

Gosforth's Wild Web Project Evaluation Report 2025



Written by Dr Sammy Mason
on behalf of the Natural
History Society of Northumbria



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Gosforth's Wild Web Highlights



Introduction

Gosforth's Wild Web was a 2 year National Lottery Heritage Fund supported project led by the Natural History Society of Northumbria. The project aimed to engage thousands of people in protecting local nature and the environment.

Gosforth's Wild Web (GWW) centered around Gosforth Nature Reserve (GNR) and its surrounding wildlife corridors, focussing on 100 one-kilometre squares. The project coincided with the 100 year anniversary of the creation of the reserve by William Edward Beck. Activities focused on engaging schools, community groups and citizen scientists through a range of events, activities and resources.

This report aims to summarise the project and the impact it had on participants, volunteers and staff. The report will first outline the evaluation methodology before highlighting the key activities delivered, groups engaged with, outputs created and the outcomes achieved. Finally, the report will reflect on what the project did well and what could be improved in the future. Overall, findings and reflections will help to embed the legacy of the project within the Natural History Society of Northumbria (NHSN) and share benefits to a wider audience.



About the Natural History Society of Northumbria

NHSN is a charity based in North East England. Its vision is for 'Many more people and a wider range of people to enjoy, understand and protect North East nature.' The charity aims to inspire wonder and collective action in all aspects of North East natural history through the delivery of high-quality communications, events, lifelong learning, citizen science, Gosforth Nature Reserve and a regional natural history archive & library.



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Evaluation Methodology

A mixed method approach to evaluation was taken, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data throughout.



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The evaluation was led by an external evaluator (Sammy Mason). A participatory action approach was taken so all members of the project team at NHSN as well as project volunteers were involved at every stage. This included developing the Logic model, collecting and analysing data and creation of the final report. As a team, we continuously evaluated our approach to see what was working and what could be improved and implemented changes as we went along.

Mid-way through the project we held an evaluation day with NHSN volunteers and staff to look at evaluation techniques and project progress thus far. Following this, a mid-point evaluation report was created with key milestones reached and recommendations.

Data collected included:

- **Monitoring statistics:** Information on participant numbers, sessions delivered and records submitted was tracked by NHSN staff
- **Feedback cards:** After every GWW event, feedback cards were handed out with Likert-scale questions mapped to project outcomes and space for written feedback
- **Observations:** The external evaluator went along to various GWW events to observe activities and talk to participants
- **Interviews:** The external evaluator conducted 14 informal interviews with volunteers, community groups, teachers, participants and project staff at both the mid-point and towards the project end
- **Informal feedback:** Volunteers, staff and the external evaluator noted down informal feedback given verbally or via email



Gosforth's Wild Web Logic Model

A Logic Model was created at the start of the project to outline the main inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.



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Logic models can be useful for determining how a project or intervention can achieve its outcomes. For GWW, both the evaluator and project team came back to this model at different points throughout the project to check progress and review how we were capturing information on each outcome. Project outcomes map onto The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes, with 'heritage' in this project referring to 'local nature'. Specific activity numbers are not shown here as targets were exceeded in almost every case. Statistics on each activity are instead presented throughout this report.

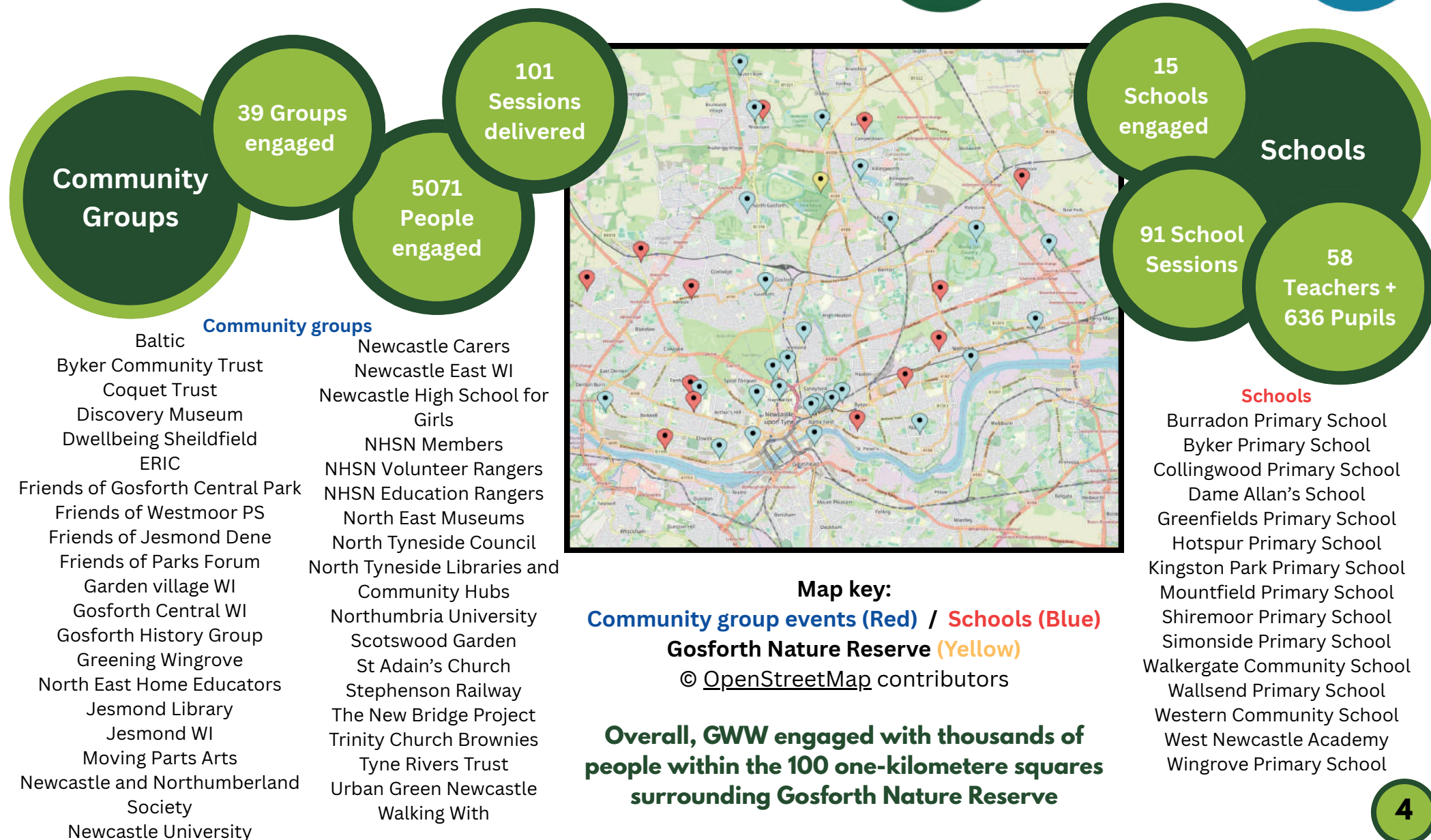
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
• Staff time, including new project staff and existing NHSN staff • Volunteers time, including Education Rangers, Student Naturalists, Event Support and Citizen Scientists • Venues, including Gosforth Nature Reserve, Community venues and School venues • Partners • Funding	• Community engagement events at GNR and community venues • Citizen science events • Sessions delivered with school groups • Nature Connection networking events • End of project celebration events • Blogs/articles • Social media posts • Newsletters 	• Project leaflet and graphics • W.E Beck video • Project webpages • Citizen science summary • Alphabets of local nature • NHSN Nature Connection Toolkit (adults) • Resources (e.g., worksheets, guides) 	• Heritage will be in a better condition • Heritage will be identified and better explained • People will have developed skills • People will have learned about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions • People will have a greater wellbeing • The funded organisation will be more resilient

