



for birds  
for people  
for ever



**Wellbeing** through **wildlife**



# Wildlife contributes to wellbeing in the UK



Colin Brewer

- Access to natural green space improves our physical and mental health.
- Education in the natural environment benefits current and future generations.
- Nature gives us green infrastructure, which contributes to the sustainable regeneration of communities.
- The environment supports substantial economic activity, and wildlife can generate significant benefits for local economies.

## Summary

Nature conservation improves the quality of people's lives.

Protecting wildlife benefits society: it provides the resources to sustain and enhance our health; it offers educational opportunities; it contributes to the regeneration of sustainable communities and it supports and generates economic activity.

While we should protect nature for its own sake (because it has a right to exist), doing so safeguards the environment that we depend on for our quality of life and long-term survival, and hands over a healthy planet to future generations. In fulfilling our moral duty to conserve wildlife, we will contribute to the wider aim of sustainable development – delivering

environmental, social and economic objectives together, rather than treating them as trade-offs. Protecting wildlife is connected with sustainable development in many ways. It not only benefits the environment, but as this report shows, also contributes to our social welfare and economic activity, and birds are a good indicator of the state of our environment.

**Cover: reed planting involves volunteers of all ages**  
**Left: reedbed habitats provide accessible wildlife-rich green space on many RSPB reserves**

# Wildlife and **urban regeneration**

To be sustainable, communities need green infrastructure – where it is not available we need to create wildlife-rich green space.

Wherever communities need regenerating, wildlife can make a real difference to urban quality of life; as a vehicle for landscape-scale environmental enhancement; as a symbol of an attractive location; as a focal point for accessing and enjoying natural green space; and as a catalyst for better health.

Parks, allotments, woodland, nature reserves, gardens and playing fields are all part of our green infrastructure. A green environment helps an area portray a positive image and be a more attractive place to live. Properties adjacent to parks carry a 5–7% price premium, and high quality green

spaces contribute to the economic vitality of, and confidence in, a locality<sup>1</sup>. In the Thames Gateway, the current negative perceptions of the area's environment need to be reversed by restoring degraded landscapes and ex-industrial sites to make them feel safe and welcoming. The Greening the Gateway strategy<sup>2</sup> recognises this and sets out the Government's vision for the landscape of the Thames Gateway. It calls for the creation of functional green infrastructure to create a positive sense of place, provide environmental protection for local communities and enhance the quality of life for those who live and work there.

## **Green infrastructure**

All green spaces, from gardens to nature reserves, make up green infrastructure; a planned network of multi-functional inter-connected green space that creates a positive environmental image and provides a resource for communities.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

<sup>1</sup> Cabe Space (2004) *Does money grow on trees?*

<sup>2</sup> *Creating sustainable communities: greening the Gateway* – a greenspace strategy for Thames Gateway, ODPM.

# Wildlife and **education**

Giving children their first contact with nature can start a lifelong interest. Educational visits to nature reserves can link to the curriculum and improve pupils' confidence, self-esteem and learning skills.

Learning experiences in the real world, such as visits to nature reserves, add significantly to children's education. A quality outdoor educational experience, such as that provided by the RSPB, delivers benefits including greater depth of understanding and improved learning across all curriculum subjects, and a more powerful grasp of environmental issues<sup>3</sup>. Specifically, fieldwork can improve long-term memory and enable higher-order learning<sup>4</sup>.

Real world learning helps educational attainment and gives children greater knowledge of, and confidence in, the natural environment. Contact with

nature is also associated with:

- improved children's behaviour and self-discipline
- enhanced emotional development in schoolchildren
- reduced crime and aggression, and improved community integration<sup>5</sup>.

Real world learning can play a role in improving public health and wellbeing, and combating the likelihood of future generations becoming inactive and obese adults<sup>6</sup>. Direct contact with nature fascinates children, and they increase their physical activity levels when outdoors. In return, school work and cognitive functioning are improved by physical activity.

