



There are 47 individual Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK, as well as the Isle of Man and Alderney. We manage 2,300 nature reserves, including around 400 woodlands, which cover more than 16,000 ha in England alone. These vital, protected refuges for wildlife are also great places for people to explore – more than 7 million visits were made to Trust reserves in 2012-13. Our woodland management generates a wide range of products, from charcoal to timber and garden furniture, which are sold locally to support ongoing conservation work. We are also end-users of sustainable timber and woodland products, and many of our 120 visitor centres have won awards for sustainability and eco-friendly design.

Looking beyond our reserves, we are working in partnership with thousands of landowners and businesses to achieve our vision of *A Living Landscape*: a recovery plan for nature which involves enlarging, improving, creating and joining up wildlife-rich areas of land to create a connected ecological network across the UK. Woodlands are a key part of that ecological network and we are working with landowners to promote sustainable woodland management, as well as woodland creation to buffer and reconnect fragmented sites, often via natural regeneration. We have 150 Living Landscape schemes across the UK – target areas where we are trying to restore and connect areas of land for nature – and many of these have a woodland focus. Alongside our own projects we are leading five of the 12 government-initiated Nature Improvement Areas in England and are heavily involved in the rest. Every year in the UK, we advise more than 5,000 landowners, provide more than 2,600 days of land management advice to businesses and give advice on more than 1,800 Local Wildlife Sites.

During 2012-13, more than 500,000 people took part in walks, talks, training courses and activities we organised, including outreach work with around 140,000 pupils and students. The Wildlife Trusts run Forest Schools the length and breadth of the UK, giving children the chance to make dens, sit around fires and explore nature on their own terms. Wildlife Trusts are increasingly working with local health care providers to provide access to nature as a form of ‘ecotherapy’. In 2013 Tees Valley Wildlife Trust concluded a six year study into the mental health benefits of volunteering and has developed partnerships with local GPs.

Some highlights from 2013

Reserves

- Laurie Lee Wood in the Slad Valley became Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust’s newest nature reserve after a successful fundraising appeal. This 3 ha site was once owned by author and nature-lover Laurie Lee and is a superb example of ancient woodland, bursting with an abundance of native flora and fauna including rare species such as white helleborine, with carpets of bluebells in spring.
- Suffolk Wildlife Trust’s Arger Fen & Spouses Vale nature reserves have been extended to form a 200 acre site, almost doubling the area protected for nature. Research is underway on-site, in partnership with the Forestry Commission, to investigate the genetic resistance of ash trees to *Chalara fraxinea*, the fungus that causes ash dieback disease.

- A successful local fundraising appeal allowed Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to safeguard Kings Farm Wood, on the edge of Swindon. This 18 hectare community woodland links existing chalk downland and ancient woodland, creating an expanse of wildlife-rich habitat and an ideal place for people to access nature on their doorstep.

Events

- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust hosted the sixth annual wood fair at the Trust's Roydon Woods nature reserve, within the New Forest National Park. This is a working woodland and the fair showcased a range of woodland products and offered demonstrations of woodland crafts.
- With the help of volunteers, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust planted more than 10,000 saplings this winter and collected thousands of seeds from veteran trees as part of the Value in Trees project. This three year project aims to safeguard the genetic stock of the Derbyshire's existing veteran trees and to plant more native tree species across the county.

Living Landscape schemes

- Management undertaken by Kent Wildlife Trust as part of the Blean Living Landscape scheme saw the return of the tree pipit to South Blean Woods. This 'Red Status' bird has declined severely in the UK over the past 20 years and is one of the species that the Trust aimed to encourage back into the area. More than 50 acres of pine plantation were clear felled and a further 90 acres were thinned, allowing swathes of foxgloves, grasses and native shrubby saplings to develop and providing an ideal habitat for tree pipits, as well as ground-nesting birds like nightjar and woodlark. In April 2013, a single tree pipit was heard and, as the season progressed, a total of seven were recorded.
- Devon Wildlife Trust's 'Exeter Wild City' Living Landscape received funding from Defra's Big Tree Plant scheme and from the Alcoa Foundation to plant at least 3,000 trees by 2015. With help from local volunteers, more than 2,000 have already been planted across the city on public and privately owned land, and within school and university grounds, to help wildlife move through the city and create attractive public spaces for people to enjoy.
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust launched a four-year project in September 2013 to create and manage wet woodland in the Upper Aire Valley floodplains. Wet woodland habitat in the UK has suffered in recent decades, yet this habitat is incredibly important to wildlife and provides valuable ecosystem services by storing water and reducing flood risk.
- Warwickshire Wildlife Trust's 'Princethorpe Woodlands' Living Landscape scheme surveyed more than 30km of hedgerow and restored 6km to help reconnect fragmented ancient woodlands. An intrinsic element of the Warwickshire countryside, hedgerows are a valuable semi-natural habitat in their own right and provide food, shelter and cover for many breeding birds, together with a whole variety of insects and small mammals.