

Nature Returns



What your support is achieving

Issue 32

Restoring Peatlands at
RSPB Lake Vyrnwy

Bringing back
Morvern's Rainforest

Nature Friendly
Farming at Island Farm

Big ambitions for peatland restoration around Lake Vyrnwy

Peatlands are a vital asset in our fight against the climate crisis. Blanket bogs store carbon, improve water catchment resilience and are home to unique sphagnum mosses and lichens, as well as rare upland breeding birds such as Black Grouse and Curlew.

There are around 3000 hectares of peatland at Lake Vyrnwy, about 3% of Wales' total peatland, and much more in the surrounding landscape. Over the past 3 years we have worked in partnership with Hafren Dyfrdwy to restore over 1000 hectares of degraded peatland. By rewetting the peatland we have started the journey towards taking in carbon from the atmosphere rather than releasing it and providing a place to feed and breed for some of our most threatened species.

We are not stopping there. We are now working towards a massive target of 1500 hectares restored for nature and people.

We could not have got this far without the support of our funders Hafren Dyfrdwy, the National Peatland Action Programme, United Utilities, Co-op, Adlard Family Charitable Foundation, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Welsh Government, and The Banister Charitable Trust.

Amy Owens



DEB WILLIAMS / RSPB

Cerniau, Lake Vyrnwy

United Utilities
Water for the North West

Cronfa Treftadaeth
Heritage Fund

Mewn Partneriaeth â
Llywodraeth Cymru
In Partnership with
Welsh Government

ADLARD FAMILY
Foundation

Cyfoeth Naturiol
Cymru
Natural Resources
Wales

WONDERFUL ON TAP

SEVERN
TRENT



Arctic tern

Marine projects take place thanks to SMEEF

RSPB Scotland are pleased to say that over the past year they have received funding for marine themed projects that could not have taken place otherwise. This includes awards to upgrade a tern raft at Port Edgar Marina, habitat improvement works for Red-necked Phalaropes on Shetland, the treatment of invasive Japanese Knotweed at our Inner Clyde Reserve and removal of Tree Mallow and Elder on Inchmickery for the benefit of seabirds.

These projects were supported by the Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund (SMEEF) using both private donations into SMEEF and finance from the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund.

[Click here to find out more](#)

Ruth Carruthers



Major boost for Scotland's rainforest

An important area of Scotland's rainforest on the Morvern peninsula is set to be restored for the future, thanks to generous assistance from The Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, which is managed by NatureScot.

Temperate rainforest is a globally scarce habitat that's overflowing with rare plants and animals, but it's unfortunately threatened by invasive non-native rhododendron. This grant will fund the first phase of a partnership project, led by RSPB Scotland, to clear rhododendron from Morvern's rainforest. Up-skilling of the local community will also take place, ensuring work can continue beyond the lifetime of the funding, which is important for tackling rhododendron regeneration.

[Click here to find out more](#)

Ruth Carruthers



Scottish Rainforest Morvern Peninsula





Heathland restoration at Hyde's Heath

Hyde's Heath sits in the UK's first Super National Nature Reserve: Purbeck Heath. Surrounding Poole Harbour, the Super NNR has become a wildlife haven. Here, visitors can be treated to glimpses of soaring White-tailed Eagles and fishing Ospreys while the heathland habitat holds host to all six of the UK's native reptiles.

Formerly 67 hectares of tree plantation, Hyde's Heath borders RSPB Arne and Arne Moors. Thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the land at Hyde's Heath was acquired by the RSPB in 2019 and is now undergoing an ambitious transformation to restore invaluable low-lying heathland. Non-native pines are being removed to allow for the growth of gorse and heather which supports scarce species, such as the Dartford Warbler.

Hyde's Heath is now home to new trails, where visitors can soak up views across the Wareham channel towards Corfe Castle and learn about the importance of heathland habitats.

The project has engaged local people with their heritage, especially those who are currently under-represented at RSPB Arne, including children and families, young people, and people with health and wellbeing needs. The funding allowed for the introduction of a shuttle bus, which operated seasonally between Wareham and RSPB Arne, allowing for easier, wider and more affordable access. In total, it provided 1,402 passenger trips!

[Click here to find out more](#)

Emma Birch

Dartford Warbler



A new wetland area at the Internationally important Humber Estuary

The Humber is the 6th most important estuary in Europe for numbers of birds, with the estuary and its surrounding farmland hosting up to 160,000 wintering and passage waterbirds, as well as supporting rare breeding birds such as Avocet, Bittern and Bearded Tit.