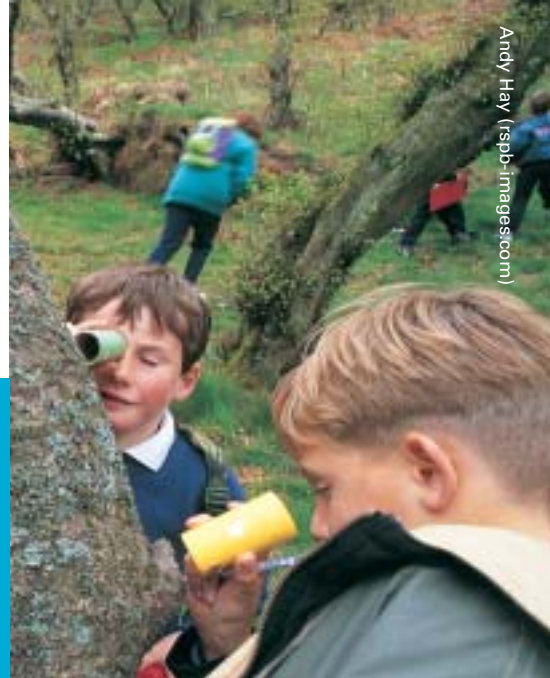
## **RSPB field teaching**

Every year, 47,000 pupils enjoy real world learning at RSPB nature reserves around the UK. The RSPB employs around 150 specially-trained part-time field teachers, in a ratio of one field teacher to 15 children. However, out-of-classroom learning is declining due to fear of accidents and litigation, increasingly busy timetables, costs and low prioritisation. The RSPB believes that society should make an effort to reverse this decline. By 2015, we aim for 100,000 pupils to enjoy visits to RSPB reserves each year.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas and Thompson (2004) *A child's place: why environment matters to children*. Green Alliance.

<sup>4</sup> Rickinson et al (2004) *A review of research on outdoor learning*. NFER.

<sup>5,6</sup> Bird W (2004) *Natural fit*. The RSPB.



# Wildlife and health

Natural spaces and the rich diversity of life they support contribute to a healthy living environment and provide a wide range of physical and mental health benefits.

## Green exercise

Physical inactivity is a major preventable health risk, which affects about 60% of the population. Correcting this is a public health priority. Accessible green space has the potential to increase our wellbeing as a society, and reduce the costs of health care. In terms of physical health, inactivity costs the UK over £8 billion a year<sup>7</sup>. It leads directly to chronic disease and lack of independence in the elderly.

Physical activities involving an environmental experience (green exercise) appear to be a sustainable way to improve public health. During

green exercise, such as the 1.41 million visits to RSPB reserves each year, physical exertion becomes an unnoticed secondary benefit from the enjoyable primary activity of being outdoors. New research<sup>8</sup> is also showing how the proximity and quality of nature affects our psychological wellbeing.

The World Health Organisation estimates that depression and depression-related illness will become the greatest source of ill-health by 2020<sup>9</sup>. Nature, through the role it plays in stimulating and encouraging physical activity, and through the direct impact it has on our emotional state, can help alleviate a range of psychological problems.



**Green exercise at an RSPB reserve:  
RSPB nature reserves receive 1.41  
million visits every year**

This positive correlation between natural green space and physical and psychological wellbeing is, regrettably, seldom reflected in health care policies, planning guidelines or economic strategies. There is evidence that green space in an urban environment can improve life expectancy and decrease health complaints<sup>10</sup>. The combination of natural green space with local opportunities for social walking and other activities means green exercise can be a cheap and sustainable way of preventing public health problems.

<sup>7</sup> & <sup>10</sup> Bird W (2004) *Natural fit*, The RSPB.

<sup>8</sup> Pretty J, Griffin M, Peacock J, Hine R, Sellens M and South N (2005) *A countryside for health and wellbeing: The physical and mental health benefits of green exercise*. University of Essex, Colchester.

<sup>9</sup> WHO (2001) *World Health Report*. World Health Organisation, Geneva.

# Wildlife and health

Rachel Fancy (RSPB)



**Improvements to Sutcliffe Park in London resulted in more users visiting the site for exercise, health, scenery and wildlife reasons. Therefore, access to green space rich in biodiversity provides the ideal opportunity for outdoor recreation and offers a valuable health resource for its users<sup>11</sup>.**

Human health ultimately depends on the health of other species and the integrity of global systems.

## Human and ecosystem health

Natural environments support wildlife and a range of ecosystem functions; they provide us with food and fuel, purify air and water, detoxify poisonous substances, break down waste, recycle nutrients, pollinate crops, make soils fertile, regulate the climate and store carbon. Though we routinely take these services for granted, they have a major impact on the health and wellbeing of people everywhere.

It follows that the conversion of natural habitats and our patterns of economic activity, which degrade or disrupt

ecosystem processes, ultimately impact on human health. The most rapid rates of conversion are occurring in parts of the world with the richest and most complicated natural systems with direct consequences for the UK population. One of the most obvious is the loss of plant and animal species that may contain valuable new medicines or medically beneficial information. In the US, half of prescribed drugs contain, or are derived from, compounds from nature<sup>12</sup>.



