

The RSPB

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The RSPB is the 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.

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for birds
for people
for ever



THE RSPB ANNUAL REVIEW
2004 – 2005

This review is a snapshot of the RSPB and its work at the end of the 2004–2005 year. Much of it looks at our achievements against the targets that we set ourselves for bird and wildlife conservation. We continually review conservation priorities and our plans to meet them, in a fast-changing world. Some issues, such as pollution of the sea or the loss of certain habitats, have been with us for a long time; others, such as the impacts of climate change, have rapidly increased in importance.

Welcome to the RSPB annual review 2004–2005

What is the RSPB?

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. Our work is driven by a passionate belief that:

- birds and other wildlife enrich people's lives
- the health of bird populations reflects the health of the planet, on which our future depends
- we all have a responsibility to protect biodiversity.

The RSPB has more than a million members, 13,000 volunteers and 1,500 staff. Our 190 nature reserves, 10 regional offices and four country offices ensure a strong and effective local presence across the UK.

What do we do?

- We champion birds and the environment to decision-makers.
- We protect, restore and manage habitats for birds and wildlife.
- We research the problems facing birds and the environment, looking for practical solutions that we can implement on the ground and promote to others.
- We own or manage 190 nature reserves, where wildlife can flourish and people can be inspired.

- We carry out recovery projects for our most threatened species.
- We share our knowledge and enthusiasm to help young and old enjoy the natural world.
- We champion the cause of biodiversity conservation as part of sustainable development.
- We are active across the UK at national, regional and local levels – our work is relevant to your environment.
- We tackle international conservation issues through the BirdLife International Partnership – a global coalition of like-minded conservation organisations.

How is the RSPB run?

The RSPB is governed by a Council of individuals elected for their expertise relevant to running a wildlife conservation charity.

The Council sets policy and is responsible for the conduct of the RSPB's affairs and for ensuring that we operate in accordance with our constitution and the law.

As the RSPB is a charity, the Council is also answerable to the Charity Commission for ensuring its funds are used wisely.

Day-to-day management of the RSPB is delegated to a Management Board headed by a Chief Executive who reports to the Chairman of the Council.

Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)



Graham Wynne, RSPB Chief Executive, and Ian Newton, RSPB Chairman of Council (right).



Roger Tidman (rspb-images.com)

It was, with some notable exceptions, a good year for wild birds in 2004–2005.

Long-term conservation efforts, including the management of nature reserves, the restoration of neglected habitats such as heathland and the creation of entirely new areas of habitats all played a part. Yet the threat of climate change made itself felt in the disastrous breeding season for many seabirds.

Review of 2004–2005 by Ian Newton and Graham Wynne RSPB Chairman and Chief Executive

Not long ago, after a century of decline, fewer than 500 singing male corncrakes were recorded in the UK. Last year, there were more than 1,000 for the first time in 40 years. This was one exciting reward for years of conservation effort.

Fifty-five male bitterns in spring was another recent record; two of these were at our new reedbeds, created at Lakenheath, Suffolk and Ham Wall, Somerset. Others were in reedbeds that had been drying out but were reinvigorated by visionary, but expensive, work. You may recall that the UK had just 11 male bitterns in 1997, when the species could easily have disappeared from our islands: it is wonderful to see such a dramatic revival.

You may never have seen a corncrake, or a bittern, a capercaillie or a stone-curlew, or several other threatened species that have been helped by recent RSPB action. Nevertheless, we can all be pleased with their recovery: without your support, no-one might have seen them in a few years' time.

As a bird conservation organisation, the RSPB is judged by its effect on birds and their habitats. In a few cases, such as the bittern and corncrake, or the stone-curlew, which has recovered to almost 300 pairs in the UK, we can measure

success by an increase in numbers or an extension of range. In numerous areas, we work with many people, from individuals to other organisations to government departments.

On habitats, we strive to influence the management and protection of land and to improve protection for marine sites. More directly, we manage 190 nature reserves that include habitats as varied as sea cliffs, estuaries and coastal marshes, lowland heath and upland moor, freshwater lakes and marshes, mixed woodland and native pine forest, peatlands and mountain tops. They create a magnificent suite of important and often beautiful places.

Birds are affected by global matters, such as climate change, forest destruction and longline fishing; by EU-wide issues such as farming and fishing policies; by UK issues such as development proposals on important sites; and by local ones, such as neglect of sensitive wildlife habitats or persecution of birds of prey. We influence all of these as best we can. We also work hard to increase public support and care for birds, opening people's eyes to the lifetime of enjoyment that wildlife can offer and informing them about our work. The success of these endeavours is continually assessed.

The RSPB is judged by its effect on birds and their habitats. Where we can restore habitats or protect threatened birds, we have a lot of success. Nevertheless, birds continue to be highly vulnerable, as people exploit or develop the natural environment, and climate change brings big new threats.

Bitterns are elusive and few of us see them, but they are symbolic of the success that comes through planned, targeted conservation action.

One of the important ways in which conservation of threatened wildlife in the UK is organised is through biodiversity action plans. UK action plans are set by the Government, with partners selected for their execution and lead partners appointed to oversee the work. The RSPB is the lead partner in 36 UK action plans, 11 of which are for non-bird species. We also work towards our own plans and targets, with 37 bird species selected for priority attention.

Aims and achievements

We do our utmost for threatened and vulnerable bird species and habitats and constantly review our effectiveness. As part of this, we work especially hard for 37 bird species that we have identified as priorities. Improving matters for these will often help other species, too. For 25 of these, and 11 non-bird species, the RSPB is lead partner in the Government's UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Action plans set UK targets for priority species and habitats. The RSPB alone cannot meet all of these targets, so we set our own, to define the share of the overall target for which we are able to accept responsibility, whether through nature reserves or recovery projects. We measure our progress, the quality of the work we do and the extent to which our work has influenced improvements in the status of the species concerned.

We also look at groups of birds that have suffered huge, long-term declines. These include some woodland and farmland species, even the common starling and house sparrow: most RSPB work is now focused on widespread and rapidly declining species, rather than on the rare or obscure.

UK Government targets include 50 territorial male bitterns, on at least 22 sites, by 2010. This has been exceeded ahead of schedule. There is, however, no room for complacency: several bittern sites are vulnerable to sea-level rise and more must be done to create reedbed habitat farther inland, as we have been doing on several of our nature reserves.

UK targets for other species, such as the black grouse and capercaillie, have not been achieved, but our own contribution has been strong. The UK aim to halt the decline of the capercaillie in eastern and central Scotland by 2000 was achieved and numbers have almost doubled since the last survey in 1999.

RSPB targets for widespread species such as the skylark are less appropriate. Increases on our reserves can affect only small proportions of UK populations. Our influence, nevertheless, is crucial, as we help to develop and promote UK-wide plans for recovery and management techniques that help such birds. The skylark, which despite a large decline remains widespread, is important for the RSPB and a measure of the health of our farmland environment. That skylarks can be helped even on intensive arable farms, without loss of profit, has been shown by trials of new techniques, such as skylark patches, at our Hope Farm, in Cambridgeshire, and replicated in partnership with others elsewhere. At Hope Farm, the numbers of skylarks have more than doubled thanks to skylark patches, which are small unsown areas within the crop.

Other farmland birds illustrate the problems and the potential to help wildlife in our managed landscape. Winter feeding and growing wild bird cover help seed-eating birds such as tree sparrows and yellowhammers. Results for the lapwing, however, are mixed. In England, a 16% increase between 1994

and 2003 is encouraging, but declines continue in Scotland and Wales.

A common bird in many places just a few years ago, the corn bunting has suffered a catastrophic reduction in numbers and range, with a decline of 89% between 1970 and 2001 as cereal production intensified. We are working towards a better future for farmland birds such as this, by offering practical advice and promoting improved environmental schemes for farmers.

One more success story must be mentioned. In 2000, 430 pairs of red kites bred (259 in Wales, 131 in England and 40 in Scotland): by 2004, there were 500 pairs in Wales, 276 in England and 60 in Scotland. In 2004, the number of chicks fledged reached 1,000 for the first time, despite poor weather. Our plan to ensure that all reintroduced populations are self-sustaining has been compromised by the vulnerability of Scottish kites to illegal persecution, but in Wales, about 500 pairs reared more than 400 chicks.

For habitats, it is a mixed picture. With three – reedbed, blanket bog and lowland heathland – good progress is being made. UK-wide, however, many low-lying wet grasslands – those wonderful wet buttercup meadows and soggy fields full of lapwings and snipe – and estuaries remain in a poor state. The RSPB's contribution is strong, however, with excellent progress on nature reserves, especially involving coastal and freshwater marshes, heathland, native woodland and peatland.

A continuing strand of the RSPB's work is to protect important sites for wildlife from damaging development. In particular, we put a lot of effort into challenging proposals that threaten sites that have been designated for their wildlife value and are, supposedly, protected from damage or destruction for as long as that value remains.

