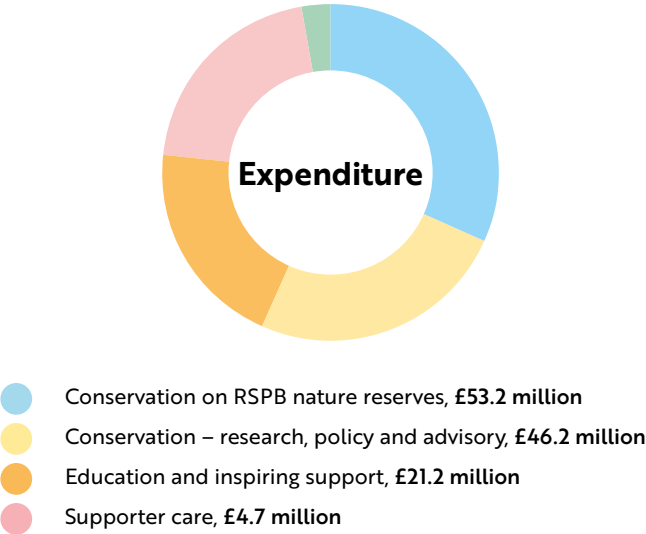
Income from commercial activities increased by £4.4 million (14.5%) to £35.0 million. This was driven by a £2 million increase in conservation consultancy and advice, whilst food and beverage and retail sales at our reserves increased by £1.7 million. Two new cafes opened at the Lodge and Dee Estuary, joining those opened last year at Conwy and Frampton Marsh.

The cost of raising funds fell by £1.5 million to £42.7 million. Prior year spend included £3.4 million cost initiatives targeting future income growth, particularly the Wild Isles programme, brand and commercial.

Income from commercial activities has increased by

£4.4 million





Expenditure

Total expenditure on charitable activities increased by £4.7 million (3.9%) to £125.3 million. £4.2 million relates directly to increased expenditure on our major conservation projects for which we resourced our teams accordingly but also saw impacts from higher global prices.

Managing nature reserves expenditure at £53.2 million was £3.8 million higher than last year. We manage 222 nature reserves, covering 158,651 hectares and providing a home to over 18,700 species of which more than 3,500 are of conservation concern. This increase reflects an increase in major conservation expenditure and in the teams to deliver that.

Research, policy, and advisory expenditure at £46.2 million was £1.8 million higher, showing additional project and operational expenditure both at home and internationally, including those already mentioned, Life on the Edge and the African-Eurasian flyway projects.

The work we undertake to educate and inspire support, whether through our members, volunteers, grant funders, political support, or our partners, is designed to bring about a shared world where wildlife, wild places and people thrive. We maintained a high level of spend

in this area at £21.2 million, though £1.6 million lower than last year as resources were directed to conservation projects.

Supporter care expenditure was £0.6 million higher than last year at £4.7 million.

Reserves policy

The appropriate level of financial reserves is considered each year by the Trustees. They consider a sustained fall in income of 10–15% to be a reasonable basis for setting a minimum level. It is the intention of the Trustees to hold sufficient reserves to enable expenditure to be reduced in a managed fashion, should the need arise, avoiding the need to halt work abruptly. The Trustees have agreed that free reserves should normally be within a range of 8 to 16 weeks’ worth of expenditure. Free financial reserves at 31st March 2024 were £42.0 million representing 13 weeks’ future expenditure, within the policy range. Income levels reflect a continued underlying resilience of the income we receive from our members and supporters, despite the cost of living crisis. We have seen impacts from high global inflation rates and although rates are now falling, costs have risen and remain at a higher level. Our financial projections reflect these factors and we anticipate free financial reserves staying within the policy range. This level of reserves gives us the financial resilience that will help us navigate through economic uncertainties. Trustees continue to monitor levels closely.

The RSPB holds financial reserves to support future activities in a number of categories:

- Total financial reserves at 31 March 2024 were £263.5 million which is made up of:
  - Tangible and intangible fixed assets of £232.8 million
  - Cash and investments of £53.0 million
  - Working capital of £6.9 million
  - Pension liability of £29.2 million

- Unrestricted reserves, available to be applied, at the discretion of the trustees, to any of the RSPB’s charitable purposes, at 31 March 2024 were £81.5 million, made up of:
  - General funds of £48.9 million including £6.9 million of tangible and intangible fixed assets, £28.0 million of investments and £14.0 million working capital.
  - Designated funds of £61.8 million represented by nature reserves owned by RSPB. There are no plans to dispose of these nature reserves.
  - Pension reserve liability of £29.2 million.
- Restricted reserves, to be applied to the specific purpose(s) intended by the donor, at 31 March 2024 were £181.7 million, made up of:
  - Nature reserves of £162.4 million
  - Other tangible assets of £1.8 million
  - Investments of £12.7 million.
  - Working capital of £4.8 million.
- Endowment reserves are restricted funds that are to be retained for the benefit of the Charity as a capital fund. Permanent endowments require the capital to be maintained and only the income and capital growth can be utilised. With expendable endowments the capital may also be utilised. At 31 March 2024 endowment funds were £0.2 million.

Investment policy and powers

The RSPB’s investment powers are as set out in the Charter and Statutes and are wider than those contained in the Trustees Investment Act 2000.

Approach

The RSPB’s primary investment objective is to maintain the real value of its investments. However, as a proportion of the financial reserves are likely to be held in the longer term, it is appropriate to invest conservatively a proportion of the funds to generate income and/or real growth.

Investment properties arising from legacies are managed by the RSPB until disposal.

Responsible investment

In managing our investments, we follow the principles of socially responsible investing. These principles are to:

- invest in companies that make a positive contribution to society.
- use influence as an investor to encourage best practice management of social responsibility issues.
- avoid investing in companies whose activities conflict strongly with RSPB objectives.

We believe that taking account of environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues is an intrinsic part of being a good long-term investor, for both ethical and financial reasons. For example, through our investment managers, we minimise exposure to fossil fuel and had <0.1% exposure during the year under review.

Performance

The Trustees rely upon specialist advice for fund selection and allocation. Investment performance is compared to an independent benchmark and the target for investment returns is to outperform this composite benchmark by at least 1% per annum over a rolling three-year period.

We continue to hold a proportion of our cash holdings in investment grade bonds to increase the returns from our cash holdings without exposing them to the level of volatility associated with equity investment funds.



Relationship with subsidiaries

The RSPB group includes a number of subsidiary companies and partnerships and holds interests in a number of other non-profit organisations as set out in Note 23 to the Accounts. The Trustees regularly check the value, performance and sustainability of these relationships, particularly the performance of the main trading subsidiary, and they are satisfied that the interests of the charity are well served by the relationships, all of which assist the RSPB in achieving its charitable objects for the public benefit.

Pension

The Pension liability in respect of the defined benefit pension scheme, that was closed to future accrual in 2017, has increased by £5.1 million. The factors affecting this movement are largely outside our control: performance of the assets in the pension scheme and sensitivity to changes in discount and inflation rates. The Trustees continue to take steps to reduce the costs and risks of the pension scheme. In addition to closing the defined benefit scheme to new entrants and future accrual, the Trustees have agreed a deficit recovery plan with the Pension Trustees which both minimises the impact on our work but closes the deficit over a reasonable period. The annual employer contributions needed to fund this deficit are determined by reference to triennial valuations undertaken by the pension trustees.

The latest triennial valuation reflected the position as at 1st April 2021 and resulted in annual employer contributions of £7.5 million per annum. This level of contribution was calculated to eliminate the deficit in just over 8 years. The annual employer contributions will be reviewed during the next triennial valuation, which will reflect the funding position as at 1st April 2024. The deficit recovery plan is underpinned

by an agreement with the Pension Trustees that, in the unlikely event of the RSPB being unable to meet its obligations to the scheme, land would be passed to the Pension Fund to cover the shortfall. The total fair value of specified land available to cover any shortfall is £61.5 million.

Outlook for the future

We have been through several years of challenges unprecedented in modern day history, from a global pandemic to a war in Ukraine, which continues to have major economic impacts.

Last year’s outlook highlighted the commitment and generosity of our members and supporters, and we have seen that again this year. With this continued support and our solid financial position, we are confident that we can navigate through the current economic headwinds and continue to act for a shared world where wildlife, wild places and all people thrive.

