

Annual Review 19/20

Another great year protecting, restoring, and celebrating nature by inspiring wonder in the natural world of the North East and beyond... thanks to you!

Your support made an impact in 2020

2,008 members supporting natural history

3,780 people attended natural history talks

20,000 people learnt about nature online during lockdown

731 people discovered North East nature through events

170 naturalists engaged in citizen science

287 young people experienced Gosforth Nature Reserve

231 volunteers came together for North East nature

40 early-career scientists supported through 1829 Talks

42 students enrolled on the Student Award Scheme

44 disadvantaged young people supported through the Lantern Fund

1,500 trees planted at Gosforth Nature Reserve



The last year continues our 190 years of passion and commitment among NHSN members to find inspiration and wonder in the natural world. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated why the natural world matters.

Time slowed and roads quietened. Many more people had opportunities to discover nature on their doorstep. Gosforth Nature Reserve welcomed new visitors and volunteers; the North East Bee Hunt had people noticing bees in their garden. People across the North East shared their pandemic experiences through Notes from a Lockdown Naturalist. All of this was achieved because of your donations, volunteering, support, membership, and your involvement.

Because of you, more people learn, enjoy, and protect North East Nature. Some highlights of 2019/20 are as follows:

Gosforth Nature Reserve flourished. New species were discovered, trees were planted, and many new volunteers helped keep the reserve safe for members to enjoy.

Your support provided vital funding to a record number of local conservation initiatives across the North East.

Members contributed their knowledge and experience allowing us to provide a record number of digital opportunities to help people learn about nature from home.

Your natural history talks grew in popularity, sharing the latest environmental news and research from across the UK.

Your passion for supporting young naturalists shone through and helped us support more young people through our Lantern Fund, 1829 Talks and Student Award Scheme.

Your observations made a difference for bees and helped make NHSN's first citizen science scheme a roaring success.

**Jonathan Hewitt,
NHSN Chair**

 **Natural
History
Society of
Northumbria**



NHSN members, supporters, volunteers and partners gathered to celebrate 190 years of NHSN in August 2019

Gosforth Nature Reserve

Gosforth Nature Reserve flourished. New species were discovered, trees were planted, and many new volunteers helped keep the reserve safe for people and wildlife.

GNR is volunteer managed and led. They have had a busy year keeping it a great place for wildlife and people. Led by Chris Wren and Warden Paul Drummond highlights include planting over 1,500 trees, cutting a large area of reed, replacing boardwalks and improved site security.

Young naturalists are important to us. Our team of 9 volunteer Education Rangers welcomed 87 school children who enjoyed a new seating area with a temporary canopy to help avoid the worst of the weather.

COVID-19 meant the reserve was temporarily closed on 23 March and reopened on 1 June. Our team of Volunteer Rangers grew to 35 strong helping us provide you with a welcome 9am-5pm, 7 days/week!

A year of discoveries:

- Using a nest box in the woodland, Barn Owls bred for the first time at the reserve in over 40 years and successfully raised four chicks. The breeding female travelled from Cambridgeshire; such a long distance of 320 km is very unusual, with less than 5% of young owls making a journey of over 100 km.
- During a bat survey by Northumberland Bat Group, over 50 roosting Noctule bats were observed to emerge from one Oak tree.
- Marsh Harrier and Hobby, two uncommon raptors at the reserve, were seen hunting over the wetland this summer.

- Following the first reserve record last year, several individuals of the regionally uncommon and species of conservation concern Dingy Skipper were observed this summer, a positive sign that this species has established at the reserve.
- During a moth-trapping session, five individuals of the reedbed-specialist and regionally rare Fen Wainscot moth were recorded, following the first reserve record for this species in 2018.
- At least 260 plant species were recorded including lowland heath plants in the clearings such as Tormentil, Heath Bedstraw, Heath Wood-rush, and Heather.
- For the third year running, Gadwall have successfully bred.

Julia Black, Chair, Gosforth Nature Reserve Management Committee



Barn Owl
© Rick Thornton

One of my favourite nature reserves to visit on a regular basis. With many varieties of birds and other wildlife here, it's a lovely place to stroll around at your leisure whilst observing nature at its best. Thanks to the great work of a dedicated, onsite warden AND numerous volunteer members, the regular upkeep and maintenance of the reserve is allowing many varieties of wildlife to breed successfully in a natural, safe environment.

