

# Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Annual Report 2014

## Summary for Members



Warwickshire



The Coventry Canal within the Tame Valley © Steven Cheshire (WWT) 2015

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust exists to achieve our vision of an environment rich in wildlife for everyone in Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull. We were established in 1970 to protect our local natural heritage and encourage people to engage, enjoy and get involved with the natural environment.

# Achievements and Performance in 2014

## Nature Reserves

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust now has 64 nature reserves including four new Local Nature Reserves managed in partnership with North Warwickshire Borough Council. We needed more help than ever before in looking after them and fortunately 2014 saw another monumental effort put in by volunteers who donated more than 20,000 hours to caring for our nature reserves ensuring they are in the best condition possible for wildlife.

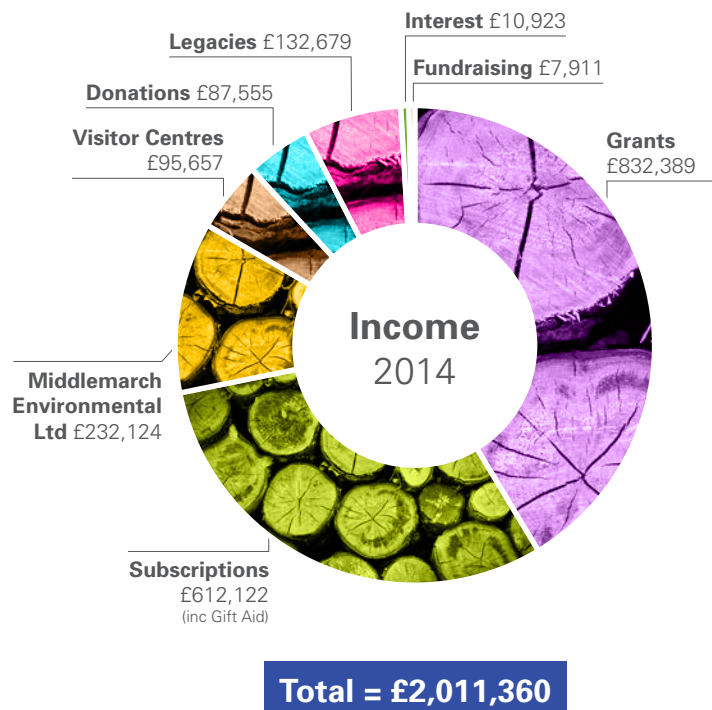
A combination of Nature Force, local work parties and corporate volunteering saw over 600 separate work party sessions delivered across Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull.

A unique aspect was the Coronation Meadows Project that allowed us to utilise wildflower rich hay from Draycote Meadow SSSI to enrich a newly acquired reserve in Dunchurch.

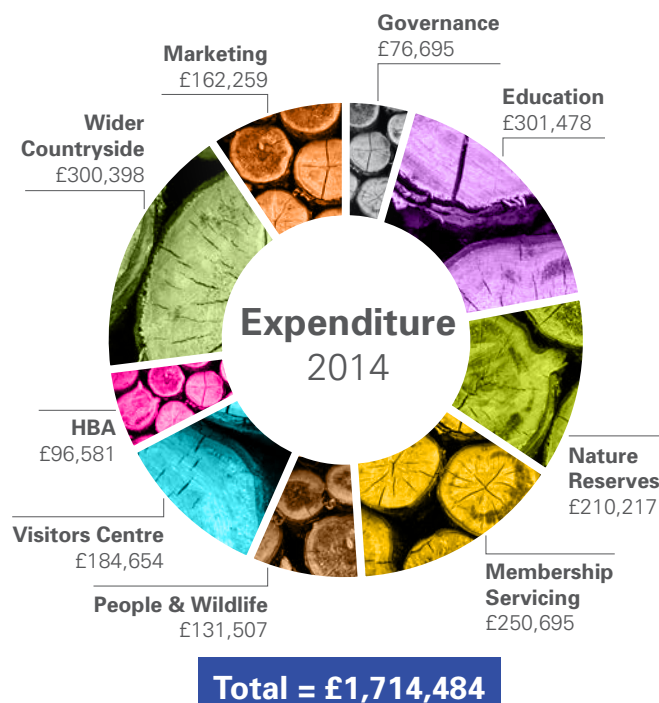
Elsewhere a new observation hide was installed at Brandon Marsh allowing visitors to prolong their stay and overlook the recently developed Newlands Phase III reedbed area.