Community Groups and Schools

Gosforth's Wild Web delivered nature sessions in schools and to community groups across Newcastle and North Tyneside.



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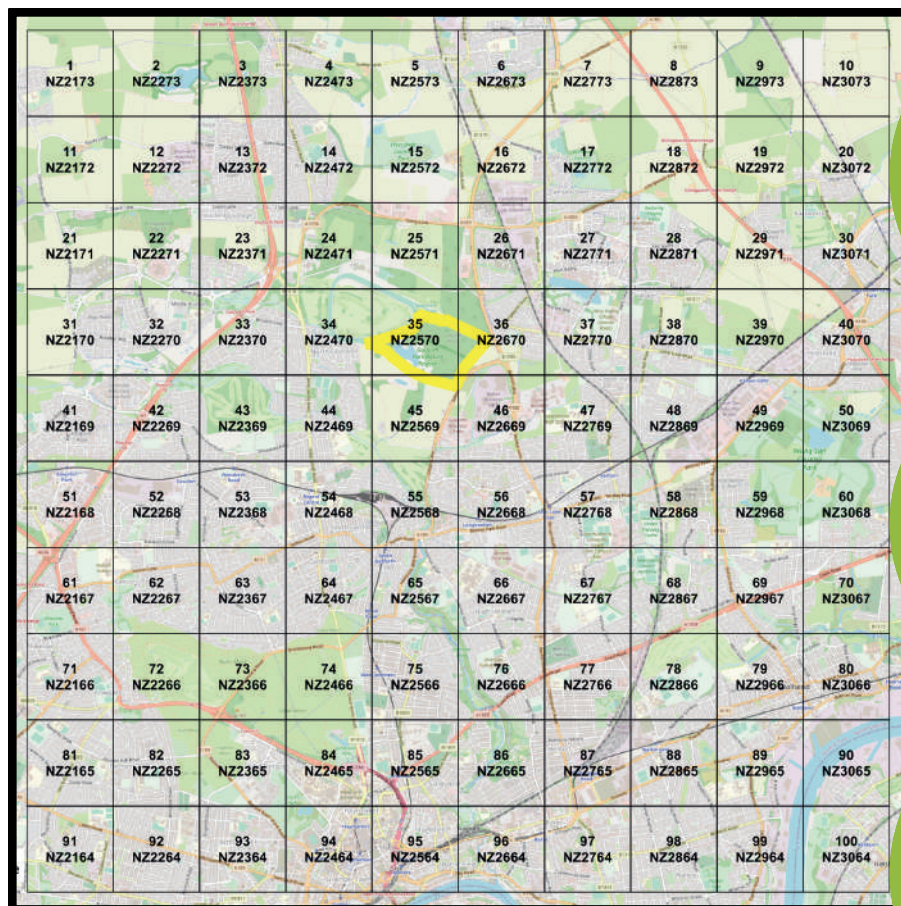
Citizen Science

Throughout the project, people were encouraged to submit species records on various citizen science platforms.

Both during and outside of project events hundreds of people used iRecord, iNaturalist and the NHSN website to record local species. Efforts focussed on 100 one-kilometre squares around Gosforth Nature Reserve.



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Gosforth Nature Reserve (Yellow)

© [OpenStreetMap](#) contributors

Total
records
= 54,036

Total
recorders
= 234

Total
species
= 2,539



"I have really enjoyed contributing to NHSN's Gosforth Wild Web. It's been a fun introduction to wildlife recording, helped improve my wildlife identification skills and given me the confidence to share my observations with others. It's also pleasing to know that my sightings are providing some insights into the natural world at a local level." Claire Partleton - Friends of Rising Sun Country Park

Citizen Scientists

Both new and experienced North-East naturalists contributed records from across Gosforth's Wild Web.



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Thank you to everyone who took part in Gosforth's Wild Web on iRecord and iNaturalist. Your discoveries have been so valuable, and together you have put Newcastle's wildlife on the map like never before. The following recorders contributed sightings direct to NHSN throughout the project, and many others helped record wildlife at events or through partner projects.