Guarding important sites

We achieved a resounding success when a damaging port development proposal at Dibden Bay, Hampshire, was rejected. This welcome and correct reading of the law should prove important in other cases involving development threats to supposedly protected areas. We also put a lot of effort into other port schemes, at Bathside Bay and Shellhaven (Essex) and Immingham (on the Humber), to secure the best possible result for birds.

We put even more effort into wind farm casework, particularly in Scotland. The RSPB wholeheartedly supports increased development of energy from renewable sources, but in some cases, such as the massively inappropriate proposals on Lewis in the Western Isles, wind farms might destroy the very environments that renewable energy is intended to protect.

Where appropriate, we encourage developers to change the location or design of their proposals to minimise damage – we hope this will be the

outcome at Shell Flat in Liverpool Bay. Where this constructive approach fails, as at Romney Marsh, Kent, we put up the strongest possible opposition through the public inquiry system.

Having lobbied for better site protection, the RSPB must set a good example on its own nature reserves. The state of land scheduled for its special scientific interest is monitored closely and hard work by staff means that, where we have control, most such land on our reserves in England is in 'favourable condition'. Some remains sub-standard, however, because of matters beyond our control, such as poor river water quality.

A long and complex process, the Water Price Round, resulted in £9.1 million given to United Utilities for an exciting project, with RSPB involvement, to improve the management of large tracts of the uplands in northern England. This should, as part of its overall effect, greatly improve matters for upland birds in substantial parts of the Pennines.

The rejection of the Dibden Bay port development proposal was important in its own right and should inform other cases that involve development threats to supposedly protected areas.



Several port development proposals threatened estuarine habitats used by large numbers of wildfowl, such as brent geese (above), and wading birds.



Nigel Blake (rspb-images.com)

Debates over the European Union budget frequently centre on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In Europe as in the UK, the vast majority of land is farmed in some way, from extensively grazed hills to the intensively cultivated fields of our lowlands. The fate of many countryside birds is intertwined with the way in which farmland is managed, and it has been clear for many years that the CAP has immense implications for the wildlife of Europe. On our own Cambridgeshire farm, we test and demonstrate wildlife-friendly techniques. We work closely with farmers, offering advice on farming with wildlife in mind and assistance with applications for agri-environment support schemes. We also lobby hard for improvements in farming policy that will offer a better deal for people and wildlife in the countryside.

A changing countryside

The RSPB has campaigned hard over many years for reform in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), often working in conjunction with BirdLife International partners in Europe. The new CAP, implemented in January 2005, represents a substantial breakthrough, as it severs the link between subsidies and the amount produced and requires farmers to meet basic environment standards to receive payments. The RSPB lobbied for the new conditions to include additional hedgerow protection in England and Scotland, protecting nesting birds from hedge-trimming and creating buffer zones from sprays and cultivations, and for payments to be redistributed towards the less intensive producers in England and Northern Ireland, whose farming systems are often better for the environment.

In Scotland, we pressed for extra support for small beef producers, as cattle grazing helps maintain habitats for wading birds.

The vital changes remove some of the pressures on farmers to continue to intensify production.

The revised CAP shifts 5% of farming subsidies into the rural development

budget across Europe and 10% in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This means more money for wildlife-friendly agri-environment schemes, helping farmers do more for birds.

New agri-environment schemes were launched in England and Scotland in 2005. The RSPB remains heavily involved in the design and implementation of these essential conservation grant schemes. In England, the Entry Level Scheme pays all farmers to do simple things that benefit the environment. RSPB staff helped to develop equivalent schemes in Wales, Northern Ireland and in Scotland, all of which will help common and widespread farmland birds when they are launched. The English Higher Level Scheme contains further measures targeted on key farmland birds.

Thousands of people helped our 'Safeguard our sea life' campaign. Members joined other environmental organisations to urge MPs to protect wildlife at sea. On World Oceans Day in June, we handed 150,000 signatures of support for the campaign to Downing Street. We will continue to press the Government to ensure that a new bill

announced in Parliament will give the protection that is so vital for our marine wildlife. Sadly, a disastrous breeding season for many seabirds in the North Sea highlighted problems there, with a tangled web of overfishing and climate change effects reducing their food supply.

In Europe, the 25th anniversary of the EU Birds Directive was an opportunity to celebrate the important role this Directive has played in protecting birds and their habitats, particularly through the designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Increasing recognition is being given to the contribution of these areas in providing for public enjoyment and to local economies by, for example, sustaining tourism.

While the debate over genetically modified (GM) crops continued, we maintained a close watch on their potential impact on wildlife. GM crops are still not cultivated commercially in the UK, largely because of the environmental impacts revealed in Government farm-scale evaluations, the need for which we supported strongly. Their potential impact on birds was an important reason for this decision.

Lapwings have shown a small increase in some parts of England, but remain absent as breeding birds from large areas and continue to decline in Wales and Scotland.

The RSPB is the UK Partner of BirdLife International, the global partnership of bird conservation organisations. The RSPB sees biodiversity conservation and environmental improvement as part of the global agenda for sustainable development. If development is to be made sustainable, the world must ensure that economic, social and environmental concerns are all addressed, in an holistic manner. Working with BirdLife International is fundamental to the RSPB's international strategy and our contribution is important to the success of the BirdLife Partnership.

International efforts

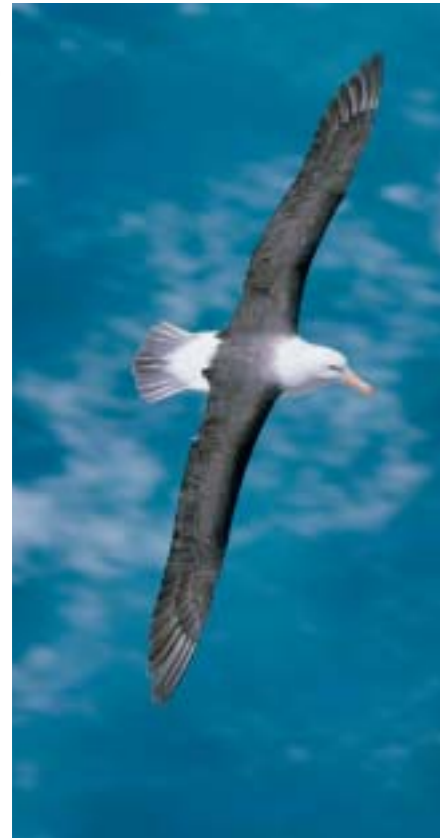
The greatest problem for wildlife worldwide is climate change. The RSPB informs its members (particularly through *Birds* magazine and the RSPB website) and the public at large about the problems and possible solutions. A paper recently published in *Nature*, co-authored by the RSPB's principal research biologist, predicted that, without action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a quarter of the world's terrestrial species could be committed to extinction by 2050 because of a changing climate.

We are continuing with our long-term effort to protect rainforests in Indonesia but, naturally, this was set back by the appalling tsunami in December. We hope our work in Sumatra will nevertheless come to fruition: the conservation need grows stronger by the day.

In June 2004, we embarked on a massive rainforest conservation project in Sierra Leone, signing an agreement with the government and our BirdLife partner there to conserve 74,000 ha of the Gola Forest. Matched funding came from Conservation International in Washington DC. Our continued commitment to helping conservation in Sierra Leone, even during the difficult times of the war, has borne dividends and we now have a chance to stop the forest from being logged and save its immensely important wildlife.

A different kind of project is our fight to try to stop three species of vultures going extinct on the Indian sub-continent: from tens of millions they have crashed to astonishingly low numbers, in two species by more than 99%. The cause is widespread use of a veterinary drug, which was hitherto thought to be safe, called diclofenac. We are urgently exploring possible alternatives and setting up captive breeding centres, where the vultures will be safe from eating meat contaminated with this drug until circumstances allow reintroduction to the wild. We were encouraged by donations of more than £130,000 for this work following a feature in *Birds*.

The relocation of the Global Seabird Programme HQ to the UK got off to a fine start with John and Marie Christine Ridgway's epic Save the Albatross voyage around the world, which generated great support and publicity for the plight of these magnificent birds. At least 19 of the 21 species face extinction: 100,000 die each year on the billion hooks of longline fishing vessels. Our appeal secured £696,000 and 60,000 pledges to help combat this dreadful situation. The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels, which came into force in February 2005, should help save steeply-declining species.



Frans Lanting (FLPA)

The shy albatross is one of 19 species of albatross that face extinction soon, unless urgent action is taken to prevent deaths on longline hooks.

The RSPB is not a law enforcement agency but works closely with the police to combat wildlife crime. Increased penalties appear to be having a deterrent effect, but we remain concerned that birds such as buzzards and red kites continue to be killed by the careless or illegal use of pesticides targeted against other species.

