



Cumbria
Wildlife Trust



Wildlife highlights

2023–24

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Our visual guide to restoring and connecting wildlife and wild places in 2023–24

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Cover image: Osytercatcher
Image: Chris Gomersall



About Cumbria Wildlife Trust

Cumbria Wildlife Trust cares passionately about wildlife and wild places. We're here to put wildlife back into our land and seascapes to make Cumbria a wilder county with more space for nature. We restore and connect wild places, work with nature to tackle the climate emergency and support people to take local action for wildlife.

Our skilled and dedicated staff work closely with volunteers, partners and thousands of supporters to create a wilder future for Cumbria.

We are part of a UK-wide grassroots movement made up of 46 individual Wildlife Trusts who all believe that we need nature and nature needs us.

Our top three priorities are:

1. Delivering nature-based solutions by playing a leading role in tackling the wildlife crisis and climate emergency on land and sea.
2. Helping connect more people with wildlife and their natural environment and making wildlife even more relevant and important in everyone's lives.
3. Raising our game to meet the scale of the challenges that lie ahead.



© Reuben Mahoney



Doing even more for Cumbrian wildlife

On behalf of the Trust's staff and volunteers, I'm proud and privileged to present this highlights report for 2023-24. The report summarises all of their hard work and gives a flavour of some of their amazing activities and many successes.

We've had an extremely busy and highly effective year - delivering our charitable aims for the wildlife, natural environment and people of Cumbria. It's great to stand back to see just how much we're doing for people and wildlife across Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness.

People are and always have been central in what we do – and people are vital in achieving our mission as a charity.

Thanks entirely to some extremely generous donations from several members and supporters, we've added several new sites to our network of nature reserves, for example, at Bowber Head and Foulshaw where we'll be protecting, restoring and improving wildlife habitats and public access.

We've been particularly grateful to all those who left a legacy for the conservation and restoration of wildlife across Cumbria this year. The Trust dedicates these generous and profound gifts to significant activities like acquisitions and/or long-lasting programmes that have long-term, major impacts according to the memory

and wishes of donors. Thank you to all of those individuals and their families who have made such a difference in this way, and to all of those considering giving a legacy in future.

We care passionately about our nature reserves. Thanks to the combined volunteer and staff 'team' effort, the network is in good condition although keeping them, in tip-top shape is a continuous task for everyone concerned. I would like to thank the large number of dedicated volunteers who support us in caring for and constantly improving the condition of the sites in our care.

Thanks to external funding, we've also worked across more than 3,000 hectares of other people's land beyond our nature reserves. Here our expert teams have restored peatlands, wildflower-rich grasslands, woodlands, hedges, wetlands and created ponds. This helps to bring wildlife and habitats back where it has been lost in the wider landscape.

We've also been excited about progress towards the 'Irish Sea Network'; bringing together the six nations which surround the Irish Sea for better marine conservation. This year, we celebrated the designation of Allonby Bay as a Highly Protected Marine Area by the Government. Its designation is a tribute to years of dedicated hard work by our Cumbria-based North-West Marine



Team – with the vital backing of many thousands of members and supporters who joined the 'campaign' for greater marine protection over the last decade.

Membership income and other supporter donations are vital to our work. This is the core resource that enables us to bring in additional external funding to do more. This year, for every £1 donated by members and supporters, the Trust has been able to spend around £6 to £7 of additional funding to deliver our charitable purposes and activities.

So thanks to your generosity, we've been able to do even more for Cumbrian wildlife. We're extremely grateful for these donations and humbled by your support.

Our members are Cumbria Wildlife Trust and none of our work would be possible without your commitment to protecting and caring for Cumbria's wildlife and 'wild' places. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to everyone involved for their superb hard work, support and commitment to the 'cause' of wildlife in 2023/24.

Thank you so much.

Stephen Trotter
CEO. Cumbria Wildlife Trust



Our visual guide to restoring and connecting wildlife and wild places in 2023–24

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42

nature reserves
for people to visit



3,730

hectares managed
for wildlife

Making space for nature

Nature and climate are emotive topics that are growing in significance as the years pass by. We are all aware of the growing importance of protecting nature, be that a pocket of wildflowers on a roadside verge or protecting a vulnerable landscape.

Our work this year has helped to protect nature wherever it is found, from creating bee-lines for pollinators, restoring areas of blanket bog, surveying for the future restoration of sea grass beds and much more in an effort to make Cumbria a more nature friendly county.

Connecting nature reserves

Through our network of nature reserves across the county, we can make necessary changes to improve their suitability to be a stronghold for nature. The huge variety of our nature reserves; from farmland, woodland, coast and bog mean that we can create thriving habitats where nature comes first.



Nature reserve highlights



April 2023

**Smardale
Nature Reserve**

Hawthorn hedges laid by staff, increasing biodiversity on site.



June 2023

**Foulshaw Moss
Nature Reserve**

Collecting sundews for propagation to plant at Foulshaw Moss and Meathop Moss nature Reserves.



August 2023

**Foulshaw Moss
Nature Reserve**

The search for the rare rosey marsh moth with Guy Broome began with regular moth trapping mornings.

Photo: Guy Broome

May 2023

**Foulshaw Moss
Nature Reserve**

Our Foulshaw ospreys White YW and Blue 35 hatched three chicks. It is now the 10th year breeding at Foulshaw Moss.



July 2023

**Drumburgh Moss
Nature Reserve**

Continuing the introduction of white-faced darters. This very rare dragonfly was found to be breeding in new ponds, indicating the population is becoming self-sustaining.



September 2023

Staveley Woodlands

Young rangers from Sandgate school improved a public footpath; removing overgrown vegetation to allow access to the woodland.



Nature reserve highlights



October 2023

Storm Babbler struck Cumbria, damaging many trees at our nature reserves.



December 2023

Smardale Gill Nature Reserve

Ash dieback safety works begins to fell diseased trees.



February 2024

South Walney Nature Reserve

A new hide is built by Timberworks.