The financial outcome for 2023/24 was a planned deficit and we resourced our teams to deliver that work, but also impacted by higher global prices. We have a cautious plan for 2024/25 including a range of scenarios to assess the financial impact of the current economic situation, so it is reasonable to expect the RSPB to have adequate resources to continue to operate for the foreseeable future.

Kevin Cox

Signed on behalf of Council

Kevin Cox  
RSPB Chair

28 August 2024

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finance adviser

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Colin Campbell (rspb-images.com)

Wildflowers save bumblebee season

Rare Great Yellow Bumblebees were helped by wildflowers planted by the community of the Isle of Tiree in Scotland. Although prolonged dry weather in early 2023 caused existing flowers to wither away, the new patches survived, providing a vital lifeline for the bees.



# Independent Auditor's Report to the Trustees of the RSPB

## Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds ('the charity') and its subsidiaries ('the group') for the year ended 31 March 2024, which comprise the Group Statement of Financial Activities, the Group and Charity Balance Sheets, the Group Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the parent charity's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of the group's income and receipt of endowments and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 and the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and Regulations 6 and 8 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (amended).

## Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

## Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's or the group's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

## Other information

The Trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

## Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the Trustees' report; or
- sufficient and proper accounting records have not been kept by the parent charity; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

## Responsibilities of Trustees

As explained more fully in the Trustees' responsibilities statement set out on page 91, the Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the group and the parent charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.



### Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 151 of the Charities Act 2011, and section 44(1)(c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and report in accordance with the Acts and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Details of the extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations are set out below.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at:

[frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities)

This description forms part of our auditor's report.

### Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We identified and assessed the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements from irregularities, whether due to fraud or error, and discussed these between our audit team members. We then designed and performed audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks within which the charity and group operates, focusing on those laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The laws and regulations we considered in this context were the Charities Act 2011 and The Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, together with the Charities SORP (FRS 102). We assessed the required compliance with these laws and regulations as part of our audit procedures on the related financial statement items.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which might be fundamental to the charity's and the group's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty. We also considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the charity and the group for fraud. The laws and regulations we considered in this context for the UK operations were General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and employment legislation.

Auditing standards limit the required audit procedures to identify non-compliance with these laws and regulations to enquiry of the Trustees and other management and inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

We identified the greatest risk of material impact on the financial statements from irregularities, including fraud, to be within the timing of recognition of income and the override of controls by management. Our audit procedures to respond to these risks included enquiries of management, internal audit, and the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, sample testing on the posting of journals, reviewing accounting estimates for biases, reviewing regulatory correspondence with the Charity Commission and reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that we may not have detected some material misstatements in the financial statements, even though we have properly planned and performed our audit in accordance with auditing standards. For example, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations (irregularities) is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely the inherently limited procedures required by auditing standards would identify it. In addition, as with any audit, there remained a higher risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal controls. We are not responsible for preventing non-compliance and cannot be expected to detect non-compliance with all laws and regulations.

### Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's Trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and Regulation 10 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's Trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's Trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

*Crowe U.K. LLP*

### Crowe U.K. LLP

Statutory Auditor  
London

30 August 2024

Crowe U.K. LLP is eligible for appointment as auditor of the charity by virtue of its eligibility for appointment as auditor of a company under section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

Crowe U.K. LLP is eligible for appointment as auditor of the charity under regulation 10(2) of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations by virtue of its eligibility under section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.



Consolidated statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 March 2024

Income and expenditure	Note	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	2024 Total £'000	2023 Total As restated £'000
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
<b>Income and endowments</b>						
Voluntary income						
Membership subscriptions and donations	3	50,762	3,243	-	54,005	53,044
Legacies	4	36,567	5,974	-	42,541	44,214
Grants, corporates and trusts	5	649	33,262	-	33,911	33,957
Total voluntary income		87,978	42,479	-	130,457	131,215
Total income from commercial activities	6	35,039	-	-	35,039	30,591
Investment income and interest	7	1,717	-	-	1,717	1,109
Charitable activities						
Land and farming income		1,619	-	-	1,619	964
Events and media sales		646	-	-	646	687
Total income from charitable activities		2,265	-	-	2,265	1,651
Other income						
Net gains on disposals of fixed assets	7	399	-	-	399	136
<b>Total income</b>		<b>127,398</b>	<b>42,479</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>169,877</b>	<b>164,702</b>
<b>Expenditure on</b>						
Cost of raising funds						
Costs of commercial activities	8	28,261	-	-	28,261	27,763
Costs of generating voluntary income	8	14,319	-	-	14,319	16,268
Investment management costs	8	134	-	-	134	167
Total cost of raising funds		42,714	-	-	42,714	44,198
<b>Net resources available for charitable activities</b>		<b>84,684</b>	<b>42,479</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>127,163</b>	<b>120,504</b>
Charitable activities						
Managing RSPB nature reserves	8	30,262	22,980	-	53,242	49,417
Research, policy and advisory	8	33,303	12,851	-	46,154	44,325
Education and inspiring support	8	20,936	248	-	21,184	22,818
Supporter care	8	4,700	-	-	4,700	4,059
Total expenditure on charitable activities		89,201	36,079	-	125,280	120,619
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>131,915</b>	<b>36,079</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>167,994</b>	<b>164,817</b>
Net gain/(loss) on investments		2,857	-	-	2,857	(1,368)
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>		<b>(1,660)</b>	<b>6,400</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,740</b>	<b>(1,483)</b>
Actuarial losses on pension scheme		(11,588)	-	-	(11,588)	(7,072)
Net movement in funds		(13,248)	6,400	-	(6,848)	(8,555)
Reconciliation of funds						
Total funds brought forward		94,752	175,318	244	270,314	278,869
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<b>81,504</b>	<b>181,718</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>263,466</b>	<b>270,314</b>

All the above results arise from continuing activities. Detailed comparative information is provided in note 25. Notes 1 to 25 form an integral part of these accounts.

Charity and consolidated balance sheets as at 31 March 2024

	Note	2024 Consolidated total £'000	2023 Consolidated total £'000	2024 Charity £'000	2023 Charity £'000
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Nature reserves	12	224,137	223,573	223,214	222,634
Other tangible assets	12	7,389	7,659	7,389	7,659
Intangible assets	12a	1,317	-	1,317	-
Investments	13	40,940	41,664	40,940	41,664
Investment in subsidiary companies	13	-	-	3,801	3,801
		273,783	272,896	276,661	275,758
<b>Current assets</b>					
Stock		5,152	4,927	222	223
Debtors	14	26,462	25,635	29,045	27,855
Short-term cash		12,013	14,662	7,581	10,764
		43,627	45,224	36,848	38,842
Creditors amounts falling due within one year	15	(20,852)	(19,534)	(17,325)	(16,403)
<b>Net current assets</b>		<b>22,775</b>	<b>25,690</b>	<b>19,523</b>	<b>22,439</b>
Total assets less current liabilities		296,558	298,586	296,184	298,197
Creditors amounts falling due in more than one year	15	(3,940)	(4,194)	(3,940)	(4,194)
<b>Net assets excluding pension liability</b>		<b>292,618</b>	<b>294,392</b>	<b>292,244</b>	<b>294,003</b>
Pension scheme liability	24	(29,152)	(24,078)	(29,152)	(24,078)
<b>Net assets including pension liability</b>		<b>263,466</b>	<b>270,314</b>	<b>263,092</b>	<b>269,925</b>
<b>The funds of the charity</b>					
Unrestricted funds					
General funds		48,890	54,991	48,516	54,602
Designated funds		61,766	63,839	61,766	63,839
Pension reserve	24	(29,152)	(24,078)	(29,152)	(24,078)
		81,504	94,752	81,130	94,363
Restricted funds		181,718	175,318	181,718	175,318
Endowment funds		244	244	244	244
<b>Total funds</b>	20 & 21	<b>263,466</b>	<b>270,314</b>	<b>263,092</b>	<b>269,925</b>

Notes 1 to 25 form an integral part of these accounts.