aadvith2017 Adibah aimeebarnett1 ala31 alison_naturalist Anderson, Colette Anderson, Emily andrew_em andyjs anna-b-2024 Astley, Brenda Atkinson, Andy Avanti, Chris Baldock, Katherine Barlow, Chris basil53000 Bennison, Susan Bertenshaw, Bill Bertoili, Ado bkwilding Black, Julia Bowe, Ron boyanat brandon1006 Burrow, Emily buzzmonk Byron, Fabian cannywilddi Carney, Paul caroline499 Carribine, Kimberley Cattan, Mima Chambers, Marie Chapman, Anne chitochi Clarke, Chris	Clark, Rhiannon Common, James Cook, Mike cormoranstrike Cowell, Ian crosbyjohnl Crump, Jamie Davison, Ellie Dawson, Ian dcfamilyhub dellywilko Dixon, John dkw19 Dobinson, Joe dolphin8 Doran, Denis dratomic Dunn, Lyndsey Dunton, Alana Dyson, Alison eastbentonamanda Eccles, Martin Edwards, Helen emily_jones333 emjadewallace emmah86 evie96585 Firbank, Michael fojocpauline Frankis, M. friends-of-joc-gill friendsrisingsun-countrypark Gammack, Neil gdring Gorbould, Georgia Gray, Jane	Greensmith, Rose Greer, Joanna Griffiths, Philip Hall, Sarah hakeemah Hamed, Pru hannanbongailut Hayes, Patrick hedgehoghan helendawe Hendrickson, Susan Henry, Lyla hfnash89 Hislop, Louise hlwalsh Horrocks, Emily Howdon, David Hurst, Jan isladog izzyoliver jackashley Jackson, Chris jamesy1974 Jarema, David Jeffries, Mike Jenkins, Amelia Jordan, Philip Kennedy, David kitty_ncl Knight, Tim Koelmans, Lydia lachenalia Leigh, Adam lily-may18 Lockey, Liz luckylou	luyc lynthatsit m_goddard MacFarlane, Helen madeleine113 manraj_layal mauritan1a McAvoy, Danny McDermott-Roberts, Alex Millican, John milo_cullinan Muir, Hollie Mujumdar, Neha Murray, John ne31 newcastlebirder Newman, Chris Newton, Samuel Nicholson, Isis nickynoodlehair nicola35 Nora, Mary Oatway, Rob O'Doherty, Oliver Oswald, Alice parlie Patterson, Tracy peterahumble phil_53 pollycwagenmann Pont, Neil Popple, David Port, Gordon Porton, George Powell, Catorina Price, Toby	Raffle, Helen Rankin, Charlotte rebecca6393 rhinomorg richard76204 richard79497 robert_lavin robhrt Robinson, Barry Robinson, Tim Rosco, Al Ross, Julie roxylargo ruth300 Rutter, Brian sallytav saunakpal Saunders, Janet sciencedad scotswoodgarden-youthgroups Scrimgeour, Cain Sedgwick, Icy Sedgewick, Laura Sendall, Molly Sewell, Alison Shorrock, Philip Shovlar, Aimee Simpson, Adrian Smith, Carter Smith, Dorothy Stein, Judith Stephenson, Anna Stephenson, Gary Stephenson, Jen Suggitt, Andrew Sura, Najmi	susanben syphon tasha43558 Tatman, Amber Taylor, Karen Thorneycroft, Lucy Todd, Alan tom77352 tonihamill townmoorneighbour treefanatic treelife Viljay, Lekshmi vivien3311 vivienne51231 Wade, Susan Wallace, Jonathan Ward, Rebecca Weatherell, Michael Webster, Anne Welfare, Mark Wells, James West, Liz White, Alan wildintrigue willmc123 Willoughby, Jeremy Wimbush, Abigail Wren, Christopher Young, Jane Where recorders names are unknown, usernames from iRecord & iNaturalist have been used
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Events

As well as community group and school events, Gosforth's Wild Web held networking and celebration events.

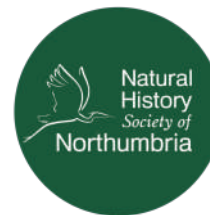
Three nature connection networking events were held at Gosforth Nature Reserve. These events brought together individuals, groups and organisations working in the local area on nature connection and related topics. Attendees heard updates from GWW and shared updates from their own projects whilst networking with others. The events provided opportunities for people to share best practice, challenges and ideas for further collaboration.

At the end of the project a celebration event brought together 72 people including community groups, schools, NHSN staff, volunteers and trustees. A final networking event also followed the next day with 21 people attending. The events were an opportunity to meet others involved in the project and to form new connections, as well as mark the successful end of the project and gather ideas to build upon.

Communications

The project used a range of communication channels available through NHSN to keep people updated on the project.

- Blog posts: 23 blog posts were posted on the NHSN website on a range of topics relating to the project
- Newsletter: 25 newsletters went out monthly to 556 subscribers
- Social media: Regular posts about Gosforth Wild Web were uploaded to NHSN social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn



Project outputs

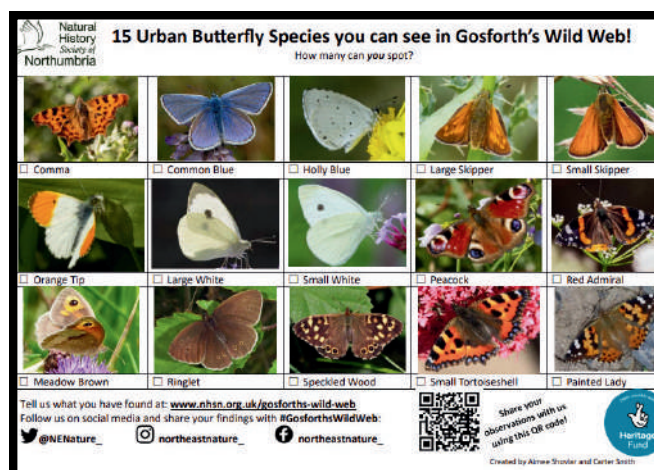
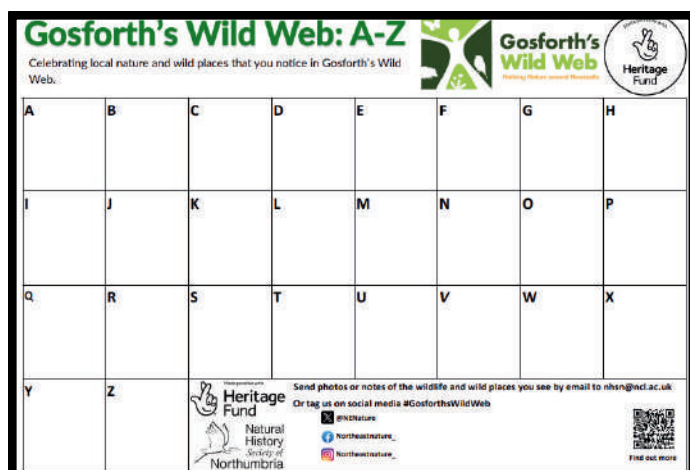
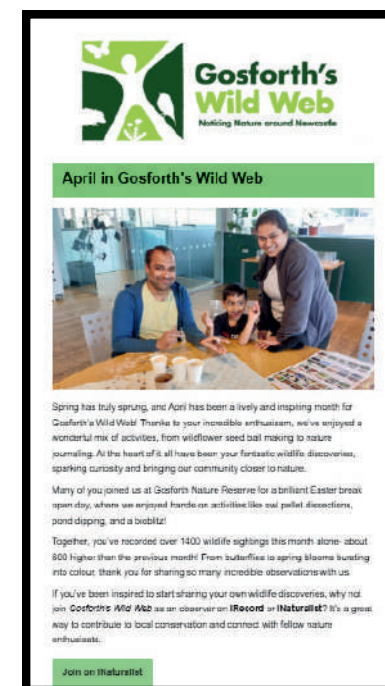
Many free resources were created to help people connect with and celebrate local nature.