November 2023

Staveley Woodlands Nature Reserve

Members of the Cumbria Bryophytes group found a new liverwort (*Ptilidium pulcherrimum*) not previously thought to be in this part of Cumbria.

Photo: Gary Lawrence



January 2024

Orton Moss Nature Reserve

Ongoing felling of self-sown Scots pine on areas of deep peat to allow specialist invertebrates that are locally extinct to return.



March 2024

Nichols Moss Nature Reserve

Plug planting of sphagnum moss on newly restored peatland bog following a land purchase and major reprofiling which expanded our reserve.



A

Looking after beach nesting birds

Many species predate and disturb beach-nesting bird eggs, chicks and adults. This results in low productivity and certain species declining, such as little tern, oystercatcher and all six main gull species. Due to this, anti-predator measures are needed.

Two wardens, one on Foulney Island and one on South Walney Island have been monitoring beach nesting birds during the breeding season. The wardens monitor target species visually, as well as using trail cameras, to monitor bird colonies throughout the day and night. They also maintain anti-predator fences, such as the hybrid fence, which is a mix of mesh and electric wire, that protects the mixed gull colony on South Walney Nature Reserve.

In 2024 a permanent hybrid electric fence was erected on Foulney Island Nature Reserve to protect beach-nesting birds from predators such as foxes and hedgehogs. This fence has successfully kept ground predators from the area, as well as deterring people from walking too closely to the well-camouflaged eggs, avoiding casualties such as eggs being accidentally stepped on and destroyed.

Several temporary 12-strand fences have been erected on both nature reserves during the nesting season. These fences are erected, maintained and packed away by the wardens. The use of these fences has aided Arctic tern nesting success, with eight Arctic tern chicks and two little tern chicks fledging from the fenced areas in 2023.

But that is not all, going forward, a new anti-predator fence will be erected on South Walney Nature Reserve to protect the little tern colony, which has grown significantly since the birds began to breed successfully at the nature reserve in the 2018 season. A section of the lagoons will be fenced in the 2025 season to reduce fox, badger and otter predation. Species such as black-headed gull and eider duck breed here and will benefit from protection.



Oystercatcher © Lynne Newton





The Irish Sea Network: Protecting marine ecosystems

Healthy marine ecosystems underpin all life on earth, including our own. Here in Cumbria, we need a thriving Irish Sea to support our society, economy and our own well-being, by providing food, recreation and education; by regulating the climate; and by bringing tourism to our region. But the Irish Sea's diverse ecosystems are under pressure and we need to take urgent action to protect them.

From minke whales to sea pens, the Irish Sea's marine and coastal ecosystems support a huge variety of important wildlife. The wildlife in the Irish Sea is interconnected and does not see the lines we draw on maps. For example, Manx shearwaters share feeding grounds in the centre of the Irish Sea and sea bass originate from a central shared spawning ground.

The Cumbrian coastline is just part of the wider picture. When we look at the Irish Sea as a whole, 36% is designated as a Marine Protected Area, but only around 5% has any management in place and less than 0.01% per cent is fully protected. This has to change – damaging activities including industrial fishing, unsustainable offshore developments, shipping and pollution are taking their toll on marine species that are already endangered by the impacts of climate change.

Cumbria Wildlife Trust is part of the Irish Sea Network (ISN), which aims to be a

united voice for nature in the Irish Sea. It brings together 10 Wildlife Trusts, Northern Ireland Marine Task Force, Irish Wildlife Trust and the Sustainable Water Network.

The ISN has set a vision for 2030 for a healthy and resilient Irish Sea where marine wildlife and habitats thrive, supporting many benefits for the environment, society and economy of coastal communities. It calls for the nations around the Irish Sea to:

- Think strategically about the cumulative impact of activities across the whole Irish Sea
- Work together to create co-ordinated plans that will prioritise nature and its recovery
- Recognise the need for stricter marine protection
- Involve sea users and coastal communities at all stages of planning.



Sea pen, an Irish Sea species
© Paul Naylor

Working together to transform our land and sea

Outside of our nature reserves, our staff work tirelessly for the improvement of a variety of landscapes to protect a wide range of species. Due to the scale and the complexities of this work, we cannot do it alone. We work and engage with landowners, land managers, community groups, fishermen and more in an effort to transform our land and seas for the benefit of nature.

Our focus habitats are:

-  Red Squirrels
-  Seagrass
-  Grasslands & pollinators
-  Peatlands



C

Red squirrels at Low Wood

The Grasmere to Grizedale project is an ambitious scheme to try to create an area where red squirrels can thrive. A large area of land, with many stakeholders involved, it is a multiagency project to try to create sanctuaries for these charismatic animals.

Cumbria Wildlife Trust, alongside a band of 10 volunteers has been working on improving Low Wood, near Loughrigg, as a place for red squirrels. A survey in 2022 discovered there were a total of four red squirrels on the site which, while an acceptable number, is nowhere near the capacity of the site.

The volunteers undertook around 200 hours of work, doing a range of activities such as installing 15 nest boxes and cleaning and sanitising the feeders to prevent the spread of squirrel. The squirrels are fed hazelnuts to encourage generational skills and to prevent squirrels seeking food that is not part of their natural diet. To prevent the food being taken by

greys, as they eat around five times as much food as the reds, the feeders are specially designed to not have flip lids and instead have holes that greys cannot access.

Through this work, as well as grey squirrel control measures, to prevent them outcompeting the reds, as well as preventing the spreading of squirrel pox, the number of reds has tripled at Low Wood. This work is ongoing, with the continued monitoring of grey squirrels, as well as putting up nest boxes and making the place more suitable for the red squirrels.



