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## Introduction

In this **interactive PDF** you can do many things to help you easily access the information that you want.


Use the section headers to the left of the page and the document controls at the bottom left of each page to help you navigate through this report.


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There are links to other pages within the report and web addresses for additional information.

 Links to other pages within this report

 Web links to further reading online

If you follow a link within an article to another page, there is a link on the bottom left of the new page, to take you back to where you were.

If you navigate to a new section using the contents listing on the left, you have to use the same listing to return to where you were.

## The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) is a collaboration of biodiversity data partners and users who are working together to make data accessible and usable by others.

The NBN Trust is the charitable body that oversees the development and management of the NBN and its information facilities. It was established in 2000 and has a Chairman and Board of Trustees who have a leadership role in relation to the Trust in that they collectively own and promote the NBN concept.

### The NBN Trust's vision is that:

*“Wildlife data collected and shared openly by the Network are central to the UK's learning and understanding of its biodiversity and are critical to all decision-making about nature and the environment.”*

To achieve that vision, the Network is working to deliver improvements to the recording, collection, verification, curation, aggregation, analysis and use of wildlife data in the UK.



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## Consolidating our work

The key message running through this year's report is – consolidation – as we sought to stabilise, maintain and improve the NBN Atlas infrastructure taking the wishes of the Network into account. It was also a significant year with the award of an Esmée Fairbairn grant, which specifically enabled us to take strides towards becoming a more resilient and sustainable organisation.

### NOTE

The NBN Trust employs a team, the NBN Trust Secretariat, to facilitate and coordinate the growth and development of the Network. The NBN Trust Secretariat comprises the staff who work to achieve the objects of the Trust and who provide a range of services and develop standards, in conjunction with Network partners, that enhance the ability of the Network to operate. They manage and develop the NBN Atlas and provide advice on technical matters such as data management and administration. They may also lead on projects designed to develop the Network and promote the Network as a whole, as well as its constituent parts, through the NBN Trust's communication channels. This Annual Report is produced by the [NBN Trust Secretariat](#). 





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## Chairman's report



Welcome to the 2019/20 NBN Trust Annual Report. I hope you, your families and colleagues are keeping well.

Peculiar and distant. That is the way it feels to be reviewing a pre-Coronavirus year from the perspective of a world that has received a pandemic jolt. We have experienced the “great human pause” of lockdown and I expect many of you have witnessed first-hand, or are working hard to understand, the effects of this on the natural world. Many people will have been stopped from recording nature in the normal way, but hopefully this has been compensated for by the succour that the natural world has provided to so many people in lockdown, including myself, and has served as a stimulus to widen the net of those who want to understand nature and thereby strengthen the resolve to protect it.

In fact, 2019/20 was a good year for the NBN Trust. The Trust's CEO, Dr Jo Judge, and her team have pushed forward a myriad of important tasks and we have benefited from some financial stability afforded by the funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for which we are extremely grateful. In particular, in this report you will see the strides made in consolidating key aspects of the Trust such as the continued development of the [NBN Atlas](#)  My thanks go to Jo and her team for achieving so much and, recently, ensuring the Trust's work continues through the challenges of lockdown.

I wrote in last year's annual review of the need for collaboration amongst the biodiversity recording network. The Trust recognises it has a big part to play here and I would like to pick out three examples from 2019/20.

First, thank you to the representatives from key stakeholders who have come together to consider how best to progress the goals of the Trust and the wider network as part of the Stakeholder Group which met three times.<sup>1</sup> This is an important forum for the Trust's Board to hear stakeholder views and for stakeholders to hear about the Trust's work.

Second, the NBN Conference in November 2019, an event I was extremely proud to host as Chair for the first time. There were a variety of stimulating knowledge exchange sessions on topics ranging from the FAIR data sharing principles to “Whose data are they anyway?”; and there were the inspirational and entertaining speakers including Tony Juniper CBE delivering the Sir John Burnett memorial lecture and our Patron, Sir John Lawton's keynote address.

<sup>1</sup> Organisations represented on the Stakeholder Group are: Andy Musgrove (British Trust for Ornithology), Barry Letheren (Natural Resources Wales), Brian Eardley (NatureScot), Chris Raper (Natural History Museum), David Askew (Natural England), Deb Muscat (Association of Local Environmental Records Centres), Erika Newton (British Ecological Society), Martin Harvey (Biological Records Centre), Marina Flamank (Environment Agency), Pete Tomlin (Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust), Steve Whitbread (Harlow Council/Association of Local Environmental Records Centres), Steve Wilkinson (Joint Nature Conservation Committee)



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Finally, albeit containing stark messages, the State of Nature Report 2019 evidenced the importance of contributions from many, diverse, sources, not least the 7.5 million volunteer hours. See [page 10](#)  of the CEOs report for more.

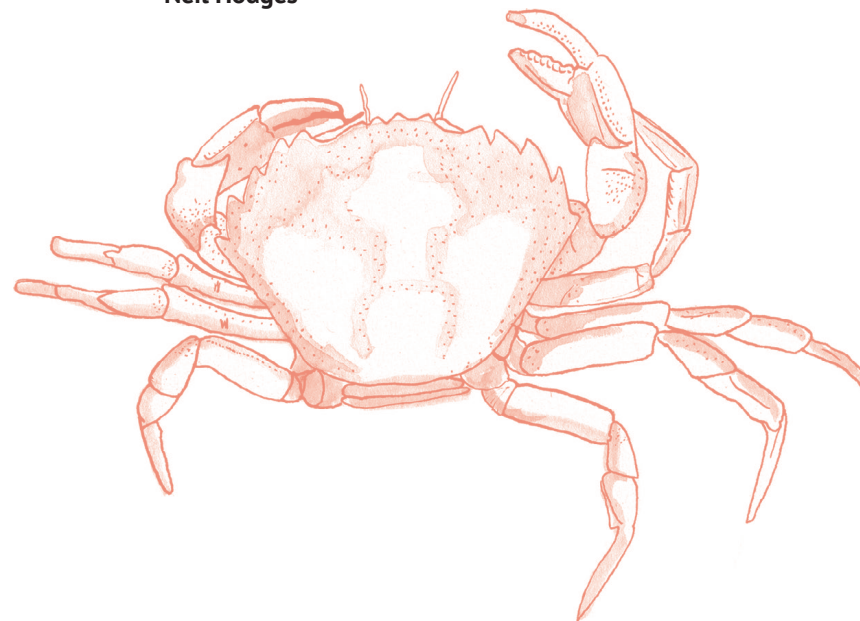
We are now in the NBN Trust's 20th year, which we will report on further in the 2020/21 Annual Report, and this year also sees the end of the Trust's 2015-2020 strategy period. The Board has started work to shape the [strategy](#)  for the next stage of the Trust's evolution and we will be continuing to seek input from Network members over the coming months. I am confident that as we all move through the Coronavirus era mutual support and collaboration will be core to ensuring the biodiversity recording community goes from strength to strength.

On a personal note, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Trustee Andrew Wood who is stepping down as Treasurer after 13 years. I am pleased to say Andrew remains a Trustee. The role of Treasurer has been undertaken by Roddy Fairley on an interim basis and I am delighted to confirm that Roddy has agreed to take this on, on a permanent basis. Thank you to both of these valued members of the board for their contributions, past and present.

I hope you enjoy this Annual Report.



**Neil Hodges**



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It has been another busy year for the NBN Trust and the Network. Within the Trust it has been a year of consolidation, working towards building resilience of the NBN Trust, and hopefully by extension the whole Network, as well as the continued development of the NBN Atlas. The Trust has also been involved in a number of events and conferences raising awareness of the Trust and the Network, continued involvement in the SBIF review and with the State of Nature Partnership.



In addition to the National Lottery Fund's Resilient Heritage Grant we were awarded in March 2019, we were extremely pleased to be awarded £375,000 over three and a half years from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation in August. These funds are for core costs to transform the NBN Atlas into a world leading source of environmental data. Combined with the National Lottery Fund award, this enabled the Trust to employ a second NBN Atlas Developer, an NBN Atlas Project Manager and a part-time NBN Atlas Support Officer, all of whom joined us during 2019. While there may not have been many big visible changes to the NBN Atlas this year, there has been a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes, especially with regard to customising the Atlas of Living Australia source code so that it works more effectively for us in the UK. Much work this year focused on clearing the backlog of bugs and minor enhancements that had built up due to the Trust's limited resources. Our original developer has been doing a sterling job, however, there is only so much one man can do!

We had two new additions to the NBN Atlas family this year, with the official launch of the [NBN Atlas Northern Ireland](#) in May and the portal for [Caring for God's Acre's Beautiful Burial Ground project](#) which launched in July. The Burial Ground portal is an interesting development for the NBN Atlas as it is based on locations rather than species and is another example of how the NBN Atlas platform can be customised to meet particular needs.

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Out of a number of presentations I made about the NBN Trust and Network in the UK, one I particularly enjoyed was at the Data Science Festival in London in April 2019. This provided engagement with a new audience, raising awareness of the whole Network and the data that are shared by the Network via the NBN Atlas to those who use data in innovative ways. Subsequently we have had three data science masters' students undertaking projects with the NBN Trust, using the NBN Atlas data, looking at the completeness of the database in terms of taxonomic comprehensiveness and geographical coverage. These have produced some very interesting results that we hope to incorporate into the metrics for the NBN Atlas in due course.

It was quite a busy year on the international front too. I represented the UK at the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) European and Global nodes managers' meetings (in Oslo and Leiden in May and October respectively) and was part of the UK delegation at the GBIF Governing Board meeting, also in Leiden in October. I also presented conference talks about the Network and the NBN Atlas at the Biodiversity Next conference in Leiden in October and the World Biodiversity Forum in Davos in February.

The [SBIF Review](#)  was submitted to the Scottish Government in November 2018, however, there continued to be work in support of the review and its recommendations, including giving evidence to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee in September, which I was delighted to do along with Ellen Wilson (Chair of SBIF) and Craig Macadam (Conservation Director, Buglife). There is no news from the Scottish Government yet as to whether the Review and its recommendations will be wholly or partially funded and implemented, but the SBIF Advisory Group continues to champion its adoption.