Protecting species

We continue to protect rare breeding birds in the UK and, in concert with the police, to pursue cases of wildlife crime. We believe increased penalties under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 have deterred egg collectors as egg collecting incidents have declined.

Nine egg collectors have been sent to prison for offences, while the first prison sentence for killing a bird of prey was given to a gamekeeper in 2004.

In England, however, the Government made it much easier to get a licence to shoot cormorants, dismissing the results of its own scientific work and the advice of English

Nature. We remain concerned that the decision was made without taking account of the impact of killing 3,000 birds a year on the breeding population of England, which is fewer than 3,000 pairs. We continue to argue for the policy to be rescinded.

After several years of RSPB effort, the house sparrow and starling have been removed from the 'general licence' (which permits control of certain 'pest' species without the need for a specific licence) in England.

We still believe, however, that there is no scientific justification for killing some other species (for example the declining herring gull) under this general licence arrangement.

We are concerned that the Government made it easier to kill cormorants against the advice of English Nature and without taking account of the impact of killing 3,000 a year on a small breeding population.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

Cormorants are relatively scarce birds in Europe and fewer than 3,000 pairs breed in England, yet it has been made much easier to kill them.

We manage 190 nature reserves across the UK. Some of these, such as sea cliffs and islands, require little management. Others, including many wetland and heathland reserves, need regular work to maintain their habitats for birds.

Nature reserves success

Our nature reserves are a huge asset and benefit birds, other wildlife and people alike. We are immensely grateful for grants, donations and the ever-generous support from members (including invaluable income from legacies) that maintain this crucial conservation programme and allow us to continue our commitments.

We continue to acquire land as nature reserves to protect important areas for birds. Increasingly, we do so where restoration of priority habitats is practical and most needed (for example, we can fell conifer plantations to restore heathland, raise water levels to revive drained wetlands or set back sea defences to return dry land to saltmarsh). We also create nature reserves close to urban centres, to bring wildlife closer to people.

We reached a management agreement to restore chalk grassland, mainly for stone-curlews, at Normanton Down, Wiltshire, overlooking Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain.

We added new land to several reserves, including stretches of wonderful cliff top to benefit choughs at South Stack on Anglesey and on Rathlin Island, Co Antrim. In both cases, our long-standing relationship with the landowner was crucial—on Rathlin, the alternative to good chough habitat was a helicopter landing pad.

Our plans (with English Nature) to restore one of England's biggest lowland raised mires to help birds such as breeding redshanks and snipe at Bowness Common, Cumbria, adjoining Campfield Marsh on the Solway, were boosted by two crucial purchases – again the product of a decade of good relationships.

At Otmoor, Oxfordshire, the reserve has nearly reached 400 ha, with an extra 96 ha for wetland restoration to help wading birds such as lapwings and redshanks. The complex deal was made possible by the co-operation of two adjoining landowners. At Lewes Brooks in East Sussex, we acquired 24 ha, which we will continue to graze with cattle to benefit the breeding wading birds.

Several centuries ago the East Anglia fens were drained for agriculture by storing flood waters in specially constructed washlands – of which the Ouse and Nene Washes are the largest. This role prevented these washlands from being drained too, protecting their wildlife. In recent decades, changes in climate and land management have resulted in the Ouse Washes flooding more often in spring and summer, wiping out eggs and chicks of hundreds of wading birds and wildfowl. We have been continuing with a pilot scheme beside the Ouse Washes to provide nesting areas for wading birds away from such flooding.

The Government has now agreed to fund habitat creation outside the Ouse Washes, to provide alternative sites for breeding birds displaced by flooding. This will enable the Environment Agency (EA) to continue to operate the Ouse Washes to protect people and property.

Grants included more than £450,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for Frampton Marshes, Lincolnshire, where we bought 84 ha of farmland to turn into wet meadows for breeding lapwings and redshanks and, in time, to provide facilities for people to enjoy this part of the coast.

At Blean Woods, Kent, an agreement to manage English Nature's 89 ha National Nature Reserve brings a total of 505 ha of woodland there, including Woodland Trust land, within an overall RSPB management plan. We hope this will benefit birds such as nightingales and marsh tits, at a time when declines in some woodland birds across the UK give cause for concern.

At Rainham Marshes, Essex, on the outskirts of London, we received marvellous support and a great vote of confidence in our visionary plans from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Thurrock Urban Development Corporation and the Bridge House Trust, with awards for development to the tune of £3.6 million in total.

Reviving lost habitats

In the Flow Country of Sutherland, we acquired a further 580 ha of exotic conifers and removed trees from 70 ha, bringing the total area of peatland brought back to life to 990 ha. This habitat restoration is on a scale and at a speed rarely, if ever, undertaken in the UK.

We look forward to more habitat creation and restoration schemes. At The Lodge, Bedfordshire, sand and gravel workings and conifer plantations will be returned to heathland. Existing heathland there has been grazed by Manx Loghtan sheep, to prevent the spread of trees and scrub. We hope that the heathland of the expanded reserve will attract nightjars, woodlarks and Dartford warblers.

Large-scale habitat creation schemes already underway begin to show results. Stone-curlews bred after a gap of 40 years at Minsmere, where farmland is being returned to heath. The value of reedbed work for bitterns has been highlighted, but bearded tits nested, too, in new reedbeds at Ham Wall and Lakenheath. These reedbeds benefit marsh harriers, water rails, reed and sedge warblers and much more wetland wildlife besides.

Numbers of nesting lapwings, redshanks and snipe rose again at Otmoor and Ynys-hir, Ceredigion, where arable land or pasture has been changed to damp meadows.

Stone-curlews bred after a gap of 40 years at Minsmere, in Suffolk, where arable fields are being returned to heath.



Much of our work at wetland reserves involves creating shallow lagoons and manipulating water levels for the benefit of both breeding and wintering birds.



At The Lodge nature reserve in Bedfordshire we have acquired new areas of land to extend the heathland habitat and offer a much improved experience for visitors.

If wild birds are to have a secure future, people must care for them: to care, people must be able to see them and to know more about them. We place great importance on showing people birds first-hand, at our nature reserves and at specific sites where we have opportunities to show interesting and exciting birds. Education, including bringing children to such places, is also crucial for future conservation, and hundreds of thousands of people gain an insight into birds through involvement in our surveys.

For birds and people

The Real World Learning campaign, with a key role played by the RSPB, put environmental education and children's entitlement to first-hand experience of nature firmly on the map. Giving children access to wildlife, including field teaching on our nature reserves, benefits them and improves the long-term chances of a more caring and responsible attitude to the environment. The 49,000 children who visited our reserves on formal trips in 2004 represented an increase of a fifth on the previous year.

An Aren't Welsh Birds Brilliant! mobile 3D cinema unit toured Wales, urging more than 10,000 visitors to 'think environment' at shows and events.

In Northern Ireland, young people helped get across important policy messages urging creation of an independent agency to protect the environment. Our President, Julian Pettifer, judged student designs for a television feature and the winning programme was broadcast on primetime UTV.

Progress at Rainham Marshes, Essex, and Old Moor, South Yorkshire, spearheaded our continuing development of urban fringe reserves, which will bring exciting wildlife centres within easy reach of huge numbers of people of all ages.

Attendance at the annual RSPB Members' Weekend topped the 1,000 mark for the first time since 1989 and the AGM and Members' Day in London had a capacity audience in October.

Our annual Big Garden Birdwatch attracted a staggering figure of almost 400,000 respondents, thanks to the combined efforts of staff and volunteers across the UK. Although participation in the Big Bug Count, a simple survey of insect numbers, was more modest, at 20,000, the media coverage was massive and drew attention to the loss of insects across the countryside, which obviously has huge implications for birds.

In October, Feed the Birds Day attracted 21,000 people to 86 events across the UK and gained valuable media attention.

The RSPB website also attracted increased interest from members and the public at large. The website, www.rspb.org.uk, now has 14,000 pages of information. We e-mail a monthly electronic newsletter to 65,000 supporters.

We launched our new volunteer management system, enabling us to improve support and management of more than 12,000 volunteers who give such dedicated work UK-wide.

More than 244,000 people visited 34 Aren't birds brilliant! sites across the UK, to see birds as varied as blue tits and peregrines.

Showing people birds

Showing people exciting birds has been an important activity for the RSPB for 50 years, enthusing people about birds and their conservation. In 2004, ospreys nested for the first time in Wales. A rapid response by RSPB staff let 9,000 people see one of the two pairs over nine weeks. Ospreys at Loch Garten (Highland), where it all began in the 1950s, produced three young and attracted thousands of people.

Visitors to our reserves, including hotspots such as Titchwell Marsh in Norfolk, Minsmere, Suffolk and Conwy in North Wales, continued to increase.

This was the eleventh successive year of increase in the Scottish white-

tailed eagle population, with 32 pairs, and we helped many people to enjoy them. Our Film and Video Unit's superb film about these eagles, *The Eagle Odyssey*, generated great public interest and picked up eight awards, including the prestigious Panda award for the best script at the Wildscreen film festival.