Tripled the red squirrel population at Low Wood



10 volunteers involved undertaking

200 hours of work



© Peter Trimming



D

Seagrass meadows

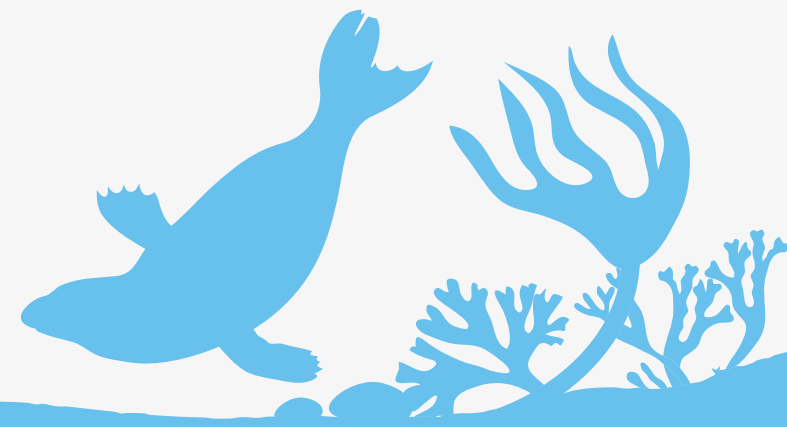
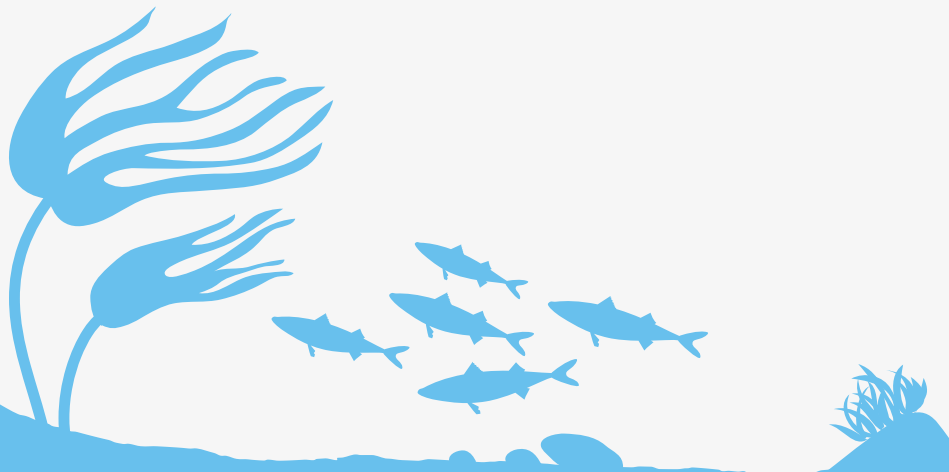
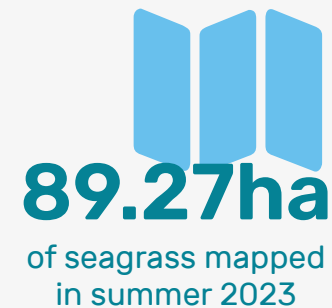
Seagrass meadows are highly productive and diverse ecosystems providing a complex habitat for creatures such as worms, molluscs and algae; nursery and refuge areas for fish; a food source for overwintering geese, eiders and shelducks; sediment stabilisation; and a carbon sink.

Up to 92% of the UK's seagrass has been lost through disease and human activities. With every loss in seagrass area, there is a consequent loss in the ecosystem services this habitat provides: carbon and nutrient sequestration, biodiversity and fish nurseries. This presents a significant cost to all of us - even if we don't acknowledge it, or we are unaware of it.

Key stats



4
universities engaged with to monitor the seagrass beds



D

Put intertidal seagrass back on the map

Where the land and sea meet – the intertidal zone – there’s a lush, green ecosystem you rarely see, but which is home to a rich diversity of marine wildlife. Seagrass meadows are one of our most important natural solutions to climate change, capturing significant amounts of carbon, but they’re in decline across the UK. We need to understand more about this vital habitat and why it’s disappearing.

Seagrasses are the only flowering plants that can live in seawater and pollinate underwater. There are two types of seagrass in the UK: common eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) and dwarf eelgrass (*Zostera noltii*). Often growing in large meadows, they’re found in sheltered areas where their swaying leaves provide cover for a variety of fish, including commercially important fish, crabs and shellfish. As well as storing huge amounts of carbon, seagrass meadows help to reduce coastal erosion and make water clearer.

Over the last three years, we have been mapping the intertidal seagrass in the Walney Channel and a smaller bed in the Ravenglass Estuary. It’s the first time the full extent of our seagrass has been mapped since 1999. The marine team mapped the seagrass beds and assessed their condition, looking at the percentage cover of seagrass, the presence of other species and the type of sediment it was in. Most of the seagrass

beds were made up of dwarf eelgrass with pockets of common eelgrass, but one area was entirely common eelgrass.

They found a big decline – 89 hectares of seagrass in the Walney Channel compared to 224 pre 1900s. Comparing these records with historical records highlights where seagrass has been lost.

Next the team will be:

- Investigating what’s caused the decline – including seagrass wasting disease, coastal developments, water quality, pipelines and human disturbance
- Continuing to map the seagrass and assess changes over time
- Collecting seeds from healthy beds in summer to replant between autumn and spring in beds that need restoring
- Finding out more about the benefits of our local seagrass beds.

© Solway Firth Partnership



E

Restoring grasslands for pollinators

Here in Cumbria, species-rich grasslands and wildflower meadows are crucial to the survival of pollinators. But in 50 years, this habitat has declined by more than 97%.

We all depend on pollinators. They play a vital role in our food production, pollinating many fruit and vegetable crops, and are also a key component of our natural world; however, many species are in trouble.

What are we doing?

- Working to ensure that precious grassland habitats and traditional management techniques are not lost. We are also working closely with farmers and landowners to promote wildlife-friendly practices for managing grassland habitats
- Through our Cumbria Plan Bee strategy we are encouraging everyone to take positive action to help our native insect pollinators
- Working with community groups within Cumbria to identify areas, however small, that can be made suitable for pollinators
- Planting thousands of native wildflowers in meadows across Cumbria, increasing the biodiversity of those sites exponentially



Find out more

Key stats



51,915

wildflower plants added to sites by volunteers and staff: (mostly from our nursery)



251

people taking part in 12 pollinator activities and events



561

people have volunteered at 42 volunteering days



51.24ha

of pollinator friendly habitat restored or created across 33 sites



E

Why pollinators have got locals buzzing

We need our pollinators – and they need us. As well as being a key part of our natural world, they play a vital role in our food production. But pollinators, including bees, butterflies, hoverflies and moths, are in trouble, due to habitat loss, pesticide exposure, disease and climate change. One way we can help pollinators is by creating habitats for them in our communities – like at Lesh Lane in Barrow.