Authorised for issue by RSPB Council on 28 August 2024 and signed on behalf of Council by:

Kevin Cox

Kevin Cox  
Chair

Robert Cubbage

Robert Cubbage  
Treasurer



Application of net incoming resources

For the year ended 31 March 2024	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Net resources available for charitable purposes	127,163	120,504
Less total expenditure on charitable activities	(125,280)	(120,619)
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before gains/(losses)	1,883	(115)
Losses on investments and pension scheme	(8,731)	(8,440)
Net movement in funds as per Consolidated statement of financial activities	(6,848)	(8,555)
Application of net funds for charity use:		
Nature reserves	563	7,766
Other tangible assets	(269)	1,386
Intangible assets	1,317	-
Movement on stock, debtors and creditors	(12)	(5,411)
Movement on pension scheme	(5,074)	(127)
	(3,475)	3,614
Movement in cash and investments available for future activities	(3,373)	(12,169)
Cash and investments available at start of year	56,326	68,495
Cash and investments available at end of year	52,953	56,326

Consolidated statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 March 2024	Note	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash provided by operating activities	23	900	1,184
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest and dividends received		1,717	1,109
Additions to nature reserves		(3,745)	(10,562)
Purchase of other tangible fixed assets		(3,641)	(5,163)
Additions to intangible fixed assets		(1,581)	-
Proceeds from disposal of fixed assets		491	188
Purchase of investments		(29)	(22)
Proceeds from disposal of investments		3,500	3,000
Net cash used for investing activities		(3,288)	(11,450)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Bank loan		(237)	2,589
Net cash provided by financing activities		(237)	2,589
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting periods		(2,625)	(7,677)
Cash and cash equivalents at the start of the year		15,118	22,795
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		12,493	15,118
Analysis of cash and cash equivalents:			
Cash in hand		12,013	14,662
Notice deposits (less than 3 months)		480	456
Cash and cash equivalents		12,493	15,118



**Record year for Ringed Plover partnership**  
A total of 25 Ringed Plover chicks fledged from beaches at Heacham and Snettisham in 2023, a fourfold increase since 2021. This follows conservation efforts led by the RSPB. Plovers in Peril launched in 2021, in partnership with Wild Ken Hill and the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk.



# Notes to the accounts

## 1) Charity information

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is a non-statutory body incorporated by Royal Charter and a charity registered in England and Wales (number 207076) and in Scotland (number SC037654). The address of the registered office is The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL.

## 2) Accounting policies

### Basis of preparation

The accounts (financial statements) have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS102) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS102, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland, and the Charities Act 2011 and the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 and UK Generally Accepted Practice as it applies from 1 January 2015.

The accounts have been prepared to give a 'true and fair' view and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair view'. This departure has involved following the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) issued on 16 July 2014 rather than the previous Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities, which was effective from 1 April 2005 but which has since been withdrawn. The RSPB meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at

historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

The Statement of financial activities (SOFA) and balance sheet consolidate, on a line-by-line basis, the financial statements of the Charity and its subsidiary undertakings. The Charity has taken advantage of the exemption in FRS102 from the requirement to prepare a charity-only cash flow statement and certain disclosures about the Charity's financial statements.

None of the subsidiary directors received any remuneration or emoluments in respect of their services to those subsidiaries. Where directors are officers/employees of the RSPB they will receive remuneration only from the RSPB.

The RSPB's commercial activities are undertaken by its wholly-owned trading subsidiaries, RSPB Sales Limited and RSPB Nature Regen Limited, and all distributable profits are donated under Gift Aid to the RSPB.

RSPB Sales Limited was incorporated as a company limited by shares in 1992 to conduct trading activities in support of the RSPB's charitable objectives. The principal activities are the sale of goods by mail order and through retail outlets, consulting and advice, farming, publications, trade, catering and lottery. The company is registered under company number 02693778.

RSPB Nature Regen Limited was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in 2023 (registration number 14776951). The principal activities are the sale of ecosystem and land management services.

March Farmers (Washland) Limited, a company limited by shares (registration number 01039814). This entity is a wholly-owned subsidiary acquired in 2008 to secure the leasehold interest in land adjacent to the Nene Washes reserve in Cambridgeshire. Through the March Farmers Habitat Restoration project, the former arable land is being restored to floodplain grazing marsh.

Farming for Nature, a company limited by guarantee (registration number 07982175), incorporated in 2012. This entity is being used in collaboration with United Utilities, from whom the company leases land on the Haweswater Estate in Cumbria, to deliver habitat restoration, drive improvements to water quality and benefit a range of upland wildlife while maintaining a viable farming enterprise.

RSPB Oronsay, a Scottish Limited Partnership of which the RSPB is the General Partner. This entity was established in 1996 to carry out the business of farming and nature conservation on the island of Oronsay.

RSPB Cayman Islands Nature Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary and a non-profit company limited by shares, registered in the Cayman Islands (registration number 304647). This entity was established in 2015 to promote the conservation of biological diversity and the natural environment through the acquisition of land to create or extend nature reserves in the Cayman Islands.

The RSPB holds a 33% joint venture interest in Yayasan Konservasi Ekosistem Hutan, a non-profit organisation registered in Indonesia established to facilitate the acquisition and management of the Harapan Rainforest in Sumatra. The results

have not been included in these accounts; to do so would not materially alter them.

The RSPB holds a 33% interest in Gola Rainforest Conservation LG, a non-profit company limited by guarantee registered in Sierra Leone and established to conserve and help fund the Gola Rainforest National Park. The results have not been included in these accounts; to do so would not materially alter them.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is a registered charity and as such is potentially exempt from taxation on its income and gains to the extent that they are applied to its charitable purposes. There was no tax charge during the year. The subsidiaries donate, under Gift Aid, all distributable profits to the Charity each year.

## Critical accounting judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the Charity's accounting policies, Trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and underlying assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an on-going basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period to which they relate.

The key sources of estimation uncertainty that have a significant effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements are related to:



- Retirement benefit liabilities – as disclosed in note 24, the RSPB has a Defined Benefit Scheme. Year-end recognition of the liabilities under this scheme and the valuation of assets to fund these liabilities require a number of significant assumptions to be made including key financial market indicators such as inflation, discount rate, expectations on future salary growth and asset returns. These assumptions are agreed by the scheme actuary and RSPB management. For each 0.1% change in the discount rate, the carrying amount of pension obligations would change by an estimated £3.7 million.
- Income recognition of legacies – legacies are recognised on the settlement of the estate or receipt of payment, whichever is earlier. Management have accrued a portion of the legacy pipeline on a basis consistent with prior years which equates to legacy receipts in the month after year-end.
- Grant income recognition – where a grant contains performance related conditions, income is recognised in line with achievement of those conditions. Management use total expenditure incurred to deliver the performance conditions at the end of each reporting period as a reasonable basis.
- Donated assets – the value of donated land and buildings recognised within fixed assets is based on external surveyor valuations. This includes specific reports and also use of market valuations by internal surveyors.

Funds

Unrestricted funds

General funds are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds, which have been applied or reserved by

the Trustees for a specific purpose. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in note 21.

Restricted funds

Restricted funds are those which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions of the donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The purpose for which restricted funds are held is analysed in note 21.

Endowment funds

Endowment funds are restricted funds that are held for the benefit of the Charity as a capital fund. Permanent endowments require the capital to be maintained and only the income and capital growth can be utilised. With expendable endowments, the capital may also be utilised. The purpose for which endowment funds are held is analysed in note 21.

Capital expenditure

Purchased assets, individually exceeding £2,500 at cost, are included on the balance sheet at historic cost less depreciation and any impairment in accordance with FRS102 ‘Property, Plant and Equipment’ (note 12). Expenditure on fixed assets is capitalised in the year of acquisition and depreciation is charged annually. During the transition to FRS102 in 2016, selected nature reserves were restated to their fair value (note 12).

Depreciation

Nature reserves, either owned as freehold land or held as leasehold land where the lease is held in perpetuity, are considered to have an indefinite useful life and are not depreciated.

Other fixed assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over their anticipated useful lives as follows:

Nature reserves – freeholding buildings:

Buildings	50 years
Reserve infrastructure	4 years
Nature reserves – leasehold land and buildings with a fixed term	Period of lease or 50 years whichever is shorter
Other fixed assets	4 to 50 years depending on the nature of the asset
Intangible fixed assets	6 to 10 years

Going concern

We have felt the financial impact of global economic factors, particularly high inflation rates on our cost base plus the related cost of living crisis. Although there has been a welcome return of rates to 2021 levels, costs are now generally higher. Bank of England projections for the medium term at time of writing showing inflation remaining between 2-3% across 2024 and being at low levels in 2025. But with interest rates still above 5% and reducing at a much slower rate, unemployment rising and economic growth forecast to be low, the overall trading environment is likely to continue to be challenging.