**To date, less than 1% of rainforest plants have been examined for medicinal uses, but even this tiny percentage yields a quarter of all prescription drugs<sup>13</sup>.**

<sup>11</sup> Pretty et al (2005) Research for the Environment Agency.

<sup>12</sup> Chivian E et al (2004) *Biodiversity: Its importance to human health*. Interim executive summary. The Center for Health and the Global Environment, Harvard Medical School.

<sup>13</sup> www.bbc.co.uk/nature/animals/features/321feature4.shtml.

# Wildlife and **local economies**

Interest in nature conservation is growing, and benefits to local people and rural economies are increasing. The environment supports substantial economic activity.



In the UK, uses of biodiversity directly support over 35,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and contribute over £4.8 billion to GDP<sup>14</sup>. Environment-related activities in the UK (broadly defined as those depending directly or indirectly on the quality of the natural environment) are estimated to support around 500,000 jobs and £18.6 billion of GDP.

- In England, the landscape and nature conservation sector provides 8,600 FTE jobs, and activities 'based on a high quality natural environment' support 299,000 FTEs and £7.6 billion gross value added<sup>15</sup>.
- In Scotland, there are an estimated 17,700 FTE jobs in natural

environment protection and management. Activities 'based on a high quality natural environment' support 92,800 FTEs (4% of Scottish jobs) and £2.2 billion gross value added. In the north of Scotland, the sector provides 9% of all jobs<sup>16</sup>.

- In Wales, the 'management, use and appreciation of the natural environment' is estimated to support 117,000 FTEs (over 10% of jobs), and total output from 'environment related activities' amounts to £8.8 billion<sup>17</sup>.
- There is no comparable study available for Northern Ireland.

Jobs in the nature conservation sector, requiring skills such as countryside management, visitor services, environmental education and an understanding of natural heritage, play a significant role in rural development<sup>18</sup>. For example, the 1,000 jobs supported by RSPB reserves in their local economies in the UK are valuable as a direct source of jobs and also for the seasonal and occupational diversity they bring to rural areas. Employment on RSPB reserves averages 7.1 FTE jobs per 1,000 hectares of productive land, and tends to bring benefits to sites that previously supported little or no economic activity<sup>19</sup>. Further employment is supported by spending from visitors to RSPB reserves.

<sup>14</sup> IUCN (2003) *Use of wild living resources in the UK*.

<sup>15</sup> GHK and GFA-RACE (2004) *Revealing the value of the natural environment in England*. Report to Defra.

<sup>16</sup> SNH (2004) *The role of the natural heritage in generating and supporting employment opportunities in Scotland*. Scottish Natural Heritage.

<sup>17</sup> *Valuing our environment: The economic impact of the environment in Wales*. (see [www.rspb.org.uk/policy/economicdevelopment/greeneconomy/wales.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/policy/economicdevelopment/greeneconomy/wales.asp)).

<sup>18</sup> Rayment, M and Dickie, I (2001) *Conservation works*. The RSPB.

<sup>19</sup> Sheil, A, Rayment, M and Burton, G (2002) *RSPB reserves and local economies* (see [www.rspb.org.uk/policy/Economicdevelopment/economics/local\\_economies/index.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/policy/Economicdevelopment/economics/local_economies/index.asp)).



# Case **studies**

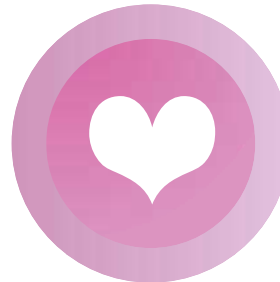
These case studies are arranged according to their main advantages to sustainable development – either **urban regeneration, education, health** benefits or fuelling the **local economy**. Many of the case studies have several, or all, of these positive benefits. Follow the symbols listed below to see how individual sites can reap benefits for people in many different ways.



**Urban regeneration**



**Education**



**Health**



**Local economy**

# Bringing **nature** into the community

'Old Moor demonstrates real action at the grass roots, and is an excellent example of positive work.'

John Healey MP, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, January 2004.

Sustainable communities need green infrastructure – where it is not available we need to create wildlife-rich green space. There are many areas across the UK with further potential for nature reserves to successfully aid urban regeneration.

## Old Moor, Barnsley

RSPB Old Moor nature reserve is part of a wider regeneration project to re-brand the Dearne Valley in South Yorkshire. Old Moor is a flagship reserve and an excellent example of a public and privately-funded project that has successfully contributed to the environmental, social and economic sustainability targets of a region.