With a bit of love and people power, even forgotten patches of urban land can become a pollinator paradise. The Planting for Pollinators scheme, a partnership between Cumbria Wildlife Trust and local councils, aims to reverse the decline of pollinators. Creating a mosaic of habitats – including species-rich grassland, hedges, scrub, deadwood, sunny banks, glades and flower-rich gardens – communities across South and West Cumbria can provide food, shelter and nesting sites.

That's why volunteers turned out in their droves to a boggy patch of species-poor land on Lesh Lane in Barrow in March 2023. Students from South Lakes Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), dads from Love Barrow Families and members of the Multicultural Forum, plus local residents, planted over 100 trees and shrubs over three days. The students chose native and locally occurring tree species, supplied by Cumbria Tree Growers and Thorpe Trees, which

included a mix of fruit trees and broadleaved trees such as field maple and goat willow. As well as supporting pollinators, this colourful new habitat will give locals an attractive green space to enjoy and fruit to harvest.

Caitlin Fox, Pollinator Conservation Officer, said: "There was such a big turnout one day that everything was planted within 45 minutes, and I had to turn away two more groups that arrived from the local rugby club and Beaumont College! It was wonderful to see people of all backgrounds and ages working together and putting in such care to their local area."

The planting for pollinator scheme was funded by Westmorland and Furness Council in South Lakes and Barrow.

The plugs for the plug planting were supplied by our nursery at Gosling Sike, and Naturescape.



F

Peatlands

Peatlands are unique and fascinating ecosystems with unparalleled ability to sequester carbon, provide a haven for a wealth of biodiversity, and regulate water cycles.

They are home to some incredible wildlife, including rare wading birds such as dunlin and curlew, as well as interesting plants such as the carnivorous sundews and sphagnums.

Did you know?

- Although peatlands are commonly known as 'bogs', they're not just a single type of habitat. They include blanket bog, lowland raised mire and valley mire
- Cumbria holds 31,000 hectares of blanket bog alone, equivalent to over 43,417 football pitches.
- Peat builds up very slowly, at a rate of only 0.5–1mm a year
- It can take over 1,000 years to make one metre of peat, and some of Cumbria's peat is 10 metres deep



Find out more

Key stats



282

people engaged through talks, walks, workshops and school visits



338

volunteer hours.



6

sites restored totalling

473ha



5

sites surveyed totalling

197ha

F

Giving peat a chance on the fells

Cumbria's cool, wet climate is ideal for peatlands – boggy habitats made up of partially decayed plant remains that build up over time. Peatlands store more carbon than all the other types of vegetation on Earth put together and are important for wildlife, but they need our protection. They grow very slowly and are easily damaged – and damaged peat bogs are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Cumbria's peatlands are crucial to a number of species, including red grouse, short-eared owls, sundews, frogs, dragonflies and craneflies, the latter being summer food for young waders such as snipe and curlews.

Barf, a small fell near Keswick, is on a popular walking route, which can add to erosion. Large patches of bare peat have been created and widened over time as walkers have looked for drier routes leading to Lord's Seat. Invasive, non-native trees such as sitka spruce dry out peat, so peat-forming species can no longer survive, also contributing to erosion.

Earlier in 2024, Cumbria Wildlife Trust took a number of steps to restore peatlands at Barf:

- **Hag reprofiling:** Changing the sharp 90-degree angles of peat cliffs to a more stable 30 degrees allows vegetation to establish and cover all the peat, while bringing 'high and dry' bare peat back into the hydrological system.
- **Creating peat bunds:** Bunds are low mounds of peat, often created in an arc shape to retain water and saturate the surrounding peat.
- **Removing invasive trees:** The team removed hundreds of invasive sitka spruce that have self-seeded in from the nearby Whinlatter plantation.
- **Planting:** Where drier, bare peat remains, ling heather and crowberry have been planted, while sphagnum has been planted behind wetter bare peat, where it can establish and spread.
- **Installing a new footpath:** Working with specialist contractors, the team installed a new section of footpath between Lord's Seat and Barf to help prevent erosion, and worked in partnership with Fix the Fells and the Lake District National Park.

National Park volunteers will continue to monitor and remove small self-seeded sitka spruce and help Cumbria Wildlife Trust to monitor the condition of peat on Barf.



Bunding to help retain water on the bog





Connecting more people with wildlife

Cumbria Wildlife Trust is here to make wildlife matter more to society and in everyone's lives, for everyone's benefit. We aim to inspire and support 1 in 4 people to take action for wildlife by 2030.

Wilder
Cumbria



We do this by:

- Helping people to take action for wildlife in the places that are closest and most important to them.
- Getting young people involved so they become the future generation of naturalists and environmentalists that Cumbria needs.
- Providing opportunities for people of all ages to volunteer.
- Creating events for people of all ages to have fun, relax and learn in nature.
- Inspiring people to create more space for wildlife in their gardens or outdoor areas.





Creating events for people of all ages

Our aim is to provide events for people of all ages to have fun, relax and learn in nature so that they gain an appreciation of the natural world and benefit from the positive effect it has on well-being. We run events across the county and online, from family fun days to in-depth talks on species. Local Support Groups inspire people in their local communities by organising talks and walks throughout the year.

3,000 

people attended events across the county

7 

Local Support Groups organised **38** events in their communities

30 

Wildlife Watch Group events run by volunteers






Providing opportunities for people of all ages to volunteer

Volunteering remains an integral part of how Cumbria Wildlife Trust is taking action for nature, with the variety of volunteering opportunities growing this year. Gone are the days where you have to be out on a nature reserve to volunteer, with roles such as Geocache Creator and Rockpool Roadie on offer for those wanting a different way to help out. Many of our volunteer roles this year focus on engagement, with volunteers signing up to support our Time in Nature dementia-friendly sessions.