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- **Project webpages** hosted on the NHSN website to provide **project updates** and links to resources created
- Participants were encouraged to notice nature near them by creating an **A-Z of the nature** in their neighbourhood using the template provided. A total of 31 alphabets were created with a range of different themes
- **19 spotter sheets** were made to help people notice and identify local nature
- **A video** was created to mark Gosforth Nature Reserve's centenary, celebrating the legacy of William Edward Beck who established the reserve.
- A nature connection toolkit for adults encourages people to engage with local nature through different activities and resources



Outcome 1: Local nature will be in a better condition

Increasing awareness and knowledge of local nature will help inform conservation in this area, now and in the future.

Through community and school engagement GWW has helped raise awareness and appreciation for nature and the environment. The project substantially increased citizen science records for the region, with many more records being submitted to the local records centre (ERIC) than in any other year. Some of these records are firsts for the region, tracking new species distributions. All of the records collected through GWW will be crucial for informing species and habitat conservation, as well as council decisions on planning applications - a key risk for Gosforth Nature Reserve. Furthermore, the project has inspired more community groups to continue to record and engage people in nature on their sites. For example, after GWW Friends of Jesmond Old Cemetery have set up their own iNaturalist group and implemented a nature trail through their site.

“Before this project I recorded local birds, and this project has inspired me to now record plant and insects, and I've enjoyed learning though attending events.”

Dave Jarema - Citizen Scientist

See more GWW citizen science highlights on page 19



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© Brian Rutter

First record of rare Barometer Earthstar for Northumberland



© Chris Barlow

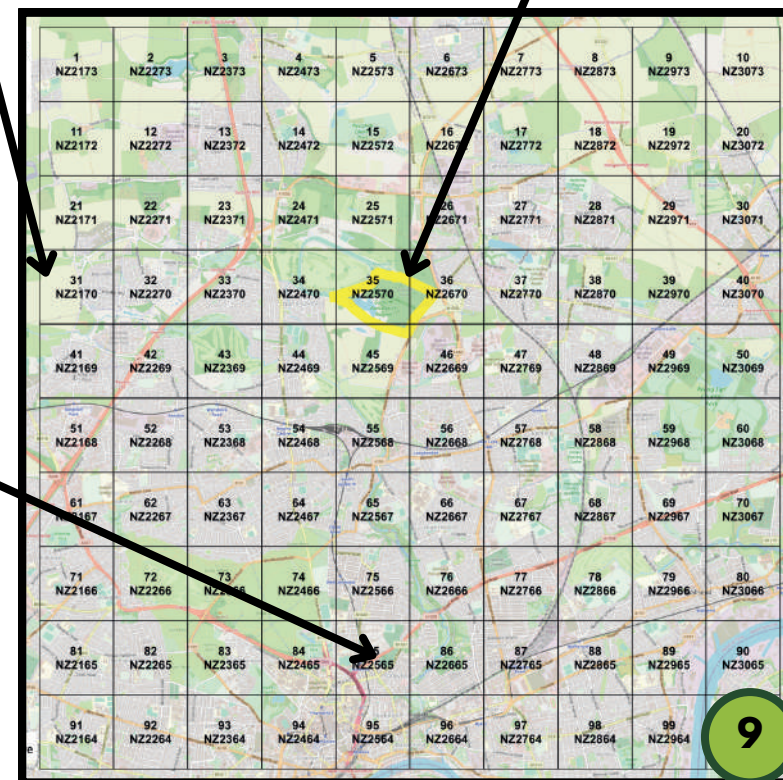
Cream-streaked Ladybird recorded for the first time from Jesmond Old Cemetery



© Christopher Wren



First confirmed breeding record of Little Egrets in the city during 2024 at GNR



Outcome 2: Local nature will be identified and explained better

Gosforth's Wild Web has encouraged people to notice and identify local urban wildlife and to share findings with others.

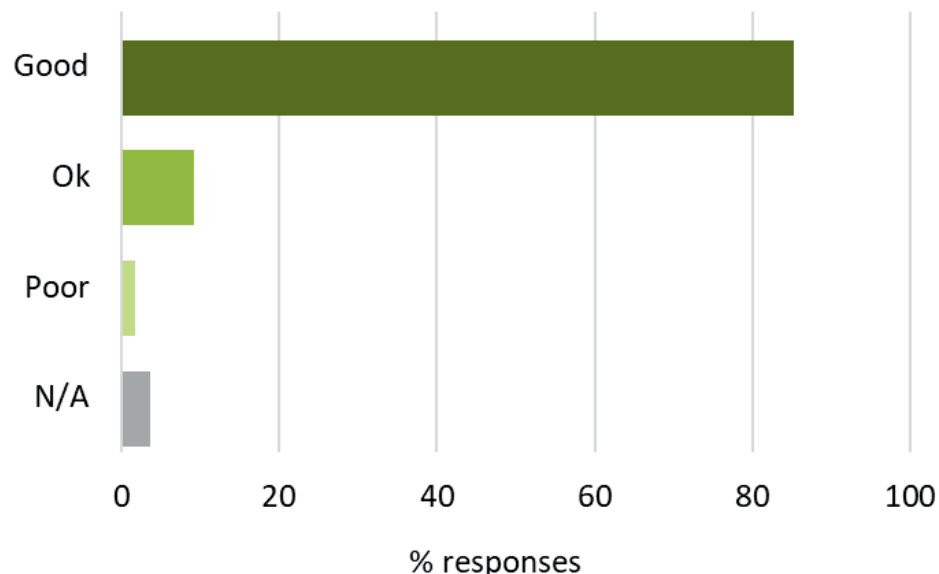
GWW has introduced both new and existing audiences to local nature. Through various resources, the project has raised awareness of the importance of urban nature and wildlife corridors. Fifteen people have created their own A to Z of local wildlife which will be accessioned into NHSN's North East Nature Archive as part of separate NLHF Dynamic Collections project. Overall, the project has increased knowledge and awareness of local nature, allowing both NHSN and participants of GWW to be able to identify and explain its importance better.