Trustees review and respond to financial projections that detail the potential financial impacts of this economic environment on the RSPB, as well as undertaking scenario planning to assess the potential short, medium, and longer-term financial implications of other risks and opportunities.

Looking forward to 2024–2025 we plan to utilise financial reserves to support the organisation and to invest in strategic priorities, whilst remaining within the 8 – 16 weeks cover policy range.

The financial outcome for 2023–2024 saw us continuing to spend on our strategic aims,

utilising reserves to do this. Our closing free financial reserves reduced to £42.0 million and cash and investments were £53.0 million. Given this position, and a careful approach to our financial planning, RSPB Council considers that there are adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future and have continued to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

Investments

The investments in the subsidiary undertakings are stated at cost less provision for impairment.

All other investments are stated at fair value with gains and losses being recognised within income and expenditure. Properties included in investments are those assigned under legacy bequests, awaiting disposal at a future date, and are stated at their fair value at the balance sheet date. The SOFA includes the net gains and losses arising on revaluations and disposals throughout the year. Investment cash is held for investment purposes only. It is the intention of the Trustees that fixed asset investments will not be drawn upon within the following year.

Stocks

Stocks, which include livestock and products for resale, are stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

Financial instruments

The RSPB has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Financial assets held at amortised cost comprise cash at bank and in hand, together with trade and other debtors. Financial liabilities held at amortised cost comprise trade and other creditors.



## Income

Income is included in the SOFA when the RSPB is entitled to the income, the receipt is probable and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy. If these conditions are not met then the income is deferred.

The following specific policies apply to categories of income:

- i) Membership income is treated as a donation and is accounted for when received.
- ii) Legacies are accounted for based on settlement of the estate or receipt of payment, whichever is earlier.
- iii) Grants, including government grants, received in advance of the associated work being carried out are deferred only when the donor has imposed preconditions on the expenditure of resources (see Note 17).
- iv) Donated services are recognised at the value of the gift to the Charity which is the amount the Charity would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market. They are included in the SOFA and balance sheet as appropriate.

## Expenditure

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to that category. Costs incurred that relate to multiple purposes are analysed and allocated to the appropriate categories in line with the joint cost allocation principles in the Charities SORP (FRS102).

- i) Costs of generating voluntary income do not include the costs of disseminating information in support of our charitable activities.
- ii) Commercial trading includes the cost of goods sold in mail order, retail and catering activities.

- iii) Costs of managing RSPB nature reserves are those incurred in managing our network of nature reserves including land management, habitat restoration and visitor facilities.
- iv) Research, policy and advisory includes the costs associated with scientific research and our advocacy work to influence public policy to benefit nature.
- v) Education and inspiring support includes the costs of activities to inspire children, young people and families to connect with nature and to enable supporters to use their voice most effectively to benefit nature conservation.
- vi) Supporter care includes the costs of providing information to our members and supporters including a quarterly magazine providing information on the work being done by the RSPB and its partners.
- vii) Support costs have been allocated to the headings in the SOFA on the basis of salary percentage. This applies to office facilities and accommodation, finance, information technology, human resources, management and governance.
- viii) The RSPB makes grants to organisations that further our charitable objectives through:
  - ongoing support to the BirdLife International partnership which provides a coordinated global framework to secure the comprehensive international agreements needed for nature conservation and the environment.
  - the funding of specific projects that support the protection, creation or restoration of priority habitats or other work to protect critically endangered species.

## Pensions

The Defined Benefit Scheme was closed on 31 March 2017 and replaced with a Defined Contribution Scheme.

The Defined Benefit Scheme amount charged in resources expended is the net of the interest cost and interest income on assets. Re-measurements are recognised immediately in Other recognised gains and losses.

Defined benefit schemes are funded, with the assets of the scheme held separately from those of the group, in separate Trustee administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent currency and term to the scheme liabilities. The resulting defined benefit asset or liability is presented separately after other net assets on the face of the balance sheet. Full actuarial valuations are obtained triennially.

With regard to the Defined Contribution Scheme, the amounts charged in resources expended are the employer contributions in the year. The employer contribution rate matches the employee rate up to a maximum of 7%.

## Redundancy and termination payments

Redundancy and termination liabilities are recognised when the obligation to transfer economic benefits has arisen. The value of this liability represents the best estimate of expenditure required to settle the obligation(s) at the reporting date.

## Operating leases

Operating lease rentals are charged and credited to the SOFA on a straight-line basis over the length of the lease.

## Foreign currency

Transactions in foreign currencies are translated at rates prevailing at the date of the transaction. Balances denominated in foreign currencies are translated at the rate of exchange prevailing at the year-end, in accordance with FRS102. Any gains or losses arising on translations are reported as part of the transaction within the SOFA and are not material; they are therefore not disclosed separately.



A new tagging project featuring Clive the Bar-tailed Godwit captured hearts and minds, achieving an 11.2% engagement rate on Facebook and 49,000 impressions on X (formerly Twitter). The project will provide valuable data on Bar-tailed Godwit migration, and is already shedding new light on the importance of England's east coast wetlands for migratory birds.



3) Membership subscriptions and donations

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Membership subscriptions	46,048	46,023
Donations	7,957	7,021
	54,005	53,044

4) Legacies

The estimated value of legacies notified, but neither received nor included in income, is £37,387,871 (2023: £31,671,600).

5) Grants, corporates and trusts

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Grants	28,271	26,384
Corporates	1,263	3,137
Trusts	4,377	4,436
	33,911	33,957
Amounts received from corporates during the year include the following donations:		
Services	63	204
Goods	17	24
	80	228

Income recognised in the trading subsidiary companies is now reported in the SOFA under ‘total income from commercial activities’. This has resulted in income moving from ‘Corporates’ in 2023

Major grants received during the year include the following:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
UK		
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs*	8,604	7,022
Natural England*	1,965	1,683
Scottish Natural Heritage*	1,587	1,498
Welsh Government/ Natural Resources Wales*	1,367	1,301
Scottish Government*	1,209	922
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs*	262	535
Landfill Communities Fund	241	666
Environment Agency*	118	1,022
Forestry Commission*	8	9
	15,361	14,658
International		
European Union	3,960	2,236
The National Lottery Heritage Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund	2,948	4,340
Climate Action Fund Round 3	223	-
Local Councils and Other	5,779	5,150
	28,271	26,384

\*Government grants used to fund conservation projects and recognised in the accounts. There are no unfulfilled conditions or contingencies relating to the government grants or other forms of government assistance from which the charity has directly benefited recognised in the accounts.

5) Grants, corporates and trusts (continued)

Grants received were for the following purposes:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Managing RSPB nature reserves	18,806	17,579
Research, policy and advisory	8,175	7,285
Education and inspiring support	1,129	1,324
	28,110	26,188
Acquisition of nature reserves	161	196
	28,271	26,384

6) Commercial activities

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Trading		
Retail, mail order and trade	19,514	18,728
Catering	4,886	3,500
Events	544	519
	24,944	22,747
Conservation		
Consultancy and advice	4,976	2,972
Land and farming income	1,392	1,642
	6,368	4,614
Fundraising		
Commercial	2,065	1,693
Lottery	951	893
	3,016	2,586
Publications, films and education		
Advertising	569	572
Promotional Sales	142	72
	711	644
Total	35,039	30,591

Income recognised in the trading subsidiary companies is now reported in the SOFA under ‘total income from commercial activities’. This has resulted in income moving from the following lines in 2023:

- Fees and grants for services
- Land and farming income
- Events and media sales



7) Investment income and interest

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Income received from:		
Interest on cash	150	251
Listed Stock Exchange investments	1,567	858
	1,717	1,109
Other income:		
Net gain on disposals of fixed assets	399	136