We took part in the UK National Tree Seed Project organised by Kew Gardens Millennium Seed Bank where Warwickshire tree species seeds were collected across reserves to preserve seeds and safeguard species in the future against pest and diseases that may affect our indigenous trees.

## Finances



Charity only income per accounts £1,779,236  
MEL Gift Aid received £232,124



Charity only expenditure per accounts

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## Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership

In April this partnership, led by the Trust and supported by 17 organisations, was successful in their second and final stage application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £1.7 million. This enabled the beginning of a four year scheme at a total cost of £2.5 million and our launch featured on BBC Midlands Today. The governance of the partnership and Board was strengthened through wider recruitment. A team of six staff was appointed, employed across three partner organisations, and Hams Hall Environmental Centre was leased as their base. Also £79,000 of match funding was secured.

A project on the River Tame at Kingsbury Water Park restored the river bank to a natural state after ecological studies, soil sampling and designs were undertaken. We worked closely with Warwickshire County Council, Natural England, co-funded by the Environment Agency to deliver this project and help meet EU Water Framework Directive targets. Riverbanks were re-profiled to improve bank sides for wildlife and safety, gravels added to improve instream habitat, reedbed created in adjacent lake to reduce erosion, native wildflowers and trees planted, including the rare Black Poplar - a Local Biodiversity Action Plan species - and access improved with the creation of a new circular walk and footpath along the river.



Drayton Turret Bridge on the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal.  
© Kate Sugden (WWT) 2015.

## Princethorpe Woodlands

Our two year project funded by SITA was completed in 2014. The main project outcomes delivered by the Trust included woodland ride restoration and creation across the Princethorpe Woodlands area, introducing and maintaining coppicing with standards over 13 hectares, planting of 1.2 hectares at two sites. 90km of Princethorpe hedgerows were surveyed and 6.2 km restored. 120 volunteers were essential in achieving this. We engaged with 10 different landowners on restoration projects and held our first Princethorpe Woodland Open Day attended by 18 people to demonstrate woodland management practices. Landfill funding from Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action was secured allowing this work to continue, supporting surveys, mapping and creation of a management plan for Princethorpe Great Wood, liaison with an additional four landowners and further hedgerow surveys.

Both the SITA and WCAVA supported work was fundamental to informing a funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund which was approved in December. This will provide £117,000 to develop community engagement and expand the scope of the Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape and, critically, a staff post to develop a £1 million second round application to HLF in 2016.



Princethorpe Woodlands Discovery Day at Ryton Wood  
© Lee Griffiths (WWT) 2015.

## Planning

The planning team responded to eight Local Plan consultations, securing improvements to policies and planning for wildlife across the districts. We screened 236 planning applications for biodiversity issues, aided by the support of a small team of dedicated volunteers. We engaged with 21 major cases regarding development control applications, including the scheme for 3,000 houses at Lighthorne Heath where we helped to ensure that Lighthorne Quarry Local Wildlife Site would be retained as a nature reserve. Elsewhere, the pressure on Local Wildlife Sites to be used in development sites and for agriculture continued.

The Trust submitted a petition to the HS2 Hybrid Bill Select Committee requesting changes to lessen the impacts on biodiversity, particularly Local Wildlife Sites, and responded to two HS2 consultations.

Neighbourhood Plans are emerging across the county so we tracked the progress of each and provided advice wherever practical. New guidance leaflets were developed to help groups involved with Neighbourhood Planning.

The application in 2013 for a license to commercially extract gas resources in the Princethorpe Woodland area led the Trust to establish a policy position on Underground Coal Gasification published in 2014.

The team responded to 43 public enquiries in 2014. These included providing advice regarding protected species and answering concerns about local planning applications.

## Local Nature Partnership and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership

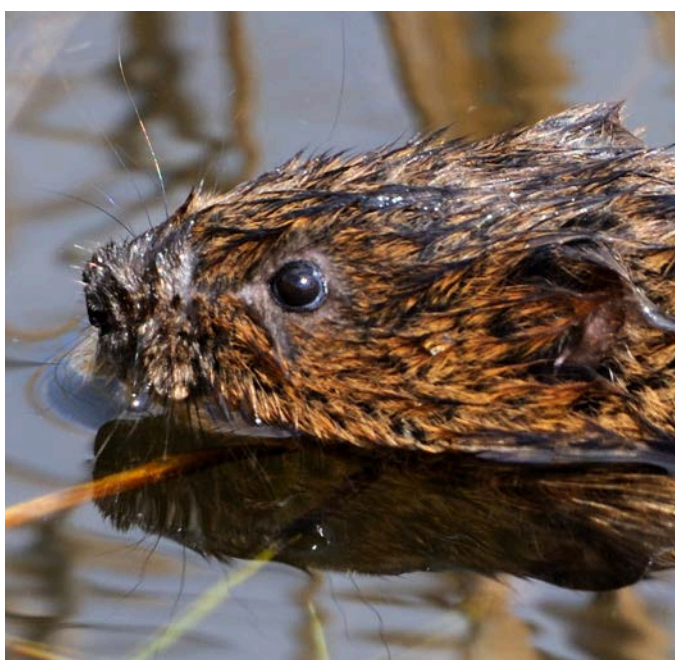
The Trust continued to support both these partnerships. Working with volunteers and partners the Trust has undertaken updates on 45 of the 52 Biodiversity Action Plans. The agreed actions are being used in funding applications by partners and has helped to secure resources for biodiversity across the county.