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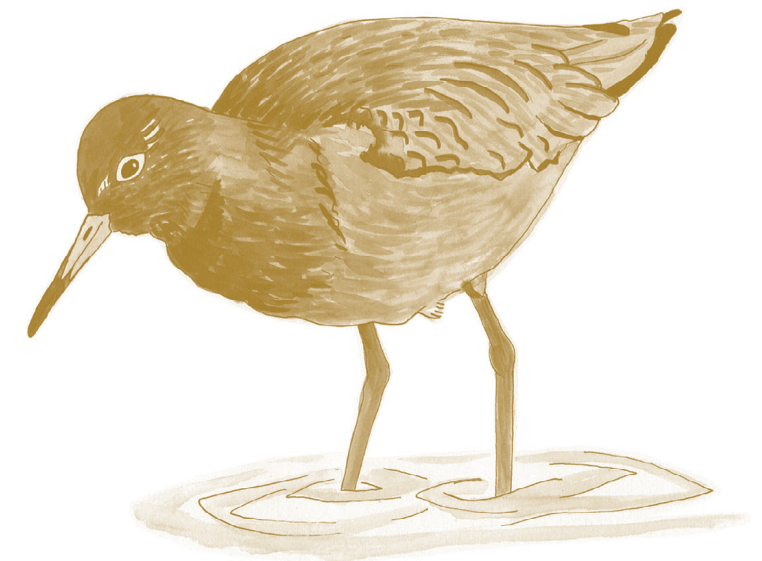
The State of Nature Partnership once again put in an enormous effort to bring together the State of Nature Report 2019, using data provided by the Network and which we are honoured to host on the NBN website.  The report not only highlights the plight of the UK's biodiversity, with 41% of the UK's species declining in numbers since 1970 and 15% of species threatened with extinction, but also recognises the huge contribution volunteers make to our understanding of the UK's natural world. It estimated that in total just under 90,000 volunteers submit wildlife records as part of structured monitoring schemes or to national recording schemes or Local Environmental Records centres. We, at the NBN Trust, along with the wider Network and all involved in conservation and decision making around the UK's biodiversity are indebted to these dedicated volunteers. None of us would be able to do what we do, if they did not do what they do, so I give our appreciation again to every one of them.

The year ended with the NBN Trust office in Nottingham being closed temporarily, as was the case for practically every organisation in the country, due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Working from home became the norm for the entire team, with the added complications of home-schooling and sharing home offices with other members of the household. The entire team has risen to the challenge admirably and I would like to thank them all for remaining focused, productive and a pleasure to work with through this difficult time. I hope we will all be able to return to some semblance of normality in the not too distant future.

Until then, stay safe, enjoy nature and I look forward to continuing to work with you all (remotely or in person) to continue the vital work the volunteers, organisations within the Network and the Trust do for the benefit of our natural environment.



**Jo Judge**





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NBN Atlas Newsletter  launched

Jo Judge presented at the  
Data Science Festival

**APRIL**



Caroline Van Dierksen appointed  
as NBN Atlas Project Manager

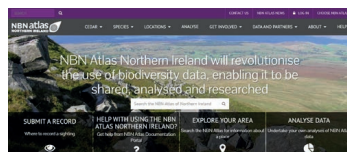
**JUNE**



2019

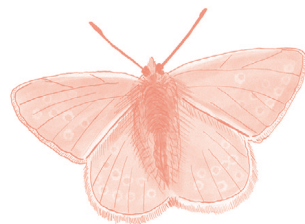


**MAY**



← NBN Atlas Northern  
Ireland  launched

Jo Judge attended the Global  
Biodiversity Information  
Facility (GBIF) European  
nodes managers' meeting



**JULY**

Stephen Page appointed as  
NBN Atlas Systems Developer

Brendan Foster, Data Science Masters student from the  
University of Salford, joined the team on a placement  
to develop methods of measuring the success of the  
NBN Atlas as a resource for UK wildlife records

SBIF Review won the CIEEM Best Practice Award for  
Stakeholder Engagement at the CIEEM Awards 2019

NBN Atlas Northern Ireland launched  
at Ulster Museum, Belfast



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All figures relate to the period ending 31 March 2019 unless stated otherwise:



213   
Number of NBN Trust members

150  
Number of data partners supplying data to the NBN Atlas. Nine of which are new for 2019/20

8.8   
Number of staff employed by the NBN Trust in the year (FTE)

866

Number of datasets uploaded to the NBN Atlas. 243 were updated in the financial year including 54 new ones

  
70,130,546   
Number of records shared through GBIF

  
7,748

Number of registered activated accounts on the NBN Atlas. 2,301 are new for 2019/20

  
725,494,302  
Number of records downloaded through the year. An increase of 163,432,294 from 2018/19 (562,062,008)

266,309,875   
Number of records shared through the NBN Atlas. An increase of 3,423,883 from the previous year (222,885,992)

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## Verification status and licensing

92%

Accepted identification  
verification status of records



8%



Unconfirmed identification  
verification status

14%



Open licence

86%

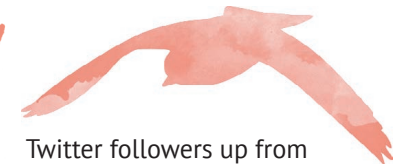
Shared licence



## Social media

+23%

Twitter followers up from  
5309 to 6550



+22%

Facebook  
likes up from  
1404 to 1714



573

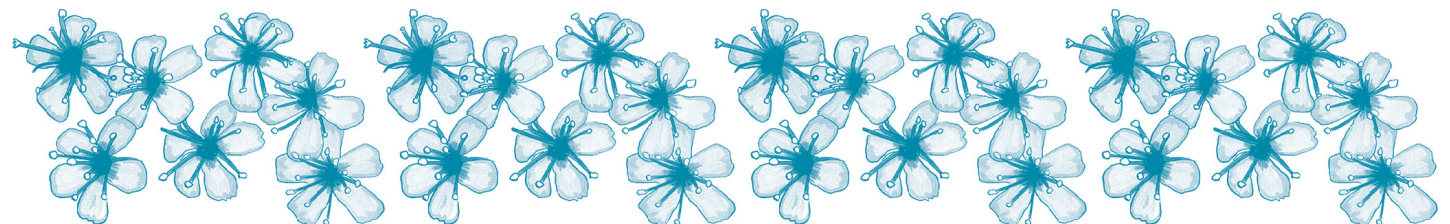


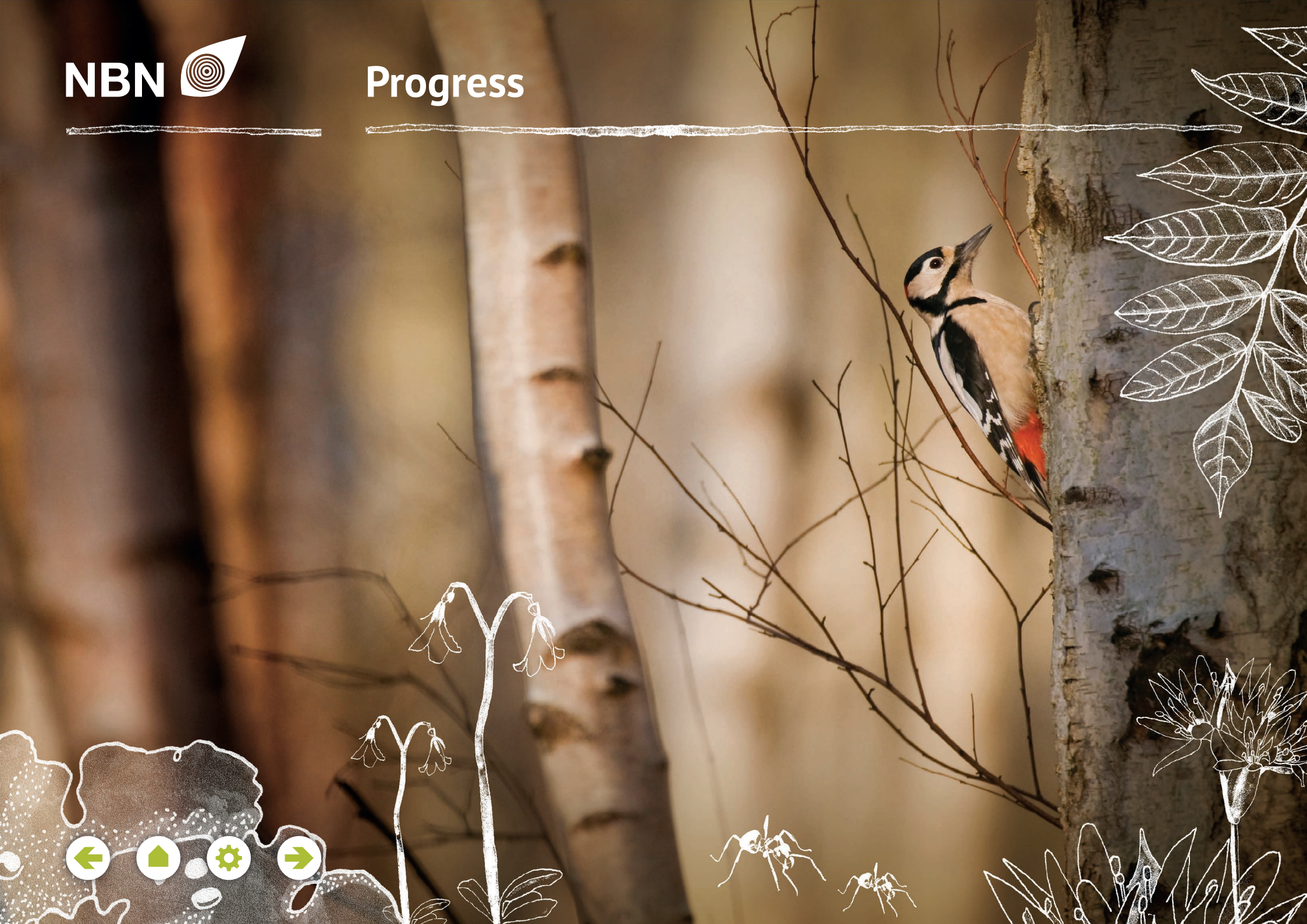
Instagram followers  
reached 573 in nine months  
(we started in July 2019)



+4%

LinkedIn Group up  
from 4690 to 4872





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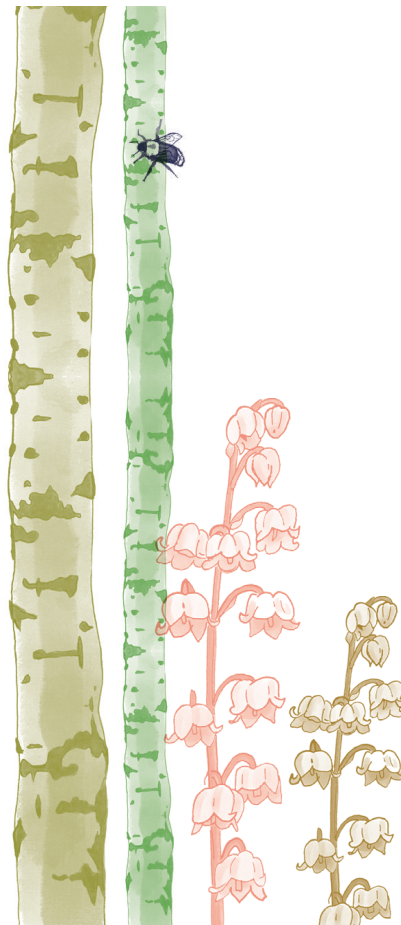
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## Progress

This section of the Report looks at the key activities carried out by the NBN Trust during the year in support of the five Strategic Aims.