The RSPB, working in partnership with other organisations, has transformed the Dearne Valley into a nationally important landscape for wildlife, making a significant contribution to nationally agreed strategies for enhancing nature. Ongoing investment has restored the landscape for wildlife and provided new facilities and learning opportunities for visitors and local communities. The site's award winning energy-efficient visitor centre makes use of renewable energy technologies: a biofuel burner, photovoltaic solar panels, a wind turbine and solar water heating.

In its first year, the visitor centre, restaurant and shop more than doubled visitor numbers to the site, and the glass-fronted classroom has provided nearly 4,000 schoolchildren from 80 schools with the important opportunity to learn about conservation and the environment. In addition, local businesses and community groups have been making full use of the conference facilities. Old Moor supports the local community by employing 24 members of staff and has increased the long-term viability of local business by adopting a local sourcing policy.



'This is an excellent example of European funds being used to bring our region's natural heritage closer to the communities of South Yorkshire. I am confident that RSPB Dearne Valley and Old Moor will be an important educational, recreational and economic resource for years to come.'

Timothy Kirkhope, MEP for Yorkshire and the Humber, November 2003.



'Creating sustainable communities is not just about housing. It is also about improving the surrounding countryside and the green spaces nearby. That's why the marshes are so important to protect the wildlife in the area and to give local people access to nature... an important new resource for the local community.'

Yvette Cooper MP – Minister for Planning and Housing

## Future urban wildlife

The RSPB has a proven track record of working to deliver quality green spaces in multi-million pound partnerships with major public bodies and private companies. We are developing urban biodiversity sites, bringing nature and green space closer to communities in many parts of the UK.

- **Newport Wetlands** – developing a 439-hectare nature reserve in South Wales.
- **Saltholme** – creating 380 hectares of natural green space on Teesside.
- **Barons Haugh** – developing a 107-hectare reserve as a resource for Motherwell.
- **Cliffe Pools** – restoring marshes accessible to major towns in north Kent.
- **Needingworth** – 700 hectares of green space in the Cambridgeshire Sustainable Communities Growth Area will include 32 km of new public rights of way.

## Rainham Marshes, London

The development of Rainham Marshes as an RSPB nature reserve will create newly-accessible, high quality, natural green space in a densely populated area of the Thames Gateway. The reserve will deliver benefits for people and wildlife:

- an environment and education centre and access improvements will meet local people's top priorities for using the site – somewhere for peaceful walks and provision for families and local schools.
- biodiversity will be improved on 200 hectares of land supporting wintering ducks, geese, breeding wading birds, scarce invertebrates and mammals such as water voles.
- a community education initiative will engage local young people with the opportunities at the site.

The positive economic impact of the development on the local area includes over £8 million of recent and planned investment in the site. Spending by visitors is expected to support 37 FTE jobs in the Thurrock area by 2010. More importantly, the reserve will enable local communities to connect with wildlife and green space on their doorstep. It will improve the attractiveness of the Thames Gateway, contributing to its wider regeneration.

# Real world learning

Children need access to sites where they can experience nature at first hand. If we want future generations to have a social and environmental conscience, we have to inspire in them a love of nature and the community.

## RSPB Vane Farm nature reserve, Perth and Kinross



RSPB Vane Farm is a 230-hectare nature reserve. It has a mosaic of upland and lowland habitats supporting breeding wading birds, farmland birds, wintering ducks and geese and woodland birds. Direct employment, reserve management and spending by 70,000 annual visitors are estimated to support 28.2 FTE jobs in the local economy. The energy-efficient visitor centre has a solar photovoltaic energy system and low-energy lighting.

Field teaching at Vane Farm is very practical and involves hands-on activities. Each visit starts with a short introduction to the RSPB and to Vane Farm before the children venture out on the reserve. Vane Farm offers programmes for children from Nursery (age 3–4), right through primary and secondary school to Advanced Higher pupils in 6th year. The topics studied are directly linked to the national curriculum and draw on the site's natural assets using the excellent facilities. The site has dedicated outdoor study areas, a small classroom – in case of wet weather – and three birdwatching hides overlooking the Vane wetlands and Loch Leven.

Every school child gets the opportunity for the maximum amount of hands-on exploration of the environment, usually including pond-dipping and minibeast investigations. Worksheets are used where appropriate to stimulate observations and to record findings. The programmes develop observation skills and basic field study techniques, as well as inspiring wonder and respect for the natural world.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

Hands-on learning at Rye Meads

## Rye Meads, Lee Valley, Hertfordshire



We upgraded the teaching facilities at RSPB Rye Meads nature reserve in 2002. The new visitor centre has a solar photovoltaic energy system and bespoke teaching facilities in the form of a large, dividable classroom complete with teaching murals. We have also created a pond-dipping area and outdoor teaching zone. A small natural amphitheatre, complete with built-in white board, enables sessions to be held in the open air, weather permitting.