Our volunteers are the oil that keep so much of our Trust machinery turning; we couldn't do it without them.

[Find out more](#) 

Volunteers help nature through varied roles:



G

Meet the volunteer who's making swift progress in Penrith

Swifts – the arrow-shaped birds that scream through our skies in summer – spend life on the wing. That feeling of never touching the ground is familiar to Sue Rowlands, a volunteer swift champion who's always on the go.

Sue is the founder and treasurer of Penrith Swift Group, and can usually be found inspiring people in and around Penrith to take action for swifts, which migrate to the UK from Africa each spring.

Swift numbers have declined by 60% in the last 25 years because of habitat loss and the huge decline in the insects they eat. Swifts need all the help they can get, and that's why Sue and other members of the small but dedicated team at Penrith Swift Group are working tirelessly to raise awareness and provide homes for them.

As well as organising talks, Sue has written articles for the local press, regularly takes grounded swifts to Kendal for rehabilitation, contacts builders and developers to see if they'll put swift

bricks in new builds or extensions, distributes nest boxes, and travels around the area talking to people at rural shows and in schools.

Sue had never set up a group before, and that's where Cumbria Wildlife Trust was able to help.

"It's quite a steep learning curve," she said. "I had to open a bank account, write a constitution, get a committee, fundraise... Cumbria Wildlife Trust initially helped by providing a venue for our meetings, and support and advice. Members come along and set up the projector, make the teas, put out the chairs... It would be impossible for me to do it all on my own."

Children at one of the local schools she's worked with – Fellview Primary School in Caldbeck – were so enthusiastic, they created their own map of the migratory route swifts take from Africa to Cumbria. Sue then put them in touch with a school in Tanzania, at the other end of the journey.



Sue Rowlands
Penrith Swift Group



H

Boosting wellbeing through nature around Morecambe Bay

Mental health problems can affect any of us at any time in our lives. They can be incredibly debilitating and restrictive, and take their toll on our confidence and self-esteem. Reconnecting with nature can have a positive impact on our wellbeing and is a well-known way of helping with depression, anxiety and other mental health disorders. That's where Cumbria Wildlife Trust's The Bay wellbeing programme can help.

The Bay is designed to support people's wellbeing in communities around Morecambe Bay, including Wyre, Morecambe and Barrow-in-Furness, through free weekly sessions that help people get back outside in a safe, relaxed environment.

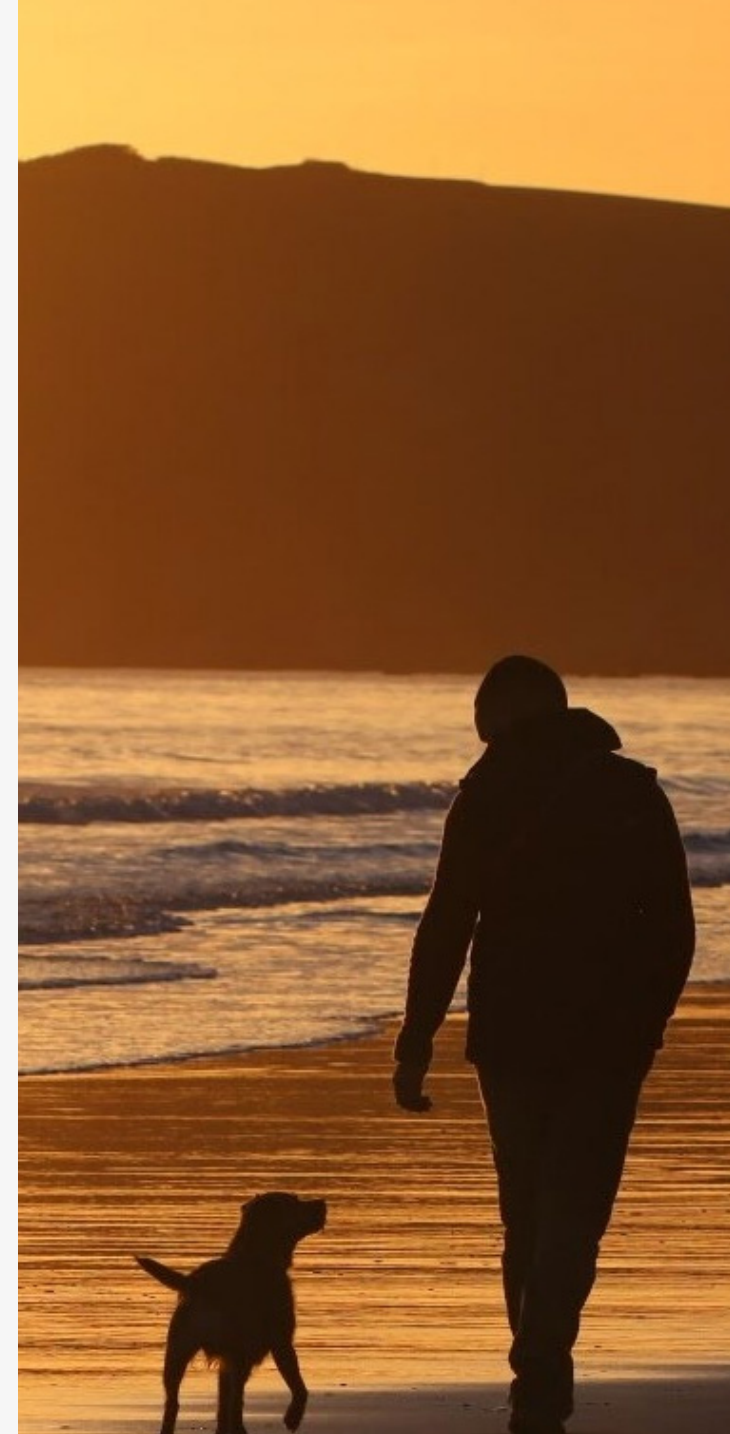
Taking time to enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of the seaside is great for our wellbeing – and Morecambe Bay is an ideal place to do just that. It's an internationally-important place for nature and the perfect setting for people to immerse themselves in activities including guided walks, rockpooling, beach cleans and art. Led by Nature and Wellbeing Officer Jess Mordain and meeting in small groups, the free coastal nature sessions help people to feel happier and healthier, while also making a difference to the local environment.