## Wetlands

We supported the Warwickshire Avon Catchment Partnership to hold two public meetings, in Coventry and Evesham, giving people the opportunity to present their views to decision makers and involve them in the River Basin Management Plan consultation. A summary report from this consultation served as the basis for the Warwickshire Avon Catchment Plan.

Specific wetland projects delivered by the Trust in 2014 included the restoration of a reed bed in Longford Nature Park. This was a partnership project with the Environment Agency and Coventry City Council to restore a silted reed-bed alongside the River Sowe to a design by our consultancy, Middlemarch Environmental Ltd. This was part of the regional Midland Urban Rivers Community Initiative (MURCI) Waters Project. Water quality on the River Sowe was improved and 2,400m<sup>2</sup> reed bed habitat was created working towards Water Framework Directive and Local Biodiversity Action Plan objectives providing the local community with an accessible natural feature.

Numerous surveys carried out between March and September showed progress in water vole recovery in Warwickshire, with an increase of 20 km in positive watercourses particularly the River Anker and Coventry Canal. These records strengthened the case for a larger water vole recovery project to be developed in 2015.



Water vole  
© Amy Lewis (WildNET) 2015.

## Habitat Biodiversity Audit

- Ecological Survey for Nuneaton and Bedworth and Green Belt Review for Coventry
- Number of designated Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) exceeds 500

Phase 1 habitat survey data now covers 190,340 hectares of Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull with 44% surveyed in the past five years and continues to inform the local districts' green infrastructure plans. The Warwickshire biodiversity offsetting pilot study, begun in 2013 using HBA data, has become the first scheme of its kind to make biodiversity offsetting a requirement in local development planning. The HBA partnership has continued to develop the ecological connectivity mapping in collaboration with York University creating a complete landscape connectivity model for the whole of Warwickshire, a tool which has informed our responses to proposals such as HS2.

At the end of 2014 a total of 511 Local Wildlife Sites had been designated in Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull covering 5,858 hectares. We surveyed 46 sites in 2014 and some of those subsequently designated as a LWS includes a traditional orchard established in 1850, oak woodland incorporating the civil war burial ground at Edge Hill, land managed by the Ministry of Defence at Kineton, Hartshill Hayes Country Park and North Cubbington Wood, one of several sites within the Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscapes project area.



Aerial photograph of Edge Hill  
© John Ball (WWT) 2015.

## Health and Well Being

- 90% of participants fitter and healthier through taking part in volunteer activities
- 3 community green spaces in North Solihull have been significantly improved
- Coppicing and holly removal in Yorkswood improves ecological diversity

This has been an expanding area of work for the Trust during 2014 as evidence mounts that fundamental aspects of the UK population's health and wellbeing are in decline.

In North Solihull, the Trust has been delivering a project, funded by the Borough's public health team, which aims to encourage people to take part in volunteer activities as a way to improve their health. In the first three months of the project four out of five of our volunteers had significantly improved their mental wellbeing, and ninety percent of participants said they felt fitter and healthier as a result of taking part. Green spaces in North Solihull have been improved, with the development of new three new wildlife gardens and woodland management taking place in Yorkswood.

## Training

- Four new training qualifications developed
- Nine trainees completed Wild Career Choice programme
- Two new partners offering an additional two placements.

The Wild Career Choice project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, entered its final year. We welcomed the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and Wyre Community Land Trust into the partnership so that a group of nine organisations across the West Midlands offered a one year training placement for people trying to make a career in conservation. During 2014 we also worked with the Open College Network to develop four new Level 1 and 2 qualifications in Environmental Conservation and Heritage.