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After attending this event, are your skills in noticing urban wildlife...?



n = 100 citizen scientists + 8 community event attendees

"We were absolutely delighted to welcome Gosforth Wild Web into our school to work with Year 4 around local nature and wildlife. The sessions were a real highlight, making pupils aware of the wildlife on their doorstep and, importantly, helping them understand the need to care for it and showing them practical ways to do so."

School teacher

"No matter what season, there is always something to discover. We have really appreciated the generosity and expertise of the NHSN team. They have opened our eyes to the treasures in our local area that we wouldn't have noticed without their guidance."

Diane Thurston - Friends of Hebburn Park

"It's encouraged me to learn about new taxa, e.g., hoverflies which are under recorded."

Citizen scientist on GWW

Outcome 3: People will have developed skills

Staff, volunteers, students and participants have developed a range of skills from Gosforth's Wild Web.

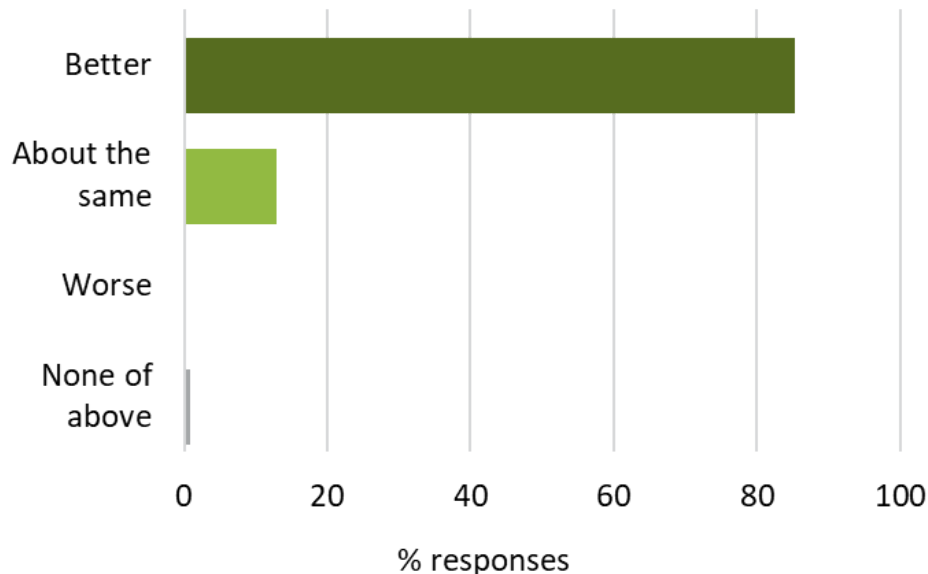
People involved in GWW have developed skills such as species identification, public speaking, events management and working with schools and vulnerable groups. Staff on the project have been involved in a range of training opportunities and all highlighted how the project has helped their career development. Volunteers and project participants, including school teachers and community group leaders, have gained skills in running their own nature activities, helping them to lead their own projects and sessions independently. Many also commented how GWW had helped build their confidence.



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After attending this event, is your knowledge about identifying wildlife...?



n = 100 citizen scientists + 8 community event attendees

“The main thing I've built on is my confidence. I've been out of employment for about 18 months now and when I started GWW I had quite low self-confidence but going to the bio blitzes helped my confidence and also my leadership skills of being able to speak to the public.” NHSN Volunteer

“Carrying out my role as Nature Ranger from September 2023 to August 2024 was my first ever job within the conservation sector, and it's brought me invaluable experience and memories that I'll take with me into my future career. I've gained so much confidence and knowledge along the way, from learning practical conservation skills to working directly with the local community. This project has been such a special part of my journey, and I'm so thankful for the experiences I've had and the incredible people I've met. I'll always look back on my time with Gosforth's Wild Web as a stepping stone that helped shape my future.”

Amber Tatman - NHSN Nature Ranger

Outcome 4: People will have learned about local nature, leading to change in ideas and actions