Taking part has been a transformational experience for one man in helping to manage his social anxiety and OCD. Having been unable to leave his house for ten years, he visibly grew in confidence through the sessions, eventually leaving after ten weeks because he'd successfully applied for a job.

The chance to try different activities really helped. Jess said: "He enjoyed the orienteering and knot-tying session, where he picked up the skills easily. When other participants were struggling, he ended up showing them how to do it. He was able to explain things clearly and left with a huge smile on his face, feeling like he had accomplished something."



Get involved





Wilder Cumbria

Wilder Cumbria is how we connect with, listen to, and collaborate with a wide range of people, building reciprocal trusted relationships at a local level. We support and facilitate individuals, communities and stakeholders, to make meaningful changes for nature's recovery.

This leads to more people influencing each other to take sustained collective action for nature and climate.



Find out more

Wilder
Cumbria



In 2023–24 Wilder Cumbria supported:

- The establishment of three wildlife gardens in Carlisle.
- The transformation of a forgotten planter in the centre of Carlisle, bringing together a local school, diaspora groups and local residents to replant it with pollinator friendly plants and trees.
- Giving advice to people on how to support wildlife on their land and on how they can involve their local community.
- Building ponds in school grounds and helping to facilitate more outdoor learning
- Hosting a Festival of Nature at Talkin Tarn attracting over 200 members of the public.
- Delivering a weekly wildlife club in Workington.
- Creating an online map of Wilder Cumbria activity in the county.



Taking action for nature in Ambleside

Locals and visitors alike love Ambleside – and they love nature and wild places, as a recent consultation has clearly shown. Ambleside Action for a Future (AAFAP) is a network of local volunteers taking action for nature and aiming to make Ambleside carbon neutral.

AAFAP wanted to find out what local people thought about green spaces in and around the town, and how they should be developed for wildlife. The group decided to run a consultation, both in person and online, that would help them to learn more about where they should focus their attention and action to make a difference to nature.

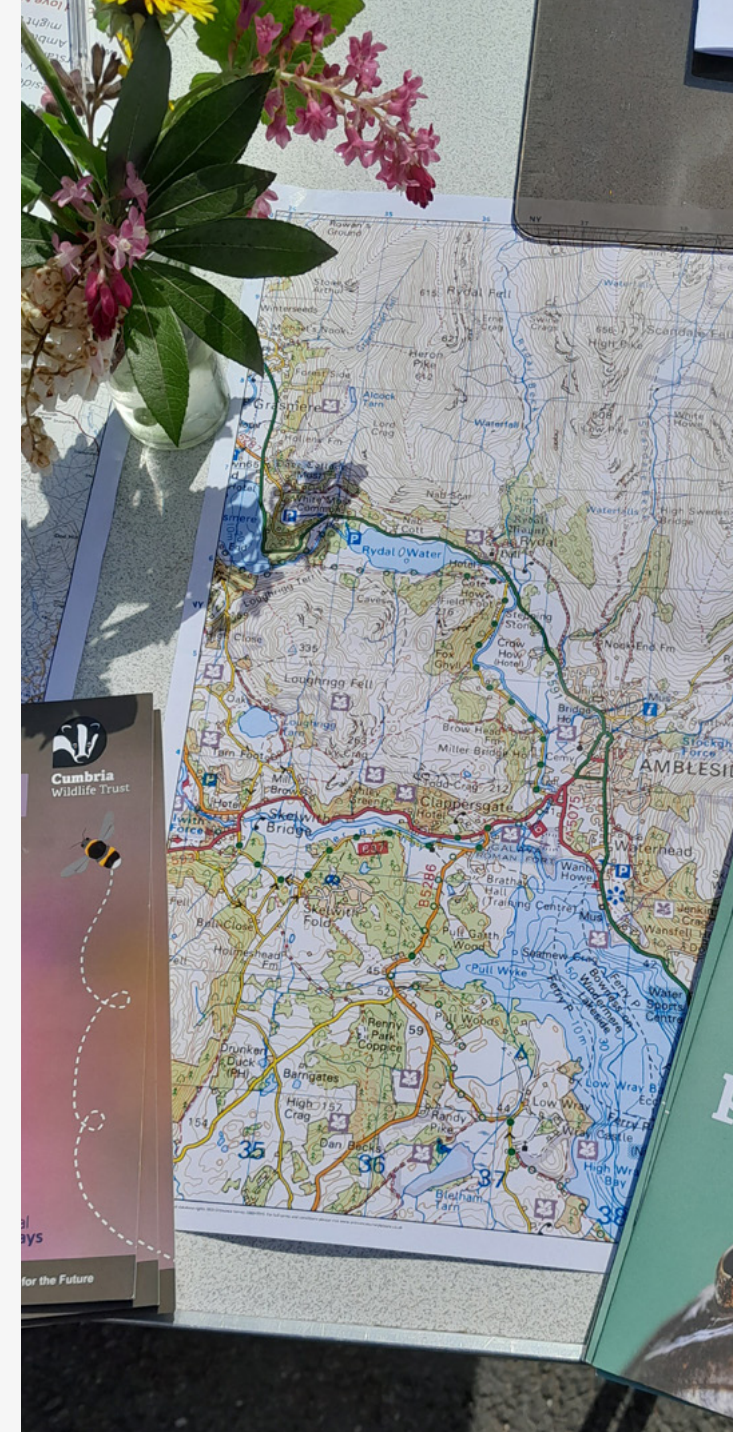
To help plan and carry out their consultation, AAFAP called on Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Head of Community Development, Simon Whalley, for support. Simon worked with the group to plan a consultation day and online survey, and joined them on the day at Ambleside Parish Centre, where his experience of community development work soon came in handy.