The Humber Estuary is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Special Protection Area (SPA), as well as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This internationally important wetland under the Ramsar Convention was also included as one of the East coast wetlands of the East Atlantic Flyway, added to the UK's Tentative List of Natural World Heritage sites last year.

Land along the estuary at Island Farm, adjacent to RSPB Blacktoft Sands in the East Riding of Yorkshire, was acquired thanks to significant grants from The Banister Charitable Trust and Biffa Award through the Landfill Communities

Fund. Now with additional generous grant support from the Ida Davis Family Foundation, exciting habitat restoration began in autumn 2023 to create 40 hectares of new conservation area.

The photo shows the shallow lagoons and seasonal pools adjacent to the river Trent which are already providing high-quality feeding and roosting sites for the Humber's array of waterbirds. And the restored land is also delivering for breeding waders, with 5 pairs of Lapwing, 5 pairs of Avocet, Redshank and Oystercatcher recorded already.

Continuing to use areas of the farmland for agriculture will also allow Island Farm to be used as a demonstration for how farmers across the region can manage estuary land for nature with sympathetic grazing and crop regimes.

Island Farm's restoration is due to be completed in September 2024.

[Click here to find out more](#)

Laurinda Luffman



Lapwing and Golden Plover at Island Farm



Shelduck, Amber conservation status

Creating vital spaces for Nature in the Inner Forth and Inner Clyde

Both the Firth of Forth and Inner Clyde estuaries in Scotland host internationally important numbers of passage and wintering waders and wildfowl, including Curlew, Redshank and Shelduck. However, these birds are under increasing pressure from various factors including loss of habitat through coastal squeeze and recreational disturbance.

Thanks to funding from Crown Estates Scotland, we are now able to create wader scrapes - shallow pools with muddy edges - at RSPB Scotland's Skinflats nature reserve on the Inner Forth and at Newshot Island, next to RSPB Scotland's Inner Clyde nature reserve. These scrapes will provide vital feeding and roosting opportunities for waders and wildfowl, allowing them to return to breeding grounds in good condition and helping to maintain populations in the long term.

Julia Westbury



Restoring RSPB Scotland Loch of Kinnordy

RSPB Scotland Loch of Kinnordy nature reserve, in Angus, is a Eutrophic body of standing water, recognised as a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) Habitat. It is home to a vast range of vulnerable species including Lapwings, Otters and Water Voles. However, encroaching vegetation threatens to shrink and dry out this delicate habitat impacting the diversity of species that live, feed and breed here.

Thanks to funding support from the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund, RSPB Scotland will hire a contractor to operate a Truxor machine, which is specifically designed to overcome wet and marshy ground, to clear the vegetation ensuring the loch remains a rich habitat for local biodiversity.

Rebecca McRitchie



Celebrating the launch of the Nation's New Currency

The RSPB has worked closely with The Royal Mint throughout the design process for the Nation's New currency, which enters general circulation throughout 2024. The coins feature native wildlife, flora and fauna from around the UK – many of which are of great conservation concern. An exclusive launch event was recently held at Scone Palace in Perthshire for some of RSPB Scotland's most generous supporters, which generated new leads for donors, legacy pledgers and corporate partnerships.

The Royal Mint also attended and donated a limited edition collection of the eight definitive uncirculated coins for use in a prize draw which generated income for conservation.

[Click here to find out more](#)

Rhona Maxwell



Staff from The Royal Mint and RSPB Scotland standing outside Scone Palace holding oversized coins representing the Nation's new currency

Improving accessibility at RSPB Scotland The Oa

RSPB Scotland The Oa nature reserve is an expansive area of open moorland and a hotspot for wildlife enthusiasts who visit to spot an array of species, including Choughs and Golden Eagles. However, with over 10,000 people visiting the reserve each year, the circular path is eroding, causing damage to sensitive peatland, and preventing some of our visitors from reaching all of the reserve.

With funding support from FCC Communities Foundation, through the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund, RSPB Scotland will extend existing sections of boardwalk throughout the circular route to improve accessibility for visitors and protect peatland habitat.