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## Strategic aim 1 Record, collect, diversify, enhance and mobilise biological data

### Mobilising Northern Ireland's data through the new NBN Atlas

On Wednesday 29 May 2019, the [NBN Atlas Northern Ireland](#)  was launched, supported by the CEDaR (Centre for Environmental Data and Recording) partnership. This newest NBN Atlas portal provides access to species- and site-based information from across Northern Ireland and its coastal waters.

The various terrestrial, freshwater and marine datasets and the habitats data stored by CEDaR are submitted to the NBN Atlas Northern Ireland on a monthly basis. Once uploaded, they are available to view, analyse and download. The Atlas is linked to local natural history resources, such as the Habitas suite of websites, and it also provides users with information on the various 'record submission portals', local recording schemes, recording initiatives and events.

The launch event, at Ulster Museum, Belfast, allowed the CEDaR partnership to demonstrate the capabilities of this exciting new website and was attended by key stakeholders and members of the wider environmental recording community.



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## One million wildlife records

In March 2020, the [NBN Atlas Isle of Man](#)  reached a record milestone with one million wildlife records available online.

Much of its data comes from surveys carried out by the lead organisations of Manx National Heritage (MNH), the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture and Manx Wildlife Trust, but also includes records from individual wildlife recorders and several specialist groups including Manx Bat Group, Isle of Man Fungus Group, Manx Basking Shark Watch and Manx Bird Atlas.

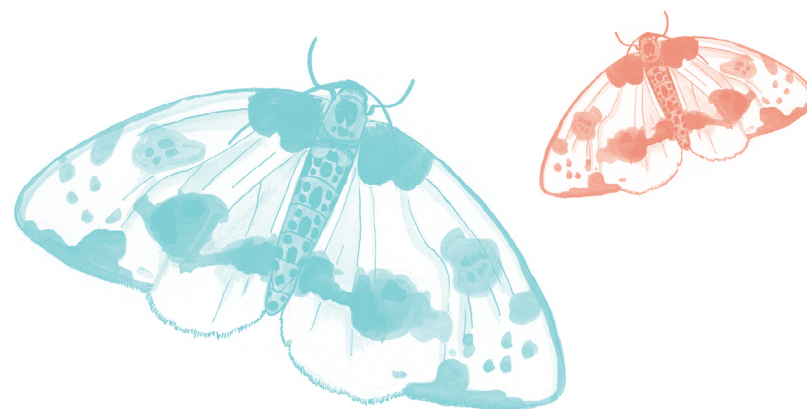
NBN Atlas Isle of Man is being further enhanced by an MNH led volunteer project to digitise over 45 years of daily logs from the Calf of Man Bird Observatory, which are currently held as paper records in the Manx National Heritage Library and Archives at the Manx Museum. Thanks to a small, but dedicated team of volunteers, over 130,000 bird sightings have so far been transcribed, validated and published on the online resource.

## Increasing data holdings

Over the course of 2019/20 a number of new data providers submitted data to the NBN Atlas and 54 data resources were provided by new or existing partners. Thank you to all our data partners for sharing data and for their support of the NBN Atlas.

### New data providers:

- Amphibian and Reptile Groups of UK
- Berkshire Moth Group
- Caring for God's Acre
- Grasshopper Recording Scheme
- National Museums Liverpool
- Salmon & Trout Conservation
- Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust
- The Rock Pool Project
- UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme



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## New data resources:


[KiEco Freshwater Ecology: River Macroinvertebrates](#) 

[Vascular plant records verified via iRecord](#) 


[Collated IRTU Freshwater Surveys](#) 


[Bee, wasp and ant \(Hymenoptera: Aculeata\) records verified via iRecord](#) 


[Fermanagh Flora](#) 

[Moths in Berkshire vice-county – records verified via iRecord](#) 

[KiEco Freshwater Ecology: Diatoms](#) 

[South East Scotland Tetrad Atlas 2008-2013 – non-sensitive breeding species](#) 

[South East Scotland Tetrad Atlas 2007-2013 – non-sensitive winter species](#) 


[Bryophyte records via iRecord](#) 

[Record Pool](#) 

[Invasive Species and Pests](#) 


[Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust – Records](#) 

[R.H.Wardell - Cardiff Nature Conservation](#)


[Strategy – 1991-1998](#) 

[KiEco Freshwater Ecology: River Macrophytes](#) 

[Diptera records from iRecord for families not covered by a recording scheme](#) 

[Manx Biological Recording Partnership VERIFIED Isle of Man records between 14/02/2017 and 05/09/2019](#) 


[Isle of Man Historical Wildlife Records pre-1990](#) 

[Riverfly Census – Aquatic invertebrate species occurrence, for the calculation of pressure biometric scores in English and Welsh rivers covering the period 2015-2018](#) 

[East Lothian Council Ranger Service Records](#) 

[Fife Nature Records Centre combined dataset 2018/19](#) 

[Dipterists Forum: Field Week 2018 \(Stoke\)](#) 

[Manx Biological Recording Partnership UNVERIFIED Isle of Man records between 14/02/2017 and 05/09/2019](#) 

[TWIC Site Surveys \(2010-present\)](#) 

[Coleoptera records from iRecord for families not covered by a recording scheme](#) 

[Loughs Agency Marine Survey Data](#) 

[Irish Whale and Dolphin Group](#) 

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[1848-1982 Lundy Field Society, The Marine Fauna of Lundy](#) 

[The Rock Pool Project database – intertidal species records from rocky shore habitats – from February 2019](#) 

[Churchyards for London](#) 

[East Lothian Council – Biodiversity Surveys](#) 

[R. Manning's Records](#) 

[National Lamprey Survey of Scotland \(2003-2005\)](#) 


[Other beetle records from National Stag Beetle Surveys 2006-2019](#) 

[Distribution of pine martens in Scotland as determined by field survey](#) 


[MoJ BioBlitz August 2018](#) 

[British Reptiles & Amphibians in the collections of World Museum Liverpool](#) 


[Nottingham Urban Wildlife Scheme iRecord download 2014-2017](#) 


[1966-1986 T.G. Skinner Solway Firth Occurrence of some prominent zooplankton](#) 

[Sea Deep Tagging Data](#) 


[Recovery of the medicinal leech \*Hirudo medicinalis\* in Scotland – Phase II](#) 

[East Lothian Council – Woodland Plants Survey 2011 \(public\)](#) 


[CEDaR images](#) 


[TWIC General Records \(2015-present\)](#) 

[Juniper Survey of Perth and Kinross, 2010](#) 

[Assessment of the status of the great crested newt \*Triturus cristatus\* within the Scottish Natural Heritage East Highland Area, 2002](#) 

[WDC Lewis survey data](#) 


[Craigellachie NNR invertebrate records compiled from SNH files](#) 

[Assessment of the status of the great crested newt \*Triturus cristatus\* within the Scottish Natural Heritage East Highland Area, 2004](#) 

[Feral Pigs – Sightings and Cull records – 2014-2015](#) 

[Feral Pigs – Sightings and Cull records – 2017-2018](#) 

[Feral Pigs – Sightings and Cull records – 2018-2019](#) 

[Wild boar culled on the National Forest Estate Scotland 2018-19](#) 

[DAERA marine species images](#) 