Liam McAleese of AAFAP said: "We really valued working with Simon – he provided us with a lot of advice and suggestions. The real value was having a friendly sounding board and source of advice, which gave us confidence in what we were doing."

To make sure they also heard from children, AAFAP brought in Jamie Normington, Learning and Development Manager, who went into two local schools to find out what was valuable to the children and where they liked to go when they weren't at school.

Jamie supported the children to record audio clips of themselves interviewing each other, which he could then transcribe and provide to AAFAP as testimonials. At their consultation event, the AAFAP team gathered 78 responses from locals and visitors in three hours, and a lot more online. "AAFAP achieved far more than they thought they would in the time – more opinions and of a higher quality, which gives them hope for the work they're doing," said Simon.

They have since produced a booklet, reflecting what they learned from the consultation and featuring people's top ten favourite natural places, along with facts and figures about climate change, and some simple ways to take action, supported by the team at Cumbria Wildlife Trust.



Schools and communities

We have long known that people will work hard to conserve and to value that which they know about and can understand.

Our work to reconnect people with nature on land and at sea involves us offering a range of opportunities for people to learn about and share the natural world, and engage with nature in ways that fit with their own lives, motivations and aspirations. It is vital that we can work with 'everybody, everywhere' – people of all ages and abilities in Cumbria.

We believe that this engagement leads to an increased knowledge and understanding of the natural world, bringing people 'closer to nature' and making it far more likely for them to take personal responsibility for conserving the environment.

Our Community and Development team has worked with hundreds of people across dozens of locations and activities each year.

Over the past year we have also developed a new approach of working with schools, organisations and communities through using a series of activities to ensure that we listen to their concerns, understand their aims and can best help them to find ways to continue helping wildlife in Cumbria, independently of the Trust. We seek to enable them to take action now and empower them for the long term of nature's recovery.

In 2023-24 we have worked with

15

schools

4

colleges

3

youth groups

2

care homes

Key stats

1670



young people engaged in educational activities



We now have community outreach staff dedicated to the West Coast, Furness, Carlisle, South Lakes and Eden valley areas



J

Planting pockets of green on urban streets

Brook Street Primary School, in Carlisle, has a school council, made up of children from each school year, who are elected by fellow pupils to represent them. On the street outside the school was an old planter made of red brick. It had become “overgrown, full of dog poo and beer bottles”.

Following a conversation with the school’s Headteacher the school council began working on transforming the planter. Children from the school council, aged 7–11, were involved in developing the planter at each step of the project, and made all the decisions.

Julie Park, Pastoral Support Worker, who runs the school council, said: “They wanted something that could potentially grow all year round and could attract some insect life. We had some money pledged by a local councillor to develop the planter if we wanted to, we’re not gardeners, and it needed more than just money for it to happen.”

The children particularly enjoyed visiting Cumbria Wildlife Trust’s wildlife garden and plant nursery at Gosling Sike, where they could see how plants grew from seeds and what they’d look like when they had grown.

Volunteers from Multicultural Cumbria came along to help prepare the ground for planting and clear it up.

“We had a competition to get other kids involved in creating posters and characters to help us advertise this message, to help get residents involved. We had some fantastic entries.”

Work has continued with the school and new council members, and to help maintain the planter.

“People who’ve been involved have realised that they can make a difference – that things can be different, that people do want to support them.”



[Read more](#)



K

My Local Catch

With a diverse menu of activities, opportunities and partners, My Local Catch has been cooking up a lasting legacy for wildlife and people in West Cumbria.

Run by Cumbria Wildlife Trust and supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project, which ran between May 2021 and February 2024, engaged with local fishermen, coastal communities, suppliers, retailers, schools and youth groups to raise awareness of marine life and sustainable seafood.

We've been dishing up a rich variety of educational activities, from school workshops to street theatre, while our beach-based events, snorkelling experiences and flagship event, SeaFest, reached 1,919 people. Snorkelling and rockpooling allowed participants to discover our marine life in its full glory.

The project team offered a flavour of sustainable seafood at food festivals, farmers' markets, and community events. We also collaborated with fishermen to help them develop creeling for langoustine as part of a diverse and sustainable fishing business.

The project also involved important monitoring work in our marine environment. Local people volunteered as citizen scientists and many benefited from the chance to learn new skills – not least our volunteers who qualified as Marine Champions.

The impact of My Local Catch lives on, with new and ongoing projects, activities and opportunities.

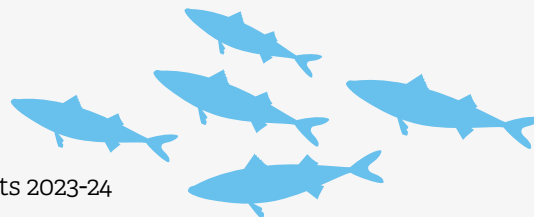


I had no idea you could see wildlife like this just off our coast. I thought you had to go halfway round the world to see this kind of thing! ”

Snorkel experience participant



Watch video





Gosling Sike

Situated on the edge of Carlisle, Gosling Sike is ideally positioned for people to access this unique site, whether for education and training, or to visit the wildlife garden. As well as being a Wildflower nursery which has grown 80,000 plug plants this year, for nature recovery projects such as Planting for Pollinators, and for planting at sites including Cold Springs and Bowber Head, it is also a great place for engaging people about wildlife and nature.

This year, we have engaged with 1,825 individuals through events, workshops and visits, all of which have the aim of getting people to take action for nature and raise the profile of Cumbria Wildlife Trust's work.

In 2023-24 we had



8-10

Men's Shed regular attendees



15

regular garden volunteers



20

weekly nursery volunteers



53

attendees to the Great Big Green Week open day with speakers/workshops



12

Monthly Wildlife Watch Groups



Find out more



Raising our game

Cumbria Wildlife Trust has an ambitious vision and we will need to grow as an organisation if we are to meet the scale of the challenges.

We are deeply committed to making sure that as much as possible of the funding that supporters entrust to us reaches the frontline, where it can make the maximum impact for people and wildlife.

