



giving  
nature  
a home



**Annual review  
2014–2015**



enmaumam - Fotolia

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Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)  
**Mike Clarke**  
 RSPB Chief Executive

# Welcome

Looking back on 2014-15, there's much to celebrate, but there's still a long way to go if we are to save nature.

As a long-standing and fully paid up member, as well as the RSPB's Chief Executive, I'm proud to report that our membership is now at its highest level ever. It's great that so many people feel that they can make a difference to saving nature as RSPB members.

Some of our most threatened wildlife finds a home on our wonderful nature reserves. This year was a good one for lapwings breeding in Wales, and in England bitterns benefited from more reedbed being created: 140 booming males was the highest level since recording began, with more than half found on our reserves. Wildlife was quick to exploit new habitat, too, at Medmerry near Chichester, where flood protection created a new wetland home in 2013. The ones causing most excitement here were the black-winged stilts that raised three young in 2014, in only this stunning species' third successful UK breeding attempt in 27 years. Have a look at our reserves round-up from page 7 for more.

We have such a diversity of wildlife here, and now is a good chance to find out about all the many and varied things that have been happening in England (page 27), Scotland (page 31), Wales (page 37) and Northern Ireland (page 45). But the wildlife the UK is responsible for isn't just confined to these shores and there have been some promising new developments that will protect UK wildlife overseas. Turn to page 23 to find out how the wildlife in the UK Overseas Territories is now better protected thanks to large-scale Marine Protected Areas.

Nature conservation must be part of our sustainable future, and we're ready to help find innovative solutions to achieve this – turn to page 21 to read about our first wildlife-friendly housing development, Hope Community at

Kingsbrook in Aylesbury Vale, Buckinghamshire.

When vital homes for wildlife are threatened by development we will stand firm and speak out against them – like housing that will destroy England's best site for nightingales at Lodge Hill in Kent, or our successful campaign to prevent a major airport damaging the Thames Estuary.

While we're doing more than ever for nature, the threats are still apparent, as we saw in 2013's *State of Nature* report. Species and habitats are in trouble, and need more help. We need more support to help us save nature.

It's more important than ever that those in power make the best decisions for people and nature alike. Moving nature up the political agenda is essential, and that's why, in August 2014, our red squirrel campaigner Bob entered our world.

There have been some high-profile and successful wildlife crime prosecution cases lately. We know that legislation plays an important role in protecting nature, and where it's effective, it's also vital that we protect that legislation. You can find our more about this on page 11.

Of course, the RSPB's work is only possible through our supporters, volunteers, staff and partners. Your loyalty is one of our main strengths, and without that, we would achieve nothing. You give the RSPB the ability to stand up for nature where needed. You've all played a vital role – thank you.

*Mike Clarke*





Professor Steve Ormerod  
RSPB Chairman

## Beyond reserves

RSPB Chairman, Steve Ormerod, looks back on a successful year at the RSPB.

Although the threats to wildlife continue to grow, your support gives us the courage and capability to save nature. Over the last year and throughout our work, you have enabled us to achieve so many amazing successes both on our reserves, and way beyond their borders.

### Looking wider

Our nature reserves remain a vital facet of our conservation work, and your support helped to reap big rewards for some of our most threatened wildlife. At our Dove Stone reserve in Greater Manchester, for example, numbers of dunlins, curlews and golden plovers have doubled in the last 10 years. And those cranes that we helped reintroduce into south-west England bred in 2014, hatching the first chicks in the area for over 400 years.

But rather than being confined to isolated havens, wildlife needs interconnected spaces to move around freely. This is especially important due to the impacts of climate change on the distribution of wildlife. Our Futurescapes programme of landscape-scale conservation is at the heart of our growing efforts with others to connect wild spaces together: we now have 38 such landscapes across the UK, totalling more than 100,000 hectares, where we're working in 144 different partnerships – see page 8 for more.

### Sound basis in science

Our work is always rooted in a sound evidence base, and RSPB scientists continue to provide critical insights into the threats that face nature, while devising new and innovative ways to save it. They contributed to the latest *State of the UK's birds* report, highlighting the worrying 70% overall decline of our summer migrant

birds since the late 1980s. We're striving to find solutions, and with exemplar projects like Operation Turtle Dove underway, we are confident that we can help turn things around for these species.

### Together we're stronger

National and international projects of this size can't be done by any one organisation alone. It's by working together with like-minded partners that we can make change possible on the scale needed. As a BirdLife International Partner, we're in a conservation family that's saving nature around the world. Families support each other when times get tough, and that's exactly what happened when the Ebola outbreak affected communities around the Gola Rainforest in Sierra Leone. The Gola partnership assisted the international aid effort and provided support for the local people who are an important part of the project.

I seem to say this every year – but every year it's more urgent. More than ever, we need to show that there is very real and powerful public support for nature, through you, and through our work. And with RSPB membership at an all-time high, you demonstrate this support and you give us the power to write "Nature" indelibly on the political agenda. This is vital right now, when the laws that protect Europe's most precious wild places – the EU Nature Directives – are under significant threat.

I can't even begin to find the words to express my thanks for the enormity of what you achieve through your support of the RSPB. Individually, you are amazing. Collectively, you are unstoppable. Together, we are the hope that the world can save nature.

Our Futurescapes programme of landscape-scale conservation is key to our work.

James G / Alamy





Andy Gibb

**Jo Gilbert**  
Head of Reserves Ecology

# Bumper year for nature on our reserves

Here's a round-up of the latest wildlife news around our network of over 200 reserves.

## Wonderful year for wading birds

At our Dove Stone reserve in Greater Manchester, we're proud to announce that the numbers of dunlins, golden plovers and curlews have increased in the past ten years. In 2004, there were just seven pairs of dunlins at Dove Stone, but there are now 39. Curlews have increased from 27 to 42 pairs over the same timescale, and golden plovers from 59 pairs to 92. This success is mostly due to our reserve management work to restore the blanket bog, including introducing vital sphagnum moss.

There's fantastic news from our Medmerry reserve near Chichester, where a managed realignment scheme has recreated vital wetland habitat. The reserve has already been colonised by a pair of black-winged stilts, which in 2014 raised four chicks, only the species' third successful breeding attempt in the UK.

Wales had an excellent year for lapwings, where a total of 133 pairs over the country successfully fledged 164 chicks. This has mainly been due to using anti-predator fencing to deter foxes in the areas where lapwings nest.

Providing the right conditions for threatened species can sometimes present challenges. You may remember the 2014 BBC *Springwatch* episode where a badger was filmed preying on avocet nests on the scrape at Minsmere, despite the presence of a predator fence designed to keep them out. This footage gave us new insight into the behaviour of the badgers on the reserve, and showed weaknesses in the existing measures, which we've now successfully rectified.

## Brilliant bitterns

There's great news for bitterns too. Extinct as a breeding bird in the 1870s, due to habitat loss and hunting for their meat, until 1911, they peaked at around 80 booming bitterns in the 20th century before numbers plummeted to 11 booming males in 1997. By this time, wet reedbeds – essential to breeding bitterns – were scarce. To bring the bittern back from the brink, old reedbeds needed to be restored and new reedbeds created. This was made possible by significant funding from the EU LIFE+ programme. Bitterns are now at their highest levels for 200 years: 141 booming males were reported in 2014! Over 70 of these were on RSPB reserves, and three of our recently-created reedbeds are now bittern strongholds, in addition to Minsmere. Ham Wall is now one of the best places for bitterns in the UK, created from old peat workings in 1995. Lakenheath Fen in Suffolk was converted from carrot fields in 1995 and is now a bittern haven. Ouse Fen in Cambridgeshire, a partnership project with Hanson, has seen wetland created from former mineral workings, which started around 10 years ago. In time, we hope it will become the largest reedbed in the UK.

## Natterjacks in Scotland

Natterjack toads are the most endangered amphibian in Scotland, and the largest population is found at Mersehead. In the 1990s, part of a threatened population of natterjacks were translocated to Mersehead reserve where



Steve Round (rspb-images.com)



At our Dove Stone reserve, Greater Manchester, numbers of dunlins have doubled in the past five years.

Steve Knell (rspb-images.com)





Steve Knell (rspb-images.com)

they have been seen ever since. Working with Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, we have pioneered a new method of surveying them. We can identify individuals from the unique wart patterns on their backs, allowing us to establish the number of breeding adults on the reserve. This has led to Mersehead being identified as one of the most important Scottish sites for the species. In 2014 we estimated a population of around 60 toads, with more in 2015. Over the winter we are also digging scrapes for them to breed in, so that the toads can continue to thrive. See page 33 for more.

#### Reintroductions

From time to time, native species are lost from an area, and to combat this, the RSPB is involved in a small number of reintroduction projects. Cranes became extinct in the UK in 1600. Whilst a small population re-established themselves in eastern England in the late 1970s, reintroduction to south-west England, where they were still absent, started in 2009. Releases were carried out every year until 2014, when there was 80 cranes in the area. Cranes take 4–5 years to reach breeding age, and in 2015 the first chicks fledged in Southwest England for over 400 years. The project was in partnership with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), Pensthorpe Conservation Trust and Viridor Credits.

#### Increasing space for nature

We're proud to announce that our Langford Lowfields reserve in Nottinghamshire is now open to the public. The area has been created on the site of an existing quarry, managed by Lafarge Tarmac, on the banks of the river Trent. As it is still a working quarry, currently only the north of the site is open to the public. The 180 hectare site, the size of 250 football pitches, continues to be developed, but once complete, the 100 hectare reedbed will be one of the largest in the East Midlands. The area is currently home to more than 190 bird species, including breeding little ringed plovers and avocets, and 28 butterfly species.

Exciting plans are afoot on the Suffolk Coast at our Boyton Marshes reserve. Thanks to a grant from WREN biodiversity fund, we've purchased 33 hectares of arable farmland. We're planning to turn it into an amazing wetland for wildlife.

We will be converting part of this land into a 30 hectare scrape, which, once finished, will be one of the largest in the UK. It will have a combination of fresh and brackish water, thanks to a new seawall sluice. This work will connect the reserve towards Havergate Island in the Alde-Ore Estuary, giving a home to avocets, lapwings, Sandwich terns and common terns. We also plan to construct a new scrub-covered spoonbill nesting island. By creating a secure location, we hope to encourage this magnificent bird to breed in Suffolk.

#### Adapting to climate change

RSPB Arne in Dorset, with its rare heathland and ancient woodland, provides an important habitat for wildlife including iconic Dartford warblers and rare nightjars. We have been considering how the reserve can play a key role in the climate change adaptation plan for Poole Harbour.

#### We're thinking big

Whilst nature reserves have an important role to play, in order for nature to thrive we need to ensure the whole landscape works for nature. That's the idea behind our three-year EU LIFE+ funded "Futurescapes" project to work on landscape-scale conservation beyond our reserves.

We now have 38 Futurescapes across the UK. To date, we have engaged over 310,000 members of the public, and participated in 144 different partnerships. Together, we have undertaken conservation work in an area of over 100,000 hectares (more than half the size of Greater London), across a range of habitats. This is just the start. We're looking forward to building on the work we've already done, demonstrating large-scale restoration in some of our most important places.



David Kree (rspb-images.com)

RSPB Arne in Dorset provides an important home for wildlife such as Dartford warblers, nightjars and smooth snakes.





Marian Bicknell

**Kate Jennings**  
Head of Site Conservation Policy



Gordon Langsbury (rspb-images.com)

# Making the law work for wildlife

Well-enforced legislation is vital for wildlife. Here's why.