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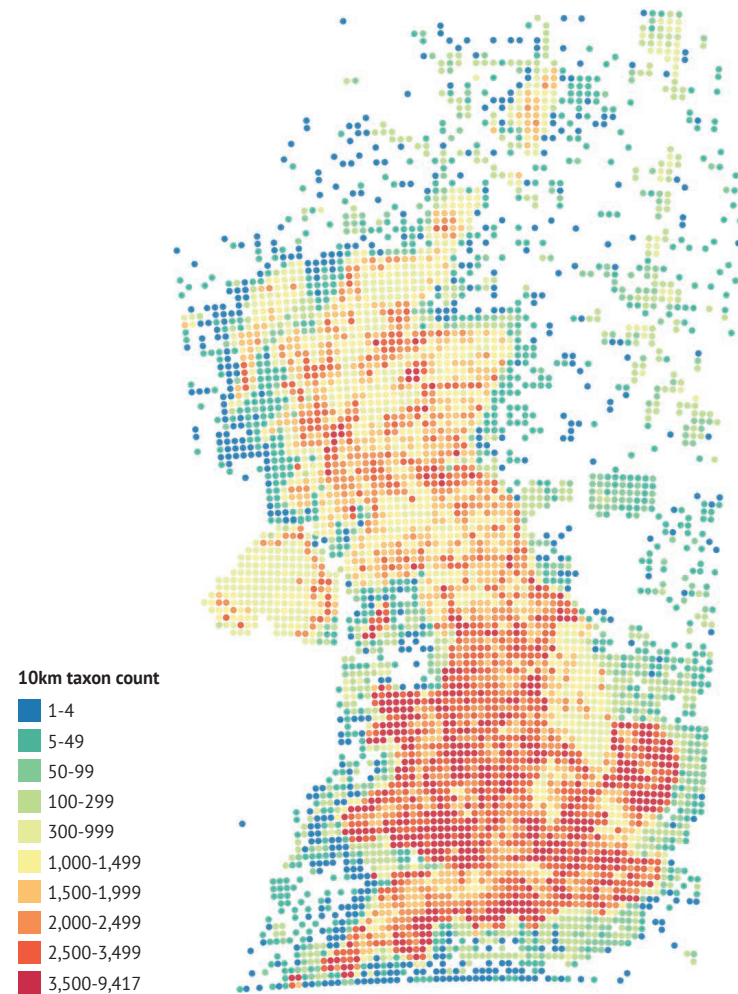
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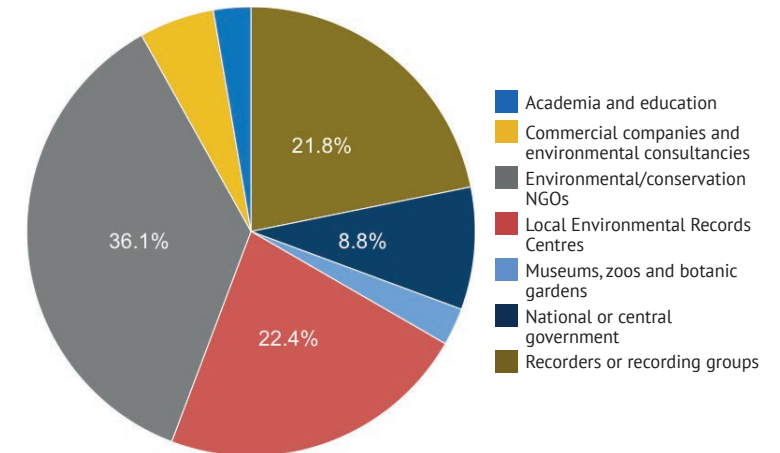
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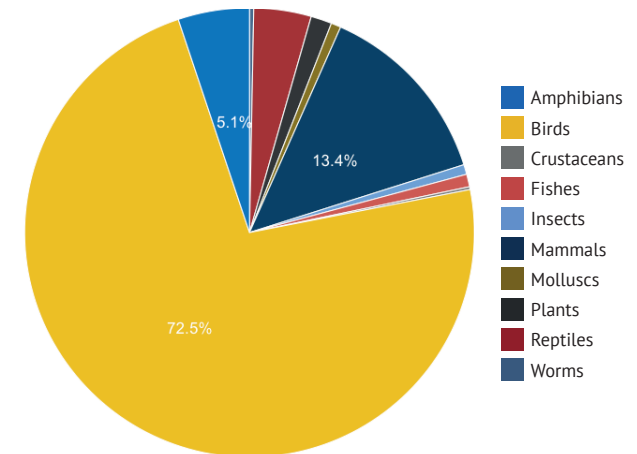
Map showing taxon count in each 10km square across the UK and Isle of Man.



## Percentage of data providers by sector



## Percentage of records by species group



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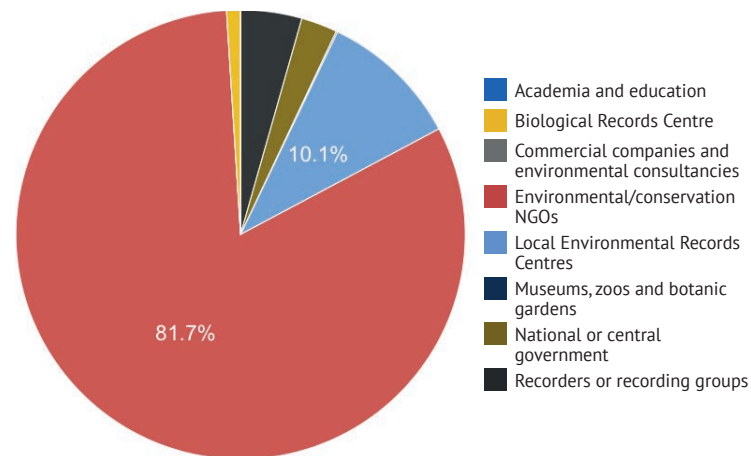
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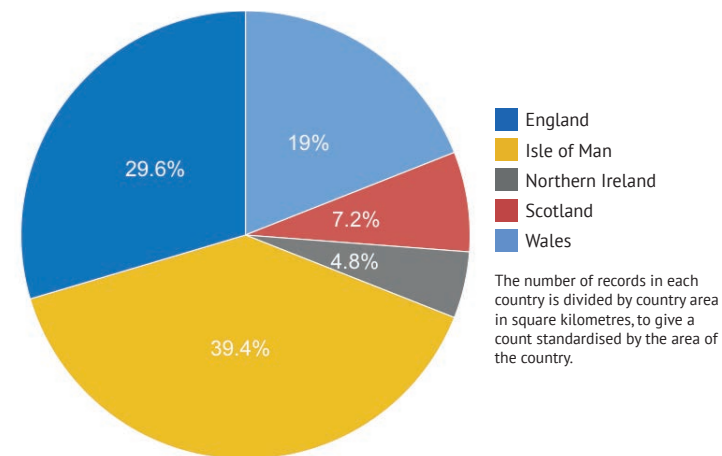
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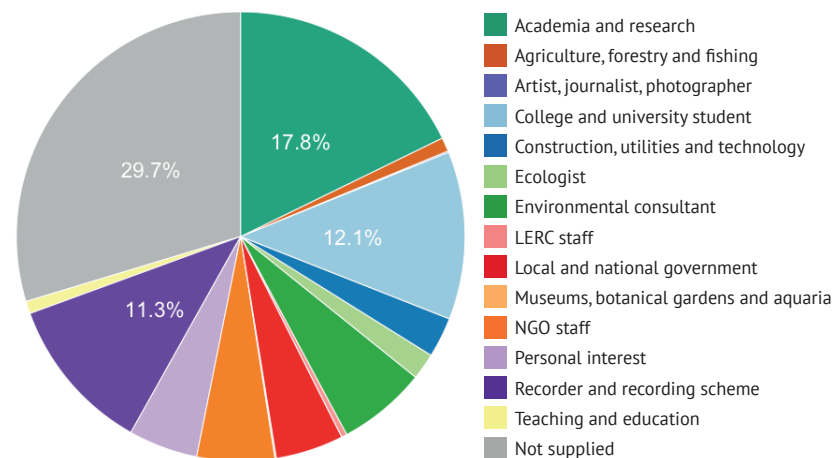
Percentage of records by data provider sector



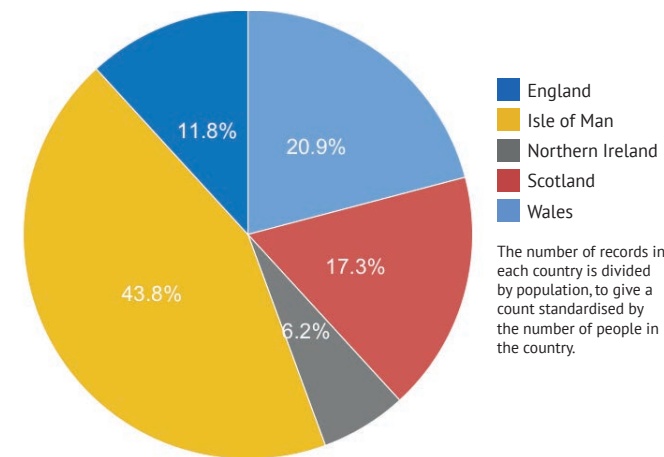
Percentage of records by country – standardised by area



Percentage of users by type



Percentage of records by country – standardised by population



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## Sensitive Species Policy Review

The NBN Trust has a responsibility to ensure that steps are taken to reduce the risk of environmental harm due to the release of sensitive data, while still maintaining as much access to data as possible. All data supplied to the NBN Atlas are displayed at the spatial resolution submitted by data providers, except records of species on the NBN Atlas sensitive species lists. Sensitive species records will be supplied at the resolution chosen by the data provider, but will only be available publicly on the NBN Atlas (to view or download) at the spatial resolution detailed on the sensitive species lists.

The NBN Trust reviewed the policy in 2019 and decided, after consultation with the individual nature conservation bodies, to continue to use the sensitive species lists as supplied by each country's nature conservation body. This was due in part to the amount of work required to liaise with the different organisations to agree any changes.

The NBN Trust will continue to use the UK and Isle of Man Agency lists (i.e. NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage), Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Manx National Heritage), which are based on specific sensitivities in each country. The NBN Trust will assist and support data providers and other interested parties in requesting changes to the individual country lists to each country Agency.

## Possible changes

Depending on the requirements of our users, the NBN Trust is investigating the demand and feasibility of the following changes to the Policy:

- 1. Opting-out:** Data partners will be able to opt-out of individual records that they supply being blurred if they feel that the locality or lifecycle of the individual record is not sensitive. Any opting-out will be done on a record by records basis.
- 2. Seasonal and life stage sensitivity:** Many species are only sensitive at certain times of the year or during specific life cycle stages e.g. breeding. The sensitive species lists may therefore define a date range within which the species' location must be blurred. All records for species outside of that date range will be available at the full supplied resolution. Currently, if a species is considered sensitive, its locality is blurred continuously, regardless of the season.



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## Strategic aim 2 Make biological data and information available to everyone


The purpose of the NBN Atlas is to provide a central location for wildlife data, making it easier for the data to be used in decision-making to protect the environment. Therefore, one of the main aims is that data from the NBN Atlas will be increasingly used and cited in peer reviewed publications and research. The incidences of this are increasing, as shown by the use of NBN Atlas data in a number of publications over the last year.