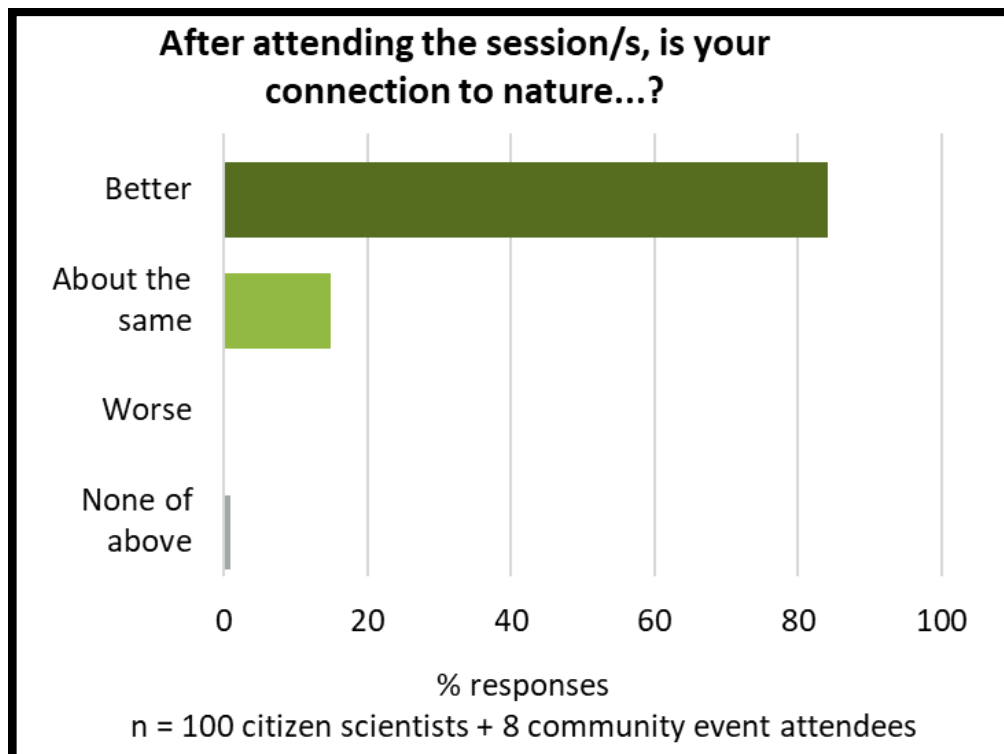


Gosforth's Wild Web
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Gosforth's Wild Web created opportunities for learning about local nature which led to meaningful change for individuals, groups and organisations.

Evidence of change in ideas and actions, including connection to nature, was evident across many individuals and groups. For example, North Tyneside libraries embedded nature connection activities into their service plans after attending a GWW event, and schools incorporated activities into curriculum teaching and forest school. Citizen scientists spoke about how the project had encouraged them to try something new or to sustain old hobbies.



“Following the training, we’ve been looking at our service plan and how we can continue the legacy of our nature project and we see Gosforth Wild Web and the nature reserve as being part of that. Getting more volunteers using the garden, making a Garden Club and really focusing children’s activities around the garden space as well and encouraging other libraries to do the same.”

Rachel Warkcup - North Tyneside Libraries

“I retired and needed some opportunity to resurrect an old hobby, the scheme inspired me to maintain it.” **Citizen scientist on GWW**

“The activities delivered were of a high quality—engaging, hands-on, and well thought through. Many of the ideas and approaches were so effective and fun that we plan to incorporate them into our own curriculum next year.” **School teacher**

“I loved the nature art because I love doing art. Today was so fun!” **Luna, aged 7**

Outcome 5: People will have a greater wellbeing

Spending time outdoors, connecting with local nature and socialising with others increased wellbeing for many people.

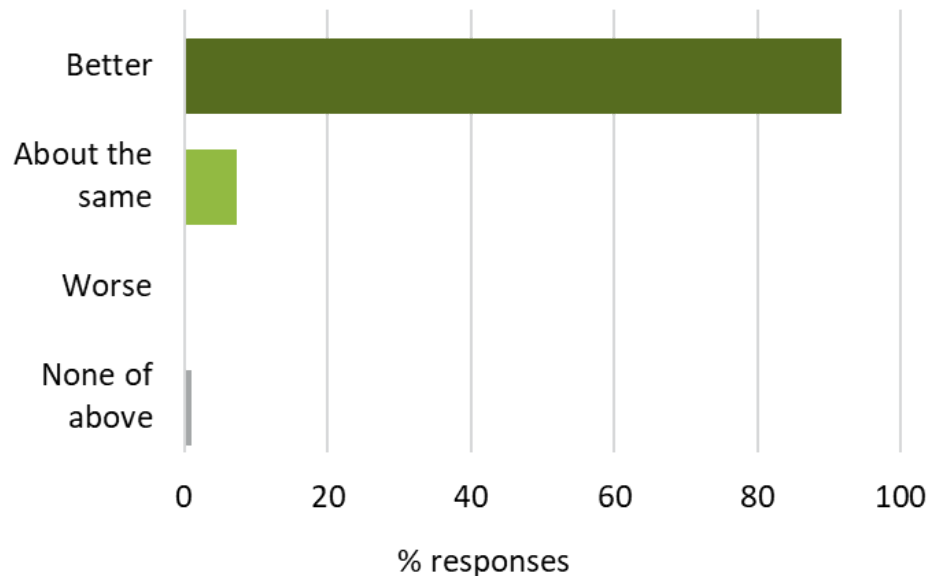
There is lots of evidence of the benefits of spending time outdoors and connecting to nature for health and wellbeing. In GWW events and sessions in schools and community groups had positive impacts on wellbeing, with many participants highlighting how spending time in local nature and connecting with others had helped them. For volunteers, as well as spending more time outside, the project helped people to gain confidence and skills, and to meet and talk to others which improved wellbeing for many.



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After attending this event, was your health and wellbeing...?



n = 100 citizen scientists + 8 community event attendees

"I used to spend a lot of time in the house but now I'm out at least once, if not more days of the week, either doing a Bio-blitz or a school event. It's really helped my wellbeing." GWW Volunteer

"The kids enjoyed it - just getting out of the classroom, as we have quite a long afternoon here, so it was a nice way to break up the afternoon. I definitely saw the benefit from being outside in the fresh air."

School teacher

"We have a lot of comments about how people feel safer going to certain places with groups in GWW as they wouldn't visit these places on their own. So I think that social element is helping people's well-being. And while we didn't necessarily anticipate this at the start we're getting a lot of repeat attendees coming to the events because they make them feel good and they're developing friendships with people."

NHSN Staff

Outcome 6: NHSN will be more resilient

From trialling new approaches to developing new connections, Gosforth's Wild Web has made NHSN more resilient.

GWW tested new ways of working for NHSN such as new partnerships, working with community and school groups and focussing on local urban nature. By testing different approaches, NHSN has and will be able to implement those that work best into their business and operating models, including their new four year strategy due to be published this year.