The reserve offers programmes for children aged from Key Stage 1 (5–7) up to AS/A2 level. The programmes for younger age groups focus on sensory exploration (First Nature), habitat comparison, bird and animal adaptations and Rye Meads' own human geography module. Secondary programmes concentrate on higher-level topics such as conservation and habitat management, pollution, and leisure and tourism.

## Wildlife for All

Wildlife for All is a joint RSPB and Royal Parks Agency education and community engagement project that aims to raise awareness of London's natural heritage. It is directed at audiences whose use of the Royal Parks is relatively low, such as families with pre-school age children and low-income households. Since 2003, the project has: engaged with more than 22,000 people; run 53 tailored events, 120 public events and more than 40 school visits for 1,300 local children; and attracted 90 volunteers.

The project is proactive in inviting schools with a high proportion of low income families to increase awareness of the available facilities. The visits are free to children and their families. There is no charge for the teaching, and schools are targeted within walking distance of the Parks, meaning there is no transport cost and the Parks remain a local teaching resource after the project finishes.

For many of the schoolchildren, the half-day session in environmental education is their first experience of green space and wildlife. The project team works with the schools to deliver programmes that meet their individual needs, ie identifying and dealing with discipline problems, providing support to children where English is not a first language and resolving access problems for children with physical disabilities. The children receive encouragement to come back to the Parks with their families.

Wildlife for All also uses natural history guides to lead health walks in four London Parks. These have been targeted at elderly community groups and people with health issues that would benefit from the exercise from walking.

**Wildlife for All encourages people from across society to enjoy nature in London's Royal Parks**



Martyn Foster (RSPB)



David Klaer (rspb-images.com)

**Upland landscapes rich in wildlife are the focus of an RSPB education project in Ayrshire**

## Ayrshire coalfields

The Ayrshire coalfields are an area of high unemployment and social deprivation in need of regeneration. An RSPB project was based around the former mining towns of Auchenleck and Cumnock, in East Ayrshire, where the upland areas surrounding the populated valleys are rich in biodiversity. There is a strong tradition of recreational use of the uplands, but little local knowledge of their national importance for wildlife.

The project worked with 4,436 pupils at 15 primary schools and two secondary schools to:

- increase teachers' confidence in dealing with environmental issues
- encourage greater use of the local environment as a teaching resource
- provide locally relevant teaching materials.

The secondary schools element of the project dealt with sustainable development using three local issues: deep and opencast mining, agriculture and energy generation.

# Healthy living



David Levenson (rspb-images.com)

Everyone needs access to natural green space for recreation. The physical and mental health benefits of green exercise are huge.

## RSPB Sandwell Valley nature reserve



RSPB Sandwell Valley provides a haven for people and wildlife a few miles from the middle of Birmingham. The reserve has a schools' education programme that hosts 3,000 pupils per year, and a Community Education initiative, designed to involve local people of all ages. RSPB volunteer Gordon MacConnell volunteered to work with school groups at Sandwell Valley. As well as helping in the reserve centre, he put his previous experience as a primary school teacher to good use as a volunteer field teacher. Having become familiar with the routine, he was eventually invited to become a paid field teacher:

'I am both a volunteer with the RSPB and also an employee. I am having a great time and reckon volunteering is one of the best things I have ever done. Do volunteer if you want to be stimulated, occupied and active, both mentally and physically.'

## Volunteering



More than 13,000 volunteers, who contribute 600,000 hours of work, worth £3.48 million each year, are an essential part of the RSPB. Approximately 40% of volunteering for the RSPB is devoted to physically active and often regular activities, involving around 4,500 individuals.

An estimated one in six RSPB volunteers described themselves as 'inactive' before volunteering, and over 80% intend to continue volunteering. Therefore, the RSPB has helped stimulate an estimated 2,000 physically inactive people to start, and continue, volunteering! Active volunteering roles with the RSPB provide the facility for nature to stimulate physical activity, directly improving people's health and saving the UK significant health costs as a result.



David Klaer (rspb-images.com)

<sup>20&21</sup> Bird W (2004) *Natural fit*. The RSPB.