[Understanding the origins of the ring-necked parakeet in the UK](#) 


[The status of \*Clibanarius erythropus\* after a recent range expansion to Great Britain](#) 


[The collared earthstar \(\*Geastrum triplex\*\) in the Glasgow area, Scotland](#) 


[Annual abundance of chanterelle mushrooms \(\*Cantharellus cibarius\*\) in Scotland](#) 

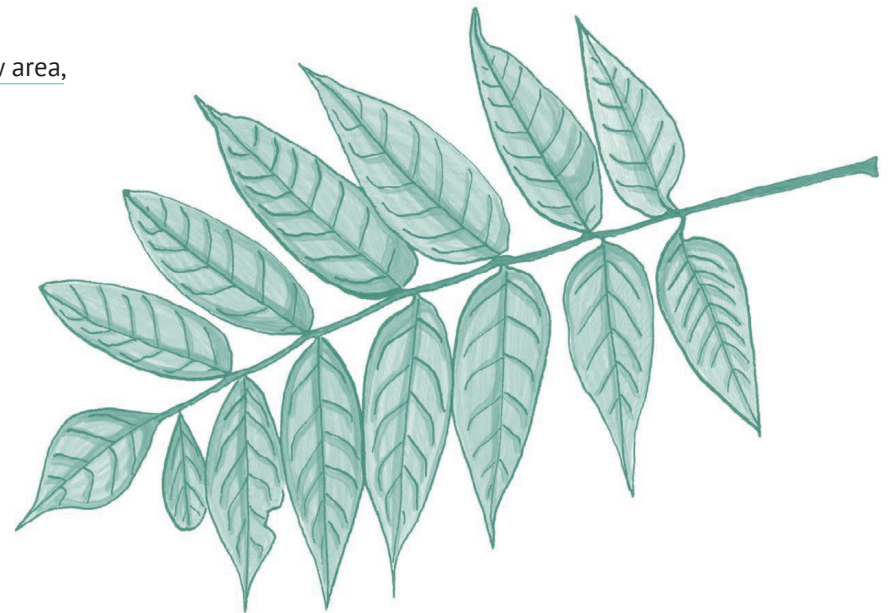
[Palloptera muliebris \(Diptera:Pallopteridae\): a rare Scottish occurrence](#) 

[A weighting method to improve habitat association analysis: tested on British carabids](#) 

[A Review of the Contribution of Species Records held by Local Environmental Records Centres in Wales to ERAMMP Evidence Needs](#) 

[Changes in the British pseudoscorpion fauna over the last 50 years](#) 

There are also a number of papers that have used the NBN Atlas as listed on [Google Scholar](#) 



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## Supporting MSc students

Over the course of the last year, the NBN Trust has supported three Data Science MSc students from Salford University for their final dissertation project.

Brendan Foster (July 2019-September 2019) developed metrics of data quality and taxonomic coverage and comprehensiveness. Brendan's project was supported by Andy Musgrove from British Trust for Ornithology. The metrics were presented in a talk at the NBN conference in November 2019 and there has been interest from NBN Atlas data providers in applying the metrics to their own records. The NBN Trust is continuing with the application and development of the taxonomic coverage and comprehensiveness metrics with another MSc student placement in summer 2020.




Hauwa'u Shehu (February 2020-May 2020) investigated using machine learning tools, such as Random Forests, to detect gaps or under reported areas in species distributions. The Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland supported Hauwa'u in providing species to include in her study.

Damien High (February 2020-May 2020) developed methods to detect outlying species records in the NBN Atlas by comparing record locations relative to:

1. land boundaries, to detect marine records on land and terrestrial records at sea;
2. other records of the same species; and
3. habitat conditions.

The results for objectives 1 and 2 were encouraging and the NBN Trust will continue with this research.

## More regular iRecord data uploads to the NBN Atlas

Data from iRecord (a site for managing and sharing wildlife records, run by the Biological Records Centre) is now uploaded to the NBN Atlas on a regular (usually two-monthly) basis using an automated export process. Recording schemes, societies and projects that use iRecord can choose to have their datasets updated on the NBN Atlas as part of this process. Just outside of this reporting period, but for interest, as at May 2020 over 1.5 million records had been shared directly from iRecord to the NBN Atlas. The list of schemes and projects that currently share their records in this way is available on [iRecord](#). 

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## Strategic aim 3 Captivate and engage people about wildlife

The NBN Trust Secretariat is responsible for all communications from the NBN Trust and aims to promote the work of the Network. Some of the main ways in which we do this are highlighted in this section.

### Newsletters

Network News continues to be one of the NBN Trust's main communications channels and is published every month electronically. It contains articles from the NBN Trust, NBN Trust members, NBN data partners as well as any relevant stories which are of interest to the Network.

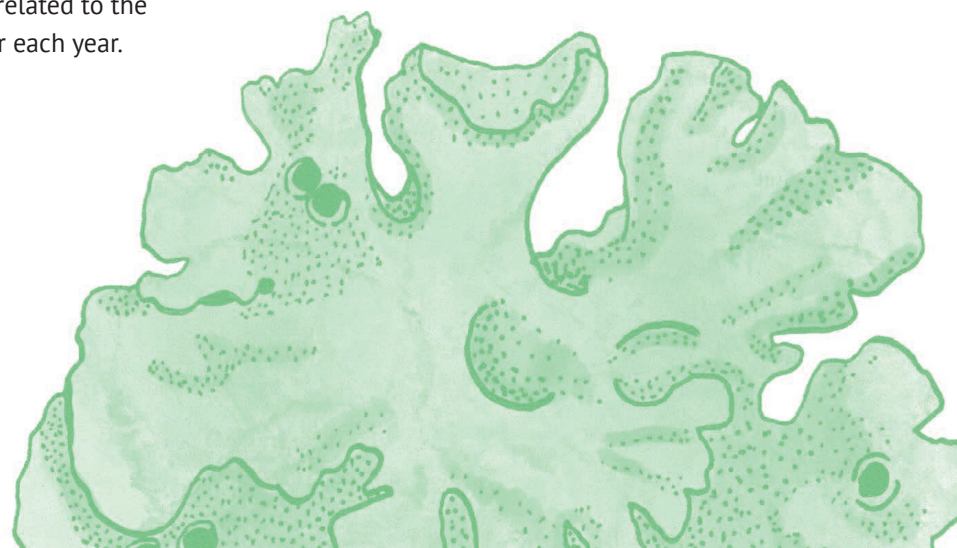
In addition to Network News, in April 2019, we introduced a bi-annual NBN Atlas newsletter, which, as the name suggests, covers information or news articles, specifically related to the NBN Atlas. This is published in April and October each year.

### Media and social media

Raising the profile of the Network via media coverage and social media remains key to the NBN Trust's strategic aim to captivate and engage people about wildlife.

This year we achieved a 150% increase in our media coverage on the previous year (2018/19).

The work of the Trust – either the NBN Atlas or the NBN Awards for Wildlife Recording 2019 – were mentioned in media as diverse as the 'Western Telegraph', the 'Maidenhead Advertiser', the 'Burnley Express' and the 'Strathspey & Badenoch Herald'. Jo Judge was also quoted in BBC Wildlife magazine (November 2019) in relation to the State of Nature Report.



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On the social media channels used by the NBN Trust, [Twitter](#)  followers were up 23% from 5309 to 6550. [Facebook](#)  likes increased by 22% from 1404 to 1714, and the National Biodiversity Network Group on [LinkedIn](#)  rose a modest 4% from 4690 to 4872 members. Given that the NBN Trust relies on organic posts that are free of charge and does not boost posts by paying advertising fees, we are very happy with the upward trends on social media usage.

In July 2019, the NBN Trust began to use [Instagram](#)  in order to reach audiences through an alternative social media platform. The number of followers gained is already very encouraging, with 573 followers in nine months.



## NBN Awards for Wildlife Recording 2019

As we entered the fifth year of these Awards, there were three main changes:

- The name of the Awards changed from the “UK Awards for Wildlife Recording and Information Sharing” to the “NBN Awards for Wildlife Recording”.
- The names of some of the individual Awards changed – for example the “Gilbert White Adult Award” became the “NBN Award for Wildlife Recording – Terrestrial” and the “David Robertson Adult Award” became the “NBN Award for Wildlife Recording – Marine”.
- The age range of the Young Person's Award was changed to 11-20 years old.

These changes were introduced to simplify the Award categories as well as strengthen the NBN brand.

There were 48 nominations this year (up by 37% from 2018). They were made up of:

- Seven – NBN Young Person's Award (open to individuals aged 11-20)
- Six – NBN Newcomer Award (open to individuals 21 years +)
- Six – NBN Award for Wildlife Recording – Marine (open to individuals 21 years +)
- 23 – NBN Award for Wildlife Recording – Terrestrial (open to individuals 21 years +)
- Six – NBN Group Award (no age restrictions).

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The five winners and runners up were:

## **NBN Young Person's Award 2019**

Winner – Michael Sinclair

Runner Up – Will Scott

## **NBN Newcomer Award 2019**

Winner – Sue Taylor

Runner Up – Cerin Poland

## **NBN Award for Wildlife Recording – Marine 2019**

Winner – Dawn Watson

Runner Up – Jane Pottas

## **NBN Award for Wildlife Recording – Terrestrial 2019**

Winner – Ian Wallace


Runner Up – Alan Outen

## **NBN Group Award 2019**

Winner – Joy of Wildlife

Runner Up – Croxteth Park Volunteer Group


In addition to the publicly nominated awards, the 2019 John Sawyer NBN Open Data Award was presented to the Earthworm Society of Britain in recognition of its ongoing commitment to making its wildlife data openly available to all.

More information on each of the NBN Award winners can be found on the [NBN website](#) .

We were grateful for the generosity of our seven sponsors – Opticon, the Field Studies Council, Nature Photographers Ltd, British Wildlife magazine and Natural History Book Service (NHBS) and two new sponsors Mrs Ceri Leigh and William Collins.

## **State of Nature Report 2019**

Three years after the previous report, the State of Nature Partnership published its latest report on 4 October 2019.

The State of Nature Report 2019,  was hosted on specially created pages on the NBN Trust website. Here all the various components of the State of Nature materials were available – the seven main reports (including the country summaries), six infographics, six videos, 11 blogs and additional materials.

The 79 members of the State of Nature Partnership successfully coordinated the media and social media activity to launch the 2019 Report. The media coverage achieved was widespread – BBC News, Channel 4, all the broadsheet newspapers and radio. The coverage was similarly all-encompassing on social media platforms with all 79 partners posting about the 2019 Report and promoting key messages about UK biodiversity and conservation.