Over recent years, successive governments have targeted legislation in an attempt to cut "red tape", and the laws that protect nature have been accused of placing unnecessary barriers to development. This view is not supported by the evidence, and can be very damaging to wildlife and the habitats where it lives. Europe-wide legislation forms the backbone of our national wildlife laws and it provides a consistent level of protection for special sites, habitats and species, which often cross national boundaries. It also provides a level playing field, as the same laws apply across the whole of the European Union.

### Legislation can drive recovery

After intense pressure from RSPB Scotland and its supporters, the Scottish Government has taken its first steps in protecting Scotland's marine environment with the successful designation of 30 Marine Protected Areas, safeguarding areas of the sea from damaging human activity. This is a good start, but we need to safeguard the most important feeding areas for our seabirds, and to make sure that protected areas are properly managed.

Earlier in 2015, the RSPB was closely involved in constructing and securing a new EU law on invasive non-native species. This should allow the EU to tackle a problem that carries a huge environmental and economic bill.

### Legislation can set an example

Properly enforced, legislation which includes effective penalties can act as a deterrent to protect wildlife. On 12 January 2015, George Mutch, a former gamekeeper, was sentenced to four months in prison for the illegal killing of a goshawk, illegal use of a trap and illegal taking of a buzzard and a second goshawk. This case was the first in the UK where someone has spent time in prison for the persecution of a bird of prey. Video footage, captured by the RSPB Scotland Investigations team, was a key piece of evidence used in the prosecution case. This penalty should be a turning point, sending a clear message to those determined to flout our laws that wildlife crime will not be tolerated.

At the end of 2014, Ninian Stewart, a landowner, was fined £675 over the actions of a gamekeeper on his land, who illegally poisoned a buzzard. He was fined under the new Scottish "vicarious liability" provision, whereby landowners can be prosecuted for illegal activities occurring on their land. The RSPB continues to campaign for this measure throughout the UK.

The EU Birds and Habitats Directives, the EU laws that protect our wildlife, are under threat from those who would like to see them weakened. Now is the time to strengthen our wildlife protection legislation, not to weaken it.

The Scottish Government has successfully designated 30 Marine Protected Areas around the Scottish coastline.

Guy Rogues (rspb-images.com)





Steve Kneill (rspb-images.com)

## Successful first year of little tern project

In September 2013, we launched a new EU LIFE-funded species recovery project to help little terns. Little terns are one of our rarest breeding seabirds, migrating from West Africa in April each year, to nest on our open beaches.

The partnership aims to secure the future of little terns in the UK, with ten partners managing more than 20 little tern colony sites; about 65% of the UK population.

Despite July storms in Norfolk wiping out the colonies there, the April to August 2014 little tern breeding season was overall one of the best, thanks to good weather and a plentiful offshore food source. Gronant Beach in Prestatyn is the last Welsh little tern breeding site, but it is holding its own with 136 pairs fledging 77 young. And the site at Crimdon Dene on Teesside had an exceptional year, with 64 pairs fledging 92 young.

This spells great news for the start of the five-year project.



Kaleel Zbe (rspb-images.com)

## RSPB Scotland helps to save red squirrels

RSPB Scotland has now joined forces with the well-established Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels project.

Since 1952, 95% of red squirrels in England and Wales have disappeared, and 75% of the remaining UK population is found in Scotland. Grey squirrels, introduced to the UK in the nineteenth century, threaten the native reds because they compete for food and habitat, and transmit the deadly squirrel pox virus.

As RSPB Scotland manages over 80 reserves in Scotland, we have a good position on which to build on red squirrel conservation.

RSPB Scotland brings charitable funds, conservation science expertise and an active voice to the project.

The work involves trying to halt the spread of grey squirrels north, by trapping them along the Highland boundary; eliminating grey squirrels in Aberdeen, north of the grey-free boundary; and protecting important red squirrel populations in southern Scotland.

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels is a partnership of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Land and Estates, and the Red Squirrel Survival Trust.



Luis Cabezas

## Task Force results in 99% reduction in albatross deaths

Of the 22 species of albatross in the world, 15 are in danger of extinction. Many are killed by the hooks at the end of fishing longlines and the cables that tow fishing nets in the water. But the Albatross Task Force, launched in 2006, working with local BirdLife partners, is looking to change all that.

The South African arm of the project has shown some remarkable results. In the local hake trawl fishery, the team has introduced bird scaring lines, to keep albatrosses and other seabirds away from the cables. A regulation enforcing this mitigation measure has been in place since 2006, and in that time there has been a staggering 99% reduction in albatross deaths, and a 95% reduction in seabird bycatch generally.

The success was down to continued work with local fisheries, and lobbying the Government to convince them to implement and use these measures.

The South African government was very supportive of this regulation, and now these mitigation measures are being trialled in other areas where the Albatross Task Force works.



Whinchat by Mike Lane (rspb-images.com)

## UK bird report shows decline in migrant birds

The latest of the annual *State of the UK's birds* report includes a migratory birds indicator for the first time.

Species that winter in the humid zone of Africa, from southern Senegal to Nigeria, such as the whinchat, nightingale, tree pipit and spotted flycatcher, showed the most dramatic declines. As a group, these species' populations have dropped by just over 70% since the late 1980s. In contrast, species that winter in the arid zone, just south of the Sahara desert, have declined by less than 20% overall.

Research is already underway and a co-ordinated effort is needed to discover the causes of these patterns.

*State of the UK's birds* is produced by the RSPB, BTO, and WWF, together with the Government's nature conservation agencies: the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Thanks are due to the thousands of volunteer birdwatchers whose survey data forms the basis for this report.





There have been 30,000 child visits to Minsmere since 2012, when the Discovery Centre and Wild Zone were opened.

Eleanor Bentall (rspb-images.com)



RSPB

**Jo Coker**  
Head of Supporter Development

## Increasing support for nature

Nature needs our help, and this year we've seen that even more people are motivated to give financial, political and moral support.

### New challenges

2013's *State of Nature* report emphasised that nature is in trouble, and needs our help. With more support, we can do more for nature, so we've been trying to highlight the problems to potential supporters, along with the message that together we can make a difference. One of the ways to reverse the declines is for more people to support the RSPB financially.

RSPB membership reached the one million mark in the late nineties, but membership has largely remained the same in recent years. To attract more people, we needed ways to inspire more people with a love of nature who could lend their support to the RSPB, particularly families, where fostering a love of wildlife will help the next generation protect it.

We're proud to announce that our membership figures are at an all-time high! It's wonderful that so many people love nature, and those that want to save it and protect it are doing that through their RSPB membership.

Our Giving Nature a Home campaign continued in the autumn of 2014, when a refreshed version of our TV advert was aired. To help support those wanting to make their own gardens more wildlife-friendly, this was combined with a new-look website full of great activities and tips. Helping people give nature a home has also been a topic of conversation for staff and volunteers and down the country, and has proven to be a great way of attracting new members.

### Inspiring visitors at Minsmere

At our Minsmere reserve in Suffolk, the team has been working hard to ensure that all visitors have a great day out. After enjoying the stunning vistas and views of wildlife, visitors are able to stock up in the café and shop, which took £1 million for the first time this year. This is great news as it means we can do so much more for wildlife in the area.

Since the new Discovery Centre and WildZone were opened in May 2012, we have recorded 30,000 child visits. This means that, outside of their education programme, there is always something to do here in school holidays. We're welcoming more children and families to Minsmere than ever, showing that the reserve is a great place for wildlife and people alike.

There's a network of new trails, including a new woodland walk, and new seasonal trails to highlight wildlife sights throughout the year. These new features give visitors the perfect excuse to come back, as there are always new places to explore, and birds and other wildlife to marvel at.

Of course, we couldn't have achieved any of this without the fantastic work of the dedicated Minsmere team and the continued support of our funders.





Our red squirrel campaigner, known as Bob, achieved over 120,000 votes, including almost 1,100 from Prospective Parliamentary Candidates and MPs.

Composite images by Eilan Moran / iStock and Steward Ellett Photography



Grahame Madge

**Steven Roddy**  
Head of Parliamentary Campaigns

## A great year for campaigning

The RSPB has a strong tradition of campaigning. This year we continued to build on that foundation with two high-profile campaigns.

### Bob for nature

Bob, our red squirrel campaigner, was launched in August 2014. His aim was simple: to get nature back on the political agenda. We encouraged those who love nature to "Vote for Bob" online and register their wish to put nature back on the political agenda. Huge numbers of people took action. Within the first week, he attracted 35,000 votes, and by June 2015 he had more than 120,000. Bob's supporters were encouraged to contact their MPs and Prospective Parliamentary Candidates and in the end nearly 1,100 had backed his campaign.

It didn't stop there. Bob, with the help of his giant red squirrel mascot, went on a huge campaign trail across the UK. He travelled to London to squeak to MPs in Westminster; he travelled through Wales and Northern Ireland, attended the Nature of Scotland Awards, took his campaign to the streets of Edinburgh, and visited many RSPB reserves from Minsmere, Suffolk to Dove Stone, Greater Manchester. He also had his name in lights in Piccadilly Circus.

Bob was an active figure on social media. As well as live tweeting from his campaign trail, supporters were encouraged to create their own "Vote for Bob scenes" and share them on social media. By June 2015 he had 10,000 Facebook "likes" and 6,800 Twitter followers.

Bob really seemed to make an impression. A survey by NFP Synergy found it was amongst the top ten campaigns recalled by MPs.

Vote for Bob was awarded Highly Commended in the "Most powerful insight through research" category in the 2015 Insight in Fundraising Awards, but the most important thing is that he encouraged thousands of people to tell politicians they care about nature.

Bob will be back in January 2016, working hard to get nature on the agenda of the devolved elections.

### The Climate Coalition

The RSPB doesn't just work alone. We're part of the The Climate Coalition, the UK's largest group of people dedicated to action on climate change, which includes organisations such as Greenpeace, WWF, Cafod and the WI.

On Valentine's Day we asked people to show their love for the things that could be lost to climate change – by dedicating love songs and wearing and sharing green hearts.

The centrepiece of the campaign was a short film based on Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"), produced by Sir Ridley Scott's RSA Films. Featuring celebrities including Emilia Fox, Alison Steadman and Stephen Fry, the film received over 180,000 views in the first 24 hours alone.

The campaign culminated in the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition signing a Green Alliance pledge to work together to tackle climate change.





Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

## 10 years of Springwatch

2014 marked the 10-year anniversary of the BBC wildlife TV soap *Springwatch*, the true-life series that brings the wonders of nature right into our living rooms. One of the UK's longest-running wildlife series and watched by almost three million people a night, the RSPB has been present on the programme right from the start.

The very first show in 2005 featured Mull's white-tailed eagles Skye and Frisa, and their two chicks Itchy and Scratchy, and the second showcased the wonderful wildlife in Shetland. The live-action wildlife bonanza was based at RSPB Ynys-Hir for three years, but in 2014 it came live from Minsmere, which the *Springwatch* team described as "the most wildlife-rich site in *Springwatch* history".

The original presenting team may have changed, but the wonder the series inspires in its viewers remains the same.



David Norton (rspb-images.com)

## Half a million do Big Garden Birdwatch

Over the weekend of 24–25 January 2015, more than 585,000 people spent an hour watching the birds that visited their gardens, and reporting on some of the other wildlife they saw throughout the year.

They counted more than 8.5 million birds. The UK's top three birds were the house sparrow, starling and blackbird. In addition, grey squirrel, hedgehog and badger were the three most spotted species seen over the past year in the "other wildlife" category.