<sup>22</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)

<sup>23</sup> Land Reform (Scotland) Act, 2003

**Regular health walks are organised at RSPB Sandwell Valley nature reserve and Forge Mill Local Nature Reserve in Sandwell. A dedicated group of walkers has been established, while new people continue to join regularly. Weekly attendance is over 20 people who meet at the RSPB visitor centre and cover a two-mile route around the reserves. Feedback from walkers shows that they feel safer walking as part of an organised and sociable group.**

## Health walks

Health walks started in south Oxfordshire in 1995 based on the hypothesis that social and environmental factors are both essential to maintaining levels of physical activity within a community setting. There are now more than 350 similar schemes, being led by over 10,000 trained volunteers in the UK, co-ordinated by the British Heart Foundation and Countryside Agency as the 'Walking the Way to Health' initiative. Although the walks are designed to increase fitness and improve health, studies have shown that a chance to be in the countryside is the joint top reason people continue with them. Sixty-four percent of participants say that health walks have changed their transport habits, with 27% saying that they now walk, rather than drive, short distances<sup>20</sup>.

Walking achieves the benefits of physical activity without needing increased fitness levels and with low risk of injury. Recreational walking is one of the few physical activities that is increasing in popularity<sup>21</sup>. Legislative changes in England and Wales<sup>22</sup>, and Scotland<sup>23</sup>, support access to countryside and hills, where natural heritage is one of the great attractions.



David Levenson (rspb-images.com)

## Local economy – bringing money into the community

Rural wildlife tourism is big business. People will travel to see nature spectacles, spending money at local shops and other businesses. Rare species can be an asset to the local economy.

### Red kites: regenerating the UK's skies

The successful re-introduction of red kites in the UK has raised widespread interest among wildlife watchers and the general public. The view of a red kite over the countryside adds value to the landscape and brings economic benefits.

Local and regional authorities have taken red kites as a flagship species for raising public awareness of the importance of their area for birds and other wildlife. Kite trails, such as around Loch Ken in Galloway, have become valuable assets to local communities. More and more businesses are using the red kite as a marketing tool. In the Chilterns, a Regional Development Agency project is helping local businesses to promote themselves by using red kites.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, sent a personal message of support for the Northern Kites initiative, which he described as 'an imaginative and visionary approach to bringing wildlife to the people of the North East [of England]. The project is a real exemplar of sustainable development bringing environmental, economic and social benefits. Now one million people will be able to experience first hand an amazing wildlife spectacle right on their own doorsteps.'



Andy Hax (rspb-images.com)

The chough became extinct in Cornwall in 1973. As a partner in the Cornwall Chough Project, the RSPB is working to champion the recovery of the chough in Cornwall.

### Cornish choughs: a sportsman's tribute

In the 1960s, Richard Sharp played rugby for Cornwall, England and the British Lions, and cricket for Cornwall. After choughs returned to Cornwall in 2001, Richard was one of 18,000 annual visitors to the chough viewpoint:

'I'd always been proud of my county cricket tie, which prominently displays the chough. In April 2003, I saw two choughs in the wild in Cornwall for the first time, three days before going into hospital for a hip operation. While waiting for the operation, I thought how wonderful it would be to see the choughs again. Six weeks later, I returned to see three choughs: two adults and a young one. A wonderful sight and a memorable moment.'<sup>24</sup>



## Agri-environment schemes: jobs and wildlife £

A significant part of the UK's employment reliant on natural heritage is supported by environmental schemes in agriculture. Both small-scale biodiversity management schemes and landscape-scale schemes have been shown to bring economic benefits to the farmers involved:

- a Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) designed to help curlew buntings in Devon benefited the species and helped farmers – 89% said CSS had increased their profitability, and the scheme resulted in a small increase in farm labour<sup>25</sup>.
- an assessment of Tir Gofal, the agri-environment scheme in Wales, found that the scheme maintained or increased household income for 92% of the farms involved, while also increasing demand for labour. Much of this labour demand helps safeguard existing farm employment, but the scheme has also created 112 FTE jobs in the Welsh rural economy<sup>26</sup>.



**The Environmental Stewardship agri-environment scheme is available to all farmers in England**

## Tourist travel and sustainable development

Environmental activities, as with many aspects of our society, face ongoing challenges to become truly sustainable. For example, wildlife may be a sustainable rural tourist attraction, but the resulting economic benefits often rely on unsustainable transport systems. These are challenges that the RSPB is working to overcome; for example, we promote greener transport options for visitors to our nature reserves.

## Osprey watching £

The quality of the natural environment is a key aspect of tourism in the UK. Birds, particularly spectacular and symbolic species, can be visitor attractions in their own right. For example, the osprey recolonised the UK in the 1950s, and its successful spread across Scotland and into Cumbria and North Wales has brought economic benefits to those areas. The continual flow of visitors to see this spectacular species reflects its widespread and sustained popularity. There are now nine osprey-watching sites in the UK that are collectively worth over £2.5 million to their local economies.