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## Strategic aim 4 Provide the best biological information management infrastructure

This Strategic Aim predominantly relates to the NBN Atlas and so it provides an opportunity to give an update on the main work strands from 2019/20 and looks at what's ahead in the coming year.

### NBN Atlas technical updates through the year

Seventy-nine new development initiatives and small enhancements were completed in 2019/20. These were prioritised by either evaluating the effort versus the benefit to users, or by the most requested changes that were feasible. Here are a few of the highlights:

#### 1. Enhanced access to sensitive records

Records of sensitive species are 'blurred' on upload to a pre-agreed resolution for public view and data providers can give individuals access to the supplied (original) location information.

#### 2. Filtering records by licence type

Data with a non-commercial use only licence (CC-BY-NC) can be filtered prior to download.

#### 3. NBN Atlas Northern Ireland launch

We launched the NBN Atlas Northern Ireland in collaboration with the CEDaR partnership. This provides access to species and site-based information from across Northern Ireland and its coastal waters.

#### 4. Flagging issues on occurrence records

Users can submit a notification of problems identified with records directly to NBN Trust Support.

#### 5. Beautiful Burial Ground website launch

We launched the Beautiful Burial Ground portal in collaboration with the Caring for God's Acre partnership. This provides access to species located within burial grounds and site-based information from across England and Wales.

#### 6. Improvements to the Species Search

Only the accepted name and any matches on a synonym are now highlighted in the search results.

#### 7. Occurrence records page re-design

Reordering and layout changes have been made for an improved user experience.



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## Bug fixing

Forty-nine bugs, defects or snags were fixed last year. These were prioritised by the impact level to the users of the NBN Atlases, or by the most requested by our users. Here are a few examples of the bugs that have been fixed:

1. The preferred English common name is now displayed as the primary name
2. Any name qualifier is now included in the scientific name
3. Taxon rank IDs that are higher than species are now displayed in the records index
4. Explore by pre-defined area interface now opens correctly
5. Performance issues raised via the [NBN Forum](#) . The NBN Forum acts as a central point for identifying improvements or raising issues, so is a helpful collaboration point for users of the NBN Atlas
6. Duplication of records and layers. These include:
  - a. Records duplicated when processing datasets that were uploaded as an Archive file and updated with a text file.
  - b. Records duplicated or missed when performing a custom download
  - c. Spatial layers being duplicated when used in the spatial portal

## Updates to the UK Species Inventory (UKSI)

The species dictionary used on the NBN Atlas, the UKSI, was updated twice in the 2019/20 financial year, in April and October 2019. We were also able to provide an update to the master species list on NBN Record Cleaner, which we will update with each future release of the UKSI.



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## Spatial layer update

This year we have focused on increasing the amount of habitat information that is displayed in the NBN Atlas. The availability and type of habitat information varies by country across the UK and our aim is to provide an overview of the main habitats in each country. By March 2020 we had fifteen habitat layers available in the spatial portal with another twelve ready for upload in the next quarter.


Spatial layers containing habitat information are usually much larger than layers that contain boundary information, so it takes longer to format them before uploading to the NBN Atlas. This year we have reviewed some of our formatting routines so that the layers are handled more efficiently.

All spatial layers are accessible in the NBN Atlas spatial portal and a selection of layers can be accessed as pre-defined areas.

## FAIRsFAIR support


The NBN Atlas was selected to be part of the FAIRsFAIR consortium, with the aim of improving the level of interoperability in its data holdings.

<sup>2</sup> FAIR data principles are a set of guidelines for sharing data in a way that will maximise their reuse and make them Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable

[FAIRsFAIR](#)  – Fostering Fair Data Practices in Europe – aims to supply practical solutions for the use of the FAIR data principles<sup>2</sup> throughout the research data life cycle. It contributes to broader adoption of FAIR policies and practices and in the development of standards for FAIR certification of repositories. The NBN Trust will be involved in testing the specifications of the interoperability layer and will provide feedback to the development team on issues and/or give suggestions to improve the specifications.

The first implementation of the data repository features is planned to be ready in February 2021 and the second will be one year later.

Prior to the application, we held a workshop on the FAIR data principles at the November 2019 NBN Conference. There were several outcomes:

1. Delegates will discuss FAIR within their organisations
2. NBN Trust will provide Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) for datasets on the NBN Atlas as soon as possible
3. The provision of metadata for datasets on the NBN Atlas will be improved and data providers will be given support, where necessary, in completing metadata
4. The NBN Trust will start developing controlled vocabularies for terms in Darwin Core. This will be done together with TDWG (Biodiversity Information Standards ) where possible. The NBN Trust will convene a Task Group for the addition of terms to Darwin Core.



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## Update to NBN Atlas Guidance

Over the 2019/20 financial year, three new pieces of guidance were written. Each was published in the NBN Atlas April 2019 newsletter and is available on the [NBN Atlas Documentation and Help Portal](#): 

**1. [How to flag an issue](#)**  – It is inevitable that some records on the NBN Atlas may contain inaccuracies. This guidance explains how users can flag potential issues with records to improve the quality of data available on the NBN Atlas.

**2. [How to allow individual users enhanced access to sensitive species records](#)**  – Records of sensitive species can be shared with the NBN Atlas at capture resolution and then 'blurred' on upload to a pre-agreed resolution for public view. There are many situations in which data users need the data at the higher resolution and they can apply to the data partner for permission to access these. This new guidance explains how data providers can give individuals access to the supplied (original) location information (locality, latitude-longitude coordinates and grid reference) of records of specific sensitive species in specific data resources.

**3. [How to edit my data provider page](#)**  – Data partners can now edit their own data provider and data resource metadata on the NBN Atlas. This guidance explains how data providers can ensure their details are correct.

The overall layout of the Documentation and Help Portal is currently being reviewed with the aim of making the information easier to find and navigate in future.

## Agile working

We adopted an Agile project management approach for work on the NBN Atlas. Regular planning meetings with the developers determine what is achievable within a two-week timeframe, ensuring any tasks are prioritised and actioned in good time whilst minimising adverse user experience.



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## What's next for the NBN Atlas?

We have an ambitious year planned for development and based on feedback from our members, users and partners, we have created a comprehensive roadmap for the coming year. This includes:

### 1. Two-Tier project pilot

The two-tier project aims to provide a mechanism by which two resolutions of the same record can be stored on the NBN Atlas. A generalised (blurred) lower resolution version will be available for public viewing and download (in accordance with the licence conditions) while a higher resolution version will only be accessible for download by pre-approved users. The first phase of this was launched in 2018/19 to provide enhanced access to sensitive species data. This second phase aims to improve the way in which users can make, and data providers can review and respond to, requests to download a higher resolution version of a record via the NBN Atlas. It will also be widened out to include non-sensitive records.

### 2. Improvements to spatial searches

Due to the way generalised records are stored, i.e. with a point at the centroid of the area, rather than showing as being present in the whole of a grid square, some relevant records are not currently returned in the search results, if the search area does not include the centroid. To counteract this, the sampling of records will be improved and manual and automatic buffering for spatial layers will be added to provide more accurate results.

### 3. Downloading maps improvements

Licensing information, README and citation files are to be added to the download map as a zip file.

### 4. Improvements to the Overview tab

Users will be provided with the ability to more easily exclude records for unconfirmed, absence, dead organisms, fossil and CC-BY-NC licence records.

### 5. Species Search Enhancements

Continued improvements for a better user experience and to provide accurate results.



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## Infrastructure updates

### General enhancements

We are committed to not only maintain, but to improve our infrastructure. Here are a few of the improvements made and some upcoming initiatives:

- A full review of the scripted tests used to check the state and quality of data identified redundant tests no longer in use and these were removed. This has saved 81GB of disk space and has improved the performance and speed of the NBN Atlas
- Monit, a monitoring software package has replaced existing software, which helps minimise server downtime
- Upgraded our server which is used for the NBN Atlas searches and analytics. This has improved relative performance, stability and reliability
- Additional changes to improve performance, stability and overall reliability of the NBN Atlases. These include:
  - a. Automated the Occurrence count so it is kept up to date at the end of each data processing run.
  - b. Formal upgrade of the component that manages the loading, sampling, processing and indexing of occurrence records.



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## Strategic aim 5 Support the development of the NBN, its board and its members



### Transforming the NBN Atlas into a world-leading source of environmental data

In July 2019, we were delighted to announce that the NBN Trust received funding from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to help transform the NBN Atlas into a world-leading source of environmental data.

The funding, of £375,000 over three and a half years, was awarded to enable the further development of the NBN Atlas to meet the needs of its audiences, both current and new, and to help with global environmental issues.

Correctly resourced, through the help of funding such as this Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Grant, the NBN Atlas aims to be an authoritative source of high-quality wildlife data at the national level.

On a larger scale, and in aiming to help address UK and global environmental concerns, the NBN Trust has identified three 'needs', which will be supported by this grant:

1. engaging more people with the natural world,
2. making the data needed for evidence-based decisions more accessible, and
3. developing the NBN Trust's organisational sustainability to be able to deliver on the first two needs.

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## Joint NBN Trust Honorary Membership 2019

Whilst it is usual to put forward a single nominee for Honorary Membership of the NBN Trust, this year, as with 2018, we received a joint nomination for two individuals.

The two individuals' work relates primarily to Recorder 6 software. They are: Mike Weideli and Sally Rankin.

Recorder 6 is a long-established software tool for entering, collating and exchanging records of species and habitats. Built to NBN Standards, it is used by a range of organisations including Local Environmental Records Centres, conservation organisations and recording groups, schemes and societies, as well as individual biological recorders.

Mike and Sally have been involved in developing Recorder 6 and providing user support for more years than anyone currently involved can remember. When the Network moved to Recorder 6 from previous versions of the software around 2003, Mike and Sally worked with countless organisations and individuals within the Network to help them migrate their data into the new system. Sally estimates that she and Mike collaborated on over 50 data transfers, the largest being nearly two million records for the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording in Northern Ireland.

