

# Natural History of Northumbria Annual Review 2020/21

**Thanks to your support,  
the last year saw NHSN go  
from strength to strength.**

During a difficult year, your support enabled NHSN to evolve and meet the challenges of the pandemic. Together, we embraced new opportunities, encouraging learning and making a difference for people and wildlife across the North East.

Thanks to you, Gosforth Nature Reserve saw lasting improvements, regional citizen science projects helped people study and record nature, and a special publication, *Notes from a Lockdown Naturalist*, captured a snapshot of nature in time.

Because of your donations, volunteering and membership, NHSN went further, inspiring more young people, embracing digital technology, and providing more opportunities for people across the North East.

Thank you.

**Jonathan Hewitt,  
NHSN Chair**



## Inspiring wonder and action across the North East

Thanks to the support of NHSN members, we were able reach more people and make a lasting difference for nature this year.

### Regional Citizen Science

Your support put regional wildlife on the map this year.

The North East Bee Hunt returned bigger and better than ever before. Aiming to inform the conservation of our region's pollinators, this year, 184 naturalists took part, sharing a record 4,653 bee records. New county species were discovered, scarce species observed, and more people than ever before were encouraged to learn about bees online.

The North East Ladybird Spot launched for the first time in collaboration with the UK Ladybird Survey. Aiming to map the distribution of these under-recorded insects across the North East, 1,413 sightings were shared by 148 recorders.



Local naturalists search for bees at Silverlink Biodiversity Park

### Citizen Science in the spotlight

6,000 records submitted

284 people taking part

53 species observed

1,950 target species sightings

200 people attended citizen science events

13,717 visits to learning resources online

*The Ladybird Spot provided an amazing gateway for me to start biological recording on iRecord. The activity was fun and straightforward. My highlight was finding my first ever 22-spot Ladybird.*

*Through this activity, I was able to encourage my sibling to take a closer look at ladybirds. Which, was a huge bonus."*

**Ho-Yin Wong, NHSN Member**



Tree Bumblebee © Chris Barlow

### Supporting local conservation

The Dickinson Memorial Fund provides small grants to local conservation projects across the North East. This year, NHSN supported Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve with a grant of £2,000 to carry out vital conservation work and improvements.

NHSN representatives continued to contribute to a range of important partnerships including the Tyne Kittiwake Partnership and Lindisfarne Advisory Committee.

### Mid-week Botany Group

NHSN's Mid-week Botany Group continued to meet to study, record and enjoy flora across the North East. The group now has 47 members and this year, they carried out 14 visits to sites across the North East. Three visits were carried out to survey sites for local landowners.



The new Beck Hide at Gosforth Nature Reserve

## Gosforth Nature Reserve - a sanctuary for people and nature

It has been an incredible year for Newcastle's most important nature reserve.

Thanks to the support of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, work began on a new Field Station set to provide new and exciting learning opportunities on site. NHSN supporters raised an incredible £11,173 to ensure the new building will be fully furnished and ready for use.

With support from National Lottery Heritage Fund, the new Beck Hide was constructed providing new opportunities for visitors to experience wildlife.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the reserve. Led by Paul Drummond and Chris Wren, this year, volunteers made many lasting improvements. From a fantastic 110m boardwalk to habitat management, tree planting and new bike racks, together they worked wonders for your reserve. Our team of passionate Volunteer Rangers grew to 40, providing a warm welcome to visitors throughout the year and capturing more wildlife records.

This year, our team of 12 Education Rangers welcomed 115 young people to learn about the natural world and our first ever Wild Weekend was attended by a fantastic 340 local people.



Little Egret © Chris Castling



Smiling faces at NHSN's first Wild Weekend

### A great year for wildlife too at GNR

- Over 1,000 sightings were shared by visitors of 470 species.
- All 17 dragonfly and damselfly species were observed including Brown Hawker, a new species for the reserve.
- Three Barn Owlets were ringed, and adults were spotted hunting.
- A BeeWalk scheme transect was set up to monitor the reserve's bumblebee population.
- 574 butterflies of 19 species were recorded during this year's butterfly transect, including Dingy Skipper.
- 13 active Heron nests were monitored, and data submitted to the BTO Heronies Census.
- 195 moths of 62 species recorded by the GNR Moth Group.
- Visitors to the reserve included Stonechat, Yellow-Browed Warbler, Marsh Harrier, Mandarin Duck.



Conservation volunteers at Gosforth Nature Reserve

## Celebrating NHSN's outstanding volunteers

**Your support helps passionate volunteers make a difference for nature, right across the North East.**

This year 214 volunteers helped across all aspects of NHSN, providing learning opportunities, carrying out vital conservation work, inspiring local people and contributing their own unique skills and experience to every aspect of our work.