The local economic benefits of ospreys that bred in the Lake District in 2001 (the first English pair for over 150 years) were particularly significant, as they helped the local economy recover from the devastating effects of foot and mouth disease. As osprey project member Jill Damment recalls, the 70,000 annual visitors made a real difference:

'It's fair to say that those two ospreys saved a lot of businesses. The café at the bottom of the hill hadn't seen a single customer in two months, but as soon as the osprey project took off they were inundated.'

<sup>24</sup> The Cornwall Chough Project (2004) *Return of the Cornish chough*. Defra, English Nature, National Trust, the RSPB.

<sup>25</sup> Rayment, M and Dickie, I (2001) *Conservation works*. The RSPB.

<sup>26</sup> Agra CEAS Consulting (2005) *Socio-economic evaluation of Tir Gofal*. Report for Countryside Council for Wales and Welsh Assembly Government.

# Local economy – bringing money into the community

## Boston Wash Banks, Lincolnshire



The RSPB manages two nature reserves, Freiston Shore and Frampton Marsh, in the south-west corner of The Wash, near Boston in Lincolnshire. The improvement of flood defences at Freiston Shore has created new wildlife interest, and habitat creation at Frampton has the potential to further increase the recreational and economic benefits of wildlife for the area.

Freiston Shore is an 858-hectare RSPB reserve and the site of one of the largest managed realignment projects (moving back from the coastline) in the UK, involving the realignment of 1.75 km of flood defences creating 66 hectares of intertidal habitat. The realignment improved the standard of flood defence protection and was the most sustainable option economically and environmentally. Extracting earth for the works has created a saline lagoon, a valuable wildlife habitat and a new reserve that attracts over 60,000 visitors per year. The reserve has a field teaching programme and is estimated to support six FTE jobs in the local area.

The current expansion of the RSPB's nature reserve at Frampton Marsh will bring a range of economic benefits to the local area. Direct employment in managing the reserve is anticipated to be at least three FTE jobs. In addition, the development of habitats at the site will involve an average of £130,000 of expenditure per year, supporting an estimated 4.5 FTE local jobs. The new habitat creation will provide year-round wildlife interest for visitors, with the potential to attract significant visitor spending to the area. If suitable visitor infrastructure can be developed at Frampton Marsh, the potential additional visitor spending in the local economy is estimated at £250,000, which would support seven FTE jobs. In total, the nature reserve development at Frampton could bring approximately 14 FTE jobs to the local area.



The saline lagoon at RSPB Freiston Shore nature reserve supports 30 pairs of avocets

## RSPB Lake Vyrnwy nature reserve, Powys



This 10,080-hectare reserve managed by the RSPB is owned by Severn Trent Water (STW). As part of the Berwyn uplands, it is one of only a few upland areas in Wales containing a wide range of characteristic upland habitats and birds. RSPB management of the site integrates wildlife conservation in the uplands with farming and forestry, and also benefits STW through sensitive management of its water catchment.

Direct employment and visitor spending are of primary importance at Lake Vyrnwy. The 10.3 FTE tourism jobs and seven FTE jobs in visitor and conservation management because of the RSPB's presence at the reserve are additional to those that would be expected from agricultural management alone. They are of great importance to the local economy, in an area of limited employment opportunities and high reliance on agriculture.

## Cetacean tourism in Scotland

An estimated 240,000 tourists per year are involved in whale and dolphin watching activities in west Scotland, which directly supports 115 jobs. The total income generated by whale tourism in rural west Scotland is approximately £8 million, and in remote rural areas, may account for as much as 12% of total tourist income<sup>27</sup>.



C. Gomersall (rspb-images.com)

**Above: dolphin tourism generates money and jobs. Below: Argyll Islands**

## Nàdair: sustainable heritage development on the Argyll Islands

The Nàdair<sup>28</sup> area scheme has supported the restoration and promotion of heritage across the Argyll Islands. The programme involves 31 projects spending £3.3 million: 60% from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with other contributions from public bodies and project lead partners. The three-year programme has brought a wide variety of benefits, including directly creating or safeguarding the equivalent of 31 FTE jobs and involving 134 volunteers. The heritage enhancement and interpretation has boosted local tourism.

The scheme has increased the capacity of local communities to plan and execute projects. A strong local team has developed from its successful co-ordination, which has now taken on a second programme of projects for HLF. The creation of Nàdair Support Services will ensure a competent exit strategy and the continuation of Nàdair into the foreseeable future. Nàdair now provides the natural point of reference for community project activities in the Argyll Atlantic Islands.