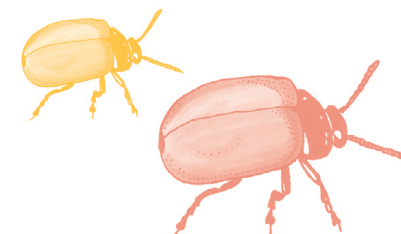
Over the years, as attention moved towards new technology, funding for Recorder 6 started to reduce, until the long-standing financial and administrative arrangements eventually ceased in March 2018.

Mike and Sally, driven by their loyalty to the Recorder 6 community, worked hard to get alternative, interim support arrangements in place, so that users could continue to have access to essential dictionary updates and support. During this time, Mike and Sally invested significant amounts of their own time in keeping Recorder 6 going.

Since 2018, the Recorder 6 Steering Group has been working on establishing longer-term financial, management and maintenance arrangements which are now in place and there is more information on this in the section overleaf. Throughout this process, the Steering Group has valued Mike and Sally's advice on all aspects of Recorder 6.

Working together as a team, both Mike and Sally have played a fundamental role in ensuring biological data has continued to be available for use by countless organisations as well as users of the NBN Atlas.

The award for Sally and Mike was given at the NBN Conference on 14 November. Sally was in attendance to receive her award and Mike's was collected on his behalf by Clare Blencowe, Chair of Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC).



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## Recorder 6 – new maintenance and development arrangements

A new software licence for Recorder 6 was launched at the end of October 2019, to fund new maintenance and development arrangements.

Under the new arrangements, maintenance and development of Recorder 6 will be funded and steered by users. A Steering Group, led by Clare Blencowe, which includes representatives from across the user community, will make decisions on how funding from Recorder 6 users is allocated.

Users are encouraged to support these new arrangements by purchasing a Recorder 6 licence with 100% of the funding received being spent on its maintenance and development.

Licences can be purchased from the [NBN website](#). 

The Recorder 6 Steering Group aims to ensure users are able to preserve the structure and integrity of biodiversity datasets held within Recorder 6 and can continue to manage and use their data-holdings effectively.

The Recorder 6 Consortium, Mike Weideli, John van Breda and Sally Rankin, has offered to continue with basic maintenance of Recorder 6 in its current form, as an 'in kind' contribution to the Recorder 6 community – to help maximise the funding available for development.

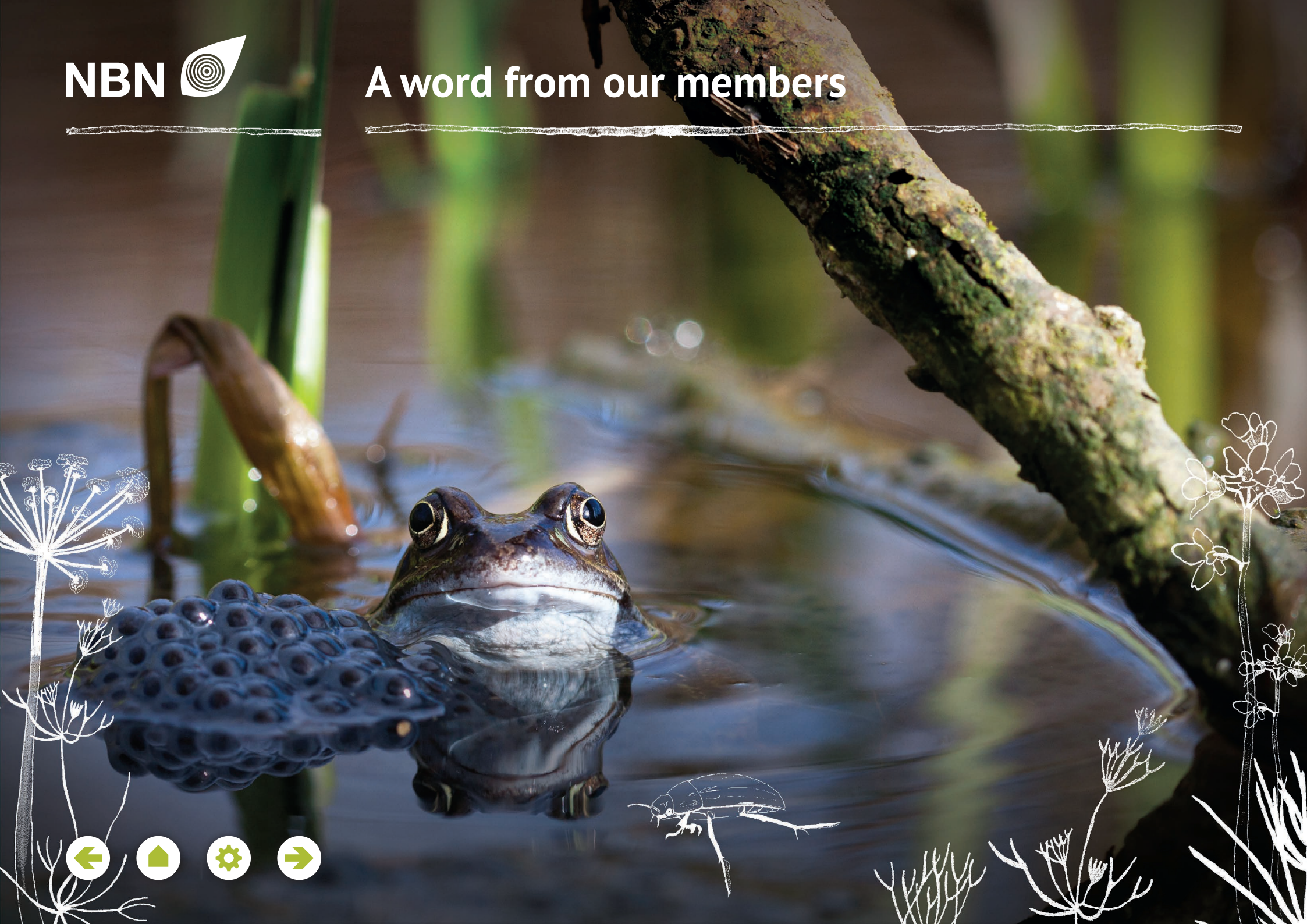
## Nineteenth NBN Conference

160 delegates attended the 2019 annual NBN Conference, which was held on 13 and 14 November, at the Albert Hall in Nottingham for the second year running. The theme of the Conference was *"Network, Knowledge and Narrative – sharing and using data across the NBN and beyond"*.

Over the course of the two days we heard from a variety of speakers explaining how they are sharing and using data in their day to day work. The two keynote addresses were delivered by Sir John Lawton and Dr Sandy Knapp and the Sir John Burnett Memorial Lecture was given by Tony Juniper CBE, Chair of Natural England

As well as the talks we also had an afternoon of Knowledge Exchange sessions, which covered: Whose data are they anyway?; FAIR Data Principles – improving the reusability of NBN data holdings; Providing multi-regional and national commercial services in collaboration with data providers; NBN Atlas Spatial Analysis Tool and iSpot at 10 years old: What's happened so far and what's next?

The Conference also included the NBN Trust AGM and celebrated the NBN Awards for Wildlife Recording with the annual prize-giving ceremony.



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## A word from our members

As mentioned in our introduction to this report, the NBN Trust is a membership organisation. Our members are diverse with their own aims and objectives, but they are playing their part in the Network through supporting the Network's Strategy and Vision and helping to contribute in additional ways to the work of the Network. The Network is strengthened by the ability of its partners to work together and, as a charity, income from the membership contributes to the work of the NBN Trust.

Members of the NBN Trust may also be data partners, but being a data partner doesn't necessarily mean that an organisation is also a member of the NBN Trust as members pay an annual fee. If an organisation meets certain criteria and supplies data to the NBN Atlas, membership can be available free of charge.

On the following pages we bring you reports from a cross section of NBN Trust members who give an insight into their work and their support for the Network.

A list of NBN Trust members can be found on the [NBN website](#). 

## Members at 31 March 2020

Member category	
Affiliate	9
Organisational	103
Corporate	5
Individual	59
Honorary	17
Lifetime (Awards)	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>



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## NBN Trust Board Member

### *Report from Wilma Harper, Chartered Forester, Chartered Environmentalist, Director and Trustee*

Purists will tell me that uniqueness is not a relative term but my experience as a Trustee of the NBN Trust has shown me that it is a very unique body. I don't know of any organisation with the same role. But speak to people involved in biodiversity or conservation about the NBN Trust and they will claim to know what it is, but may be unaware of how small it is, how it is funded and the extent of what it does. With that need for clarity in mind, the NBN Trust Board has spent some time this year discussing strategy for the NBN Trust and, to use the jargon term, determining our USP. The strategy is still being developed and will seek wider input before it is finalised, however, at its heart will be an expression of the value of bringing together data about species and wildlife for the benefit of the natural environment.

Some years ago, walking in a botanical garden in Australia I came across a rock inscribed with a quote from John Sawhill, president of the American Nature Conservancy:

*"A society is defined not only by what it creates, but by what it refuses to destroy."*



This resonated with me and seems of particular relevance to the Network. Refusing to destroy is an active process, arrived at by garnering the evidence to make a decision. We need to know about the species and biodiversity which exists in a given area – what, where and when. The NBN Trust is the curator of those biological records. In days gone by, species records were held in notebooks, publications or perhaps spreadsheets. The NBN Atlas brings these records together, making them available to decision makers. These are not free goods. They are the product of people's expertise and commitment. Not everything can be conserved, but nothing should be lost by accident or because the necessary information is not accessible.

Maintaining and growing that knowledge base by the NBN Trust comes at a cost too. By making the case for its work, the NBN Trust has been successful in obtaining grant funding to complement support from the public sector. As we seek to develop the strategy for the future, we must ensure that the work begun 20 years ago can continue through a sustainable financial model. At a time when all organisations are struggling for funds, that is no easy task. It will require some difficult decisions and compromises.

The NBN Trust may be unique but it does not stand alone. By providing the hub for biodiversity data, it has amplified their value and created a resource to be used by all for the benefit of nature. As we develop the new strategy, we look to work with our members and partners to fulfil that ambition.