Sightings of every bird that featured in this year's top 20 have increased since 2014, except chaffinch, goldfinch and greenfinch.

We pioneered a new digital approach to make it even easier to take part. Participants can now report back using their tablet or smartphone.

Our Big Schools' Birdwatch saw a record 91,000 children and teachers take part and the most common playground visitor, for the seventh year in a row, was the blackbird.



Louise Greenhorn

## Giving nature a home in Glasgow

The most urban parts of Glasgow are now teeming with life, thanks to the Giving Nature a Home in Glasgow project.

A partnership between Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Life and RSPB Scotland, the aim is to reach out and bring the wonders of nature to urban audiences.

A network of projects across the city, it works on all levels; from encouraging families to put up nestboxes in their gardens; to schools and community groups creating wildlife havens in their grounds; to working with developers to ensure that wildlife gets incorporated into their designs; and working with the council so that nature has a space in public parks and spaces.

Over 50 community groups have taken part in the scheme, including a number of local schools. Six secondary schools have even been named ambassadors for certain key species, and have been designing areas of their school grounds with them in mind. Students at St Andrew's School, Easterhouse, are designing an area of their school for water voles.

Thanks to the success of the project, a wildlife garden festival took place in July 2015, and a similar project for Edinburgh is now in the planning stages.



Abbi Jinks

## Events Team volunteers celebrate

Our wonderful Events Team volunteers were rewarded in October 2014 with a Presidents' Award, our volunteering Oscars.

The Events Team volunteers are responsible for constructing the impressive RSPB stands for events such as Gardeners' World Live. Construction starts months in advance, from February each year, and the team work tirelessly at RSPB Hope Farm to bring our innovative designs to life on a fraction of a budget.

These unsung heroes have been working with the Events Team for the past 10 years, and in 2014 the team decided it was time to nominate them for the award.

The Events Team volunteers are vital to the work we do at BBC Gardeners' World Live, and we value their support and dedication tremendously. We look forward to working with them in the future.





Lodge Hill in Kent represents a stronghold for British nightingales. 1% of the UK nightingale population calls it home.

Mike Read (rspb-images.com)



RSPB

**Andrew Dodd**  
Head of Casework

# Making space for people and nature

The RSPB isn't afraid to challenge development that would damage nature, but we also encourage developers to plan for a positive future for wildlife.

## Campaigning at Lodge Hill

On the Hoo Peninsula in Kent sits Lodge Hill, perhaps the most important site in the country for nightingales, and the only Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) specifically for this iconic species. Lodge Hill is a vital stronghold for this declining bird, with over 1% of the UK population calling it home.

However, the Lodge Hill site has already been earmarked for development by the Ministry of Defence, who are pursuing plans to build up to 5,000 homes on the site. This would be catastrophic for wildlife and would set a dangerous precedent for other areas designated for nature.

More than 12,400 people wrote to the government campaigning against this, with Natural England and various conservation organisations, including the Wildlife Trusts and the National Trusts, expressing their concern. Thankfully, the Government decided to step in and launch a full public inquiry into development at the site, due in 2016. We hope that plans for the development will be rejected, and the future of SSSIs will be safe.

## Thames Estuary Airport – NO!

We also campaigned successfully against a proposal to build a four-runway airport on the Isle of Grain, also on the Hoo Peninsula, on the site of a coastal wetland. The mudflats, saltmarsh and reedbeds that line the estuary are some of the most important wildlife habitats in Europe, with a thriving bird population as well as rare insects.

Happily, on 2 September 2014 the Airports Commission, which examined the need for extra airport capacity and made recommendations to the Government, announced that it would not include the Thames Estuary on its shortlist of options for new airports by 2030 – the latest rejection in a long line of similar proposals. Let's hope this is finally the end.

## New Hope Community

At the RSPB, we know that we need to create spaces for people as well as wildlife. In view of this, we've joined forces with Barratt Developments, the UK's largest house builder. This historic partnership is putting high-value wildlife features in all types of new developments. Kingsbrook, in Aylesbury Vale, is the first flagship "Hope Community." Starting in 2016, it will comprise 2,450 homes plus a school and community facilities. In addition, half the site will be green infrastructure, including wildflower meadows, hedgehog highways, birds' nest bricks, and a 101 hectare nature reserve (the size of 100 football pitches).

The RSPB and Barratt Developments have signed an agreement to incorporate wildlife-friendly principles across all their developments.

Eric Isesle / Fotolia







**Jonathan Hall**  
Head of UK Overseas Territories Unit



# New marine protection for Territories' wildlife

UK wildlife also lives on our Overseas Territories. Here's how our work has ensured they are better protected.

New initiatives over the last year promise much greater protection for wildlife in the seas around the UK's 14 Overseas Territories. And since we have responsibility for the fifth largest area of ocean owned by one country on the planet – more than 30 times the size of the UK itself – there's a lot of marine wildlife to protect. We have more penguins than any other country, the largest coral atoll in the world, and breeding grounds for endangered turtles.

## The start of the Great British Oceans Coalition

A major step was the setting up of the Great British Oceans Coalition partnership. Campaigning for the creation of large-scale Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) around the Pitcairn, Ascension and South Sandwich Islands, we had our first major breakthrough in March, when the Government announced its intention to create an MPA around the Pitcairn Islands, in the Pacific Ocean. At 834,000 km<sup>2</sup>, (or 1.1 million football pitches) it will be the world's largest marine reserve, making the ocean safer for wildlife such as humpback whales, turtles and shark species, as well as roving Henderson's petrels (amongst the world's most threatened seabirds).

The marine reserve is fully supported by the Pitcairn islanders, whose council voted unanimously in its favour. Islanders will still be able to fish in the seas, but other damaging activities, such as industrial fishing by other nations, will be banned.

We hope for more progress in the year to come – the majority of MPs elected in May 2015 came from parties committed to measures that safeguard wildlife in the waters around our Overseas Territories.

## Exciting new designations

Protection also arrived onshore last year at Ascension Island in the South Atlantic, with the designation of seven new nature reserves and wildlife sanctuaries. One fifth of the island's land area now has protected status, a boost for 25,000 nesting green turtles, as well as more than 800,000 seabirds, including the Ascension frigatebird, found nowhere else in the world.

On Anguilla, Eastern Caribbean, a partnership we were involved in finally declared Dog Island – home to more than 100,000 breeding seabirds – rat-free. As the second most important seabird island in the Caribbean, this is good news for the tropicbirds and frigatebirds that were preyed on by non-native black rats.

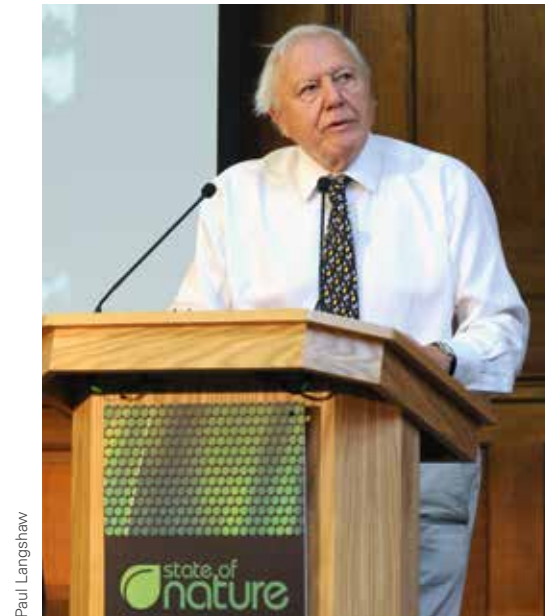
Finally, the Centre Hills on the Caribbean island of Montserrat were designated a National Park, when the long-awaited Conservation & Environmental Management Act 2014 was passed. These hills are the only area of upland forest left on the island since a major volcano destroyed the rest in 1997. They are home to a whole range of wildlife found only on Montserrat, including the mountain chicken (one of the world's largest frogs) and two lizard species, the Montserrat anole and Montserrat galliwasp. There are also fewer than 500 pairs of Montserrat orioles. We are working with partners to secure this bird's future.

National Geographic Image Collection / Alamy

The UK Government has announced its intention to create a Marine Protected Area around Pitcairn, safeguarding hundreds of marine species.

triggerfishsaul / iStock





Paul Langshaw



GNRP



Oliver Smart (rspb-images.com)



Chris Gibson

## Conference for Nature

Our inaugural *State of Nature* report, launched by Sir David Attenborough in 2013, showed the RSPB joining forces with the UK's other leading nature conservation organisations to produce a healthcheck on the UK's wildlife. The results were striking. 60% of the species surveyed in the report had declined over the last 50 years. Of these, 31% of the total had declined strongly.

A year later, the question was "what next?": so in September 2014, we held the high-profile Conference for Nature. Speakers included senior directors from major businesses, including Marks & Spencer and CEMEX. Focusing on possible solutions, it showcased groundbreaking examples of successful conservation from different sectors.

In this way, we demonstrated ways to ensure that nature is embedded in the day to day decisions of politicians, major business and civil society organisations.

## Helping the fight against Ebola

The RSPB, with the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone and the Sierra Leonean Government, helped out with the international aid operation when the Ebola outbreak affected communities around the Gola rainforest in Sierra Leone.

All expatriate staff were evacuated, and local staff were given regular and extensive health and safety training. Strict measures were put in place as Sierra Leone declared a state of emergency.

From September 2014, the Gola partners assisted the international aid effort, lending vehicles and seconding staff, to help deliver food supplies to the affected communities around the forest.

Food security is a key issue for the communities we work with in the Gola rainforest. It is a particular area of focus for our ongoing work as well as for Ebola recovery, so our work here has many direct benefits.

In addition, the RSPB joined forces with Oxfam, Medecins Sans Frontières, the Red Cross, and many others, to coordinate Ebola relief efforts from London. This bridged the gap between natural resource management and international aid.

## Operation Turtle Dove update

Turtle doves are one of our best-loved farmland birds. Sadly, they are also our fastest-declining bird, so in 2012 Operation Turtle Dove was set up to address this.

The main cause of their decline in the UK is food shortages. Turtle doves exclusively eat seeds, particularly the seeds of plants on arable farmland, but modern agriculture does not always allow for this. During 2011–2014, fieldwork on six farms in East Anglia suggested that an ideal turtle dove feeding ground can be created by sowing a mixture of plant seeds in the autumn, and then cutting or harrowing areas during the following summer and autumn to prevent them from getting too overgrown. These research findings are being used to help farmers create turtle-dove friendly habitat.

Operation Turtle Dove is also working with building materials supplier CEMEX UK, to test how CEMEX quarries can increase numbers of turtle doves in the UK. CEMEX also works with BirdLife International in France and Spain, on turtle dove migration routes, to help conservation in the western European flyway.

Operation Turtle Dove is a partnership of the RSPB, Conservation Grade, Pensthorpe Conservation Trust and Natural England.

## A hidden gem in South Essex

Deep in the industrial landscape of the Thames Estuary in South Essex nestles a wildlife gem – a place so rich in plants, insects and other creatures that it has been likened to a rainforest. When Canvey Wick was abandoned as an industrial site in the 1960s, nature moved in and the area gradually evolved into this amazing home for nature in the west end of Canvey Island.

It's one of the most important sites in Britain for endangered insect species, including a hugely important population of shrill carder bees – one of the UK's rarest bumblebees. This is the first reserve where we've focused on insect conservation.