The RSPB was involved in Nàdair from the outset, encouraging the partnership and setting up and initially chairing the Nàdair Trust. Several of the projects have enhanced the natural heritage of the islands, including RSPB work for corncrakes, choughs and other wildlife on Islay, Mull, Colonsay, Oronsay, Tiree and Coll. Other biodiversity projects have included: community sea life training; the development by the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust of the *Blue Planet* yacht as a floating classroom; and an RSPB education project for all 19 primary and five secondary schools (over 2,500 pupils) serving the islands, providing their teachers with guidance, training and materials to increase pupils' understanding of the area's outstanding environment.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

Natural heritage enhancement plays a significant role in the area's tourism industry, which has been helped through improved access and brochures publicising heritage-tourism attractions assisted by Nàdair, such as:

- **Finlaggan** – conserving Islay's ancient settlement of the Lord of the Isles
- **Croft House restoration** – a community project to freeze in time the typical home and belongings of a Lismore inhabitant from 1850
- **Tiree Chapels** and **pilgrimage trail**.

<sup>27</sup> Warburton et al (2001) *Whale watching in West Scotland*. Report for Defra.

<sup>28</sup> The Nàdair Trust – *Nature and sustainable development in the Argyll Atlantic Islands* – Scotland's sea kingdom. Tourist Information Centre. Oban. [www.nadair.org.uk](http://www.nadair.org.uk)

## Our thanks to:

**Wildlife for All:** Royal Parks Agency. **RSPB Rainham Marshes, London:** Heritage Lottery Fund, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation, East of England Development Agency, South Essex Green Grid, Bridge House Trust, Cleanaway Havering Riverside Trust, WREN, Rail Link Countryside Initiative, Defra via Countryside Stewardship and Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, DTI, Countryside Agency, English Nature, Environment Agency, London Borough of Havering, Thurrock Unitary Authority. **RSPB Vane Farm nature reserve, Perth and Kinross:** SITA Environmental Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department, Fife Council, Dundee Council, Falkirk Council, Stirling Council, Dziniak Charitable Trust, The Gillman Trust, The Gannochy Trust, NWET. **RSPB Rye Meads, Lee Valley, Hertfordshire:** The Ashby Trust, The WF Southall Trust, Heritage Lottery Fund, Thames Water, RMC Environment Fund, Energy Saving Trust, Environment Agency, Lafarge Aggregates Ltd, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority. **Ayrshire coalfields:** The RSPB, East Ayrshire Council (Department of Education and Social Services), Scottish Natural Heritage, The Hugh Fraser Trust, Heritage Lottery Fund, local primary schools. **Red kites: regenerating the UK's skies:** the RSPB, English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage, *Gateshead 'Northern Kites'*, Gateshead Council, Northumbrian Water, National Trust, Forestry Commission England, Heritage Lottery Fund, SITA Environmental Trust. *Chilterns:* Southern England Kite Group. *Yorkshire:* Harewood Estate, Yorkshire Water. *Scotland:* SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Raptor Study Groups, LEADER+, Making Tracks. *Wales:* Welsh Kite Trust. **Cornish Chough Project:** Defra, English Nature, The National Trust, the RSPB. **Osprey watching:** Lake District Osprey Project, The Forestry Commission, Lake District National Park Authority. **Boston Wash Banks, Lincolnshire:** The Environment Agency, the RSPB, Lincolnshire County Council, Boston Borough Council. **RSPB Lake Vyrnwy nature reserve:** The RSPB, Forestry Commission Wales, Severn Trent Water – working together as Vyrnwy Partnership. **Nàdair sustainable heritage development on the Argyll Islands:** Nàdair Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Scottish Natural Heritage, Argyll and Islands Enterprise, Argyll and Bute Council, Historic Scotland. **RSPB Sandwell valley nature reserve:** SITA, Ibstock Cory Environment Trust, Scottish and Southern Energy, The Big Lottery / English Nature. **RSPB Old Moor nature reserve:** Yorkshire Forward, HLF, Barnsley M B Council, Environment Agency and WREN.

Protecting wildlife benefits society: it supports and generates economic activity; it provides the resources to sustain and enhance our health; it offers educational opportunities; and it can contribute to the regeneration of sustainable communities.

## For further information, please contact us:

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To download a PDF of *Wellbeing through wildlife* visit:

[www.rspb.org.uk/policy/economicdevelopment](http://www.rspb.org.uk/policy/economicdevelopment)



The RSPB is the UK charity working to secure a healthy environment for birds and wildlife, helping to create a better world for us all. We belong to BirdLife International, the global partnership of bird conservation organisations.