Our programme of Aren't birds brilliant! projects continues the theme on a grand scale. More than 244,000 people (25,000 of them in Wales) visited 34 sites across the UK to see birds as varied as blue tits and peregrines, opening their eyes to the wonders of wild nature as well as the work of the RSPB.

Little terns at Gronant, North Wales, produced 167 fledglings in their second most successful breeding season ever. A camera placed within the colony beamed pictures to the nearby Presthaven Sands Holiday Park, where visitors could see the young birds as they developed.

More than 5,600 people came to see one of Britain's rarest breeding birds, Montagu's harrier, nesting in Lincolnshire: this attention helped to ensure the successful fledging of two chicks.

Ray Kennedy (rspb-images.com)



Garden birds, such as this young blackbird, are always popular: our surveys of such species enthuse hundreds of thousands of people.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

First-hand experience of wild birds is essential for people of all ages if they are to enjoy, and then care about, the wildlife around them.



Mike Lane (rspb-images.com)

Work in Northern Ireland was given fresh impetus with the arrival of several new staff, including a new director, conservation manager and reserves manager. This brought the total to more than 30. Strengths of the various teams were brought to the fore as we continued the challenge of campaigning and working hard on behalf of the birds and wildlife in Northern Ireland.

Focus on Northern Ireland by Aidan Lonergan, Director Northern Ireland

Farmland birds and agriculture

Meetings with ministers and other interested parties focused on schemes to help farmers do more for the environment. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) announced a useful package to increase funding for these in Northern Ireland, after we ran a high profile campaign. We attended the Balmoral show, Ireland's biggest agricultural show, and other agricultural fairs to promote agri-environment schemes with the slogan 'A living countryside that makes a living', raising the RSPB's profile in the farming community and media in Northern Ireland.

Our recovery project aims to improve the status of the yellowhammer in Northern Ireland through research and advice to farmers. One way to help yellowhammers and other seed-eating birds, such as tree sparrows, is to provide seed in winter and spring. We created giant bird tables (fields with plants that produce an abundance of seeds) at 28 sites in 2005 to provide suitable feeding conditions.

Conservation policy

We continued to press for a review of environmental governance, and for an independent environmental protection agency for Northern Ireland. In response to a consultation paper on proposals to amend planning legislation, we called for sustainable development to be built in to the planning process.

We also contributed detailed proposals to the development of the Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland and to the work of the Northern Ireland Freshwater Task Force and Marine Task Force. We promoted appropriate implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive to benefit freshwater wetlands and urged the adoption of comprehensive marine legislation in Northern Ireland, to help protect wildlife at sea.

Education

A 25-foot inflatable lapwing landed in Enniskillen Agricultural College in May, before making its way to schools in Lisnaskea as part of our local conservation education programme, highlighting the importance of the area for breeding wading birds.

The schools took part in a story-telling project in which local farmland birds, such as the lapwing and snipe, have been used to inspire the children into writing myths and legends. They trialled a mythmaking pack that gives students a chance to find out about the birds' characteristics and apply them in a creative way.

Our field teaching programme is the largest in the UK and reached an impressive 5,000 students last year.

Working with people

We produced our first all year round series of events, with guided walks and open days on the reserves: 35 events generated much publicity, especially for

Belfast Harbour and Rathlin Island. Two UK-wide participation events, the Big Garden Birdwatch and Feed the Birds Day, received massive support, with the creation of a 70 m long bird cake in the Ulster Museum and a mask competition with more than 200 entries from schools in Belfast.

Membership figures increased by 11%, including almost a quarter of the total in Wildlife Explorers, our junior membership: Northern Ireland has one of the highest membership retention rates in the UK.

The Foyle Local Group was established and 120 volunteers worked tirelessly, from office reception to education and farmland bird activities.

Nature reserves

New land at Rathlin Island will help our efforts to attract choughs back there and could benefit corncrakes, too. At Portmore Lough, we began intensive management work to create 'scrapes' as suitable breeding habitat for lapwings.

Lapwings (26 pairs) and redshanks (50 pairs) did well at the Fermanagh reserves, where 105 pairs of Sandwich terns was the highest figure since 1983. There were also record figures for black-headed gulls (1,761 pairs) and Sandwich terns (573 pairs) on the Larne Lough Islands, where nine pairs of roseate terns and 567 pairs of common terns bred. At Carlingford Lough, 795 Sandwich, 58 Arctic and 289 common tern pairs nested.

In winter, the whooper swans on Lough Foyle reached the highest numbers ever recorded there.

Whooper swans are characteristic birds in winter in many parts of Northern Ireland. Numbers have recently increased.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

In 2004, the RSPB celebrated 100 years of working for Scotland's wildlife. Celebrations, from local events to a reception in Edinburgh Castle, marked our achievements and our long-term commitment to working with the people of Scotland for birds and other wildlife. The last century has seen our presence in Scotland grow, with more than 140 staff and more than 70 nature reserves from Shetland to the Solway under our management. We have enjoyed many conservation successes but the threats and challenges to our wildlife are ever present. Current work includes action to help capercaillie, corncrakes and farmland birds as well as improving and creating habitats from the peatlands of Caithness, to the wet grasslands of Dumfries.

Focus on Scotland by Stuart Housden, Director Scotland

Working for birds

Scotland has a large proportion of the UK's eight million breeding seabirds: the finest colonies make some of the most spectacular wildlife sights in Europe. Many suffered a disastrous summer in 2004. In Orkney and Shetland, the birds found no food and reared no young. Breeding failures were most notably linked to a lack of sandeel availability, possibly caused by climate change and the warming of Scotland's seas. Our seas are under increasing pressure from fishing and a variety of industrial and leisure developments. We are working hard to secure more sustainable management of the seas.

Corncrakes responded to our continuing work with crofters in the north and west, with 1,040 calling birds recorded. There were big increases in the Inner and Outer Hebrides, with our Coll nature reserve alone having 67 calling corncrakes, up from 46 in 2003. Corncrake work also helps fragile remaining populations of other wildlife, such as the great yellow bumblebee – identified as a priority species for which the RSPB is the lead partner under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

There was mixed news for hen harriers. A national survey showed a 45% increase in Scotland's hen harrier numbers since 1998, from 436 to 663 pairs. However, increases in the north and west are offset by declines in grouse moor areas where persecution is limiting recovery. This issue continues to attract a lot of media interest.

Similarly, for capercaillie, the spring 2004 survey found almost 2,000 birds – an encouraging increase since the last survey in 1998–99. However, poor breeding success in 2004, due to cold and rain during the crucial chick-rearing

period in June, shows there is no room for complacency. The remaining, fragmented populations of capercaillie are highly concentrated in Badenoch and Strathspey, where we are working with other landowners to encourage conservation management as there are signs that it is succeeding.

Our Friends of the Capercaillie scheme is building support for these efforts to save this great forest grouse in Scotland. Sadly, the capercaillie is not the only grouse in trouble. With a 70% drop in numbers recorded since 1999, the black grouse is one of the UK's most rapidly declining species. These birds have complex needs – preferring a mix of forest and moorland habitats. We are carrying out experimental burning and cutting of vegetation at our Abernethy and Corrimony nature reserves to test new management approaches, and are increasing our research efforts to understand the needs of these species.

Important new laws to strengthen the protection of key bird species and their habitats were introduced under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. Despite these advances, persecution of birds of prey continues and we remain concerned that inadequate resources and training are impeding effective police enforcement.

We are increasingly aware of the need for a better understanding of how climate change is affecting Scotland's wildlife. Our research has shown that, with current climate predictions, golden plovers will start laying earlier, by as much as 25 days. Their key food source at this crucial time, the crane-fly, is emerging earlier, but only by some 12 days. The mismatch, resulting from different species' responses to warmer spring weather, is typical of the types of impacts we can expect to see in the complex food

web. In this case, it may affect the success of early breeding attempts by golden plovers. We are now extending this research to look at impacts on a range of moorland, mountain and blanket bog species.

Working with farmers and crofters

We have continued our wide-ranging work on agriculture policy and this is slowly improving the outlook for farmland birds such as corn buntings and tree sparrows in Scotland. Our advisory courses – attended by colleagues from the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Scottish Agricultural College, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and other land managers and advisers – are helping to disseminate knowledge and experience of wildlife-friendly farming practice. This in turn feeds into the development of agriculture policy and management supported by the agri-environment schemes.

Meanwhile, our farmland bird research work is focusing on twites and corn buntings. The twite is a red-listed species because of its long-term decline. More than 90% of Britain's twites now breed in Scotland, mostly in crofting areas in the north and west, yet we know relatively little about their ecology. We are carrying out research to test which cultivation methods are best for this localised species.