Canvey Wick's future became brighter in September 2014 when the RSPB, Buglife and the Land Trust began to work together to manage this special place as a nature reserve – ensuring its safety as a haven for the important insects and other wildlife that live there.

Canvey Wick is one of seven nature reserves the RSPB manages in South Essex.





2014 was a record year for redshanks on RSPB reserves in the south-east of England.

Nigel Blake (rspb-images.com)



Julia Mackay

**Shaun Thomas**  
Director, Region and Country Operations

# England

We picked out wildlife highlights from each of our five English regions.

Our ambitious “Skydancer” project, to raise the profile of the hen harrier in northern England, won an astonishing accolade when it was voted the National Lottery Award for Best Education project. It’s a real boost for a moorland bird that is one of England’s more beleaguered birds of prey.

Our bid to teach young people about hen harriers was a success through the education system. Almost 4,000 primary and secondary children have learned about hen harriers and other moorland birds through interactive assemblies and workshops – education in real depth.

At a practical level, we trained more than 60 new volunteers to support hen harrier conservation. We also spoke to more than 100 gamekeeping and countryside management students – young people who one day may be managing land with hen harriers in their stewardship. And on one exhilarating afternoon, around 3,500 people attended our hen harrier circus event at Alnwick Garden, where the RSPB teamed up with a Newcastle circus, Circus Central, to tell the fictional story of the last pair of hen harriers in England, using acrobats, jugglers and unicyclists.

### Cirl buntings are back

Both of our cirl bunting reintroduction projects have had a successful year. Our groundbreaking Cornish Cirl Bunting Reintroduction Project – the first passerine (perching bird) reintroduction project in Europe – reached another important milestone in 2014. Monitoring by RSPB staff and volunteers proved that the population stood at 39 pairs. If this figure increases or remains stable in 2015, it will indicate that the population is now self-sustaining. Cirl buntings

will once again be established as a breeding species in Cornwall.

The project started in 2006 and involved six years of releasing hand-reared cirl buntings into suitable habitat in south Cornwall. The last birds were released in 2011, and we hope that no further releases will be required. Our future work will focus on habitat improvements through advisory work.

Moving east, the RSPB’s cirl bunting recovery project in Devon and the success at our Labrador Bay nature reserve show that habitat improvements do result in cirl bunting increases. This is highlighted by the remarkable statistic that the population on Labrador Bay has increased sevenfold over the six years we have owned it.

The reintroduction project is a good example of a partnership project (involving Natural England, Paignton Zoo, the National Trust and the Zoological Society of London as advisers) using the expertise of different organisations with specialist skills to undertake what was a complex and, at times, challenging project. The details and results of this project provide a blueprint for any future cirl bunting reintroductions and could help design reintroduction projects for similar species.

With 42 pairs in Devon already recorded in the 2015 breeding season, a significant milestone has been achieved. We believe this Devon project has already established a self-sustaining population.

### Wading bird success stories

We had a record year for lapwings and redshanks on RSPB nature reserves in the south-east, the climax of three years of marked increases.







Roger Tidman (rspb-images.com)

Both these species of wading birds are under increasing threat from changes in land management, sea level rises and predation pressure on increasingly concentrated nesting sites. Lapwings need to fledge an average of 0.7 chicks per pair every year to maintain a stable population – but they regularly don't meet this magic number.

The good news is that both species have increased in number on wet grassland in the south-east in recent years, particularly on our North Kent reserves. A number of factors have been pivotal to these successes. At Medmerry, Great Bells Farm and Northward Hill, we have been creating new wader habitat. At Brading Marshes, Amberley Wildbrooks, Rainham Marshes, Shorne Marshes and Highham Marshes, we have been restoring the wet grassland that is critical to feeding and breeding. And better management across all of our sites, especially in managing predators, is bringing results.

Over the last 10 years, lapwing numbers have risen by 264% and redshanks by 281% on our reserves in south-east England. We reached an average of 1.06 chicks per pair for lapwings in 2014 – well above the 0.7 minimum target.

#### Langford Lowfields is now open

We announced a new nature reserve in the Midlands in 2014, with the opening of Nottinghamshire's Langford Lowfields reserve. This has been the result of a fruitful partnership with LaFarge Tarmac. Surrounded by dragonflies and reed warblers in the summer, visitors are able to walk across a pool on a bridge that rises with water levels. The reserve is one of a string of wetlands across the Trent and Tame floodplains Futurescape.

#### Stone-curlews' fortunes transformed

Back in the 1980s, one of the UK's rarest birds was teetering on the brink of extinction as a breeding species. Between 1940 and 1985, the stone-curlew population had declined by 85%. In East Anglia's Brecks, there were fewer than 100 pairs left – there was a definite sense that we had to do something before it was too late.

So, imagine Eastern England Director James Robinson's delight at being in a room at the back of a Thetford inn, along with local MP and Environment Secretary Elizabeth Truss and more than 50 farmers, landowners, gamekeepers and conservationists to celebrate a transformation in the stone-curlew's fortunes. We had worked to reduce the number of nests accidentally destroyed by farming operations, helping more stone-curlew chicks to fledge. The RSPB has been helping landowners enter stewardship schemes so they can farm for both food and wildlife, creating stone-curlew plots within the arable farmland on which 70% of them now nest. This has played a significant role in the stone-curlew success story in the Brecks.

Today, this pioneering landscape-scale conservation partnership has succeeded in nearly trebling the number of pairs of stone-curlews breeding in the area, with nearly 250 pairs recorded in 2012. The partnership responsible for the recovery must continue to work together for stone-curlews and other threatened Breckland wildlife, and the RSPB will continue to play its part. An EU LIFE+ project is helping to increase the number of safe nesting places for stone-curlews. We are paving the way towards building a more sustainable population.



Steve Keall (rspb-images.com)

Our Langford Lowfields reserve opened to the public in May 2014. Part of the area is still a working quarry, run by LaFarge Tarmac.





Scotland has the largest concentration of red squirrels in the UK.

Andrew Mason (rspb-images.com)



Dr Dan Hufton

**Stuart Housden OBE**  
Director, RSPB Scotland

## Scotland

Restoring large-scale habitats like the Caledonian forest takes time, but persistence has paid off for a number of conservation projects in Scotland.

When Senior Conservation Manager Peter Mayhew and Site Manager Jeremy Roberts took environmental campaigner George Monbiot to our Abernethy nature reserve in Cairngorms National Park, he was immensely impressed with the scale of our landscape restoration project. There are hundreds of thousands of new pines and other native trees growing, to regenerate the Caledonian forest and almost double its current size.

We've been working on this for 25 years or more and it was pleasing to show George what we have done: I'm immensely proud of what the team has achieved. It's a fantastic place to visit. Not only is the scenery stunning, but the sounds and sights are uplifting and it's a great home for nature. As twigs crack underfoot, the smell of fresh pine is accompanied by the call of grouse, or the soft trill of a crested tit. Look down and you see mountain bumblebees bringing a splash of colour. Look ahead and there are dashes of meadow pipits. It's a joy to see.

The vast majority of the forest regeneration is natural, achieved by managing and reducing the grazing pressure on the reserve, but we are also giving a helping hand. As well as Scots pine, a critical element of ancient pine forests includes a wider range of native shrubs and broadleaved trees, such as junipers, birches, and aspens. We found that the recovery of broadleaves has been extremely slow and localised compared with the pine. This in part reflects historical management of the forest so we are planting 100,000 broadleaved trees to form a "nursery" and a source of seeds for the forest in the future.

Local schoolchildren and volunteers are helping with this work, as are college groups and locally-employed contractors. We are supported by a range of partners, including Walkers Shortbread and Scottish Power, and local Cairngorm companies such as Speyside Wildlife and Scot Mountain Holidays, which operate their own "Visitor Payback" schemes to fund our forest expansion work. We are very grateful to our members and the Friends of Abernethy who are supporting this work too. It really is a great partnership of enthusiasts.

### Giving red squirrels a home

Our Abernethy nature reserve is one of the best places in Scotland for red squirrels, found on 13 of our nature reserves here. We are privileged to provide safe homes for them as they face increasing pressure from grey squirrels, which transmit the deadly squirrelpox virus.

Tackling the challenges faced by red squirrels is not something we can do alone, so we have joined forces with an existing programme run by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Land & Estates and the Red Squirrel Survival Trust as part of the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels partnership.

The project aims to continue to prevent the spread northwards of grey squirrels and squirrelpox via a programme of grey squirrel control. It will also define and map priority areas for red squirrel conservation in south Scotland.

We believe this is our very best chance of preventing the extinction of this species on the British mainland and we are pleased to be a full member. A visit to our visitor centre at







Corncrakes are now back from the brink of extinction in Scotland.

Nigel Blake (rspb-images.com)



Nature Photographers Ltd / Alamy

Loch Garten, Abernethy wouldn't be the same without red squirrels scampering up the pines.

**Corncrakes up**

The corncrake is another species that was on the brink of extinction in Britain, mostly due to changes in farming practices. We are delighted to report a 30% increase in numbers where we are working for them in the Hebrides, following three years of declines. We have been managing some of our reserves in the Hebrides and Orkney specifically for corncrakes, ensuring there is plenty of tall vegetation for them when they arrive back from Africa in the spring. Meadows are left unharvested until the corncrakes have fledged.

Making sure corncrakes have a home in Scotland is only part of the story, as they spend the winter in Africa and a couple of months of the year flying between the two. We weren't sure exactly where they went until this year when we successfully tracked their migration by fitting a satellite tag to some of the birds. This revealed they migrated to West Africa, before moving east to the Democratic Republic of Congo. This means we now have the right information to enable us to do further work in these areas for "our" corncrakes.

**Saving seabirds on the Shiant Isles**

The Shiant Isles between Skye and the Outer Hebrides are one of the most important breeding colonies for seabirds in Europe, with around 10% of UK puffins and 7% of UK razorbills breeding there every year. Unfortunately, there is also a colony of non-native black rats, detrimental to seabirds.

As I write, we are just completing a combined programme of at-sea survey and tracking individual birds using GPS tags, which will give us a more detailed picture of the most important feeding grounds for Shiant's seabirds.

We are working with the custodians of the islands, the Nicolson family, and Scottish Natural Heritage to improve the fortunes of the seabirds, with the hope of attracting Manx shearwaters and storm petrels back. Part of this work will be an attempt to eradicate the rats, should happen over the winter of 2015-16.

Our efforts over the last year have involved raising funds to be able to do this, including £450,000 from an EU Life+ funded project and generous donations from our supporters and Scottish National Heritage. It has been quite an achievement to get this project off the ground and we are very grateful to all who are making this possible. With seabirds generally in decline across the UK, we want to do all we can to make sure they will still be there for future generations to enjoy as much as we do.

**Areas at sea protected**

Following the Marine (Scotland) Act in 2010, we are pleased that large areas of the sea around Scotland are now designated as Marine Protected Areas. RSPB Scotland and our members have played a big role in making this happen, by showing the Scottish Government that it's important to the people of Scotland.

This will make a real difference for our marine wildlife. It will also help protect important habitats such as cold water corals.

We now need to make sure the protected areas are managed well, as is the intention in 2020 Challenge, the refreshed Scottish Biodiversity Strategy that aims to halt the declines in wildlife by 2020.

**Natterjacks recovering**

One thing we can't plan for is extremes in weather. When half of the sand dunes were washed away by extreme tides at our Mersehead nature reserve in Dumfries and Galloway in January 2014, we were worried about the impact on rare natterjack toads.