## Volunteers

- More than 1,000 volunteers helped the Trust in 2014
- Donated time equivalent to an extra 20 full-time members of staff
- New handbooks for work party leaders

Volunteers are invaluable to the Trust's work -without them we would not be able to do half of the amazing work that is documented here! Volunteers bring new ideas, and unique skills and knowledge to the Trust and their commitment and belief in our work strengthens us as an organisation across all areas of the Trust's activity from reserve management to surveying and from administrative work to magazine delivery or leading school activities.

We now have over 1000 registered volunteers - more than ever before - who donated a magnificent 31,500 hours of their time in 2014.

## Youth Engagement

- Young people gave 835 hours to support the Trust's work
- First ever youth project delivered in Rugby
- A number of youth groups helped redevelop the education garden at Brandon Marsh

Work started this year on a youth project at Cock Robin Wood Local Nature reserve and workshops with young people from Playbox Theatre supported the creation of the Trust's first audio trail at Welcombe Hills and Clopton Park Nature Reserve.

At Brandon Marsh 24 young people on the National Citizenship Service summer programme came to learn about the work of the Trust, campaign and fundraise, and to take part in constructing a clay oven for running outdoor cooking workshops. Young people from V Squad of Voluntary Action Coventry painted a mural for the new education garden, and Avon Valley School completed a seven week outdoor learning programme for their John Muir Discover Award. The Prince's Trust undertook their two week team challenge there during which they restored part of the education area into an outdoor learning venue.

## Education

- A total number of 14,528 children took part in education activities
- 105 different school groups visited in 2014
- We delivered 544 parties, events and Nature Tot sessions across the year

2014 was a successful year of external funding where Coventry Public Health, BBC Children in Need, Tesco Charity Trust and the Four Winds Trust funded us to deliver sessions, trips and provide resources to children's centres in Coventry reaching many hundreds of families. Community First funded us to run after school session at Smith's Wood Community Primary. This was the most well attended after school club for the year with 357 children outside in their school grounds.

A busy schedule of curriculum based activities continued with the team delivering an array of exciting and engaging events and parties which use environmental themes and outdoor settings to captivate and inspire children in and about the natural world and our native wildlife.

## Community Work

- Series of talks reaching hundreds of people in rural communities
- Wide range of community events throughout the whole county
- UK's first dedicated hedgehog conservation area established

2014 saw the delivery of a year long programme of talks reaching 21 audiences consisting of 840 people in rural communities. We also delivered or participated in 175 community events during the year ranging from our popular in-house Wildlife Taster Sessions to the successful Oakley Wood Bioblitz attended by over 300 local people. A total of 221 species were identified by the public.

The past year was a particularly significant year for the Help for Hedgehogs campaign with the development of the Hedgehog Improvement Area conservation model. The Solihull HIA is the nation's first dedicated hedgehog conservation area which aims to empower local people to take action for the species, thus strengthening local hedgehog populations and encouraging longer-term habitat connectivity on a landscape scale.

## Visitor Centres

- 4% increase in visitors to Brandon Marsh
- 12% increase in income via the Brandon shop
- Parkrlidge visitor centre saw a 6% increase in sales income

2014 saw the redevelopment of the education garden at Brandon Marsh, offering a more inviting space for children to learn and play outside the classroom. This included the building of a new

stone wall as a joint venture between Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and Warwickshire Geological Conservation group. The wall is built from stone, typical of the Warwickshire area, and represents a cross section of Warwickshire's geology and tells a compelling story.

Visitor Centre numbers increased with a significant number of new people visiting both sites.

## Membership

Membership of the Trust grew by 2% in 2014 with 1,449 new memberships. At the end of the year 23,227 people were members of the Trust. Eight-eight percent of our members continued their support for the work of the Trust by maintaining their membership.

We had 22 business members. As well as providing income through subscriptions many of our business members also contributed to conservation activities on reserves through volunteering time as well as providing donations for materials. Businesses have been hugely supportive with donations and raffle prizes as well as sponsorship of school visits to Brandon Marsh.

## Fundraising

£12,198 was raised through the habitat conservation appeal, £5,000 of which has been used as match funding to lever a further £61,600 in grants, with other applications still being assessed. We continued to raise funds for the Badger Vaccination appeal through the adopt a badger scheme and donations and for Peregrine Watch.

The Help for Hedgehogs Campaign raised £45,097 in 2014 which includes a large grant from the British Hedgehog Preservation Society. Pin badges continue to raise both funds and awareness and additional income was raised through recycling schemes such as Stamps 'n' All and GiveaCar, raffles and donations.

