

HIGHLIGHTS 2019/20



© Hamish Murray



In winter 2019/20, record sightings of black-tailed godwits were made on the Brownsea Lagoon, with 4,000+ birds recorded. Widespread flooding meant the lagoon at Brownsea provided the perfect alternative habitat to their usual feeding and breeding grounds.

The past financial year (2019/20) has been one of significant successes, challenges and new opportunities for Dorset Wildlife Trust. As always, at the centre of our work are our members, volunteers, partner organisations, those who support wildlife through gifts in Wills or donating to an appeal, and our far-reaching online community. Thank you - we couldn't do it without you.

We have started to address the climate and ecological emergencies by encouraging our supporters to think globally and act locally. We've seen the designation of 6 new Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), and we've launched exciting new projects including Wild Brownsea, Gillingham Royal Forest and Urban Green. We've continued to respond to planning applications, helping to ensure that development happens in the right place in Dorset.

And we launched our ground-breaking beaver trial project - the first of its kind in the county.

This report presents some of the great work that our staff, volunteers, members and supporters have undertaken throughout the 2019-2020 financial year and I hope you will all take pride in what we have achieved together.

As ever, thank you for your support.

Brian

Beaver Project



© Nick Updon, Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Beavers offer a huge range of environmental benefits, helping to improve water quality and management of water flows. We have been preparing to establish an enclosed beaver trial project in Dorset, the first project of its kind for the county. The beaver project team have been busy organising the release which is (at the time of writing) scheduled for autumn 2020.

Volunteering



© James Haldane

Our volunteers are at the heart of the work we do to help wildlife in Dorset. From 1st April 2019 until 31st March 2020 we had 236 new volunteers join us, increasing the total number of registered volunteers to 4,118. Practical work parties contributed a massive 17,405 volunteer hours with around 1,060 active volunteers during this time frame. Thank you to our dedicated volunteers!

Nature reserves



© Kathy Cook

The winter of 2019/20 saw a break-through moment in our work to restore and reconnect the historic heathland landscape at Winfrith Heath nature reserve, attracting recognition from Natural England. Scrub management was a key feature across many of our reserves this year, whose downland, meadowland and heathland wildlife depend on this intervention. Fresh coppice work took place at Ashley Wood to ensure dormice and bluebells alike will continue to thrive. Work continued to support the vulnerable populations of the rare ladybird spider and our vital monitoring programme to assess the health of our reserves continued, from waders on Brownsea Island to marsh fritillary at Bracketts Coppice.

Influencing planning & development



© Tony Bates MBE

We responded to 67 planning applications in 2019. Alongside Dorset's Local Nature Partnership (LNP) we were actively involved in the consultations on BCP Council's Local Plan Issues, as well as the revised Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework Supplementary Planning Document for the period 2020 - 2025. Key applications responded to include the proposed energy recovery facility at Portland Port, and a housing development at the Aviation Business Park at Bournemouth airport, which would result in the loss of a part of a Site of Nature Conservation Interest.

Site of Nature Conservation (SNCI) work



© Nick Gray

The SNCI programme identifies and provides management advice for locally important sites. The SNCI team have had surveys completed by the Dorset Flora Group and volunteers, who completed seven funded surveys in the Marshwood Vale Landscape Enhancement Initiative project area. Our liaison with SNCI landowners and managers is continuing with much positivity from all involved.

Spreading the word



Engaging and informing people about the value of wildlife and the natural environment is a vital part of our work.



524 articles published



29 radio interviews



55,199 social media followers – up 11.7% year on year

393,900 engagements across social media, up 46% year on year.