In late March 2014, I joined the team looking for them to see if they had survived. Luckily, under the flashes of our torchlight one damp evening, we found them. They did extraordinarily well last year and we can now identify individual toads to see which ones are still around from year to year.

The toads come with their own individual fingerprint: the pattern of big warts and the yellow stripe on their back is unique. By photographing each individual, we can build up a database of natterjack "mugshots" so that we can track their fortunes in the future.







There is a tiny population of natterjack toads in Scotland. They each have a unique wart pattern on their back, like a fingerprint.

Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

#### Other wildlife successes

Across our 80 nature reserves in Scotland, we're pleased to report some more successes for wildlife. Black grouse are doing well, with 108 males recorded in 2014, an increase of 17% from 2013. Water voles returned to our Insh Marshes nature reserve in Highland after a 30-year absence. We found more of the rare short-necked oil beetles on the Isle of Coll than we expected, and we had the first confirmed record of a chequered skipper butterfly at our Glenborrodale nature reserve, the most westerly record for Scotland.

#### Persecution still a problem

The persecution of birds of prey and other wildlife is still a problem in Scotland, but thankfully the authorities are taking it seriously. In January 2015, we saw the first prison sentence for a gamekeeper convicted of illegal killing in Scotland. Thanks partly to RSPB Scotland evidence, George Mutch was sentenced to four months in prison following his conviction for the illegal killing of a goshawk; illegal use of a trap; and illegal taking of a buzzard and a second goshawk. This case showcased the benefits of the RSPB and authorities working together to put an end to persecution. It sends a strong message: illegal killing will not be tolerated.

In December 2014, the first Scottish landowner was convicted for the illegal actions of an employee on his land under "vicarious liability", which came into force in 2012. Ninian Stewart was fined a total of £675 after pleading guilty to being vicariously liable for Peter Finley Bells' crime of poisoning and killing a wild bird.

In an ideal world, persecution wouldn't be a problem, but sadly it is. Whilst it's not our desire for people to be sent to prison or fined, we will continue to help tackle illegal activity in order to keep birds of prey and wildlife safe.

#### Standing up for nature

In January 2015, we submitted a legal challenge of the decisions by Scottish Ministers on 10 October 2014 to grant consent for four large offshore windfarms in the Firths of Forth and Tay. We believe the 335 turbines will pose too great a risk to the many thousands of resident and migratory seabirds there. From puffins to kittiwakes, many birds are at risk.

This was not a decision that we took lightly, but we have a proven track record of taking a stand to ensure that wildlife and the environment is properly safeguarded.

The vast majority of renewable energy developments pose no significant threat to wildlife. We continue to support the development of carefully sited and designed renewables, including offshore wind. However, these kinds of developments must not be at the cost of the environment they are intended to protect. At the time of writing, we are still awaiting the decision of this judicial review.

#### Working together

RSPB Scotland works with many organisations, businesses and individuals to make our conservation work possible and to act on the scale that wildlife needs: stretching across the landscape. One example of our work across the community is the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative, an industrial landscape with wildlife, agriculture and archaeology woven through it.

There's a whole range of organisations and individuals involved, from Butterfly Conservation Scotland to Falkirk, Fife and Stirling Councils, but everyone involved has one thing in common: the Inner Firth of Forth is important to them. Bringing all these inspiring stories together and working together to keep the area a special place is an example of innovation at its best. A big thank you to the HLF in Scotland for making this possible.

Another example of communities pulling together is the Glasgow Wildlife Garden Festival. It aims to create more homes for nature across the city and encourages the people of Glasgow to get in touch with their wild side. The City Council is behind it, plus dozens of charities, conservation groups, community gardens, allotments and parks.

#### Looking forward

Politically, it has been a busy year in Scotland, with the independence referendum and the lead-up to the General Election. We took care not to enter the political debate, but put forward the actions that could best help wildlife and the environment to all concerned.

We will continue to put the best solution forward for nature, irrespective of who is in power.





We hope that connecting children with nature will spark a life-long love of wildlife.

Katie-jo Luxton



RSPB

**Katie-jo Luxton**  
Director, RSPB Cymru

## Wales

There are a number of conservation success stories from Wales this year: from lapwings to black grouse, as well as great news on Marine Protected Areas.

I'm glad to be able to report on a number of well-earned conservation success stories for Wales this year, in our efforts to save threatened species, protect special places, and inspire the wider community to enjoy nature.

### Recovering lapwings

For me, one of the most significant successes is our work to reverse the decline in lapwing numbers in Wales. When I was a kid, lapwings were one of our most common farmland birds. Now there are fewer than 400 breeding pairs in Wales and it is an absolute crisis situation for the species here. We've taken on board research from our conservation science team that found that breeding is unlikely to be successful among colonies of fewer than 10 pairs. Consequently we've focused our efforts on managing a number of sites specifically to support lapwings. The great news is that on all these sites the number of chicks fledged has exceeded expectations. It's a huge success and we've learned how to recover this iconic bird on land we manage. The challenge is how we can roll that out into the wider countryside, and particularly to improve Glastir – the Welsh Government's agri-environment scheme – so that it better supports farmers to make the wider countryside more suitable for lapwings and other farmland wildlife in decline.

### Reversing the decline in black grouse

Another bird making a recovery in Wales is black grouse. In the 1990s, the Welsh population reached a low of 126 displaying males, and we were worried we would not be able to halt the loss. However, we've

teamed up with landowners and managers as well as Natural Resources Wales to stop that happening. In particular, for more than 15 years, we've been working with the Wynnstey Estate at Ruabon Moor, near Wrexham, to manage the land to support black grouse alongside the estate's management for game shooting. In spring 2014, there were at least 328 lekking males in Wales, of which 199 were at Ruabon Moor. It's a tremendous achievement for the landowner and his keeper, as well as conservation staff, that together we have halted the decline in black grouse. It's a great example of how we can work with a moorland game estate to support wildlife recovery.

### Land management for people and nature

We've also been working hard to save our special places in Wales, and in spring 2015 I was delighted to announce a landmark agreement that secures the future of our tenancy at the Lake Vyrnwy estate farm in Powys. It's a very important area. Not only does the lake provide drinking water, but the moor and blanket bog and the woodlands around it are important habitats for some very special wildlife and plants including hen harriers, merlins, curlews, the endemic Welsh clearwing moth and one of the UK's rarest ground beetles, *Trechus rivularis*. Moreover, the blanket bog acts as an important carbon "sink," vital in our efforts to take action on climate change. It's a special but fragile site that needs careful management. This agreement with Severn Trent Water, which owns the estate, alongside some initial funding from the Welsh Government's





Nature Fund, and entry into Glastir, means that we can now ensure that this beautiful landscape continues to be looked after for people and nature.

#### Greater protection for seabirds

Another really big success for us is the Welsh Government's decision to increase the protection afforded to areas of sea surrounding three internationally important sites for seabirds. These are: Grassholm, home to 10% of the world's population of northern gannets; Bardsey, which is important for a number of birds including Manx shearwaters, choughs and razorbills; and neighbouring islands Skomer and Skokholm which are home to half the world's population of Manx shearwaters. The legislation has come after a long period of advocacy and it's a big milestone in terms of recognising the importance of the sea surrounding our seabird nest sites. Previously only the breeding sites were protected, so this marks a big step forward. We've been working with partner conservation organisations on the Wales Environment Link Marine Working Group for almost a decade, so the news was a cause for great celebration. To mark the occasion, we commissioned local artist Theo Shields to create a sand art picture at Llanddwyn beach in North Wales. The next challenge is to ensure that we get protection for seabird feeding areas further out to sea.

#### Protecting the environment for future generations

I'd like to thank our supporters in Wales for our next achievement: influencing the content of the Well-being of Future Generations Bill passed by the Welsh Government. Together with our partners in the Sustainable Development Alliance, we've been campaigning to shape this Act of the National Assembly and ensure that it emphasises the importance of biodiversity and healthy, functioning ecosystems. After late Government amendments, we achieved the wording we wanted and we certainly had a lot of support from our members in doing so. This legislation will mean that all public bodies in Wales will have to consider sustainability in every decision they make. Government, by its very nature, is often focused on the short-term, but by passing this Act the National Assembly is recognising the challenge of looking towards the longer term. It's a really bold move forward and I congratulate the Welsh Government for taking it.

#### Creepy-crawlies in Cardiff

On a local scale, we've been carrying out some rewarding work to connect children to nature in Cardiff. Thanks to funding from the carrier bag levy from Tesco in Wales, and in partnership with the City of Cardiff Council, we've been visiting schools, searching together for the wildlife they have on their grounds, getting pupils involved in the Big Schools' Birdwatch and helping schools to give nature a home. Both teachers and children have loved it. We're particularly grateful to the large numbers of enthusiastic volunteers who helped deliver these sessions.

We've also been bringing nature to people wherever they are, popping up in Cardiff's parks and shopping centres with activities and hands-on nature experiences. Over Christmas we created a nature space in the city's St David's shopping centre with wooden trees beautifully made by one of our volunteers, and wheelbarrows full of leaf litter and creepy-crawlies. Children and parents had a whale of a time. Some of them had never picked up creatures like earwigs or slugs, so you can imagine the excitement. We hope these experiences will lead people to explore the parks themselves and look more closely at the nature around them. One of the things I've loved is the enthusiasm: it really seems to have struck a chord. I've also been overwhelmed by the support of the local businesses, especially St David's shopping centre.

#### For the birds

A final project I'd like to mention is an event held at RSPB Ynys-hir in autumn 2014. Called *For the birds*, this was a collaboration of artists led by Jony Easterby and supported by the Arts Council Wales and National Theatre of Wales. They transformed the reserve with a series of visual and sound installations and lit up a network of paths at night. The art explored the fragile nature of the natural world, and the event brought this home to the hundreds of visitors who experienced the show.

We are well aware of the fragility of our wild spaces and wildlife, and our efforts to save nature are of course all about this. We are facing so many environmental challenges, typified by the alarming declines in so many of our bird species in Wales, but looking back over the year I can see we've taken some important steps in the right direction. And our recent successes with lapwings and black grouse are rays of light that fill me with hope for the future.



Eleanor Beattie (fishimages.com)

Lake Vyrnwy is a beautiful place for both people and nature.





RSPB

**Katie-jo Luxton**  
Cyfarwyddwr, RSPB Cymru

## Cymru

Mae nifer o straeon o Gymru eleni am lwyddiannau o ran cadwraeth: o'r gornchwiglen i'r rugiar ddu, yn ogystal â newyddion gwych am Ardaloedd Gwarchoddedig Morol.

**R**ydw i'n falch o allu adrodd ar nifer o straeon yng Nghymru eleni, am ein hymdrechion i achub rhywogaethau mewn perygl, gwarchod ardaloedd arbennig, ac ysbrydoli'r gymuned ehangach i fwynhau byd natur.