Babs Baker, NHSN Member



Regional Nature Conservation

Your support provided vital funding to a record number of conservation initiatives across the North East.

North East Bee Hunt

The North East Bee Hunt was NHSN's response to bees and other pollinators that need our help. We know they provide an important service; that many populations are in decline; and that bee populations in the North East are under-recorded. Launched in Spring 2020, The North East Bee Hunt aimed to increase the numbers of bee records in the region and increased awareness and knowledge of bees.

With over 2400 new records from 170 North East naturalists, your support greatly increased our knowledge of North East bees, filling many gaps on the map and revealing several exciting discoveries. I would like to offer a big thank you to everyone who took part in the North East Bee Hunt and to all who contributed their articles, photography, and observations. It is because of you that NHSN's first citizen science scheme was a fantastic success.

Gordon Port, NHSN Invertebrate Section-Coordinator

"The north east bee hunt was really fun to get involved with and a good opportunity to contribute to local science. This was my first year being involved with NHSN and this experience has made me keen to get involved with more projects with the society."

Supporting local conservation

The Dickinson Memorial Fund provided small grants for nine local conservation initiatives carried out by NHSN Members. Your membership supported:

- Pipistrelle bat research across Northumberland
- Wildlife research and recording at Felton
- Wetland management at Tynemouth
- Mammal research at Gosforth Nature Reserve
- Moth surveys across Redesdale
- Tree Sparrow nest boxes at Clara Vale
- Habitat restoration at Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve
- Arctic Tern research on the Farne Islands
- Swift conservation at Monkseaton

"I am delighted to have been awarded a small grant from the NHSN's Dickinson Memorial Fund to help erect Swift nest boxes in Monkseaton and engage the local community with these wonderful birds. As well as helping the birds directly, this is a great opportunity to raise awareness of Swifts amongst the community, helping local people to both enjoy and protect these fabulous birds."

Sam Fisher, Monkseaton



Early Bumblebee on Evergreen Geraniums.
Killingworth © Brian Moorhead



Orange Foxtail at Colt Crag -
new addition to Northumberland
flora this year

This year, your support made a difference for bees by revealing new information about their distribution in the North East

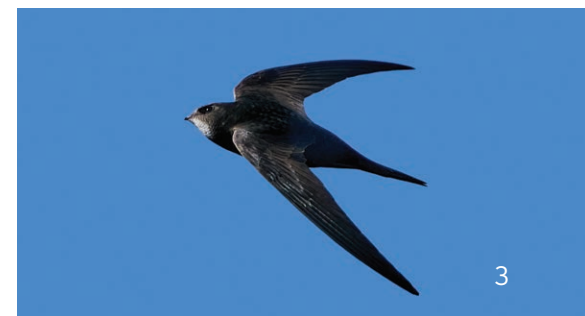
2,451 bee observations
170 recorders taking part
41 species recorded
859 records of target species
5,000 people inspired about bees online
10,500 visits to bee learning materials

Mid-week Botany Group

NHSN's Mid-week Botany Group meet to survey flora in the North East and to build up skills among 40 strong group. We continued to meet at sites across the county until Covid-19 curtailed our programme.

In August and September 2019, we completed the remaining seven site visits of our summer programme. Over three thousand records were submitted to the BSBI 2020 Plant Atlas.

Bill Burlton and Kevin Charman, Mid-week Botany Group Coordinators





North East Natural History Archive and Library

Up until March 2020 the archive was in full swing, bustling with volunteers, visitors, and events, all set for another successful year. Over 300 visitors to the archives were recorded before lockdown and 200+ enquiries. Lockdown did curtail some of our proposed activities, but we have used the time wisely to progress the development of our long term management plans and have stepped up our profile on social media sites connecting with naturalists and archivists all over the world.

The NHSN library continued to operate as usual until March of 2020, when the lockdown forced an immediate closure. There were 134 additions of books before the closure.

NHSN is grateful for all the wonderful donations to the archive collection received during the year. Of particular importance is a unique hand-drawn and coloured geological strata diagram, 'Section of a Strata from Cross Fell Mountain to Hownes Gill, 1839' by Thomas Sopwith, accepted under the Cultural Gifts Scheme by HM Government from Graham Carlisle. It is

a spectacularly beautiful object measuring a massive 24 feet by 42 feet. In the NHSN library, a small but important donation of six books from the Darlington & Teesdale Naturalists' Field Club included copies of Donovan's British Shells (1800-04) and Robson's British Flora (1777).