8) Total expenditure

	Direct costs £'000	Support costs £'000	2024 Total £'000	2023 Total £'000
<b>Cost of raising funds:</b>				
Costs of generating voluntary income:				
Membership subscriptions and donations	9,820	994	10,814	11,342
Grants, corporates and trusts	1,564	280	1,844	2,915
Legacies	1,545	116	1,661	2,011
Total cost of generating voluntary income	12,929	1,390	14,319	16,268
Costs of commercial activities	27,358	903	28,261	27,763
Investment management costs	134	-	134	167
Total cost of raising funds	40,421	2,293	42,714	44,198
Charitable activities				
Managing RSPB nature reserves	51,106	2,136	53,242	49,417
Research, policy and advisory	41,520	4,634	46,154	44,325
Education and inspiring support	19,027	2,157	21,184	22,818
Supporter care	4,629	71	4,700	4,059
Total expenditure on charitable activities	116,282	8,998	125,280	120,619
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>156,703</b>	<b>11,291</b>	<b>167,994</b>	<b>164,817</b>

Research, policy and advisory includes grant payments amounting to £7,632,914 with support costs of £510,858 (2023: £6,626,907; £369,142). Grants were awarded to 92 (2023: 84) organisations; no grants were made to individuals. A full list is available on [rspb.org.uk/grant-funding](https://rspb.org.uk/grant-funding)

Future commitments:

Future commitments relating to charitable work carried out by other organisations on behalf of the RSPB, amount to £5,000,076 (2023: £2,656,608). These represent contracts signed before 1 April 2024 for payments in future years.

9) Support costs

	Premises £'000	Finance and IT £'000	Human Resources £'000	Management and other £'000	Governance £'000	2024 Total £'000	2023 Total £'000
Generating incoming resources	407	631	690	432	133	2,293	1,909
Charitable expenditure:							
Managing RSPB nature reserves	379	588	643	402	124	2,136	1,750
Research, policy and advisory	822	1,275	1,396	872	269	4,634	3,667
Education and inspiring support	382	593	651	406	125	2,157	1,857
Supporter care	13	20	21	13	4	71	-
Total Charitable expenditure	1,596	2,476	2,711	1,693	522	8,998	7,274
<b>Total support costs</b>	<b>2,003</b>	<b>3,107</b>	<b>3,401</b>	<b>2,125</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>11,291</b>	<b>9,183</b>

Support costs are included in the expenditure reported in the Consolidated statement of financial activities and have been allocated on the basis of salary percentage. The cost allocation includes an element of judgement and the RSPB has had to consider the cost benefit of detailed calculations and record keeping.

Governance costs include audit, legal advice for Trustees and the costs associated with the constitutional and statutory requirements, such as Trustees’ meetings.

10) Audit fees

The total audit fees were:	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Statutory audit:		
Charity	59	53
RSPB Sales Limited	36	32
RSPB Nature Regen Limited	5	-
March Farmers (Washland) Limited	4	4
Farming for Nature	4	3
	108	92

During the year there were £9,270 (2023: £6,320) fees for non-audit services provided by Crowe U.K. LLP.



**Working with Girlguiding for nature**  
Our partnership with Girlguiding regions has continued to inspire girls to do more in and for nature. Girlguiding events in London, funded by the Kusuma Trust saw over 200 girls from Girlguiding London and South East Region take part in Wildlife Discovery events, while Girlguiding North West England have awarded over 1,100 nature-related badges to their members.



11) Staff costs

The average number of employees during the year was 2,517 (2023: 2,406).

	2024 No.	2023 No.
Average staff numbers by activity:		
Generating incoming resources	594	580
Managing RSPB nature reserves	779	716
Research, policy and advisory	815	776
Education and inspiring support	286	289
Supporter care	43	45
	2,517	2,406

The nature of work undertaken by individual staff traverses the categories above; therefore, the allocation includes an element of judgement. In accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice the average number of employees for 2024 represents the average number of staff employed each month.

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Remuneration	73,242	65,296
National Insurance	6,372	5,772
Pension contributions	4,354	3,818
	83,968	74,886

The key management personnel of the charity comprise the Trustees and the Directors, including the Chief Executive, as detailed on pages 92–93.

11) Staff costs (continued)

The total salary of all higher paid employees earning in excess of £60,000, including Directors, are shown in bands of £10,000 below.

	2024 No.	2023 No.
£60,001 – £70,000	26	23
£70,001 – £80,000	5	10
£80,001 – £90,000	12	1
£90,001 – £100,000	2	-
£100,001 – £110,000	1	2
£110,001 – £120,000	-	1
£120,001 – £130,000	1	-
£160,001 – £170,000	1	1
	48	38

Under the RSPB’s pension scheme, which is open to all eligible staff, benefits are accruing for 48 (2023: 38) higher-paid employees including Directors. There are no enhanced pension benefits for any employees or Directors. No other benefits were paid during the year. Pension contributions are made in line with the Defined Contribution Pension Scheme rules. The highest amount of pension contributions paid to the scheme on behalf of one individual during the year was £11,760 (2023: £11,418).

Redundancy and termination payments of £218,475 (2023: £197,353) were made in the year, of which £6,847 was paid post year-end.

The total employee benefits (including employer pension contributions and national insurance) of the 8 (2023: 7) Directors were £848,970 (2023: £788,373) of which, £200,069 (2023: £195,445) was for the Chief Executive. The total travelling, accommodation and subsistence expenses reimbursed to them was £28,372 (2023: £24,918).

The Trustees do not receive any employee benefits. The total reimbursement of travelling, accommodation and subsistence expenses incurred by 15 (2023: 15) Trustees on Council business amounted to £15,558 (2023: £7,283).

Indemnity insurance premiums paid by the RSPB amounted to £17,640 (2023: £16,800).



**A good year for Black-necked Grebes**  
RSPB St Aidan’s was home to 18 breeding pairs of rare Black-necked Grebes in 2023, up from 17 in 2021. Meanwhile, Black-necked Grebes bred for a fifth successive year at RSPB Bowers Marsh in Essex, increasing from two to four pairs.



12) Tangible fixed assets – charity and consolidated

	Nature reserves		Other tangible assets			Total
	Freehold land	Leasehold land	Buildings	Other properties	Motor vehicles	Equipment, fixtures and fittings
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost						
At 1 April 2023	183,438	1,730	69,758	3,662	4,658	31,269
Diminution	(325)	-	-	-	-	-
Additions	999	2	2,744	-	425	3,216
Disposals	-	-	(77)	-	(407)	(874)
At 31 March 2024	184,112	1,732	72,425	3,662	4,676	33,611
Depreciation						
At 1 April 2023	-	590	30,763	2,563	4,101	25,266
Charge for the year	-	18	2,813	85	370	3,389
Disposals	-	-	(51)	-	(407)	(808)
At 31 March 2024	-	608	33,525	2,648	4,064	27,847
Net book amount:						
At 31 March 2024	184,112	1,124	38,900	1,014	612	5,764
At 31 March 2023	183,438	1,140	38,995	1,099	557	6,003

Net book amount:	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Nature reserves:		
Freehold land	184,112	183,438
Leasehold land	1,124	1,140
Buildings	38,900	38,995
	224,136	223,573
Other tangible assets:		
Other properties	1,014	1,099
Motor vehicles	612	557
Equipment, fixtures and fittings	5,764	6,003
	7,390	7,659
Total tangible fixed assets	231,526	231,232

The wholly owned subsidiary March Farmers (Washland) Limited holds Leasehold land of £550,000 (2023: £550,000); the leases for this land are held in perpetuity and no depreciation arises. The wholly owned subsidiary RSPB Cayman Islands Nature Limited holds Freehold land of £373,000 (2023: £389,000).

In 2013, the RSPB entered into a Contingent Asset Agreement with the RSPB Pension Scheme. Under this agreement, specified land and buildings, with a fair value just below £61,500,000, would pass to the Pension Scheme in the unlikely event of the RSPB being unable to meet its obligations to the Scheme. The land selected is unencumbered by any legal charges or funding restrictions.

In 2016, land with an historic cost of £42,401,000 was revalued at £97,779,000. This £55,378,000 increase in value was reflected in the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2016.