### Adferiad y gornchwiglen

I mi, un o'r llwyddiannau mwyaf arwyddocaol yw ein gwaith i wrthdroi'r prinhad yn y nifer o gornchwiglod yng Nghymru. Pan oeddwn i'n blentyn, roedd y gornchwiglen yn un o'n hadar ffermdir mwyaf cyffredin. Bellach, mae llai na 400 o barau'n nythu yng Nghymru ac mae'n hi'n sefyllfa wirioneddol argyfyngus i'r rhywogaeth hon. Rydym wedi ystyried gwaith ymchwil ein tîm gwyddoniaeth cadwraeth a'u darganfyddiad nad yw'r adar yn debygol o lwyddo i fagu cywion mewn nythfa sy'n llai na 10 pâr. O ganlyniad, rydym wedi canolbwyntio ein hymdrechion ar reoli nifer o safleoedd yn benodol ar gyfer cynnal cornchwiglod. Y newyddion gwych yw bod y nifer o gywion sydd wedi llwyddo i adael y nyth ar bob un o'r safleoedd hyn wedi bod yn well na'r disgwyl. Mae hyn yn llwyddiant ysgubol ac rydym wedi dysgu sut i sicrhau adferiad yr aderyn eiconig hwn ar y tir a reolir gennym ni. Yr her yw sicrhau llwyddiant tebyg ledled cefn gwlad ehangach Cymru ac yn arbennig i wella Glastir – cynllun amaeth-amgylcheddol Llywodraeth Cymru – fel ei fod yn rhoi mwy o gefnogaeth i ffermwyr a sicrhau bod ein cefn gwlad ehangach yn fwy addas ar gyfer cornchwiglod a rhywogaethau eraill o fywyd gwyllt y ffermdir sy'n prinhaus.

### Gwrthdroi prinhad y rugiar ddu

Aderyn arall sy'n mwynhau adferiad yng Nghymru yw'r rugiar ddu. Yn yr 1990au, disgynnodd y boblogaeth yng Nghymru cyn ised â 126 o geiliogod yn arddangos eu hunain, ac roeddem yn bryderus na fyddem yn gallu arafu'r golled. Fodd bynnag, rydym yn cydweithio â thirfeddiannwyr a rheolwyr yn ogystal â Chyfoeth Naturiol Cymru i rwystro hynny rhag digwydd. Yn arbennig, ers dros 15 mlynedd, rydym wedi bod yn cydweithio â Stad Wynnstay ar Ros Rhiwabon, ger Wrecsam, i reoli'r tir ar gyfer cynnal y rugiar ddu ochr yn ochr â rheolaeth y stad ar gyfer saethu adar hela. Yng ngwanwyn 2014, roedd o leiaf 328 o geiliogod yn arddangos eu hunain yng Nghymru, 199 ohonyn nhw ar Ros Rhiwabon. Mae'r ffaith ein bod gyda'n gilydd wedi atal prinhad y rugiar ddu yn wych i'r tîr feddiannwr a'i gipar, yn ogystal â staff cadwraeth,. Dyma enghraifft wych o sut allwn gydweithio â stad adar hela rhostir i gefnogi adferiad bywyd gwyllt.

### Rheolaeth tir dros bobl a byd natur

Rydym hefyd wedi bod yn gweithio i achub ein manau arbennig yng Nghymru, ac yng ngwanwyn 2015 roeddwn yn falch iawn o gyhoeddi'r newyddion am gytundeb mentrus sy'n sicrhau dyfodol ein tenantiaeth ar fferm stad Llyn Llanwddyn ym Mhowys. Dyma ardal hynod o bwysig. Mae'r llyn yn darparu dŵr yfed ac mae'r rhostir, yr orgors a'r coedlannau o'i gwmpas yn gynefinoedd pwysig ar gyfer bywyd gwyllt a phlanhigion hynod o arbennig yn cynnwys y boda tinwyn, y cudyll bach, y gylfinir, gwyfyn cliradain brodorol Cymru ac un o chwilod daear prinnaf y DU, *Trechus rivularis*.



Gwarchodfa Ynys-hir wedi ei gweddnewid ar ôl gosod goleuadau a synau *Dros yr Adar* yno

Giles W Bennett



Yn ogystal â hyn, mae'r orgors yn gweithredu fel 'storfa' bwysig o garbon sy'n hanfodol yn ein hymdrechion i weithredu ar newid hinsawdd. Dyma safle arbennig ond bregus y mae angen rheolaeth ofalus arni. O ganlyniad i'r cytundeb hwn gyda Dŵr Hafren Trent, perchnogion y stad, ynghyd â rhywfaint o arian cychwynnol gan Gronfa Natur Llywodraeth Cymru a'r ffaith ein bod wedi ymuno â Glastir, gallwn bellach sicrhau y byddwn yn parhau i warchod y tirlun hyfryd hwn ar ran pobl a byd natur.

#### Gwell gwarchodaeth i adar môr

Llwyddiant aruthrol arall i ni yw penderfyniad Llywodraeth Cymru i gynyddu'r warchodaeth i ardaloedd o fôr sy'n amgylchynu tri safle adar môr sy'n rhyngwladol bwysig, sef Ynys Gwales, cartref i 10% o boblogaeth y byd o huganod; Ynys Enlli, sy'n bwysig oherwydd nifer o adar yn cynnwys adar drycin Manaw, brain coesgoch a llursod; ac ynysoedd Sir Benfro sef Sgomer a Sgogwm sy'n gartref i hanner poblogaeth y byd o adar drycin Manaw. Daw'r ddeddfwriaeth wedi cyfnod hir o hyrwyddo ac mae'n garreg filltir enfawr o ran cydnabod pwysigrwydd y môr sy'n amgylchynu safleoedd nythu ein hadar môr. Cyn hyn dim ond y safleoedd nythu oedd yn cael eu gwarchod, felly mae hyn yn nodi cam enfawr ymlaen. Rydym wedi bod yn cydweithio gyda chyrff cadwraeth sy'n bartneriaid ar Grŵp Gwaith Morol Cyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru ers bron i ddegawd, felly roedd y newyddion yn rhywbeth i'w ddathlu. I nodi'r achlysur, comisiynwyd yr arlunydd lleol, Theo Shields, i greu darlun celf tywod ar draeth Llanddwyn yng ngogledd Cymru. Yr her nesaf yw sicrhau ein bod yn sicrhau gwarchodaeth i ardaloedd bwydo adar môr ymhellach allan ar y môr.

#### Gwarchod yr amgylchedd ar gyfer cenedlaethau'r dyfodol

Hoffwn ddiolch i'n cefnogwyr yng Nghymru am ein cyflawniad nesaf: dylanwadu ar gynnwys Mesur Lles Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol a basiwyd gan Lywodraeth Cymru. Ynghyd â'n partneriaid yn y Gynghair Datblygu Gynaliadwy, rydym wedi bod yn ymgyrchu i lunio'r Mesur hwn gan y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol a sicrhau ei fod yn pwysleisio pwysigrwydd bioamrywiaeth ac ecosystemau iach a gweithredol. Yn dilyn newidiadau hwyr gan y Llywodraeth, llwyddwyd i sicrhau'r geiriad yr oeddem wedi ei ddymuno ac yn sicr, cafwyd llawer o gefnogaeth gan ein haelodau i wireddu hyn. Yn dilyn y ddeddfwriaeth hon bydd yn ofynnol i bob corff cyhoeddus yng Nghymru ystyried cynaladwyedd ym mhob penderfyniad a wneir ganddyn nhw. Yn aml, mae pob Llywodraeth yn ôl ei natur yn canolbwyntio ar y tymor byr, ond wrth basio'r Ddeddf hon mae Cynulliad Cymru'n cydnabod yr her o edrych tua'r tymor hir. Dyma gam gwirioneddol feiddgar ymlaen ac rydw i'n llongyfarch Llywodraeth Cymru am dderbyn yr her.

#### Mân drychfilod yng Nghaerdydd

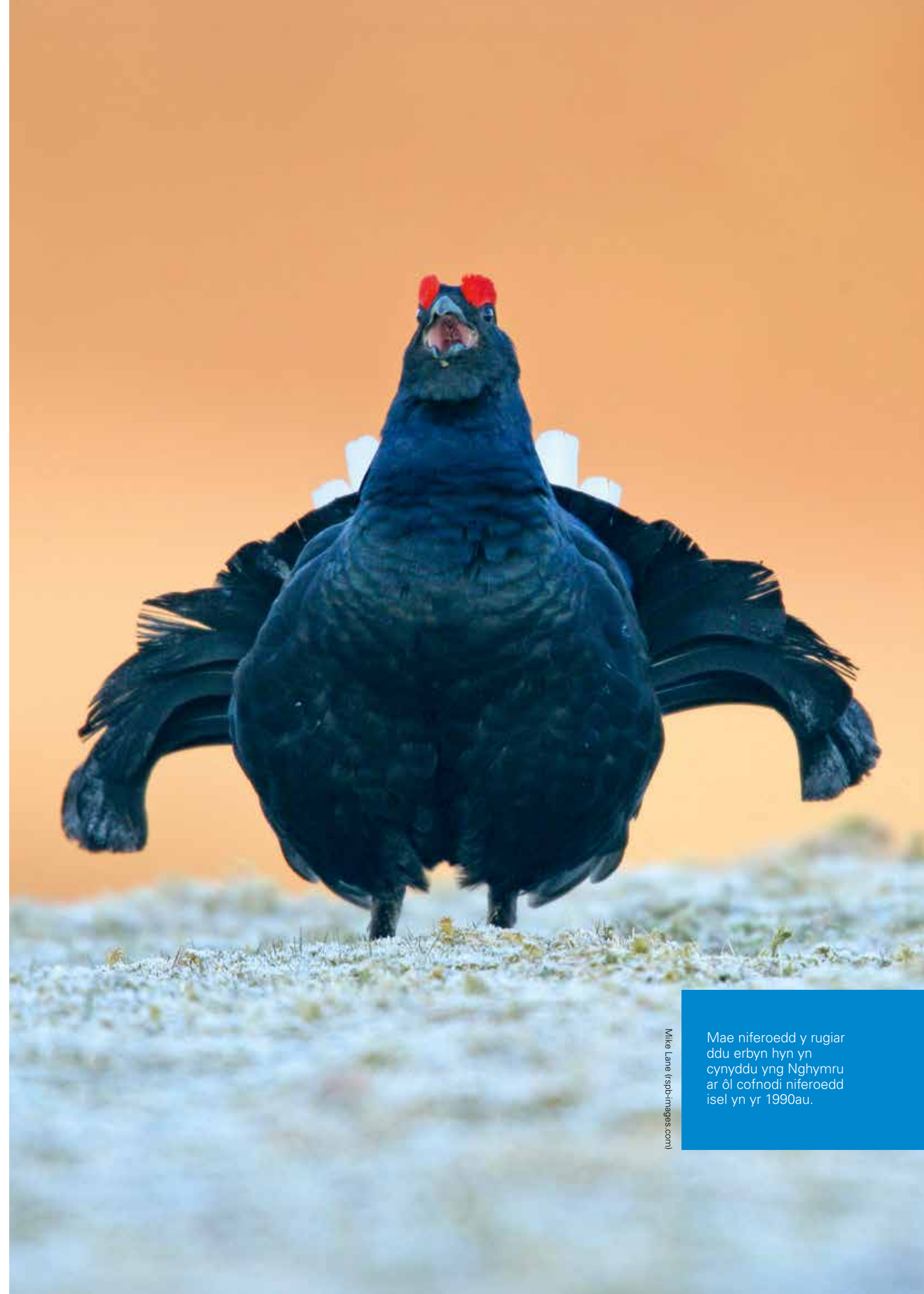
Ar raddfa leol, rydym wedi bod yn cyflawni gwaith gwerth chweil wrth gysylltu plant â byd natur yng Nghaerdydd. Diolch i arian o'r tâl am fagiau cludo Tesco yng Nghymru, ac mewn partneriaeth â Chyngor Dinas Caerdydd, rydym wedi ymweld ag ysgolion i chwilota gyda'n gilydd am y bywyd gwyllt ar dir eu hysgol, sicrhau rhan disgyblion yn arolwg Gwyllo Adar yr Ardd a helpu ysgolion i roi cartref i fyd natur. Mae'r athrawon a'r plant wedi bod wrth eu bodd. Rydym yn arbennig o ddiolchgar i'r nifer fawr o wirfoddolwyr brwdfrydig sydd wedi helpu i gynnal y sesiynau hyn.