As always, we are grateful to our dedicated archive and library volunteers for their continued enthusiasm, commitment and for rising to the challenge to work from home where they could.



Celebrating NHSN's Amazing Volunteers

Your support helps volunteers make a difference for nature, from the Tees to Tweed.

This year 231 volunteers helped people learn and protect nature across the North East. Each one bringing with them a unique mix of knowledge and experience to NHSN's indoor and outdoor programme.

From Gosforth Nature Reserve and the NHSN Archive to publications and public talks, volunteers make an incredible difference at all levels of NHSN. This year, rising to meet the challenge posed by lockdown, many went one step further by:

- Creating informative videos to inspire members at home
- Contributing articles, images, and social media content
- Evolving the NHSN website to provide new opportunities for members at home
- Contributing to citizen science
- Welcoming members back to Gosforth Nature Reserve

Volunteers are the heart and soul of NHSN, and I hope you will join trustees and staff in offering heartfelt thanks for their work over the past year.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to encounter the richness and biodiversity which the reserve nurtures, something essential in the current climate and ecological emergency. I have learned so much about nature by simply talking with other volunteers and visitors who are from all walks of life, both expert and amateur. What we all have in common is a love and appreciation for nature."

Chung Chung Stockman, Volunteer Ranger



"I have loved volunteering at Gosforth Nature Reserve as it has provided me with the opportunity to experience and learn about the natural world on my doorstep here in Newcastle."

Ted Mitchell, Volunteer Ranger



Heartfelt thanks go to:

- 35 Volunteer Rangers
- 10 Education Rangers
- 32 Conservation Volunteers
- 66 Deliverers
- 11 Trustees
- 21 Event Leads
- 14 Library & Archive volunteers
- 40 Digital Contributors

NHSN Goes Digital

This year, you came together to share your knowledge, experiences, photography, and research online, inspiring many people to enjoy and understand North East nature.

Together, you contributed:

- 109 informative articles to encourage learning at home
- 17 inspiring videos about North East nature on NHSN's new YouTube channel
- Two special digital editions of North East Nature
- Photos and observations towards hundreds of social media posts
- 20 Notes from a Lockdown Naturalist sharing your experience of nature close to home

For 190 years NHSN members inspired others by sharing their experience, research, and enjoyment of the natural world. Thank you for continuing this tradition.

"As an early career scientist, I found giving a talk with the NHSN to be a great chance to develop my presenting skills, and to share my work outside of those within my area of research. The audience were very friendly and genuinely interested, and I enjoyed getting to hear a more experienced researcher giving the talk after me about their work in a very different but still very interesting field."

Ilona Kater, 1829 speaker, Durham University

Inspiring Young Naturalists

You asked us to encourage more young people to understand and appreciate the natural world. We listened! This year, your membership allowed NHSN to continue our work with schools, students, and children's charities to provide new opportunities for young people.

In the last twelve months, you have helped us:

- Continue our work with Children North East to provide 44 disadvantaged young people with opportunities to discover nature. Including 20 young people provided with 'naturalist bags' to explore nature at home during lockdown.
- Welcome 287 young people to experience Gosforth Nature Reserve and learn about nature first-hand from committed local naturalists at reserve open days and on school visits.
- Continue 1829 Talks, providing 40 early-career researchers with the opportunity to share their work with local people.
- To promote work, research, and photography online to a wider audience than ever before.
- Build on our Student Award Scheme to provide 42 students vital skills in conservation, natural history, and research.



Inspiring wonder online

Your support enabled NHSN to rise to challenge of lockdown by providing more opportunities than ever before people across the North East to learn about nature at home.

- 135,000 unique visitors to the NHSN Website
- 53,000 People inspired by your articles
- 7,709 Social media followers
- 4,545 People discovered nature through videos
- 2980 People explored research through online talks
- 434 Naturalists explored citizen science in a special online event
- 11,000 people learnt about bees online

Honorary Treasurer's Statement - July 2020

During the year subscription income fell slightly from £63,152 to £61,012. Investment income showed a decrease to £20,872 from £23,041 the previous year. This reflected the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic throughout the year.