12a) Intangible fixed assets - charity and consolidated

	Website £'000	Total £'000
Cost		
At 1 April 2023	-	-
Additions	1,581	1,581
Disposals	-	-
At 31 March 2024	1,581	1,581
Depreciation		
At 1 April 2023	-	-
Charge for the year	264	264
Disposals	-	-
At 31 March 2024	264	264
Net book amount:		
At 31 March 2024	1,317	1,317
At 31 March 2023	-	-

Intangible fixed assets relate to the costs to develop internal software including the RSPB website.

13) Investments – charity and consolidated

Investments at fair value:	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Investment cash	480	456
Equities, bonds and other stocks:		
Equities	12,696	10,664
Corporate bonds	24,622	27,411
Government bonds	1,586	1,576
Listed Stock Exchange investments	6	7
	38,910	39,658
Investment properties within the UK	1,550	1,550
	40,940	41,664

Equities, Corporate bonds and Government bonds are held in unit trusts.

Investment properties are revalued every five years by professional external valuers. They were last revalued at 31 March 2021, based on their fair value at that date. Trustees have considered the valuations in the intervening years and they do not consider that there has been a significant change in value between the valuation date and the balance sheet date. The amount includes property assigned under legacy bequests and donated property.

Movement during the year:	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Fair value at 1 April	41,664	55,451
Fees	(134)	(146)
Additions	22	17
Dividends reinvested	7	5
Disposals	(3,500)	(3,000)
Net (loss)/gain on revaluation at 31 March	2,857	(1,368)
Movement in investment cash	24	(9,295)
Fair value at 31 March	40,940	41,664
Historical cost as at 31 March	30,363	33,840



13) Investments – charity and consolidated (continued)

The Charity investments in its wholly owned subsidiaries are held at cost and represent the aggregate amount of the subsidiaries’ assets, liabilities and funds. The subsidiary investments are:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
RSPB Sales Limited	3,250	3,250
March Farmers (Washland) Limited	551	551
	3,801	3,801

14) Debtors – charity and consolidated

Amount falling due within one year	2024 Consolidated £'000	2023 Consolidated £'000	2024 Charity £'000	2023 Charity £'000
Trade debtors	5,576	7,076	3,302	4,947
Other debtors	3,872	3,909	3,813	3,907
Legacies	3,181	2,893	3,181	2,893
Prepayments and accrued income	13,833	11,757	13,213	11,102
Amounts due from subsidiaries	-	-	5,581	5,006
	26,462	25,635	29,090	27,855

15) Creditors – charity and consolidated

Amounts falling due within one year	2024 Consolidated £'000	2023 Consolidated £'000	2024 Charity £'000	2023 Charity £'000
Trade creditors	4,136	5,400	3,795	4,837
Other creditors	5,269	827	5,268	827
Deferred income (see note 17)	6,493	6,457	3,739	4,607
Accruals	4,735	6,633	4,303	5,915
Bank loans	219	217	219	217
	20,852	19,534	17,324	16,403

Amounts falling due in more than one year	2024 Consolidated £'000	2023 Consolidated £'000	2024 Charity £'000	2023 Charity £'000
Deferred income – lease premium	725	740	725	740
Bank loans	3,215	3,454	3,215	3,454
	3,940	4,194	3,940	4,194

On 31 March 2019 the RSPB entered into a loan agreement with Triodos Bank. The loan was for £0.7 million (fixed rate 4.097%) and was used to finance a range of sustainable energy projects across our nature reserves. The capital and interest will be repaid over a 20-year period using the ongoing energy savings together with income from electricity generation.

On 6 December 2019 the RSPB entered into a loan agreement with Lloyds bank. This loan was for £0.5 million (fixed rate 2.506%) and was used to purchase land at Ash Hill to offset the loss of Cirl Bunting habitat to housing expansion in the area. The loan will be repaid using designated Section 106 funding from Teignbridge Council over the five-year loan period.

15) Creditors – charity and consolidated (continued)

On 25 April 2022 the RSPB entered into a loan facility with Triodos Bank. A loan of £2.8 million (fixed rate 5.240%) was drawn down on 21 June 2022 and used to fund the development of four modular cafés on our reserves at Conwy, the Dee Estuary, Frampton Marsh and The Lodge. The capital and interest will be repaid over 20 years using profits from the café operations.

There are two loans with funders, associated with grants received: £125 thousand (3.0 % interest) with the People’s Postcode Lottery repayable over 7 years to 2029; £46 thousand (0.0 % interest) with the Welsh Government repayable over 5 years to 2027.

16) Commitments

Commitments for capital expenditure at 31 March 2024 not provided for in the accounts were £77,811 (2023: £325,620).

17) Deferred income – charity and consolidated

Movement during the year:	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Creditors amounts falling due in more than one year		
Balance at 1 April	740	754
Amount released to income	-	-
Amounts due within one year	(15)	(14)
Balance at 31 March	725	740
Creditors amounts falling due within one year		
Balance at 1 April	6,457	5,313
Amount released to income	(5,457)	(5,313)
Amounts due within one year	5,478	6,443
Amounts transferred from creditors due in more than one year	15	14
Balance at 31 March	6,493	6,457
Deferred income: balance at 31 March	7,218	7,197

Deferred income includes lease premiums of £740,000 (2023: £754,000) received and amortised over the life of the leases. Income of £5,478,000 (2023: £6,443,000) was deferred in the year. Deferred income comprised grants and other income of £3,770,000 (2023: £4,593,000) and commercial trading £2,708,000 (2023: £1,850,000).

**New podcast sets out solutions**  
*Here's The Plan* is a new youth-led environmental podcast, hosted by activists Bella Lack and James Miller and funded by the RSPB. The 10-part series explores 10 solutions to tackle the climate and nature emergency, through interviews with top changemakers including politicians and activists.



18) Operating leases – commitments and contracted income

Commitments: Properties and equipment are leased by the RSPB for defined periods. The full cost of these over the lease period is shown below:

	Land and buildings £'000	Other £'000	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Less than 1 year	2,103	55	2,158	2,029
2 – 5 years	2,752	-	2,752	3,482
Over 5 years	6,456	-	6,456	6,856
	11,311	55	11,366	12,367

Lease payments of £2,448,684 (2023: £2,531,204) were charged to the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities during the year.

Contracted income: Land and properties are leased out by the RSPB for defined periods. The full income of these over the lease period is shown below:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Less than 1 year	930	1,029
2 – 5 years	976	509
Over 5 years	2,612	2,449
	4,518	3,987

Lease income of £1,142,674 (2023: £1,054,467) was credited to the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities during the year. All lease income relates to land and buildings.

19) Contingent liabilities

The Trustees have given indemnities to executors under the standard terms for legacies received; they believe the chance of significant claims arising as a result of these to be negligible.

20) Statements of funds – Charity and consolidated

The purpose for which funds are held can be analysed as follows:

	Total funds 1 April 2023	Income	Expenditure	Other recognised gains/ (losses)	Transfers	Total funds 31 March 2024
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Unrestricted funds:						
General funds	54,991	127,398	(130,919)	2,857	(5,437)	48,890
Designated land fund	63,839	-	-	-	(2,073)	61,766
Pension liability	(24,078)	-	(996)	(11,588)	7,510	(29,152)
Total unrestricted funds	94,752	127,398	(131, 915)	(8,731)	-	81,504
Restricted funds:						
Nature reserves	165,000	3,395	-	-	-	168,395
Other tangible assets	1,996	1,017	(1,159)	-	-	1,854
Managing RSPB nature reserves	2,116	22,806	(21,821)	-	-	3,101
Research, policy and advisory	6,135	14,913	(12,851)	-	-	8,197
Education and inspiring support	71	348	(248)	-	-	171
Total restricted funds	175,318	42,479	(36,079)	-	-	181,718
Endowment funds	244	-	-	-	-	244
Total funds	270,314	169,877	(167,994)	(8,731)	-	263,466

20) Statements of funds – Charity and consolidated (continued)

A review of funds during the year resulted in the net transfer of £2,073,000 from the Designated land fund to the General fund. A transfer of £7,510,000 from the General fund to the Pension liability fund represents a pension deficit recovery payment in line with the triennial valuation as at 1st April 2021, see note 25.