Rydym hefyd wedi bod yn dod â byd natur i bobl ym mhle bynnag y maen nhw, gan ymweld â pharciau a chanolfannau siopa Caerdydd gyda gweithgareddau a phrofiadau ymarferol o fyd natur. Dros gyfnod y Nadolig crëwyd gofod byd natur yng nghanolfan siopa Dewi Sant y ddinas a lluniwyd coed hardd o bren gan un o'n gwirfoddolwyr, yn ogystal â whilberau'n llawn o wasarn dail a mân drychfilod. Cafodd plant a rhieni lawer o hwyl. Nid oedd rhai ohonyn nhw erioed wedi dal creaduriaid fel pryfed clust neu wliothod o'r blaen, felly gallwch ddychmygu'r cyffro. Gobeithio y bydd y profiadau hyn yn arwain pobl i archwilio'r parciau eu hunain ac edrych yn fwy manwl ar fyd natur o'u cwmpas. Un o'r pethau sydd wedi fy nharo i yw'r brwdfrydedd: mae pawb wedi bod wrth eu bodd. Rydw i hefyd wedi fy synnu gan gefnogaeth busnesau lleol, yn enwedig canolfan siopa Dewi Sant.

#### Dros yr adar

Project olaf yr hoffwn sôn amdano yw digwyddiad a gynhaliwyd yn RSPB Ynys-hir yn hydref 2014 o'r enw *Dros yr Adar*. Cydweithrediad gan artistiaid a arweiniwyd gan Jony Easterby oedd hwn, ac fe'i cefnogwyd gan Gyngor Celfyddydau Cymru a Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru. Cafodd y warchodfa ei gweddnewid gyda chyfres o osodiadau gweledol a sain a oleuai rwydwaith o lwybrau yn y nos. Roedd y gwaith celf yn archwilio natur fregus y byd naturiol, a thrwy gyfrwng y digwyddiad hwn cafwyd y cannoedd o ymwelwyr brofiad unigryw.

Rydym yn ymwybodol iawn o ba mor fregus yw ein gofod a'n bywyd gwyllt, ac wrth gwrs rydym yn canolbwyntio ein hymdrechion ar achub byd natur. Rydym yn wynebu cymaint o heriau amgylcheddol, megis y prinhad dychrynlyd yn nifer cymaint o'n rhywogaethau o adar yng Nghymru, ond wrth edrych yn ôl dros y flwyddyn gallaf weld ein bod wedi cymryd camau pwysig i'r cyfeiriad iawn. Mae ein llwyddiannau diweddar gyda'r gornchwiglen a'r rugiar ddu yn fy llenwi â gobaith ar gyfer y dyfodol.



Mike Lane (rspb-images.com)

Mae niferoedd y rugiar ddu erbyn hyn yn cynyddu yng Nghymru ar ôl cofnodi niferoedd isel yn yr 1990au.





Environment Agency/NRW

**Joanne Sherwood**  
Director, RSPB Northern Ireland

## Northern Ireland

We've had a fantastic year saving nature in Northern Ireland and I am determined that we will achieve even more in the future, despite the challenges ahead.

I'm writing this from possibly the best office in Northern Ireland – Belfast's Window on Wildlife, our nature reserve on the edge of Belfast Lough. This is a special place where business and nature co-exist and it can't help but be rooted in the natural, industrial and maritime heritage of Belfast.

We're delighted to have revamped the reserve over the last year, so it is now even better for people and wildlife.

As well as extending the visitor centre, we've added a sand martin bank, swift tower, installed two new hides (made from old shipping containers) and there's a new community and meeting room.

Our friendly volunteers make sure every visitor has a great time at the reserve. No wonder everyone who walks through the door says "WOW!"

### Difficult meetings; fantastic backdrop

When it was announced at the end of 2014 that there would be no funding for the environment in 2015–16, nature lovers were shaken to their core. How would Northern Ireland protect its critical habitats and species now and in the future? We didn't really know if we – or others – were going to have money to carry out our vital conservation work, now or in the future.

But we joined forces with other environmental organisations to send a strong message to the Assembly about what we can achieve for nature and people. For every pound of Government money, we can unlock between four and seven pounds of additional funding, protecting wildlife, providing employment and connecting people with nature.

The discussions were difficult and we campaigned hard to influence change. I recall one challenging meeting at Belfast's Window on Wildlife and like to think that the backdrop of nature's home, and those enjoying it, reminded decision-makers of the important role that nature plays in all our lives.

As a result, some limited money was made available for grants during 2015–2016, but this is just a one-year sticking plaster. Without longer-term sustainable funding we are likely to repeat the same conversation in future years, so we're now focusing on how to achieve long-term sustainable funding.

### Teaming up for nature

In the last year, I couldn't be more proud of the way my colleagues rose to the challenge of reduced funding and increasing pressures on our wildlife. Our innovative Pledge for Nature saw ten organisations sign up to give nature a home. These organisations, which include housing providers, health trusts and construction companies, have pledged to work with us to accommodate nature wherever and whenever possible. We hope they will become shining examples of how, with a little thought and sound forward planning, nature can be given a home easily, and at low cost.

### HELP on the horizon

You could be forgiven for thinking we've only worked in the urban environment this year – not so! One of the biggest achievements has been the results of the Halting Environmental Loss Project (HELP), which works to improve habitats for priority species.

In 2015, we counted over 300 spikes of the rare Irish ladies tresses orchid at Lough Beg National Nature Reserve.

Bob Gibbons / Photoshot





Steve Round (rspb-images.com)

Alongside work on our reserves, more than 190 farmers created and managed habitat, resulting in fantastic work for some key species. Breeding pairs of lapwings, snipe and redshanks increased in HELP areas by 67% between 2011 and 2014, bucking the general trend of declines since 1985. These farmers are incredibly modest about their achievements ("It's nothing – just a bit of rush cutting", they can be heard saying), but the results speak for themselves. On one farm in Glenwherry, imagine the delight of a grandfather on hearing the evocative, bubbling call of a curlew again, years after he thought they had disappeared. That's something to be proud of, and a legacy to pass on to his grandchild.

#### Wildlife successes

In 2015, we counted over 300 spikes of the rare Irish ladies tresses orchid at Lough Beg National Nature Reserve, that we help to manage. For the first time ever, there were over 100 spikes at our Portmore Lough nature reserve in County Antrim. Such is the rarity of this beautiful plant, and others such as pennyroyal, that people travelled from England to join our popular orchid walks.

The future for our marine wildlife is looking brighter too, as we've been part of the Northern Ireland Marine Task Force, working to ensure the adequate implementation of Marine Conservation Zones. After much campaigning, including from our young campaigners group "Northern Lights", we were pleased that black guillemots were included as a feature in the proposed zone around Rathlin Island.

#### Inspiring people

Our young campaigners remind us of the importance of inspiring future conservationists. Last year, we connected more than 16,000 young people with nature and showed the Education Minister the value of outdoor learning when he visited the RSPB's environmental education programme at

the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise Greenmount Campus. He and his senior officials saw how children were really stimulated with the outdoor learning environment, demonstrating the important value of connecting young people with nature.

On one of the coldest August nights on record, I joined in the RSPB's Big Wild Sleepout with my six-year-old son Finn, camping in the grounds of the Ulster American Folk Park. Not even the freezing conditions could dampen the excitement and enthusiasm of young and old alike, as they experienced nature through bat walks, moth hunts, bushcraft and storytelling – camping out in nature's home is truly magical.

Along with over 22,000 people in Northern Ireland – the highest number ever – we took part in the annual Big Garden and Big Schools' Birdwatch.

#### Looking ahead

Without the support of our members, dedicated volunteers and partners, we couldn't achieve half as much, so I would like to thank you for your tremendous support and for your resounding mandate that we should keep striving to save nature.

The political and financial situation in Northern Ireland is like the view from Belfast's Window on Wildlife: ever-changing. We have an election ahead and a reduction in the number of Government departments. With the environment appearing to drop ever lower on the political priority list, it would be easy to become despondent.

But the evidence is that the work we do saves wildlife, and we will continue to do all we can to give nature a home in Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man. Just like that farmer in Glenwherry, we want everyone to enjoy nature now, but also to leave this vital legacy in good shape for our children and grandchildren.



Nigel Blake (rspb-images.com)

Thanks to the efforts of more than 190 farmers, lapwings have increased by 67% between 2011 and 2014.





**Graeme Wallace**  
Treasurer

## From the treasurer

In my report last year, the two key challenges I highlighted were putting money to work in conservation and the need to attract new audiences so we can increase our conservation work. This year we've made good progress on both fronts.

The investment we continue to make in growing support for our work meant another strong year for income which increased by 5% to £132.8m (£99m net). All our major income sources were higher than last year with the biggest increase coming from membership income, up 8% to £45.6m. This highlights our success in attracting new supporters while retaining existing loyal members. I'm pleased to report a new record high of 1.16 million members.

With this extra income, we increased charitable spend by £4.6m to £98.8m, including investment in land acquisition and visitor facilities. The preceding pages highlight the conservation stories behind this spend.

We ended the year with a small surplus. This is good news but we recognise some elements, such as grants, cannot be relied upon to continue at the same level so it is important to continue to invest in building support and seek efficiencies in all we do.

Our free financial reserves represent nine weeks' expenditure. Council is satisfied they remain sufficient to support our medium-term plans. In common with many businesses across the UK, continuing declines in long-term interest rates led to a further increase in our reported pension deficit. A reversal of this trend would lead to a corresponding improvement in the deficit. However, we will continue our programme of reducing the long-term cost and risk of pension provision.

With increased support we've done even more to save nature. Thank you for helping to make this happen.

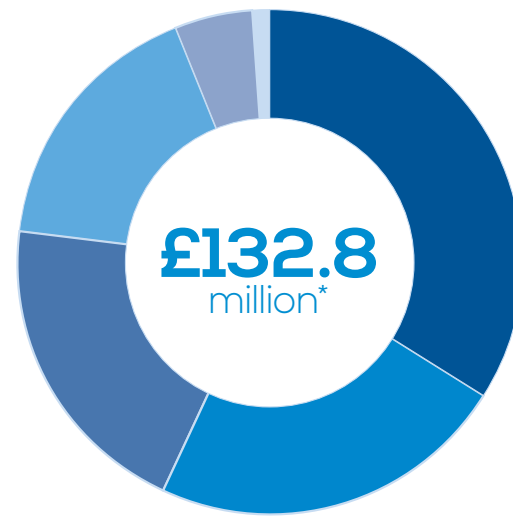
With the increased support this year, particularly from families, we've done even more to save nature.

Nick Upton (psbimages.com)

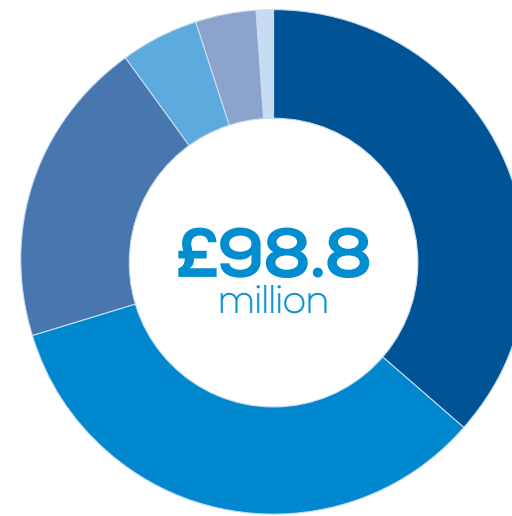


# Income and spend

## Total income



## Total spend



\*Net income is £99 million. Cost of generating income is £33.8 million.