Research is also under way to assess the benefits of the Rural Stewardship Scheme for corn buntings in the north-east and to test ways of supplying grain for winter buntings populations in the Outer Hebrides.

RSPB nature reserves are acquired for their actual or potential value to wildlife, but many, such as Inversnaid beside Loch Lomond, are also beautiful places, whose value is incalculable.

Working in special places

We were fortunate in our centenary year to acquire a lease over the magnificent seabird island of Ailsa Craig, off the South Ayrshire coast. We have also taken steps to secure the long-term future of the nationally important Tay reedbed, leasing 80 ha of reedbed and 700 ha of adjacent mudflats. This area is of crucial importance in Scotland for water rails, marsh harriers and other reedbed species, which breed here. With commercial reed cutting becoming less viable due to competition from overseas, we are seeking to secure long-term harvesting of the reedbed for the benefit of these and other birds.

Our major peatland restoration programme in the Flow Country continues apace: with 1,100 ha of restoration work completed to date and 585 ha of new plantations acquired this year for clearance.

With Scotland's tourism market set to grow by 50% over the next 10 years and the wildlife tourism sector playing an increasing part, we are delighted that the visitor facilities at four of our nature reserves – Vane Farm, Loch of Strathbeg, Loch Garten and Lochwinnoch – have won Green Tourism Business Scheme Awards. These and other RSPB nature reserves offer great opportunities for people to enjoy our fantastic natural heritage, while supporting local tourism operators and accommodation providers in often remote rural communities.

Working with people

We marked our Scottish centenary with more than 700 events and activities all over Scotland. The Centenary Awards celebrated the contributions of individuals, communities and businesses to nature conservation in Scotland over the last 100 years. These were announced at a St Andrew's Night dinner in Glasgow, attended by many of the leading figures in nature conservation in Scotland, including the Environment Minister, Ross Finnie MSP and chairman of Scottish Natural Heritage, John Markland.

The centenary generated much media interest – a successful competition in collaboration with *The Scotsman* to identify Scotland's national bird and a petition is currently before the Scottish Parliament asking that the golden eagle be adopted as Scotland's bird emblem.

We are delighted to report that the number of active volunteers in Scotland grew by half, from 1,044 to 1,568; they worked some 88,000 hours, about a fifth of our work programme. Volunteers form an increasingly important part of our workforce, and we greatly value their contribution. Thank you to all of them.

Our work in the Argyll Islands, as part of the Nadair programme, which is enhancing and improving access to the region's natural and cultural heritage, received a major boost. The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded a further £2.2 million of grants to the programme, distributed among 22 partner organisations, which together are

spending some £4.6 million across 38 projects in the next three years. RSPB projects will include action for choughs and corncrakes, as well as developing teaching resources for local schools. RSPB staff in Scotland will lead on a range of projects, from new activities on our reserves to developing a book on the birds of Coll and Tiree and facilitating the Eagle Watch on Mull – which won a Centenary Award for community action for conservation.

Helping people to enjoy and find out more about Scotland's amazing wildlife remains a key part of our work. We are fortunate to have some of the UK's most charismatic birds – white-tailed eagles, red kites, capercaillie, hen harriers and seabird colonies – and through our Aren't birds brilliant! events we offer RSPB members and the public chances to see these birds for themselves from Lochinver to Lewis and Stonehaven to Galloway, with expert help on hand.

In addition to these projects, we continue our formal education work: both advocating a bigger role for out-of-classroom education for schoolchildren, and giving field-teaching to more than 7,500 children across Scotland, from Shetland to the Solway Firth.

A project, part-funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage and the East Ayrshire Council, with schools in East Ayrshire over the last three years has helped to raise awareness and interest among local children in the amazing birds and other wildlife they can see on their doorstep.

Future challenges

RSPB staff in Scotland have worked closely with others to develop and support the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, adopted in 2004. The challenge now is to see this 25-year vision to conserve and enhance wildlife in Scotland translated into action to create a wildlife-rich environment, for the benefit of Scotland's people and communities.

The future of some of our most precious wildlife sites continues to be threatened by inappropriate development. Our work to protect these sites, particularly in the face of an increasing number of poorly-located wind farm proposals, is growing fast. While we address individual proposals case-by-case, we continue to press the Scottish Executive for a more robust response to climate change.

In particular, we are calling for more urgent action in Scotland on energy efficiency, and for a strategic approach to the development of renewable energy, without which we fear action designed to save the environment could have the

opposite effect. The big challenge for the future will be marine renewables, especially in the absence of an effective marine planning system and of marine protected areas.

Major programmes of work for the capercaillie and in the Flow Country have received substantial funding support over the last five years from the EU LIFE programme. We are concerned about the future funding of these and other conservation programmes after the current EU funding schemes end in 2006.

Our increasingly ambitious work in Scotland depends on the commitment and support of many individuals and organisations: our members, and also the Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage, the EU LIFE programme, BP through the Scottish Forest Alliance and many charitable trusts and other organisations. We are very grateful for their continuing support, through which we look forward to working for Scotland's people and wildlife even more actively in the future.

Our increasingly ambitious work in Scotland depends on the commitment and support of many individuals and organisations, not least our members.

David Tipling (rspb-images.com)



Crested tits are widespread in Europe, but in the UK they are scarce birds, restricted to pinewoods in northern Scotland.



Razorbill by Richard Revels (rspb-images.com)

Seabirds in the north and east of the UK suffered disastrously poor breeding seasons in 2003 and 2004; in 2005, the problem spread farther west, too. Through global warming, sea temperatures have been rising in the North Atlantic, removing the plankton which hatching sandeels used to feed on. Sandeel numbers have plummeted, depriving hundreds of thousands of seabirds of their staple diet. We welcomed the closure in July of the North Sea industrial sandeel fishery as it could further damage the dwindling sandeel stock.



Fritz Polking (FLPA)

As ospreys bred in Wales for the first time, gannets increased to record levels and little terns did well, there was much good news to celebrate.

Focus on Wales by Tim Stowe, Director Wales

Aren't Welsh birds brilliant!

Our Aren't Welsh birds brilliant! partnership project encompasses a broad range of conservation, education and inspirational work. Additional funding from the EU helped to increase our work for birds in Wales. Since 2003, we have been working to increase the range of black grouse, mainly on Forestry Commission land, and to protect choughs and their food supplies. Our work in communities focused on farmland bird projects, while staff showing people birds helped thousands of people to enjoy the spectacle of wild birds such as peregrines and red kites. Our mobile cinema continued to tour Wales and more than 10,000 visitors watched its short animated film at shows and events. The extra money also helped to initiate the Glaslyn osprey project in North Wales.

We are grateful to the Forestry Commission Wales, the Countryside Council for Wales and Enfys, a Lottery distribution fund, for their fantastic support for Aren't Welsh birds brilliant!

Extending and improving our nature reserves

Choughs at South Stack benefited from an extension to the reserve, at Gors Goch. Through careful management, we provided excellent feeding and nesting habitat for the birds. The purchase of Gors Goch was helped by a memorial fund to J Rowland: we thank all those who so kindly contributed to this fund.

A grant from the Welsh European Funding Office enabled a group of environmental organisations to upgrade their nature reserves throughout North and West Wales. Through this scheme, as part of the Phoenix Project, co-ordinated by the Countryside Council for Wales, the RSPB can claim more than £270,000 from the EU to undertake nature reserve improvements, such as public access, habitat management and essential boundary works.

Good news for birds

An historic event took place in 2004 – two pairs of ospreys chose to nest in Wales for the first time. One pair was found early in the breeding season near Porthmadog, in North Wales. As soon as it became clear that they were incubating

eggs, a round-the-clock surveillance operation was set up with help from local people, landowners, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Snowdonia National Park Authority, North Wales Police, the Wales Raptor Study Group and Gwynedd Council. Ospreys are protected but illegal egg collectors still target them, so we made every effort to ensure the pair was kept safe.

Many of the volunteer wardens were from the local community. They devoted many hours, day and night, to protecting the nest site.

We were delighted when two chicks hatched in mid-June. Unfortunately, owing to harsh weather, the nest collapsed and sadly the chicks did not survive. The ospreys stayed in the area, fixing the nest and hunting for fish. We set up a viewing point so people could see these remarkable birds. Many local people came to see them, along with thousands of visitors, who got a glimpse of the birds before they left the area.

The second pair, elsewhere in Wales, reared their young successfully, a real landmark in osprey history in the UK.

Little terns at Gronant, North Wales, had their second most successful breeding season on record. The colony produced 167 fledglings last year. High winds and even higher tides threatened the safety of the nests on many occasions, but hard work by staff and volunteers helped to ensure another successful season. A CCTV camera, placed within the colony for the first time, beamed pictures to the nearby Presthaven Sands Holiday Park, where visitors could watch the young birds as they developed.

We are grateful to Denbighshire Countryside Service, the Countryside Council for Wales, Clwyd Ornithological Society and Presthaven Sands Holiday Park for their continued support.