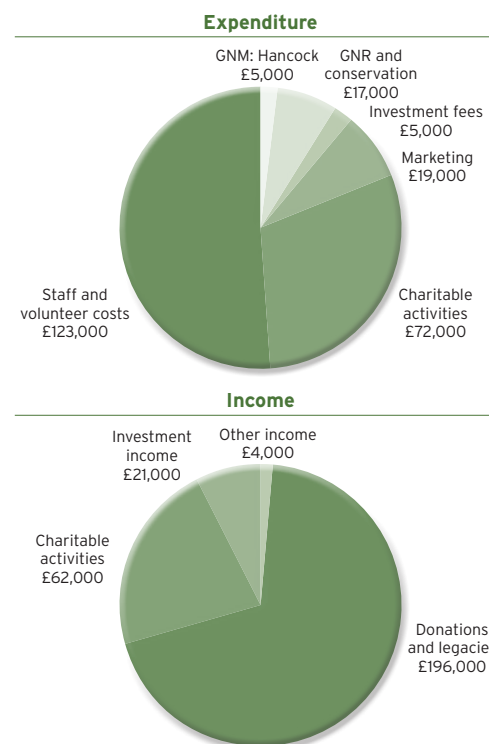
Our investments decreased in value, ending the year with a valuation of £660,525 compared to £705,980 as at 31st July 2019. By mid-October 2020, the valuation was £684,048.

Expenditure on charitable activities exceeded that of the previous year. The main reasons were increases in staffing, communications, and membership support as part of the Towards 2029 Project.

Capital Expenditure on Fixed Assets totalled £17,896. Included in this figure was £4,220 to remount the Great Auk and £5,241 for cabins and canopies at GNR. Cash at bank and in hand increased from £196,118 to £227,707. This is largely due to legacies received of £60,500 and grants received to the value of £54,390.

The total funds carried forward at the end of the year decreased from £1,005,849 to £996,562.

By Brian Kram, NHSN Honorary Treasurer



SUMMARISED ACCOUNTS: 2018/19

	£'000	£'000
	2019/20	2018/19
INCOME		
Donations and legacies	196	102
Charitable activities	62	65
Investment income	21	24
Other income	4	3
Total Income	283	194
EXPENDITURE		
GNM: Hancock	5	5
GNR & Conservation	17	16
Investment Fees	5	5
Marketing	19	21
Charitable Activities	72	69
Staff & Volunteer Costs	123	108
Total Expenditure	241	224
Net Income / (Expenditure)	42	-30
Net losses on investments	-51	14
Net movement in funds	-9	-16
Total funds brought forward	1,006	1,022
Total funds carried forward	997	1,006
REPRESENTED BY		
Tangible assets	84	78
Investments	661	706
Net current assets	252	222
	997	1,006

These are summarised accounts. The Annual Review and Financial Accounts are available on the NHSN website.

A Special 'Thank you' to our funders

National Lottery Heritage Fund

Naturetrek

Peter Headley Trust



Thank you!

For 191 years, your passion has helped inspire wonder in the natural world. We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to all NHSN members. It is because of your support that NHSN can achieve so much as a small, local charity.

Never has it been more important to protect, study and celebrate the natural world. By becoming a Life Member of NHSN, you could encourage learning, support conservation, and inspire others across the North East, quite literally, for life.

- As a thank for your lifetime's support, you will receive:
- Invitations to exclusive events
- Lifetime access to Gosforth Nature Reserve
- Lifelong copies of *North East Nature*
- All editions of *Northumbrian Naturalist*

Find out about becoming a Life Member on the NHSN website:
or email nhsn.director@newcastle.ac.uk



Your NHSN membership makes a world of difference:

- Protects Gosforth Nature Reserve
- Inspires young people
- Promotes natural history to others
- Supports citizen science
- Celebrates regional natural history

Thank you to our newest life members:

- Philomena Johnston
- Jane Kysow
- Peter and Frances Robson

Stay up to date with North East nature:

-  Facebook
-  Twitter
-  Instagram



"Wonderful nature reserve, containing rare wildlife, amazingly within city boundary. Guided walks to, and talks on, every aspect of NE wildlife, given by knowledgeable and friendly experts. Specialist groups within NHSN enable members to build up knowledge in a focused way and to make new friends."

Lydia Koelmans, NHSN Member



Scottish Red Squirrel
©Richard Potts