● Membership subscriptions and donations	34%	● Research, policy and advisory	37%
● Legacies	23%	● Managing RSPB nature reserves	34%
● Grants, corporate and trusts	20%	● Education and communication	20%
● Commercial trading	17%	● Membership services and enquiries	5%
● Land rents, farming and advisory services	5%	● Acquisition of nature reserves and operating assets	4%
● Financial income – profit on sale of fixed assets and interest	1%	● Governance	<1%

## Where your donation goes

We spend 90% of our net income on conservation, public education and advocacy.

## Our fundraising

We raise, on average, £4 from every £1 we spend across our range of fundraising activities.



### OPERATING STATEMENT for the year ended 31 March 2015

	2015 £m	2014 £m
<b>Income</b>		
Membership subscriptions and donations	45.6	42.4
Grants, corporates and trusts	26.7	25.4
Legacies	30.6	30.4
Commercial trading	21.8	21.3
Land rents, farming and advisory	7.1	7.0
Financial income – profit on sale of fixed assets and interest	1.0	0.5

Total income **132.8** 127.0

### Cost of generating income

Cost of goods for resale	13.1	12.9
Other cost of generating income	20.7	20.9

Total cost of generating income **33.8** 33.8

**Net income available for charitable purposes 99.0 93.2**

### Expenditure on charitable purposes

Acquisition of nature reserves and operating assets	4.4	1.2
Managing RSPB nature reserves	33.5	32.6
Research, policy and advisory	36.8	36.4
Education and communication	19.2	19.4
Membership services and enquiries	4.4	4.0
Governance	0.5	0.6

**Total expenditure on charitable activities 98.8 94.2**

Net operating income / (expenditure) **0.2** (1.0)

### Other movements

Investment assets	2.1	1.2
Pension scheme	(2.5)	(2.0)
Stock, debtors and creditors	(2.3)	3.6

Total other movements **(2.7)** 2.8

**Movement in cash and investments (2.5) 1.8**

### STATEMENT OF NET ASSETS

as at 31 March 2015	2015 £m	2014 £m
Nature reserves	134.4	129.7
Operating assets	4.1	4.3
Cash and investments	41.1	43.6
Stock, debtors and creditors	4.9	2.6
Pension liability	(86.5)	(62.4)

Net assets **98.0** 117.8

### FINANCIAL RESERVES

as at 31 March 2015	2015 £m	2014 £m
Available financial reserves at the start of the period	46.2	48.0
Net operating income / (expenditure)	0.2	(1.0)
Movement in investment assets and pension scheme	(0.4)	(0.8)
Available financial reserves for future activities	46.0	46.2
Held for specific purposes	(31.3)	(32.2)

**Free financial reserves 14.7 14.0**

Representing future expenditure cover of **9 weeks** 9 weeks

### INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S STATEMENT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

We have examined the summarised financial statements set out on this page.

### Respective responsibilities of trustees and auditor

You are responsible as trustees for the preparation of the summary financial statements. We have agreed to report to you our opinion on the summarised statements' consistency with the full financial statements.

**Basis of opinion** We have carried out the procedures we consider necessary to ascertain whether the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements from which they have been prepared.

**Opinion** In our opinion, the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2015.

**Crowe Clark Whitehill LLP** Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors, St Bride's House, 10 Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8EH, UK

THE FULL AUDITED ACCOUNTS were authorised for issue on 30 June 2015 and, together with the Annual Report, have been submitted to the Charity Commission.

The opinion of the auditor was unqualified. These summarised accounts may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. For further information, the full accounts, the auditor's report on those accounts and the Trustees' Annual Report should be consulted. Copies can be obtained, free of charge, from the Director of Finance, The RSPB, UK Headquarters, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

*Steve Ormerod*

**Professor Steve Ormerod**,  
Chairman, RSPB Council

Jan Savick (rspb-images.com)



### Members and supporters

The support and loyalty of our members is critical to the success and achievements of the RSPB. Meeting the rigorous conservation targets that we set would not be possible without the enormous contributions that members make. Members help in many ways, all of them equally important, including: financially, through volunteering, by supporting RSPB campaigns, and by helping to deliver RSPB projects on the ground through local groups. We would also like to thank all of the supporters who contribute generously through in memoriam, raffles, lotteries, payroll giving, regular gifts, appeals and other forms of support.

### Community groups

RSPB local groups, RSPB Wildlife Explorer groups and RSPB Phoenix groups worked unstintingly over the year. Local groups provide a great focus for us in local communities, involve many people in our work, and raised over £400,000 for RSPB conservation projects.

### Volunteers

The RSPB enjoyed the support of more than 13,500 volunteers last year, giving the RSPB a gift of time of 1,004,307 hours. This is equivalent to an extra 587 full-time staff working for nature conservation.

These volunteers helped with virtually every aspect of the RSPB's work, and we cannot thank them enough for their generous support. Additionally, 585,000 people gave an hour of their time to participate in the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch.

### Legacies

Legacies income makes a significant impact on the conservation work we carry out every year. Whilst it is impossible to thank every single one of our generous benefactors here, we would like to mention the following:

- Mr John Harding Atherton
- Mrs Vera Emily Naomi Jenkins
- Miss Betty Vivienne Langford
- Mrs Jean Levett
- Mrs Marjorie Frances Lewington
- Mrs Kathleen McDowell McKinlay
- Mr Roy Lucien Perrin
- Mr John Michael Randall
- Mr Norman Saddler
- Mrs Iris Spink
- Mr Norman Claude Spink
- Mr Malcolm Philipson Towler
- Mr Anthony Richard Zambra

### Heritage Lottery Fund

The Heritage Lottery Fund has provided essential support for RSPB projects to restore our natural heritage and bring nature into people's everyday lives. The RSPB is indebted to the Heritage Lottery Fund for their continued support for our work.

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

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

- African Bird Club
- Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)
- Malcolm Appleby
- Arun and Rother Rivers Trust
- A J H Ashby Will Trust
- Geoff Ball
- The Banister Charitable Trust
- Basel Zoo
- Gordon and Ena Baxter Foundation
- Linna Edith Bentley Discretionary Trust
- BirdLife International
- BirdLife Switzerland
- British Birdwatching Fair
- British Trust for Ornithology
- Cambridge Conservation Initiative (CCI)
- Mark Constantine and The Sound Approach
- Mr Ronald Day Discretionary Trust
- Elizabeth Desmond
- Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund
- The Pamela Edmundson Connolly Charitable Trust
- John Ellerman Foundation
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- Farallon Islands Foundation
- Hilda Farr Charitable Trust
- John Fletcher
- Mrs Marjorie Galen Discretionary Trust
- The Gannochy Trust
- Gillman Charitable Trusts
- David and Sarah Gordon
- Patrick Goss
- Mr and Mrs A E R Goulty's Charity Trust
- The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
- Mr R E Hale
- Joachim Hammar
- The Hasluck Charitable Trust
- International Eco Fund
- International Seafood Sustainability Foundation
- Dr A Von Känel
- Henry Kenner and Deidre Boyle
- Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust
- The A G Leventis Foundation
- Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens/Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association
- The MacRobert Trust
- The Elizabeth C F McGregor-Dziniak Charitable Trust for Animals
- David Milne QC
- Moorcroft Pottery
- Sir Douglas Myers CBE
- National Birds of Prey Trust
- The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- The Nature Trust (Sandy) Ltd
- Mrs Margaret Jane Niven Discretionary Trust
- Northwick Trust
- Oceans 5
- Susan Orr
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Friends of Pagharn Harbour
- The Peacock Trust

- Per Underland
- The Pew Charitable Trust
- Pittsburgh Zoo
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- Save Our Species (SOS)
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- John Young Charitable Settlement
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We are grateful for funding support from the following organisations through the Landfill Communities Fund:

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- Argyll and Bute Council
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- Caird Bardon Community Programme
- Caird Peckfield Community Fund
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- Groundwork Northern Ireland
- Highland Council
- Ibstock Cory Environmental Trust
- Impetus Environment Trust
- Lafarge Tarmac Ltd
- Lancashire Environmental Fund
- SITA Trust
- Solway Heritage and Shanks Waste Solutions
- Teesside Environmental Trust
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- Veolia North Thames Trust
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### Business supporters

The RSPB enjoys successful partnerships with business supporters to our mutual benefit. We would particularly like to acknowledge the following:

- Abel & Cole
- Abercrombie & Kent
- Ardmore Whisky
- Ashridge Nurseries
- Barratt Developments plc
- Blacks
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- The Caravan Club
- CEMEX UK Ltd
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- Fulham Heating Merchants Ltd
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- HSBC Water Programme
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- Paramo Nikwax Ltd
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- South West Water Ltd
- SSE Generation Ltd
- TAQA
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- Defra – Darwin Initiative
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- ERDF – INTERREG IVA administered by the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB)
- ERDF – INTERREG IVA Halting Environmental Loss Project 2009–2014
- ERDF – INTERREG IVA France (Channel) England Cooperation Programme 2007–2013
- ERDF – INTERREG IVB Atlantic Area Transnational Programme 2007–2013
- ERDF – INTERREG IVB North West Europe Transnational Programme 2007–2013
- European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)
- European Commission - BEST
- European Commission – DG Environment
- European Commission – DG Justice
- European Commission – Erasmus+
- European Commission – LIFE+
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- European Environment Agency
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- Natural England
- Natural England – Action for Birds in England partnership
- Natural England – Nature Improvement Areas
- Natural Environment Research Council
- Natural Resources Wales Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
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- Northern Ireland Environment Link
- Northern Ireland Tourist Board
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- Welsh Government – Glastir
- Welsh Government – The Nature Fund
- Welsh Government – The Resilient Ecosystems Fund
- Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority



Eleanor Bennett (rspb-images.com)

## Looking forward

When we launched the Giving Nature a Home campaign in 2013, we wanted to show people that no matter how much outdoor space they had, there was something they could do to give nature a home where they live.

### Going further than gardens

Giving Nature a Home was a huge success, with thousands of people taking steps to give nature a home, be it leaving a section of their gardens to grow wild, or making mini garden ponds. But by working together, we could do so much more. One person can make a difference in their own back garden, but if neighbours worked together, they could turn the whole street into a haven for wildlife. We hope people will see their gardens as more than a personal oasis, but part of a big interconnected home for nature.

### Defend the Nature Directives

Giving nature a home isn't just a challenge we're putting to ordinary people at home – we need to help decision makers and politicians to ensure that nature has places where it can thrive in the wider landscape. European leaders are considering weakening the laws (known as the Nature Directives) that protect our most vulnerable wildlife and the homes it depends on. This could be catastrophic for wildlife, so we need to get behind nature, shout loudly, and fight to keep these laws as they are.

We know that millions of you all care about nature. Together, we can convince politicians to leave these laws as they are, and to focus on giving nature a home in the UK and Europe by putting them properly into practice.

For more details, visit our page: [rspb.org.uk/defendnature](https://rspb.org.uk/defendnature)



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

The RSPB is a member of BirdLife International, a partnership of nature conservation organisations working to give nature a home around the world.

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