There was good news for Welsh hen harriers. A UK survey revealed 39 confirmed nests, and up to 43 territorial pairs – an increase on the previous Welsh record of 28 pairs. In Wales, the survey received 50% grant aid from the Countryside Council for Wales.

Gannets reach new peak

The number of gannets on our Grassholm nature reserve, 10 miles off the Pembrokeshire coast, has grown to

almost 33,000 breeding pairs, making it the third largest colony in the UK.

The gannets were counted using high-resolution aerial photography in a survey carried out by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, on behalf of the Countryside Council for Wales. While the rate of population growth has slowed, the results are welcome news for our breeding seabirds, which have seen mixed fortunes recently across the rest of the UK.

Grassholm is the only gannet colony in Wales and has 12.5% of all the gannets breeding in the North Atlantic. The RSPB bought the island, which consists of almost 9 ha of volcanic basalt, in 1948.

State of birds in Wales 2003

We published the second annual partnership report detailing how our Welsh birds are faring. *The State of Birds in Wales 2003* provides a valuable snapshot of birds across Wales, including those on the red and amber lists that need our continued support.

Environment and education strategies for Wales

Our conservation manager was seconded to the Welsh Assembly Government to help draft the Environment Strategy for Wales, while the head of the lifelong learning team was seconded to the Welsh Assembly Government to help draft the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Strategy for Wales.

Involving people

We continue to benefit enormously from the dedicated work of volunteers. In 2004, 99 volunteers surveyed 3,400 hectares of land and recorded 112 species on 70 farms as part of the Volunteer & Farmer Alliance in Wales.

A remarkable 17,000 people took part in the annual Big Garden Birdwatch in Wales, including a record 3,570 children, while 4,000 people attended events to celebrate Feed the Birds Day.

More than 25,000 visitors enjoyed Aren't birds brilliant! schemes across Wales, with close-up experience of birds as varied as black grouse, little terns, red kites, ospreys and peregrines.

In 2004, ospreys bred in Wales for the first time since records began.

Yn 2004, nythodd gweilch y pysgod yng Nghymru am y tro cyntaf ers cadw cofnodion.

Cafwyd sawl rheswm i ddatlu newyddion da – nythodd gweilch y pysgod yng Nghymru am y tro cyntaf, cynyddodd y nifer o huganod unwaith eto a ffynodd y fôr-wennol fechan.

Golwg ar Gymru

Adar Campus Cymru

Mae ein partneriaeth Tydy Adar Cymru'n Wych! yn cynnwys ystod eang o waith cadwraeth ac addysg sy'n ysbrydoli pobl. Drwy gyfrwng arian ychwanegol gan yr UE cynyddwyd ein gwaith dros adar Cymru. Ers 2003, rydym wedi gweithio i gynyddu cynefin y rugiar ddu, yn bennaf ar dir y Comisiwn Coedwigaeth, ac i warchod brain coesgoch a'u cyflenwad o fwyd. Canolbwyntiwyd ein gwaith yn y gymuned ar brojectau adar ffermdir, a bu staff 'dangos adar i bobl' yn helpu miloedd o bobl i fwynhau rhyfeddodau adar gwylt fel yr hebog tramor a'r barcud. Parhaodd ein sinema deithiol i grwydro Cymru a gwylidodd mwy na 10,000 o ymwelwyr ei ffilm fer wedi ei hanimeiddio mewn sioeau a digwyddiadau. Defnyddiwyd yr arian ychwanegol hefyd i roi project gweilch y Glaslyn ar y gweill yng Ngogledd Cymru.

Rydym yn ddiolchgar i'r Comisiwn Coedwigaeth Cymru, Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru ac Enfys, cronfa ddosbarthu'r Loteri, am eu cefnogaeth werthfawr i Tydy Adar Cymru'n Wych!

Ymestyn a gwella ein gwarchodfeydd natur

Rhoddyd hwb i'r brain coesgoch yn Ynys Lawd drwy brynu estyniad i'r warchodfa, yng Nghors Goch. Drwy reolaeth ofalus, llwyddwyd i ddarparu cynefin bwydo a nythu delfrydol i'r adar. Cafwyd cymorth i brynu Gors Goch gan y gronfa er cof am J Rowland; diolch i bawb a gyfrannodd at y gronfa hon.

O ganlyniad i grant o Swyddfa Ariannu Cymru Ewropeaidd llwyddodd grŵp o gyrrff amgylcheddol i uwchraddio eu gwarchodfeydd natur ledled Gogledd a Gorllewin Cymru. Fel rhan o Broject Ffenics, a drefnir gan Gyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru, gall yr RSPB hawlio mwy na £270,000 o'r UE i ymgymryd â gwelliannau sylfaenol ar warchodfeydd megis rheoli cynefin, mynediad i'r cyhoedd a gwaith ar y terfynau.

Newyddion da i adar

Cafwyd digwyddiad hanesyddol yn 2004 – nythodd dau bâr o weilch y pysgod yng Nghymru am y tro cyntaf.

Cafwyd hyd i leoliad un pâr yn gynnar yn y tymor nythu ger Porthmadog, yng Ngogledd Cymru. Pan welwyd eu bod yn eistedd ar wyau, sefydlwyd cynllun gwyllo bedair-awr-ar-hugain gyda chymorth pobl leol, tîrfeddianwyr, Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru, Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri, Heddlu Gogledd Cymru, Grŵp Astudio Adar Ysglyfaethus Cymru a Chyngor Gwynedd. Er bod y gwalch y pysgod yn aderyn sy'n derbyn gwarchodaeth, mae casglwyr wyau yn parhau i'w targedu, felly gwnaed pob ymdrech i sicrhau diogelwch y pâr.

Daeth llawer o'r wardeiniaid gwirfoddol o'r gymuned leol. Treuliiwyd oriau maith, ddydd a nos, yn gwarchod safle'r nyth.

Roeddem wrth ein bodd pan llwyddodd yr adar i ddeor dau gyw o'r wyau yng nghanol mis Mehefin. Yn anffodus, oherwydd y tywydd drwg, cwmpodd y nyth ac yn drist iawn bu farw'r cywion. Arhosodd y gweilch yn yr ardal, gan drwsio'r nyth a hela pysgod. Sefydlwyd man gwyllo fel bod pobl yn gallu dod i weld yr adar rhyfeddol hyn. Daeth llawer o bobl leol i'w gweld, ynghyd â miloedd o ymwelwyr, a gafodd gipolwg ar yr adar cyn iddynt adael y fro.

Llwyddodd yr ail bâr, rhywle arall yng Nghymru, i fagu eu cywion, felly dyma flwyddyn gofiadwy yn hanes gwalch y pysgod yn y DU.

Y fôr-wennol fechan yn ffynnu

Cafodd môr-wenoliaid bychan Gronant, Gogledd Cymru, eu hail flwyddyn fwyaf llwyddiannus hyd yn hyn. Llwyddodd 167 o gywion i adael y nyth y llynedd. Er i wyntoedd cryfion a llanw uchel fygwth diogelwch y nythod sawl gwaith, bu'r staff a gwirfoddolwyr wrthi'n ddygn i sicrhau tymor llwyddiannus arall. Gyda chymorth camera cylch cyfyng, a osodwyd o fewn y nythfa am y tro cyntaf erioed, darlledwyd lluniau byw i Barc Gwyliau Traeth Presthaven gerllaw. Lle'r oedd modd i ymwelwyr wyllo'r adar ifanc wrth iddynt ddatblygu.

Rydym yn ddiolchgar i Wasanaeth Cefn Gwlad Sir Ddinbych, Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru a Pharc Gwyliau Traeth Presthaven am eu cefnogaeth barhaol.

Cafwyd newydd da i'r boda tinwyn yng Nghymru. Wedi arolwg ledled y DU, cafwyd cadarnhad bod 39 o nythod a hyd at 43 o barau yn dal tiriogaeth – cynnydd ar y cofnod blaenorol o 28 pâr. Yng Nghymru, derbyniodd yr arolwg nawdd grant o 50% gan Gyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru.

Nifer yr huganod yn parhau i gynyddu ar Ynys Gwales

Mae nifer yr huganod ar ein gwarchodfa natur ar Ynys Gwales, 10 milltir oddi ar arfordir Sir Benfro, wedi tyfu i bron i

33,000 o barau yn nythu, gan sicrhau mai dyma'r drydedd nythfa fwyaf yn y DU.

Cyfrifwyd yr huganod drwy ddefnyddio ffotograffiaeth eglurdeb-uchel o'r awyr mewn arolwg a roddwyd ar y gweill gan y Ganolfan Ecoleg a Hydroleg, ar ran Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru. Er bod graddfa'r twf yn y boblogaeth wedi arafu, mae'r canlyniadau yn newyddion da i'n hadar môr sy'n nythu, oherwydd cafwyd cryn amrywiaeth yn eu hanes ar draws weddill y DU.