Inter-company reconciliation

	RSPB Charity	Farming for Nature	March Farmers (Washland) Ltd	RSPB Sales Ltd	RSPB Cayman Islands Nature Ltd	RSPB Nature Regen Ltd	Elimination	RSPB Consolidated
	2024 £'000	2024 £'000	2024 £'000	2024 £'000	2024 £'000	2024 £'000	2024 £'000	2024 £'000
Income	141,604	219	159	34,511	(5)	455	(7,066)	169,877
Expenditure	(139,705)	(81)	(129)	(28,373)	(11)	(415)	720	(167,994)
Other recognised gains	(8,731)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(8,731)
Profit/(loss)	(6,832)	138	30	6,138	(16)	40	(6,346)	(6,848)
Gift aided	-	(138)	(30)	(6,138)	-	(40)	6,346	-
Net movement in funds	(6,832)	-	-	-	(16)	-	-	(6,848)
Net Assets at 31 March 2023	269,925	-	551	3,250	389	-	(3,801)	270,314
Net Assets at 31 March 2024	263,093	-	551	3,250	373	-	(3,801)	263,466

The Charity holds a 33% joint venture interest in Yayasan Konservasi Ekosistem Hutan, a non-profit organisation registered in Indonesia and established to facilitate the acquisition and management of the Harapan Rainforest, Sumatra. Based on the latest financial statements available for the year ending 31 March 2024, the Charity’s share of the net assets, income and surplus were £295,489, £438,878 and £66,569 respectively (2023: £295,096, £538,603 and £89,458).

The Charity holds a 33% interest in Gola Rainforest Conservation LG, a non-profit company limited by guarantee registered in Sierra Leone and established to conserve and help fund the Gola Rainforest National Park. Based on the latest financial statements available for the year ending 31 March 2024, the Charity’s share of the net assets, income and surplus were £10,451, £404,064 and £42,599 respectively (2023: £6,949, £375,704 and £30,462 deficit).

The results of both interests have not been consolidated into the core financial statements; to do so would not materially alter them.

During the year ended 31 March 2024, the Charity paid £318,047 (2023: £518,000) to Yayasan Konservasi Ekosistem Hutan and £1,364,840 (2023: £1,598,671) to Gola Rainforest Conservation LG.

Unrestricted funds include free and general funds that are not designated for particular purposes.

Designated funds comprise the Land Fund which represents land and buildings purchased using unrestricted funds including the investment in March Farmers (Washland) Limited.

- Restricted funds comprise:
- The Nature reserves fund represents the historic cost of nature reserves acquired using restricted funds and a further £6,024,695 (2023: £5,265,418) held for future acquisitions.
  - The other funds held for charitable objectives include grants received of £6,994,423 (2023: £4,969,109) in advance of the associated work being carried out.

Endowment funds are comprised of permanent endowments.



21) Analysis of net assets between funds

The Trustees consider that sufficient resources are held in a suitable form to enable them to be applied in accordance with any restrictions imposed, as set out below:

Asset type:	Unrestricted funds		Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds 31 March 2024
	General £'000	Designated £'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Nature reserves	-	61,766	162,370	-	224,136
Other tangible assets	5,536	-	1,854	-	7,390
Intangible assets	1,317	-	-	-	1,317
Investments	28,042	-	12,654	244	40,940
Current assets	31,614	-	12,013	-	43,627
Current liabilities	(14,404)	-	(6,448)	-	(20,852)
Long-term liabilities	(3,215)	-	(725)	-	(3,940)
Net assets excluding pension liability	48,890	61,766	181,718	244	292,618
Pension liability	(29,152)	-	-	-	(29,152)
Net assets	19,738	61,766	181,718	244	263,466

Free reserves which are available to be applied at the discretion of the Trustees are held as investments or working capital:

	Unrestricted funds		Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds 31 March 2024
	General £'000	Designated £'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Net assets excluding pension liability	48,890	61,766	181,718	244	292,618
Less: Operating assets					
Nature reserves	-	(61,766)	(162,370)	-	(224,136)
Other tangible assets	(5,536)	-	(1,854)	-	(7,390)
Intangible assets	(1,317)	-	-	-	(1,317)
Available reserves	42,037	-	17,494	244	59,775
Less: Restricted and endowment	-	-	(17,494)	(244)	(17,738)
Free reserves	42,037	-	-	-	42,037

22) Connected charities and related party transactions

The RSPB is one of the global partners in BirdLife International (registered charity number 1042125), an umbrella organisation for entities with similar objectives throughout the world. Further information about this organisation can be obtained by writing to BirdLife International at The David Attenborough Building, Pembroke Street, Cambridge, CB2 3QZ.

Farming for Nature: on 29th July 2024 Farming For Nature Ltd’s accounting reference date was extended to 30th September 2024, with the intention to close the company and transfer all the assets and liabilities to the Charity. This was agreed by the Directors of Farming for Nature and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Transactions with subsidiaries during the year:

Subsidiaries	Farming for Nature £'000	March Farmers (Washland) Ltd £'000	RSPB Sales Ltd £'000	RSPB Cayman Islands Nature Ltd £'000	RSPB Nature Regen Ltd £'000
Balance at 1 April 2023	340	144	4,522	-	-
Gift aid paid	(185)	(39)	(3,655)	-	-
Gift aid due	138	30	6,138	-	40
Grants received	-	-	-	(5)	-
Other inter-company transactions	10	6	(2,010)	5	103
Balance at 31 March 2024	303	141	4,995	-	143

23) Reconciliation of net income to net cash flow from operating activities

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Net income/(expenditure) for the year	4,740	(1,483)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation on fixed assets	7,264	6,521
(Gains)/losses on investments	(2,723)	1,514
Interest and dividends received	(1,717)	(1,109)
Profit on sale of tangible assets	(399)	(136)
(Increase)/decrease in stocks	(225)	148
Increase in debtors	(827)	(1,716)
Increase in creditors	1,301	4,390
	7,414	8,129
Movement in pension scheme	(6,514)	(6,945)
Net cash provided by operating activities	900	1,184





24) Pensions

The defined benefit scheme operated by the RSPB was closed in March 2017. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the RSPB, being invested by professional fund managers, in accordance with guidelines issued by the Trustees of the pension fund.

A full actuarial valuation is undertaken by the Pension Trustees and their advisers every three years. The latest triennial valuation reflects the position as at 1st April 2021 and has resulted in an annual employer contribution of £7.5 million per annum with effect from 1st April 2022. This level of contribution is calculated to eliminate the deficit over a period of 8 years 4 months. As part of the valuation the Society’s contributions to the Scheme are agreed by the Trustees, certified by the Scheme Actuary and recorded in a Schedule of Contributions. The current Schedule of Contributions is dated 14 March 2022. The Charity is aware of the Virgin Media v NTL Pension Trustees II Limited Court of Appeal judgement which may give rise to adjustments to the RSPB defined benefit scheme. At present the legal process is incomplete and therefore we are unable to quantify any potential liabilities.

Changes in defined benefit obligation:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Defined benefit obligation at start of year	197,757	269,428
Interest expense	9,526	7,452
Remeasurements	(1)	(72,567)
Benefits paid	(6,693)	(6,556)
Defined benefit obligation at end of year	200,589	197,757

Amounts recognised in the statement of financial position:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Defined benefit obligation	200,589	197,757
Fair value of scheme assets	(171,437)	(173,679)
Net defined benefit liability	29,152	24,078

Changes in scheme assets:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Fair value of scheme assets at start of year	173,679	245,477
Interest income	8,530	6,887
Remeasurements	(11,589)	(79,639)
Employer contribution	7,510	7,510
Benefits paid	(6,693)	(6,556)
Fair value of scheme assets at end of year	171,437	173,679



24) Pensions (continued)

Cost relating to defined benefit plans:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Interest expense	9,526	7,452
Interest income	(8,530)	(6,887)
Cost relating to defined benefit plans included in SOFA	996	565
Total remeasurements included in SOFA	11,588	7,072
Total cost related to defined benefit plans recognized in SOFA	12,584	7,637

The major categories of scheme assets as a percentage of total scheme assets:

	2024	2023
Equities, hedge funds and commodities	37.3%	40.2%
Gilts and bonds (including LDI)	52.7%	49.6%
Property	7.9%	8.9%
Cash	2.1%	1.3%

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Actual return on the scheme assets during the year:	(3,059)	(72,752)

Principle assumptions expressed as weighted averages:

	2024	2023
Discount rate	4.90%	4.90%
Rate of increase in salaries	1 April 2024: 4.0% (5.6%) 1 April 2025: 3.0% (4.5%) 3.50% p.a. thereafter	1 April 2024: 3.0% (5.2%) 1 April 2025: 3.0% (3.4%) 2.80% p.a. thereafter
% in brackets include a further allowance for salaries to align with benchmark pay bands over the short term		
Rate of increase in pensions in payment:		
Pre 97 (pre 97 excess over GMP)	3.00%	3.00%
Post 97/pre 07 pension	3.00%	3.00%
Post 07 pension	1.90%	1.80%
Rate of increase of pensions in deferment:		
Pre April 09 (CPI max 5.0%)	2.80%	2.80%
Post April 09 (CPI max 2.5%)	2.50%	2.50%
RPI inflation	3.10%	3.20%
CPI inflation	2.80%	2.80%

Weighted average life expectancy for mortality tables used to determine benefit obligations:

	2024 Years	2023 Years
Member aged 65 (current life expectancy) – male	22.2	22.5
Member aged 45 (life expectancy at 65) – male	23.6	23.9
Member aged 65 (current life expectancy) – female	24.2	24.3
Member aged 45 (life expectancy at 65) – female	25.8	25.9



25) Comparative statements

Consolidated statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 March 2023

Income and expenditure	Unrestricted funds £'000	Restricted funds £'000	Endowment funds £'000	2023 Total £'000
<b>Income and endowments</b>				
Voluntary income				
Membership subscriptions and donations	50,770	2,274	-	<b>53,044</b>
Legacies	38,517	5,697	-	<b>44,214</b>
Grants, corporates and trusts	2,204	31,753	-	<b>33,957</b>
Total voluntary income	91,491	39,724	-	<b>131,215</b>
Commercial trading	23,693	-	-	<b>23,693</b>
Investment income and interest	1,109	-	-	<b>1,109</b>
Charitable activities				
Land and farming income	964	-	-	<b>964</b>
Events and media sales	687	-	-	<b>687</b>
Total income from charitable activities	1,651	-	-	<b>1,651</b>
Other income				
Net gains on disposals of fixed assets	136	-	-	<b>136</b>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>124,978</b>	<b>39,724</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>164,702</b>
<b>Expenditure on</b>				
Cost of raising funds				
Costs of commercial trading	27,763	-	-	<b>27,763</b>
Costs of generating voluntary income	16,268	-	-	<b>16,268</b>
Investment management costs	167	-	-	<b>167</b>
Total cost of raising funds	44,198	-	-	<b>44,198</b>
<b>Net resources available for charitable activities</b>	<b>80,780</b>	<b>39,724</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>120,504</b>
Charitable activities				
Managing RSPB nature reserves	32,657	16,760	-	<b>49,417</b>
Research, policy and advisory	27,486	16,839	-	<b>44,325</b>
Education and inspiring support	22,678	140	-	<b>22,818</b>
Supporter care	4,059	-	-	<b>4,059</b>
Total expenditure on charitable activities	86,880	33,739	-	<b>120,619</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>131,078</b>	<b>33,739</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>164,817</b>
Net (losses)/gains on investments	(1,368)	-	-	<b>(1,368)</b>
Net income/(expenditure)	(7,468)	5,985	-	<b>(1,483)</b>
Actuarial gains/(losses) on pension scheme	(7,072)	-	-	<b>(7,072)</b>
Net movement in funds	(14,540)	5,985	-	<b>(8,555)</b>
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	109,292	169,333	244	<b>278,869</b>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>94,752</b>	<b>175,318</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>270,314</b>

25) Comparative statements (continued)

Statement of funds – charity and consolidated for the year ended 31 March 2023

	Total funds 1 April 2022	Income	Expenditure	Other recognised gains/ (losses) £'000	Transfers	Total funds 31 March 2023 £'000
<b>Consolidated</b>	£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	
Unrestricted funds						
General funds	73,115	124,978	(130,513)	(1,368)	(11,221)	<b>54,991</b>
Designated land fund	60,128	-	-	-	3,711	<b>63,839</b>
Pension liability	(23,951)	-	(565)	(7,072)	7,510	<b>(24,078)</b>
<b>Total unrestricted funds</b>	<b>109,292</b>	<b>124,978</b>	<b>(131,078)</b>	<b>(8,440)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>94,752</b>
Restricted funds						
Nature reserves	160,822	4,178	-	-	-	<b>165,000</b>
Other tangible assets	1,574	1,541	(1,119)	-	-	<b>1,996</b>
Managing RSPB nature reserves	1,329	16,428	(15,641)	-	-	<b>2,116</b>
Research, policy and advisory	5,462	17,512	(16,839)	-	-	<b>6,135</b>
Education and inspiring support	146	65	(140)	-	-	<b>71</b>
<b>Total restricted funds</b>	<b>169,333</b>	<b>39,724</b>	<b>(33,739)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>175,318</b>
Endowment funds	244	-	-	-	-	<b>244</b>
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>278,869</b>	<b>164,702</b>	<b>(164,817)</b>	<b>(8,440)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>270,314</b>

Analysis of net assets between funds for the year ended 31 March 2023

	Unrestricted funds General £'000	Unrestricted funds Designated £'000	Restricted funds £'000	Endowment funds £'000	Total funds 31 March 2023 £'000
Asset type:					
Nature reserves	-	63,839	159,734	-	<b>223,573</b>
Other tangible assets	5,663	-	1,996	-	<b>7,659</b>
Investments	39,573	-	1,847	244	<b>41,664</b>
Current assets	27,766	-	17,458	-	<b>45,224</b>
Current liabilities	(13,817)	-	(5,717)	-	<b>(19,534)</b>
Long-term liabilities	(4,194)	-	-	-	<b>(4,194)</b>
Net assets excluding pension liability	54,991	63,839	175,318	244	<b>294,392</b>
Pension liability	(24,078)	-	-	-	<b>(24,078)</b>
<b>Net (liabilities)/assets</b>	<b>30,913</b>	<b>63,839</b>	<b>175,318</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>270,314</b>



Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

**Choughing good news in Cornwall**  
It was a record-breaking year for Choughs in Cornwall, with more than 100 chicks fledged in 2023. This is an important milestone for a bird that was once extinct in the county.



Time spent in nature is time well spent.

# Driving positive change for nature

As we reflect on what's been achieved for nature in the past year, there is much to celebrate.

**Thank you for reading this year's Annual Report. We hope that you found it an engaging and inspiring read. While much has been achieved thanks to the support of our many members, supporters, funders, partners and volunteers, there remains far more to do.**

The *State of Nature 2023* report warned: "The UK, like most other countries worldwide, has seen a significant loss of its plants, animals and fungi. The data from State of Nature cover, at most, 50 years but this follows on from centuries of habitat loss, development and persecution. As a result, the UK is now one of the most nature-depleted countries on Earth."

The challenge facing us all is to act with pace and at scale to tackle the climate

and nature emergency. We need to restore stability to our planet, halt the declines of birds and other wildlife, restore biodiversity and create the healthy functioning ecosystems that we all need to survive.

**This report shows that change is possible.**

We have shown that when we act together for nature, we can bring back wildlife and transform spaces into thriving places for wildlife. Never have we had a better understanding of the state of nature and what we need to do to turn round the declines. We have the solutions and we won't give up. Together, we'll continue to work tirelessly to create a world where wildlife and all people thrive.



# Contacts

To find out more about the RSPB, please contact us at our UK headquarters or via the relevant country headquarters. We welcome your questions and comments.

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To find your nearest office, see: [rspb.org.uk/contactus](https://rspb.org.uk/contactus)



Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Memorial owl at RSPB The Lodge.



Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

**Go a bit further for nature**

We hope you feel inspired by reading this report. Nature is in crisis, but thanks to your support we are able to save it. When you make a donation, you are helping to save rare species, look after iconic landscapes and speak up for nature at a time when it really needs us. If you can help, please visit: [rspb.org.uk/donate](https://rspb.org.uk/donate).





Protecting habitats, saving species  
and helping to end the nature and  
climate emergency.

**Nature is in crisis.**  
**Together we can save it.**

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## Stay connected

Keep up to date with the latest thinking, news, events,  
and information from the RSPB in your local community.



Natures\_Voice



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## Head Office

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