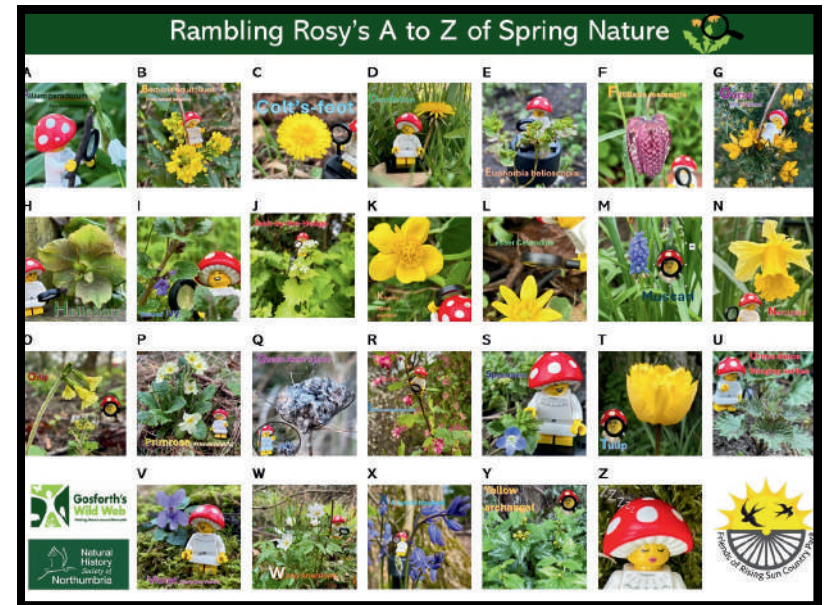
Through all of the engagement, the project has reached over 5,000 people in the local area. This will help raise the profile of NHSN, leading to increased membership, more support for fundraising and awareness campaigns, and potential for new future volunteers and trustees.

Project partnerships range from small community groups to large organisations such as the Wildlife Trusts, but all are crucial for increasing collaboration in the region and will be of benefit to NHSN as it moves forward. Examples of key partnerships include:

- Friends of Rising Sun Country Park: Supported in citizen science, helping to build their confidence in identifying local wildlife, producing a range of wildlife A-Z's (example pictured right) - encouraging people of all ages to explore the park. NHSN have strengthened relationships through events and networking opportunities and now have a stronger relationship with the education team from North Tyneside Council who operate at the park
- Friends Of Jesmond Old Cemetery: Supported with various events during GWW including a Bio-blitz of the site. The group have now created their own nature trail map for the cemetery (pictured right) and continue to work with NHSN to run events to engage visitors with nature.



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What worked well?

Exceeding targets: GWW exceeded almost every target set at the start of the project for numbers of people engaged with and number of sessions delivered. Some of the targets were exceeded by over double the number. This seemed to be largely achieved by the efficiency and effectiveness of the NHSN volunteer and staff teams who worked well together and had a genuine passion for the project!

Empowering others: GWW provided a great platform for empowering others to engage with their local nature in new ways. Volunteers spoke about how the project had empowered them on their own nature journeys from surveying their local greenspace, or exploring new taxa, to seeking out other engagement opportunities. GWW appears to be a great catalyst for many ripple effects across the region.

Inclusive: In line with the core values of NHSN, many project participants highlighted how inclusive GWW sessions were. Staff and volunteers were praised for making events accessible, friendly and fun and as a result both new and existing audiences could benefit from the sessions, learning and connecting with nature as well as other like-minded people.

“It was fantastic to see how inclusive the sessions were. Every child, regardless of ability, was involved and able to take something valuable away from the experience. The programme showed how outdoor education can inspire, and empower young people.”

School teacher

“This is the best event like it I’ve ever attended, absolutely loved it and felt very calm and at one with nature afterwards.”

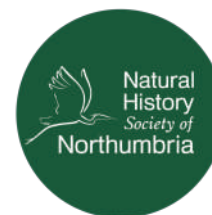
Session attendee



Target	Achieved
100 Volunteers	235
15 Community groups	39
15 Schools	15
1000 People reached	5000+
100 Community Engagement Events	101
100 Citizen Science Events	89

What could be improved?

Expand: Whilst the geographical focus of GWW worked well and gave a focus to the project, some participants felt they couldn't be part of the project as they were outside of the 100 one-kilometre square grid. Moving forward, it will be important for NHSN to bring approaches from GWW to this wider area to create an even larger web. Feedback also highlighted that although GWW had engaged with many schools and groups, with more capacity in the future it could expand on this. Ideas included working with secondary schools and youth centres to reach older children and young adults, and working more with other existing natural history, citizen science and community groups.



Integrate: It is an exciting time for NHSN with multiple large projects and a new strategic four-year plan to be published in 2025. There could be more integration of different projects and initiatives across the society to maximise benefits. For example, using the library and archives more with schools and community groups to link the history of local nature with the present. Or, by embedding citizen science into school sessions so young people have the opportunity to contribute species data from their school grounds. By creating a more integrated approach NHSN can offer more opportunities for a greater number of people.

Honest reflections

NHSN has been on a journey of evolving from an exclusive members society to a regional charity proactively engaging with more and a wider range of people.



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Previous NLHF investment has been a significant factor in NHSN's success in achieving this evolution over the last ten years, combined with a team culture of reflection and continuous improvement. GWW has provided an opportunity to continue on this journey and has been particularly important in the development of the new strategic plan, leading up to NHSN's 200th anniversary. Summarised below are some practical learnings from GWW to be taken forward as the charity continues to evolve and grow.

Staff changeover: There was a changeover in staff during the project which gave opportunities for different expertise, however also came with challenges. For example, the first year's staff were more experienced and interested in working with schools than community groups, so year one targets on schools were exceeded but left less time to build relationships with community groups in the second year. Planning in advance to ensure both school and community group engagement was equal throughout the project may have helped with this.

Sharing findings: The project generated a vast amount of citizen science records, however a more structured system for sharing these results in a quick and visually appealing way would have been beneficial. This has been incorporated into the new strategic plan with sharing discoveries emphasised as well as improving staff skills around storytelling.



"The society has changed over the last few years and its brilliant to see more work being done with children and more people visiting the reserve."

A long-standing member



"I just wanted to say thank you. This is one of the first walks I have been on when the lead hasn't just spoken at me in Latin and it feels like I've learnt so much."

Event attendee

Honest reflections continued

Synergy between projects: There could have been more synergy between the two NLHF funded projects at NHSN - GWW and Nature's Cure. One of the challenges which prevented this was staffing changes of the Project Archivist in the Nature's Cure project. The recruitment of 3 Heritage Researchers in the last 12 months of the project has helped with this and establishing more connected ways of working within the NHSN team is something which continues to be worked on.