Ynys Gwales yw'r unig nythfa o huganod yng Nghymru, ac mae'n cynnwys 12.5% o'r holl huganod sy'n nythu yng Ngogledd yr Atlantig. Prynodd yr RSPB yr ynys, sy'n cynnwys bron i 9 hectar o fasalt folcanig, ym 1948.

Sefyllfa adar yng Nghymru 2003

Cyhoeddwyd ein hail adroddiad partneriaeth blynyddol yn rhoi manylion am dynged adar Cymru. Mae *Sefyllfa Adar yng Nghymru 2003* yn rhoi golwg werthfawr ar adar ledled Cymru, yn cynnwys y rhai ar y rhestrau coch ac ambr sydd angen ein cefnogaeth barhaol.

Strategaethau yn ymwneud â'r amgylchedd ac addysg yng Nghymru

Rhyddhawyd ein rheolwr cadwraeth i Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru i helpu i ddrafftio'r Strategaeth dros yr Amgylchedd yng Nghymru, tra rhyddhawyd Pennaeth y tîm dysgu gydol oes i Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru i helpu i ddrafftio Strategaeth Cymru dros Addysg er Datblygiad Gynladwy a Dinasyddiaeth Fyd-eang.

Gyda chymorth pobl

Mae'r RSPB yng Nghymru yn parhau i elwa'n fawr o waith ymroddedig gwirfoddolwyr. Yn 2004, arolygwyd 3,400 hectar o dir gan 99 o wirfoddolwyr a chofnodwyd 112 rhywogaeth ar 70 o ffermydd fel rhan o'r Gynghrair Gwirfoddolwyr a Ffermwyr yng Nghymru.

Bu mwy na 17,000 o bobl yn cymryd rhan mewn Gwyllo Adar yr Ardd yng Nghymru, yn cynnwys y nifer fwyaf o blant hyd yn hyn, sef 3,570.

Mynychodd mwy na 4,000 o bobl ein digwyddiadau i ddatlu Diwrnod Bwydo'r Adar.

Daeth mwy na 25,000 o ymwelwyr i fwynhau cynlluniau Tydy Adar yn Wych! ledled Cymru, lle cafwyd cyfle i wyllo adar mor amrywiol â'r rugiar ddu, y fôr-wennol fechan, y barcud, y gwalch y pysgod a'r hebog tramor.

Robert Horne (rspb-images.com)



Little terns did well in North Wales and live pictures of the colony were beamed to television screens at nearby visitor centres. Cafodd y fôr-wennol fechan flwyddyn dda yng Ngogledd Cymru a darlledwyd lluniau byw o'r nythfa i sgriniau teledu mewn canolfannau ymwelwyr gerllaw.



Ben Hall (rspb-images.com)

Our brilliant nature reserve beside the estuary at Conwy attracts visitors from all over the UK, but especially the western midlands of England and North Wales.

Mae'r warchodfa natur ger aber Conwy yn denu ymwelwyr o bob rhan o'r DU, yn enwedig gorllewin Canolbarth Lloegr a Gogledd Cymru.

Treasurer's Report

Andy Hey (rspb-images.com)



Alan Sharpe

John Mills Photography



Bryan Barnacle

'When it comes to providing funds for conservation, there is no such thing as enough' says Mr Ian Darling, Chairman of the RSPB Conservation Committee. The RSPB generated £63 million for nature conservation in 2004/05. How might our conservation colleague judge this?

Well, it is ahead of the sum for 2003-04, always a good sign. In fact it was £2.3 million or 3.7% ahead, this during a period when '...the economic climate turned out to be tougher than forecast' according to the chief executive of a major retailer. The RSPB would like to claim a little of the credit for this outcome, but it is mostly down to the generosity of our members and supporters.

In common with many organisations, the RSPB chose to limit price increases, keeping average subscription rate changes below inflation. Fortunately, Gift Aid continued to provide a welcome boost to income from individuals and, while around 70% of members have already signed-up, it is pleasing to report that we continue to make modest advances in this area.

Diversity of income is a strength that has been commented upon before in our annual reports, but it becomes especially important if recent economic experience on the high street spreads to the charity sector. Although membership subscription growth was limited, as mentioned above, legacies, appeals and other donations made a significant contribution to growth in the year.

Turning to expenditure, it is important to ensure that we continue to bring birds and the environment to the attention of new and existing audiences. Our accounts show that expenditure on education, publications and films has been growing steadily and it is awareness-building activities such as field teaching (as a result of which 49,000 children were given first-hand experience of nature) and Aren't birds brilliant! schemes where such expenditure growth had the most visible impact.

Of course, no RSPB financial report would be complete without mentioning land purchase and 2004-05 saw an increase in the pace of acquisitions, with important extensions at Pulborough and Otmoor among the successes. Members who share our passion for nature reserves will be pleased to learn that even this was below the aspiration set out in our budget and it is our intention to increase the pace further. We have earmarked funds accordingly, but we will only commit when the right land is available at the right price so this expenditure will always be subject to fluctuation.

It is not only in the year of acquisition that land makes its presence felt in our financial reports; the cost of conservation on nature reserves increased by almost 14% in the year. This is partly due to work on this year's new sites, but it often takes some time to prepare plans and to secure necessary planning consents; for example, a significant sum was spent in the year undertaking important work on Geltsdale, purchased in 1998.

Eagle-eyed readers may notice subtle changes to captions and some rationalisation in the presentation of figures for 2004-05. The changes have been made to comply with the *Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice 2005* (SORP). We have chosen to continue to show RSPB local groups separately in recognition of their importance to the RSPB. Alas, accounting guidelines oblige us to show donations separately (trading is included elsewhere) although in any event, the worth of local groups goes far beyond their financial contribution.

Pension matters are destined to remain to the fore in many financial reports for some time to come and the RSPB's is no exception. After several years of poor investment returns it is pleasing to report that returns were ahead of expectation for the second year in succession. Generally speaking, the fact that life expectancy is ahead is also good news – however, in the world of pension provision this is not quite so welcome and, in the case of the RSPB, will extend the time it takes to extinguish the current deficit. This will be considered in detail during a full actuarial review scheduled for 2006.

Taken overall, we are pleased to have generated funds for charitable purposes of £63 million, enabling us to increase expenditure on charitable activities by 10.9%, leaving £3.7 million to be carried forward in financial reserves. But is it enough for our conservation colleague? Well he has confessed to pondering from time to time what a difference to the environment the BT profits (£2,300 million) might make, after hearing them announced on the *Today* programme on Radio 4.

Back in the real world, we have already mentioned our UK land purchase ambitions and it is increasingly the case that acquisitions are just the start. To ensure places such as Rainham, Abernethy and Old Moor realise their potential requires long-term funding. Naturally the RSPB holds financial reserves; we increased these a little in 2004-05 in recognition of such work. If we are to have any chance of realising these and other ambitions, however, it is important that we maintain a reliable and steadily increasing stream of income. We know from the fact that 90% of members renew each year that most share these goals and we are confident that, together, we can make a lasting and positive difference for the birds.

Alan Sharpe – Director of Finance

Bryan Barnacle – Honorary Treasurer

We are extremely grateful to all for the support (financial or otherwise) that made our work possible during the year.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

for the year ended 31 March 2005

	2005 £'000	2004 £'000
INCOMING RESOURCES		
VOLUNTARY INCOME		
Membership subscriptions	23,668	22,899
Legacies	21,099	19,626
Grants, commercial donations & trusts	12,980	13,645
Appeals	3,072	2,553
General donations & reserve entry fees	2,147	1,910
Local groups	320	342
	63,286	60,975
ACTIVITIES TO GENERATE FUNDS		
Mail order & shop income	10,967	9,616
Media advertising & inserts	1,309	1,406
Lotteries	857	921
Commercial sponsorship	714	642
	13,847	12,585
INVESTMENT INCOME & INTEREST		
	1,064	835
ACTIVITIES TO FURTHER THE CHARITY'S OBJECTS		
Land & farming income	989	1,062
Fees & grants for services	892	866
Events & media sales	580	518
	2,461	2,446
OTHER INCOME		
Net gains on disposals of fixed assets	190	304
Total incoming resources	80,848	77,145
RESOURCES EXPENDED		
COST OF GENERATING FUNDS		
Costs of generating voluntary income	6,190	6,104
Activities to generate funds including cost of goods	11,573	10,211
Cost of investment management	63	61
Total cost of generating funds	17,826	16,376
Net resources available for charitable purposes	63,022	60,769

AUDITORS' STATEMENT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE RSPB

We have examined the summarised financial statements which comprise the summarised statement of financial activities and summarised balance sheet (statement of net assets) set out on pages 27 and 28.