This year, we were delighted to welcome three passionate new Trustees, Alexandra Healey, Rob Carr, and Sammy Mason, each of whom bring a wealth of wisdom and experience to NHSN.

This year, many volunteers went above and beyond, embracing new opportunities by:

- Contributing photography, videos, and articles
- Taking part in citizen science across the region
- Providing an enthusiastic welcome at Gosforth Nature Reserve
- Inspiring school groups and young visitors

Volunteers really are the beating heart of NHSN. On behalf of all at NHSN, a huge thank you to all for everything you do.

**Heartfelt thanks go to:**

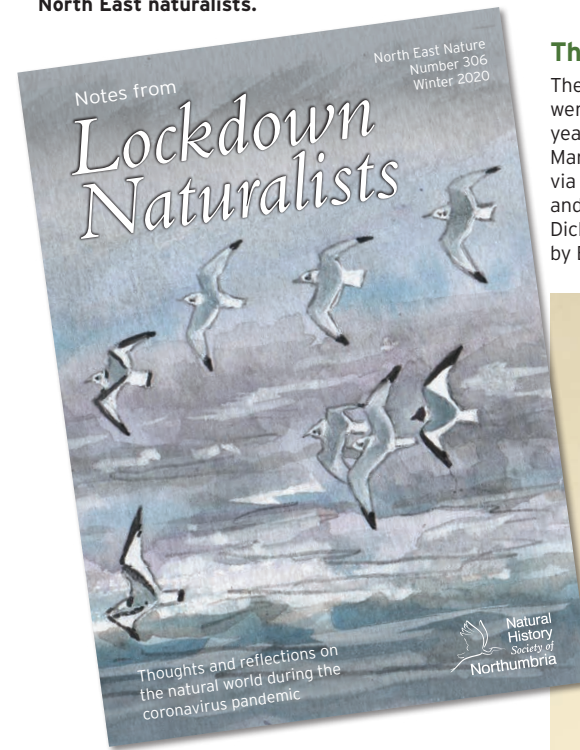
- 40 Volunteer Rangers**
- 12 Education Rangers**
- 32 Conservation Volunteers**
- 36 Deliverers**
- 11 Trustees**
- 15 Event leads**
- 53 Digital Contributors**
- 15 Library and Archive Volunteers**

*Having supported NHSN a few times during their Towards 2029 journey, it was a privilege to become a new Trustee. In the last few months, I've met a number of volunteers and members and continue to be struck by their passion and enthusiasm for nature, knowledge, and NHSN itself.*

**Alexandra Healey, NHSN Trustee**

## Sharing the North East's social and cultural aspects of natural history

This year, your membership meant that NHSN could go further, capturing and protecting the stories of North East naturalists.



### Notes from a Lockdown Naturalist

As Covid-19 changed how local people experienced the natural world, we launched our Notes from a Lockdown Naturalist to capture your reflections on nature in lockdown. From the Tees to the Tweed, local naturalists shared their stories, capturing a snapshot of this important and challenging year for future generations. In 2020, a special publication was created sharing these stories with people across the region.

### Capturing the stories of local naturalists

This year saw the launch of a Talking Naturally, a new series of interviews sharing the life stories of some of the North East's most committed naturalists. From early childhood memories and the moments that inspired them to career highlights and personal achievements, these videos will ensure that this precious information is used to inspire others in the future.

### The Margaret Dickinson collection

The hidden treasures of the NHSN archive collection were made more accessible than ever before this year as 458 exquisite artworks by Victorian botanist, Margaret Dickinson were made freely available online via JSTOR. Already, these are helping inform study and research, including the 2021 book, Margaret Dickinson: A Botanical Artist of the Border Counties, by Elizabeth Towner.



A watercolour of Small Scabious by Margaret Dickinson, found in the NHSN Archive.

*Small scabious  
Scabiosa columbaria*



Local naturalists exploring wildflowers at Wylam in Northumberland

## Connecting people with nature

### Embracing new ways to learn

As face-to-face events were paused, you came together once again to share your knowledge and experiences online.

For the first time in almost 200 years, your Friday Night talks moved online, bringing together researchers and naturalists from across the UK to share their knowledge. These proved popular and were watched an amazing 16,074 times. Our 1829 Talks, shared by early-career scientists, were watched a record breaking 8,436 times and reached new people across the North East.

#### Other highlights include:

- 15 online courses encouraging learning about natural history.
- 12 special online events sharing the wonder of North East nature.
- 27 wildflower films shared by local botanists, Hazel and Chris Metherell.
- 13,563 people now learning about nature on social media.

### Supporting young naturalists

NHSN members are passionate about encouraging more young people to understand and protect the natural world.

Your support has meant that NHSN can continue its work to inspire young people about North East nature.