## Communications

- Highest ever use of the Trust website
- Significant increases in social media use

Our members received three editions of Wild Warwickshire magazine with articles on a range of topics. Email bulletins go out monthly. The number of visits to our web site rose with a 38% increase in users compared to 2013 and a 22% increase in page views to 331,498 in 2014.

Social media continued to grow, with a 26% increase in Twitter followers and a 31% increase in Facebook page likes, both driving traffic to the web site. Building on the success of the youth biog, we launched a Trust biog in May which has had an average of 249 visits per month.

We had 15 traditional media appearances in 2014 primarily on BBC Coventry and Warwickshire radio but also including two appearances of BBC Midlands Today and one national appearance on BBC Breakfast, and coverage in local newspapers.

## Middlemarch Environmental Ltd

Our subsidiary ecological consultancy company, produced excellent results against an increasingly competitive market with a turnover of £3.5M (£3.1M, 2013), with profits similar to last year.

During 2014 we continued to grow our professional arboricultural services, increasing staff numbers and turnover. These activities complement the ecological services and we continue to integrate these services for a growing number of clients.

The company received reaccreditation to the British Safety Council's International Safety Award 2014 as well as retaining accreditation to 1509001, 15014001 and OHSAS18001 which reflects their continuing commitment to the Health and Safety and to quality and environmental management.

Development of regional offices with further presence in Southampton, London, Kent, Brighton, Stafford, Milton Keynes and Worcester will assist our growing client base across the UK.

## Legacies and in memorium gifts

The Trust is very grateful to the following people who remembered local wildlife and gave a lasting gift in their wills this year: Margaret Baldock - £1,000, Bill Davison - £1,000, Andrea Jones - £38,841, Joyce Lambourne - £500, Barry Lawley - £20,000, Jeremy Littleton - £2,000, Eric Pickett - £59,724, Mr Roe - £500, Kenneth Simmons - £7,374, Margaret Sprung - £300, Jean Stewart - £340, Martin & Isobel Thacker - £1,000 and Dorothy Yardley - £100.

## Business Members

Birmingham International Airport, Britannic Fire and Security Systems, Compton Verney, Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Coventry Golf Club, Ellisons, Hanson Building Products, Harris and Sheldon Group, Henley College, Jaguar Land Rover, Lafarge Tarmac Aggregates Ltd, Listers Volkswagen Coventry, McColm Cardew, Midrepro, Rugby Borough Council, Saint Gobain PAM UK, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Stratford Manor Hotel, Tomkins Construction, Warwick Print, Woodside Conference Centre and Xoserve Ltd.

## Grants

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust wish to acknowledge the following organisations for providing grants for projects: BBC Children in Need, Biffa Award, Birmingham Airport Community Fund, British Hedgehog Preservation Society, Community First, Coventry City Council, Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust, Environment Agency, Four Winds Trust, Galaxy Hot Chocolate Fund, George Cadbury Trust, Heritage Lottery Fund, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, People's Postcode Lottery, Rugby Borough Council, Severn Trent Water, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Public Health, Stratford upon Avon District Council, Tesco Charity Trust Community Award, The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust, The Ratcliff Foundation, The Rowlands Trust, The Saintbury Trust, Valley House, Warwick District Council, Warwickshire County Council, Warwickshire County Council Public Health, WCAVA and WREN.

## Support

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust wish to acknowledge the support of the following organisations: Belgrade Theatre, Brownsover Hall Hotel, Coventry City Football Club, Donna Aplin, Focus Optics, Go Ape, Hatton Adventure World, IBM, Irwins, Lockwoods, Lucy Hartley Gardens, Lush, Mercure Brandon Hall Hotel and Spa, National Grid, Oakes Farm Shop, Opticron, Orthotike, The Brook Farm Shop, The Establishment Bar and Grill, The MAD Museum, The Teddy Bear Shop, Vine House Farm, Waterstones, Wellesbourne and District Lions Club ...and the many businesses that have a pin badge box or collecting tin.

## Thank you

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust is your organisation, the natural home for all those who care about local wildlife, wild places, geology and the natural environment. Our work is important for the integrity of the natural world on our doorstep. The quality and health of our environment is also important for our own health and well-being and for the future of society, the economy, jobs and growth.

The Trust can achieve nothing without the support of members and the hard work and dedication of all of our volunteers and staff.

We would like to offer our warm thanks and sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to our success in 2014 and, most of all, for helping make Warwickshire a better place to live and work.

We can be justifiably proud of what we are achieving. Keep up the superb work in 2015 and thank you for being part of it!

*Thank You!*



Warwickshire

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A full version of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust's 2014 Annual Report is available on our website.

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