This report is made solely to the Charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with the *Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice 2005* (SORP). Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Charity and the Charity's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and auditors
The trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised financial statements in accordance with the recommendations of the SORP. Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summarised financial statements with the full financial statements and Trustees' Annual Report. We also read the other information contained in the summarised annual report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summarised financial statements.

Basis of opinion
We conducted our work having regard to Bulletin 1999/6 *The auditors' statement on the summary*

financial statement and Practice Note 11 *The audit of charities* issued by the Auditing Practices Board for use in the UK.

Opinion
In our opinion, the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements and the Trustees' Annual Report of the RSPB for the year ended 31 March 2005.

Deloitte & Touche LLP
Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors,
Hill House, 1 Little New Street, London EC4A 3TR

29 June 2005

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

for the year ended 31 March 2005

	2005 £'000	2004 £'000
CHARITABLE REVENUE EXPENDITURE		
Species and habitat conservation	24,237	22,496
Conservation on nature reserves	18,695	16,437
Education, publications and films	7,603	6,801
Membership services and enquiries	5,090	4,439
Total charitable revenue expenditure	55,625	50,173
GOVERNANCE COSTS		
	387	351
Total resources expended (including Total cost of generating funds)	73,838	66,900
Net incoming resources before gains	7,010	10,245
Gains on investments	1,482	2,210
Net movement in funds	8,492	12,455
USE OF NET FUNDS		
Charitable capital expenditure:		
Nature reserves	4,737	4,705
Other tangible assets	52	231
Movement on stock, debtors & creditors	47	(416)
	4,836	4,520
Increase in cash & investments available for future activities	3,656	7,935
Cash & investments available at start of period	26,065	18,130
Total cash & investments available for future activities	29,721	26,065

STATEMENT OF NET ASSETS

As at 31 March 2005

	2005 £'000	2004 £'000
CASH & INVESTMENTS AVAILABLE FOR FUTURE ACTIVITIES		
General purposes	18,215	15,782
Designated	5,346	4,281
Restricted	4,603	4,706
Endowment	1,557	1,296
Total cash & investments available for future activities	29,721	26,065
Nature reserves	67,717	62,980
Other tangible assets	5,085	5,033
Stock, debtors & creditors	498	451
Net assets	103,021	94,529

THE FULL AUDITED ACCOUNTS were approved on 29 June 2005 and, together with the Annual Report, have been submitted to the Charity Commission. The opinion of the auditor was unqualified. These summarised accounts may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. For further information the full accounts, the auditors' report on those accounts and the Trustees' Annual Report should be consulted. Copies can be obtained, free of charge, from the Director of Finance, The RSPB, UK Headquarters, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Signed on behalf of the Council:

Ian Newton

Ian Newton, Chairman, 29 June 2005

NOTE

An audit does not provide assurance on the maintenance and integrity of the website, including controls used to achieve this, and in particular on whether any changes have occurred to the financial statements since first published. These matters are the responsibility of the directors but no control procedures can provide absolute assurance in this area.

Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements differs from legislation in other jurisdictions.



David Hosking (FLPA)

Acknowledgements

Thank you for supporting us

Members

The support and loyalty of our members is critical to the success of RSPB achievements. The rigorous conservation targets that we set simply would not be possible without the enormous contributions that members make. Members help in many ways, all of them equally important: financially, through volunteering, by supporting RSPB campaigns through letter writing and helping to deliver RSPB projects on the ground through local groups.

Local groups

RSPB local groups and RSPB Wildlife Explorer groups worked unstintingly over the year. They provide a great focus for us in local communities, involving lots of people in our work and raise valuable funds for our conservation projects.

Legacies

Once again we are astounded by the generosity of supporters who remember the RSPB in their wills. This income makes a tremendous difference to the amount of conservation work the RSPB is able to undertake. Our posthumous thanks go to each and every one. We would like to recognise them all by name, but this is not possible. However, there are a few that we would like to mention.

Dorothy S Morgan, Farnham
Christine M Bond, Ditchling
Anne N Jarman, Weston Super Mare
Barbara Walker, Polegate
Dorothy L B Hamilton, Bognor Regis

Our thanks and gratitude goes to everyone who has the forethought and generosity to support us in this way.

Heritage Lottery Fund

The Heritage Lottery Fund has provided essential support for RSPB projects to restore and secure natural heritage for current and future generations. In this 11th year of National Lottery funding, we remain indebted for their continued support for this work.

Charitable trusts

We are extremely grateful for the support received from charitable trusts and foundations and would particularly like to acknowledge the following:

A B Grace Charity
A J H Ashby Trust
The Allan & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Settlement
The Banister Charitable Trust
Betty Knight deceased
Bridge House Trust
Cemlyn Jones Charitable Trust
The Chapman Charitable Trust
Christopher G H Simon deceased
Donald Forrester Charitable Trust
The Doris Field Charitable Trust
Elsie Susan Exton deceased
Geoffrey Burton Charitable Trust
Gillman Charitable Trusts
The Harry Dunn Charitable Trust
The Jack Patston Charitable Trust
Leventis
Lloyds TSB Foundation
Michael Otto Stiftung für Umweltschutz
The Northern Rock Foundation
The Peter Smith Charitable Trust for Nature
R D Plunkett deceased
Restore UK
The Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation

The Shears Charitable Trust
The Simpson Education and Conservation Trust
The Spear Charitable Trust
Teesside Environmental Trust
The Tory Family Foundation
Whitley Animal Protection Trust

Sponsorship, donations & grants

The RSPB has enjoyed successful partnerships with organisations to our mutual benefit. We are delighted to acknowledge our business supporters and the many other organisations that have assisted us.

A&C Black (Publishers) Ltd
Adnams Wine
BG Group Plc
BP through the Scottish Forest Alliance
British Airways
The Caravan Club
Center Parcs Group plc
Chevron Texaco
CJ WildBird Foods Ltd
The Co-operative Bank Plc
Country Artists Ltd
David Milne
Folkestone and Dover Water Services Ltd
Hanson Aggregates Ltd
Holiday Cottages Group
Jarrold Publishing
K&M Europe (UK) Ltd
Lafarge Ltd
Mersey Waterfront Regional Park
National Grid Transco
Northumbrian Water Ltd
The Penguin Group (UK)
The Puppet Company Ltd
Scottish and Southern Energy Plc
Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey
Sussex Ornithological Society
Swarovski Optik, Austria
Terra Ecosystems
Thames Water Utilities Ltd
United Utilities
Vale of Glamorgan Welsh Church Act Fund
Viking Optical Ltd
Vogelbescherming Netherland
Webb Ivory (Burton) Ltd

Support from statutory sector and other bodies

African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (UNEP-AEWA)
Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
Broads and Rivers LEADER+ Programme (a programme funded by the European Union)
Chartered Institute of Water and Environment Managers
Cherwell District Council
Community Environmental Renewal Scheme managed by Forward Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Executive
Countryside Agency through Defra
Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund
Countryside Council for Wales
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) (NI)
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
DFID – Civil Society Challenge Fund
East of England Development Agency
Energy Saving Trust grant provided by the Department of Trade and Industry
Enfys Fund, National Lottery Wales
English Nature
English Nature through Defra Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund
Environment Agency
Environment and Heritage Service (DOE) (NI)

European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund through the Highlands & Islands Special Transitional Programme
European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund through the South of Scotland Objective 2 Programme
European Commission – ‘Tropical Forests’ Budget Line B7-620
EU Life Nature
Forest Enterprise
Forestry Commission
Forestry Commission Wales
Fylde Borough Council
Gateshead Council
Global Conservation Fund (Conservation International)
Heritage Lottery Fund
Heritage Lottery Fund Wales
INTERREG North Sea Programme – Transnational Ecological Network (TEN) III
LEADER +
Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
North West Farm Tourism Initiative
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
The Overseas Territories Environment Programme of the Department for International Development and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Rail Link Countryside Initiative
Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD)
Scottish Executive’s Biodiversity Action Grants Scheme
Scottish Natural Heritage
Sefton Borough Council
South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)
Tourism Partnership North Wales
UNDP Belarus
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Water UK
Welsh European Funding Office
WWF – Worldwide Fund for Nature

Landfill Tax Credit Scheme

We are grateful for funding support contributed through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme.
Angus Environmental Trust
Biffaward
Brett Environmental Trust Ltd
Cleanaway Havering Riverside Trust
Cumbria Waste Management Environment Trust
Eggborough Power Station through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme
Glasgow City Council Environmental Bodies Credit Scheme
Gloucestershire Environmental Trust
Hanson Environment Fund
Ibstock Cory Environmental Trust
Lancashire Waste Services
Mersey Waste Holdings
Newport City Council
Onyx Environmental Trust
RMC Environment Fund
Shanks First Fund
SITA Environmental Trust
Suffolk Environmental Trust
Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment with funds from Viridor Credits’ Oxfordshire Fund
Waste Recycling Group Ltd (WRG) through Waste Recycling Environmental (WREN)
Wessex Water
Wyvern Environmental Trust