Rebecca McRitchie



David Wood RSPB

View across RSPB The Oa Peninsula, Islay

Celebrating Good Causes for National Lottery Open Week

In March this year 36 reserves took part in National Lottery Open Week, more than ever before! This popular date in our calendar is a fantastic opportunity to thank National Lottery players for supporting the work we do, with special offers such as free entry and magical nature walks. This year we held a Nature Tech Day at RSPB Loch Lomond for young people from another National Lottery funded charity, Tullochan. Tullochan is a youth development charity supporting young people who face barriers to learning. At Loch Lomond the group got a chance to use an array of wonderful wildlife tech such as drones and gimbals, learning how it can help us protect wildlife.

The young people had a great time, and we enjoyed another successful week saying [#ThanksToYou](#) to Lottery players for supporting good causes.

This autumn will be The National Lottery's 30th birthday. We are looking forward to joining the celebrations and showcasing how the vital funding we have received over the last 30 years has been a real game changer for nature and people.

events.rspb.org.uk/nationallotteryopenweek

Sarah Harris

Roe Deer



Transforming Middleton Lakes for Visitors

The RSPB Middleton Lakes nature reserve is nestled in the heart of River Tame Valley. It receives around 55,000 visitors a year, including from nearby Birmingham.

In March, we had the grand opening of our improved visitor facilities in the presence of our ambassador Lucy Lapwing and many families. The Enover Community Trust funding allowed us to install play equipment, improve play trails, construct a footbridge, and add event space. These additions will greatly enhance our offerings and attract families for enjoyable nature days out.

We express our gratitude to Enover Community Trust, through the Landfill Communities Fund, for their support.

[Click here to find out more](#)

Karolina Roszkowska



Play meadow grand opening gravel wall being used by family

Making nature accessible for all at Abernethy

RSPB Scotland Abernethy nature reserve has ambitions to become the most accessible nature setting in the whole of the Cairngorms National Park. Thanks to funding from the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) and The Gordon and Ena Baxter Foundation, we are closer to making this a reality.

With their support we are now able to upgrade two of the reserve's most popular woodland trails to improve accessibility and ensure that they are suitable for wheelchair users, mobility scooters and prams. The Big Pines linear trail (0.7km) and the Two Lochs circular trail (2.4km) will have no steps or barriers restricting access. Both paths will be resurfaced and widened to accommodate all users, and benches and perches will be placed at regular intervals to provide resting opportunities.

Enjoying the peace, quiet and tranquillity of our wild spaces, away from crowds and traffic, is something that many people take for granted. But for people with disabilities, accessing and enjoying the wonders of our wild spaces can be a real struggle. By making these improvements, we will continue to ensure that nature is accessible to everyone. Everyone has a right to enjoy our wild places.

Julia Westbury



Finished section of the path upgrade at RSPB Abernethy nature reserve

The RSPB is very honoured to have His Majesty, The King as new Royal patron

We are looking forward to the support of His Majesty in promoting the need to protect and restore both our wildlife and wild spaces. [Click here to find out more](#)

A Lifeline for Sandeels

The closure of sandeel fisheries in the English waters of the North Sea and all Scottish waters respectively, after more than 25 years' of campaigning by the RSPB and others, calling out the practice as one of the contributors to seabird decline, could be a lifeline for our most threatened seabird species. However the EU Commission has asked to hold talks with the UK over the decision to stop sandeel fishing. We will continue to speak out on why the full closure across the English North Sea and all of Scottish waters must remain in place. [Click here to find out more](#)

Grant Funders supporting the RSPB

Thanks to our grant funders, we connect people with wildlife and habitats, empower landowners to give nature a home, and support endangered bird species. Find out more about who they are and the projects they're funding, here



Why work with the RSPB?

We have a proven track record of successes in saving both habitats and species. We work closely with local communities, and provide incredible first-hand nature experiences. We work hard to make a difference, from lobbying for new policies, to helping our nature reserves adapt.

You'll raise your organisation's environmental profile: we're the UK's largest nature conservation charity. You'll get support through our PR teams and channels, including The RSPB Magazine. You can take advantage of corporate volunteering days: [Click here to find out more](#)

Get in touch today to find out more about working in partnership with the RSPB. Nature is in crisis. Together we can save it.

Contacts

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Your views

We always welcome your feedback and comments on *Nature Returns*. Please email Ellie Kirby at eleanor.kirby@rspb.org.uk

Thank you to everyone who has contributed towards these vital projects.



Stay connected

Keep up to date with the latest thinking, news, events, and information from the RSPB in your local community.



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