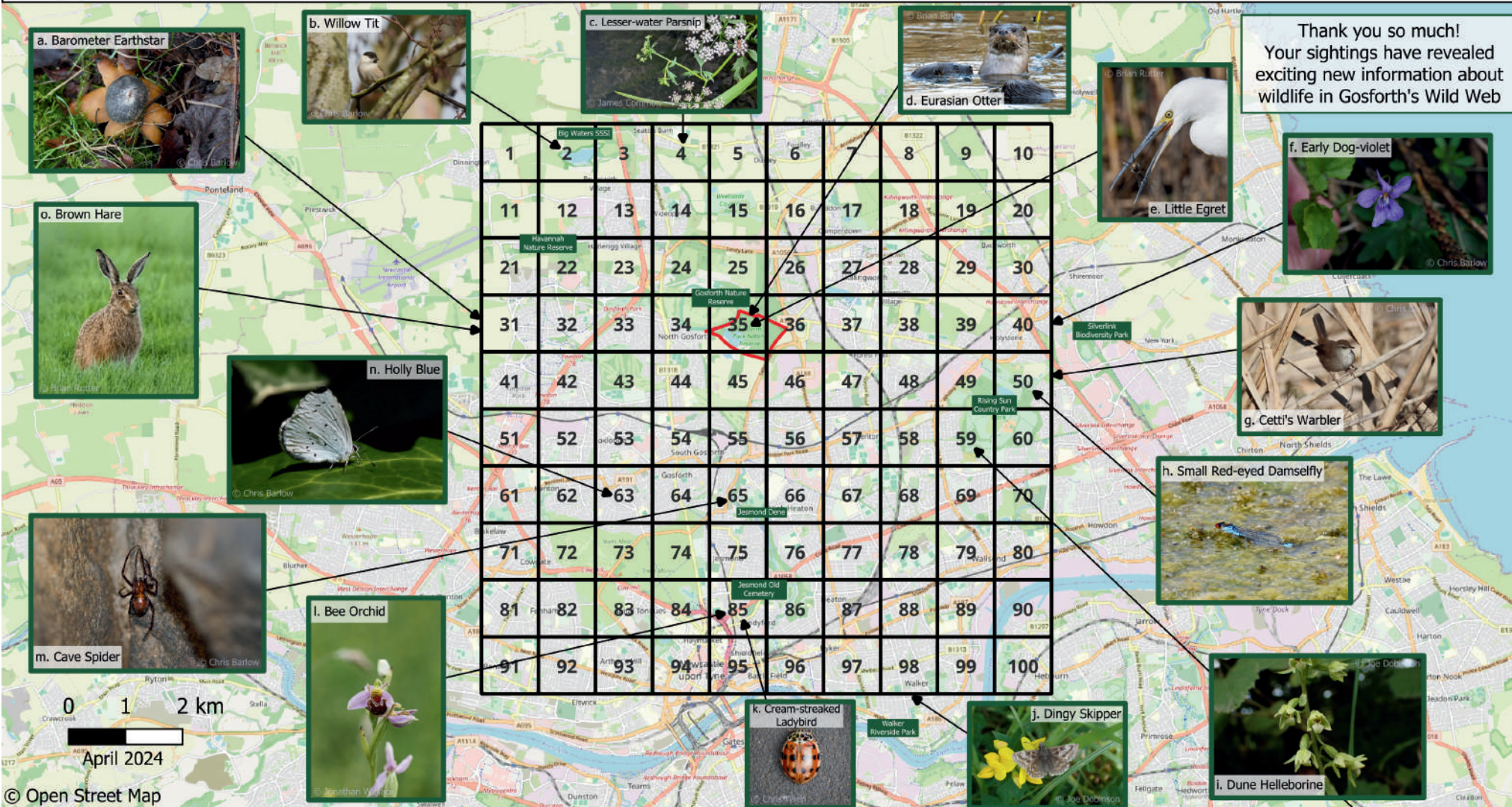
Linking to NHSNs history: NHSN has a rich history and is fortunate to have much of this accessible within its archives. Within GWW, more of this history could have been emphasised and linked to, for example more about the founder of GNR William Edward Beck including that coincidentally his initials were WEB.



Early career staff and volunteers: As an agile charity with small staff team, NHSN provides a really positive learning environment for early career staff where they can access many opportunities. All projects staff have been highly motivated and committed which has been crucial to project success. Involving the two Student Naturalists on year long voluntary placements in GWW brought great skills and additional capacity and improvements could be made to plan for more integration of these roles into future projects.

Your Highlights in Gosforth's Wild Web

100 years, 100 squares - exploring nature and connection as Gosforth Nature Reserve celebrates its centenary



Thank you so much!
Your sightings have revealed exciting new information about wildlife in Gosforth's Wild Web

a. First record of the rare Barometer Earthstar for Northumberland	f. Once known from only two sites in Northumberland, Early Dog-violet has colonised the city for the first time	k. Cream-streaked Ladybird arrived on Tyneside, recorded for the first time from Jesmond Old Cemetery
b. Britain's fastest declining bird, the Willow Tit, continues to find a home in the city	g. A new arrival in Gosforth's Wild Wild, Cetti's Warbler has spread north in recent years	l. Bee Orchids continue to spread and by 2025, had reached Newcastle City Centre
c. Once thought extinct in Northumberland but discovered in the Seaton Burn	h. First confirmed record of Small Red-eyed Damselfly north of the River Tyne	m. A new species for Northumberland, Cave Spiders were discovered in tunnels within Jesmond Dene
d. Otters spotted regularly including two cubs at Gosforth Nature Reserve	i. A new population of the rare Dune Helleborine was discovered at Rising Sun Country Park	n. Once a rare sight locally, the beautiful Holly Blue continues to spread locally
e. First confirmed breeding record of Little Egrets in the city during 2024	j. Dingy Skipper still thrives on post-industrial sites along the Tyne	o. Typically found in more rural areas, Brown Hares can still be found on the edge of the city

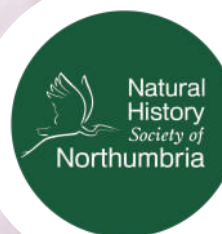
**Thank you to all the volunteers,
community groups, schools and
citizen scientists who contributed
to Gosforth's Wild Web!**

**With thanks to lottery players and NHSN
members for funding Gosforth's Wild Web**

Contact:

NHSN - nhsn@ncl.ac.uk

**Dr Sammy Mason (Evaluator) -
sammy@wildaboutscience.co.uk**



**Gosforth's
Wild Web**
Noticing Nature around Newcastle