2019 saw the launch of the Get Dorset Buzzing campaign, designed to raise awareness of Dorset



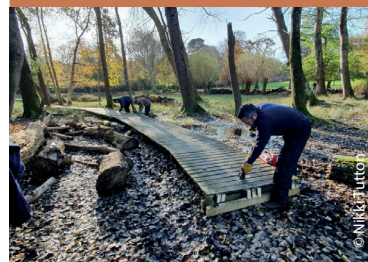
Wildlife Trust and the plight of pollinators. The campaign was supported by the Gardens Group and Wessex Water, and 4,100 people pledged to do one thing for pollinators in their gardens. We ran the Get Dorset Buzzing roadshow, which toured the county during the spring and summer.

Dorset Wild Rivers



Dorset Wildlife Trust has continued work as a key partner in the Stour Headwaters Project. By working with natural processes at the catchment scale, and the farming community, we are seeing real benefits for species such as great crested newts and water voles, through pond creation, tree planting, woodland management and in channel restoration, which all have additional benefits for water quality and flood management further downstream.

Wild Brownsea

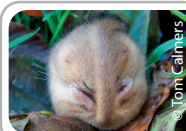


Work began on Wild Brownsea (funded by the NLHF)*, to improve facilities, create better public engagement and enhance habitats on Brownsea Island. We started planning volunteering and events with an ambitious project in the community as well as on the island. One of the highlights of winter 2019 was the unprecedented number of black-tailed godwits flocking to the Brownsea Lagoon.

Explore West Dorset



Dorset Wildlife Trust was successful in being awarded funding from the NLHF* for the Explore West Dorset project, which aims to improve the engagement and volunteering opportunities at the Kingcombe Centre and nearby nature reserves. Work has already started on creating an exploration trail at the Kingcombe Centre, complete with new information signs.



With your support, we have been able to install 50 new 'footprint tunnels' at Ashley Wood to accurately survey the dormice populations. These have been so successful that we hope to install more at Girdlers Coppice and Fontmell Down nature reserves.

Marine Conservation Success



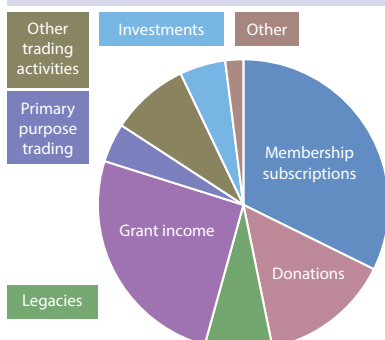
This year our work has helped to identify and designate six new Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in Dorset. In addition, new features were listed for the three existing MCZs meaning that management measures, such as no-trawling areas, can now be applied to wider areas. Dorset Wildlife Trust has been working closely with Southern IFCA and other partners to raise awareness of and to develop management plans for each MCZ.

Gillingham Royal Forest & Urban Green

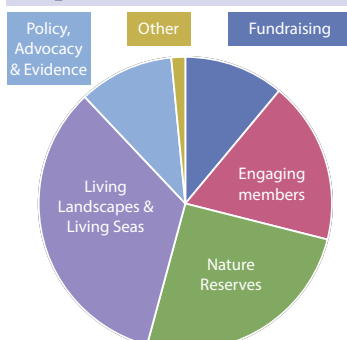


The Gillingham Royal Forest project is underway, and although Covid-19 has disrupted delivery since spring 2020, project partners have been able to survey the wildlife of the area, including carrying out bird, hedgerow and great crested newt surveys. Engagement events also started, with training for 20 volunteers. The Urban Green project (funded by NLHF)** in east Dorset started work to support communities in enhancing their greenspace for people and wildlife.

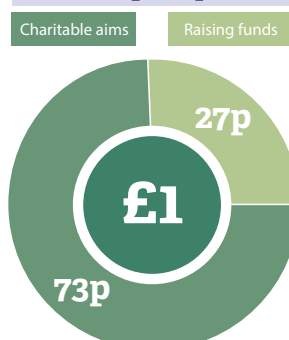
Income - £3.217 million



Expenditure - £3.173 million



For every £1 spent ...



* NLHF

National Lottery Heritage Fund

** NLCF

National Lottery Community Fund