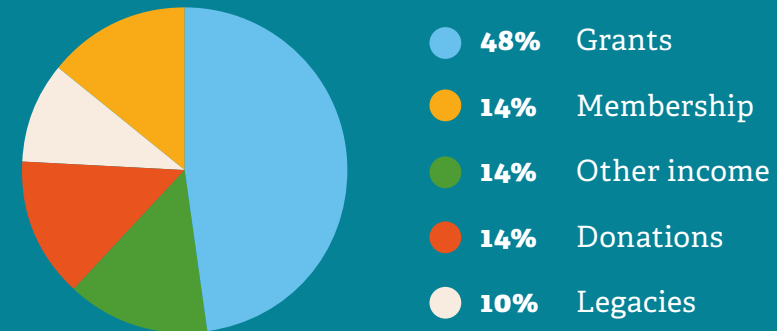
We will strive to continuously improve our efficiency and effectiveness as an organisation and work hard to drive down back-office costs and minimise expenditure on necessary but non-charitable purposes.

Where our income came from

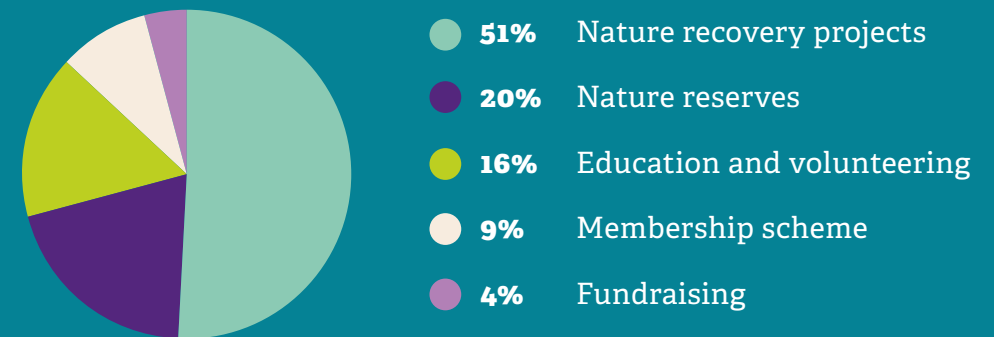
Total	£5,757,274
Grants	£2,758,632
Membership	£775,356
Donations	£839,525
Legacies	£573,504
Other income*	£810,257

*This includes income from contracts, Local Support Groups, our lottery, merchandise sales, fundraising events and investment income.

Income in the year ended 31 March 2024



Expenditure in the year ended 31 March 2024



Thank you

Double your donation land purchase Appeal

Thank you to all our amazing supporters who chose to donate to the Land Purchase Funding Pot. Thanks to an extremely generous donor, every single contribution up to £200,000 was matched, which resulted in £400,302 being raised.

We look forward to updating you on what land this money has helped secure for nature.

Business supporters

Thank you to businesses supporting us with donations in 2023-24, including

- The World of Beatrix Potter, who collected a total of £28,278 via touch-to-donate & ticket sales to help fund extensive tree planting at Eycott Hill Nature Reserve.
- Ozone, who have committed to donating £141,000 over the next 3 years to help restore a large area of seagrass near Roa Island in the Walney Channel.
- Lakeland Limited, who continue their long-standing support with a donation of £20,000 towards our red squirrel conservation work.

– Ticket Tailor, who donated a percentage of their profits, totaling £39,428 to continue their support of our peatland work.

– The Cumberland, who have chosen to continue their support of red squirrels, with a further minimum donation of £20,000.

In-kind donations, percentage of sales, and fundraisers generated much needed funds from Eden Nuclear & Environment, Fern & Fell, Gary Lomas Calendars, Grasmere Gingerbread, Park Cliffe Camping & Caravan Estate, Storey Homes, 2 Sisters Food Group and Wilkinson Cameras.

Thank you to our Business Members

Platinum: Aggregate Industries, Fibrus, Lakeland Limited, Lyon Equipment, Ozone, The World of Beatrix Potter, Ticket Tailor, The Cumberland

Gold: Orosurgeon, The Roselands Charitable Trust

Silver: H&H Reeds Printers Ltd

Bronze: Canine Cottages, Cedar Manor Hotel, Center Parcs, HolidayCottages.co.uk, O'Neil Architects, Original Cottages, Sally's Cottages, The Cumbria Grand Hotel, University of Cumbria

Standard: Fern Howe Guest House, Fortis Remote Technology, Ingrid Flute's Yorkshire Holiday Cottages, Langdale Hotel & Spa, Netherby Hall, Phil Collier Associates, TheLakeDistrict.org, Wildroof Landscapes Complimentary: Aerial Artwork, Cumbria Waste Management, Lakeland Trails, 2 Sisters Food Group

Business membership starts from as little as £300

[Find out more here](#)



Thank you

Wild Work Days

Many businesses also contributed to Cumbria Wildlife Trust through a donation and staff taking part on a Wild Work Day. Thank you to all those who came along.

You can find out more about our Wild Work Days and Wild Wellbeing Days on our website.

Find out more



A massive thank you to all our members

Thank you to all our members who continued to support us through a very difficult economic climate for many. Particular thanks to those that chose to increase their membership subscriptions in February. This generated an additional £43,000 including Gift Aid, which will make a huge contribution to protecting our county's wildlife.

Gifts in Wills

A gift in your will is a simple yet powerful way to keep your wishes alive. No matter how big or small, your gift can help Cumbria's wildlife in the future.

During the year we were grateful to receive new legacies from Margaret Miller, Gillian Lawrence, John Bowerbank, Ian Shepherd, Catherine Scott, Dorothy Perks, Brian Pickford, Mike Langley, Eunice Stevenson and Anne Simpson, Edward Higgins and Maurice Payn.

*If the time is ever right for you to consider a gift in your Will and you would like further information, please contact:
Helen Duxbury 01539 816325, helend@cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk*

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Make a one-off donation



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Wildlife Trust

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