#### In the last twelve months we have:

- Provided 360 nature activity bags working with six organisations across the North East.
- Welcomed 115 children to Gosforth Nature Reserve to experience nature firsthand.
- Held 40 1829 Talks by North East early-career environmental researchers.
- Grown our Student Award Scheme to provide 55 students with skills in natural history.
- Continued our work with key partners, including Children North East, to reach more young people than ever before.
- Inspired 50 children about bees and bugs at Hotspur Primary School.

## Honorary Treasurer's Statement - as at 31 July 2021

During the year subscription income increased from £61,012 to £72,642. Investment income showed a decrease to £17,412 from £20,872 the previous year. This reflected the market performance throughout the year.

Our investments increased in value, ending the year with a valuation of £696,458 compared to £660,525 as of 31 July 2020. £75,000 of shares to fund the construction of the new Field Station.

Total expenditure exceeded that of the previous year, as per budget. The main reasons were increases in staffing, communications, and membership support as part of the Towards 2029 Project.

Capital expenditure on Fixed Assets totalled £167,867. Included in this figure was £167,262 for constructions at GNR and £605 on laptops for home working during the pandemic.

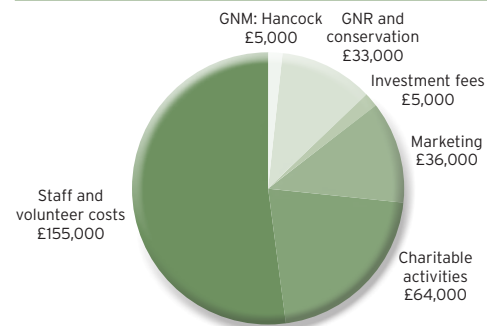
Cash at bank and in hand fell from £227,707 to £47,501. This cash movement, together with the sale of shares (£75,000) and grant income (£98,400) was used to fund the Towards 2029 Project.

The share portfolio benefited from an unrealised gain of £106,956. This more than offset the planned costs listed above, so total funds carried forward at the end of the year increased from £996,562 to £1,064,164.

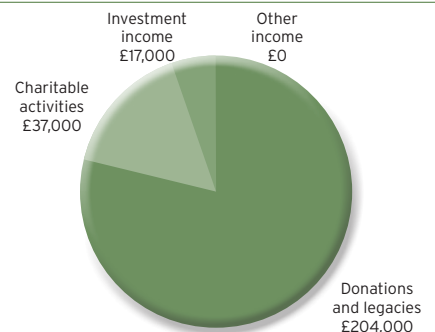
### SUMMARISED ACCOUNTS: 2020/21

	£'000	£'000
INCOME	2020/21	2019/20
Donations and legacies	204	196
Charitable activities	37	62
Investment income	17	21
Other income	0	4
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>283</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
GNM: Hancock	5	5
GNR & Conservation	33	17
Investment Fees	5	5
Marketing	36	19
Charitable Activities	64	72
Staff & Volunteer Costs	155	123
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>241</b>
Net Income / (Expenditure)	-40	42
Net gains/(losses) on investments	107	-51
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>-9</b>
Total funds brought forward	997	1,006
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>1,064</b>	<b>997</b>
<b>REPRESENTED BY</b>		
Tangible assets	236	84
Investments	697	661
Net current assets	131	252
	<b>1,064</b>	<b>997</b>

#### Expenditure



#### Income



### A special thanks go to the:



## Thank you!

For 192 years, the passion of NHSN members, like you, has inspired wonder in the natural world. On behalf of NHSN volunteers, trustees, and staff, we would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to every member. It is because of your support that NHSN achieves so much as a small, regional charity.

## Become a lifelong supporter






In the face of a climate and ecological emergency, never has it been more important to protect, study and celebrate the natural world. By becoming an NHSN Life Member today, you'll encourage learning, support conservation, and inspire wonder across the region, quite literally, for life.

As a thank you for your lifetime's support, you'll receive:

- Invitations to exclusive events
- Lifetime access to Gosforth Nature Reserve
- Lifelong copies of North East Nature
- All editions of North East Naturalist

Find out more about becoming a life member on our website, or email [nhsn.director@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:nhsn.director@newcastle.ac.uk)

Stay up to date with North East nature at:

-  [@naturalhistorynorthumbria](#)
-  [@NEE\\_Naturalist](#)
-  [@nee\\_naturalist](#)
-  [NaturalHistorySocietyOfNorthumbria](#)
-  [natural-history-society-of-northumbria](#)

## A great year at a glance

- 2,284 memberships supporting natural history
- 214 volunteers brought together for North East nature
- 24,510 views of our natural history talks
- 344 people discovered North East nature on courses
- 284 naturalists engaged in citizen science
- 165 young people inspired on school visits