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## Affiliate Member

*Report from Marina Flamank, National Biodiversity Adviser,  
The Environment Agency*



The Environment Agency  takes a copy of records held on the NBN Atlas, for over 2,000, different species. There aren't many species that some aspect of our work won't impact! Obviously, with abstractions and discharges we impact riverine habitats, but our licences also cover estuarine water quality, air quality, agricultural practices and groundworks, so the species we want to know about are from a wide variety of habitats.

We bring the records into our bespoke 'Easimap' GIS, and combine them with records from other organisations, and our own survey, to produce a single, simple, England wide, presence map. This map is essential and central to our ability to protect wildlife from damaging activities. The rarest, and most sensitive species are given zones of sensitivity, like a bull's eye's circles, by our screening widget; the National Permitting Screening Tool. The greater the circle, the farther apart the presence of a sensitive species is from an activity, which will raise a flag. When that flag is raised, a biodiversity specialist will look at how to prevent or mitigate the impact. Roughly 10,000 permissions are checked this way every year.

It is an amazing resource, saving hundreds of map checking hours every month. And it is one we are frequently asked to supply to others; requests have recently been made by water companies, consultants and the public. However, each record retains its details of ownership and licence, so we know where we can share records and many records will never be passed on to third parties by us.



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Bringing species records together into a single map, gives one great advantage; any new activity can be added to our screening widget, once it is 'told' which species are sensitive, but it gives us issues too. Many recording schemes capture attributes appropriate for a particular species, so for raptors there may be a tick box for finding a pellet, for reptiles, shed skin, and so on. Adding every type of attribute together makes our screening widget fall over and editing them into one format is expensive. It would be great to see every record have a brother; a record with the same key information, in a standard format. Another issue is the time lag between recording and having a point on a map. Fast spreading invasive non-native species, especially those which are transported along rivers, need our rapid response. More coordination and commitments to verifying and validating these records would be a great benefit to us.

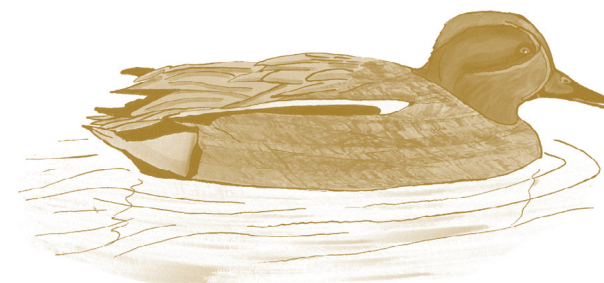
We are very grateful to the NBN Trust, which continues to work on these and many other aspects of improving how we store, share and use digital wildlife information, and in bringing the recording community together. Our Chief Executive recently sent out a letter to our eNGO partners reiterating the Environment Agency's support to working together. This has gone to the CEOs and directors of all the large organisations we work with including (but not exclusively) National Trust, RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, Rivers Trust, Green Alliance, Wildlife and Countryside and Heritage Fund.

## Organisational Member

*Report from Elizabeth Rollinson, Executive Secretary,  
The Linnean Society London*



One of Carl Linnaeus' aphorisms was 'if you do not know the name of things, the knowledge of them is lost, too' – the need to know what things are is fundamental to the work of the Network – and also underpins the Linnean Society's vision of *a world where nature is understood, valued and protected*. So, it was an obvious choice for [The Linnean Society London](#)  to become an organisational member of the NBN Trust. Our President, Dr Sandy Knapp, was delighted to be invited to speak at the NBN Conference in November 2019; her talk was entitled "Building knowledge and narratives through open networks" and she showed how sharing data and stories is essential for furthering biodiversity knowledge, and how open data leading to open science is critical for future progress in both understanding and conserving the Earth's biodiversity.



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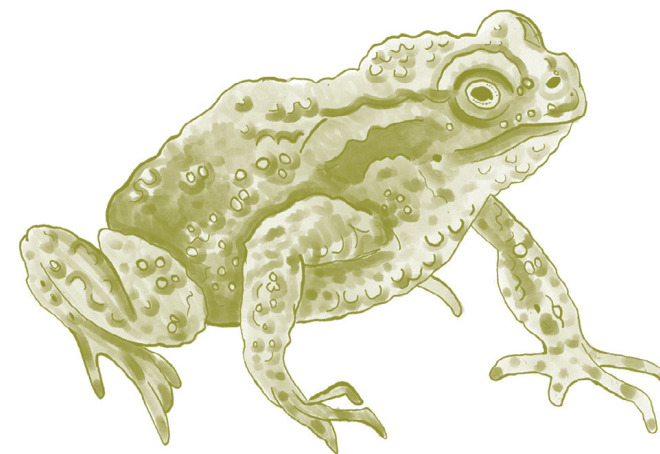
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Biodiversity data include both the names of things and their locations in space – distribution. Both citizen scientists as well as staff in the UK's big biodiversity institutions like the Natural History Museum London (NHM), Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH), the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, collect and curate these data that are absolutely critical for underpinning environmentally sound decision-making and strategic policy around the environment. Without these contributions, we would be unable to predict the impacts of the extremely difficult choices we will make as we move forward in the low-carbon world.

The Linnean Society advances scientific knowledge on biodiversity through its journals, providing free access to the Society's biological specimens and historical resources, and by supporting and recognising scientists and natural historians engaged in study of the natural world. Through its public scientific programme as well as its educational outreach programme, the Society is reaching out to all, providing extensive educational and research resources. The Society connects academia with a broad and diverse public, informing UK government policy and promoting the international profile of the UK as an international hub for expertise about the natural world.

Continuing this significant work in supporting and understanding biodiversity requires us to be resilient and sustainable and both organisations have been consolidating towards this goal, with the NBN Trust receiving HLF and Esmée Fairbairn funding, allowing it to stabilise, maintain and improve the NBN Atlas infrastructure, while the Linnean Society is now implementing the recommendations of a governance review undertaken during 2019, ensuring a smooth transition for the coming decades.

Our organisations share extremely important common goals relating to documenting the identities and distributions of the organisms that share our planet. It is only by working together and sharing data over the coming years, and by forming strong and sustainable networks that we will begin to understand the impacts of dramatic climatic and environmental changes on biodiversity – both today and into the future.



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## Academic Corporate Supporter

*Report from Dr Claire Cresswell, Agriculture & Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Lecturer at University Centre Sparsholt*



University Centre Sparsholt  is an NBN Trust member to support the valuable exposure of students to data sharing and its use in evidence-based conservation. Students are trained in effective use of the NBN Atlas and encouraged to contribute their own findings. Supporting the Network is key in emphasising to students the importance of wildlife recording on a large scale and the value of community science.

Students use NBN Atlas data in their academic assignments, as it is often a good starting place when undertaking research on a specific species. Assessing abundance and distribution at a landscape scale is key before undertaking deeper investigations into the ecology of the species. Familiarity with the NBN Trust systems is also useful in several career paths for our students. For example, the data are sometimes used in assessing populations of target species for ecological surveys. Being an NBN Trust member has enabled our students to network at the NBN Conference and gain insights into the important work the Network is involved in. This has been of huge benefit and our students were very grateful for the opportunity.



Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Students at University Centre Sparsholt  
© UC Sparsholt





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## A Word from our data partners

Without organisations and individuals being willing to share data, the NBN Atlas would not exist. NBN Atlas data partners and those recording what they see (often volunteers), are the lifeblood of the Network, without them, the NBN Trust would not be able to realise its vision and the Network would not function. Nature would lose out.

The NBN Trust values the vital contributions of its data partners and on the following pages we bring you reports from a selection of our NBN Atlas data partners who explain why they share their data in this way.

A list of data partners can be found on the [NBN Atlas](#). 



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## Report from Damian McFerran, Manager, The Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR), Northern Ireland



Nearly 30 years ago a biological recording project was established at the Ulster Museum in Belfast, Northern Ireland. By 1995, this concept had taken form and developed in CEDaR.  In this pre-email and pre-internet existence, sharing of biological records (as we now know it) was in its infancy, mostly achieved via letters and other printed (hard-copy) paperwork. Thanks to our membership of the National Federation (now Forum) for Biological Recording (NFBR), we became aware of a new millennium project, the National Biodiversity Network (NBN). Thanks also to people like Stuart Ball, Charles Copp, Paul Harding, Trevor James, Bernard Picton (to name just a few), we threw our hat into this ring. We became advocates of Recorder (providing national support at one stage) and the development of websites to collate images and information; we saw a shadow of the future to come.

At this time, there were a lot of ideas about sharing and the value of biological records. We had developed a network of recorders (satellite sites), and it was through their [continued] support, funding by NI Environment Agency and our strategic grounding within the Museum's structures that we had the confidence to put in place a local system for the collection, collation, management and dissemination of biological records.



Fen Habitats ID Course, Oxford Island, County Armagh, June 2019 ©CEDaR



Grassland Fungi ID Course, Magilligan, County Londonderry, October 2019 ©CEDaR



Aquatic Plants ID Course, Crom Estate, County Fermanagh, June 2019 ©CEDaR



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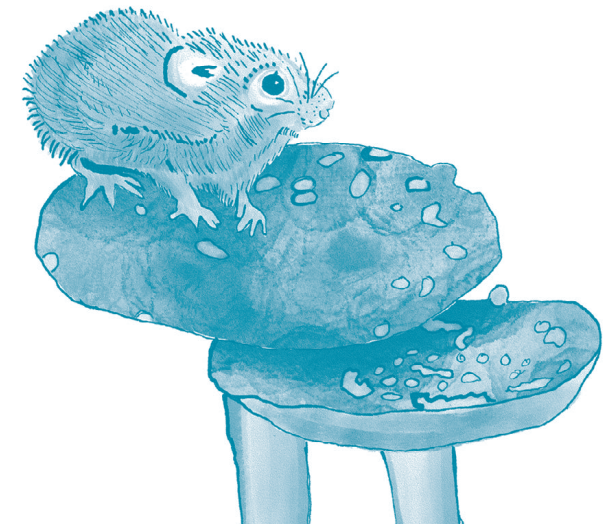
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There is, however, always a bigger picture, and we had now gained experience of managing all-Ireland projects, for example Dragonfly and Lichen Ireland. The next phase was involvement within a platform that would allow CEDaR to share and disseminate Northern Ireland records within a UK platform/ context. At this time, we sent through a number of limited datasets to the NBN Trust and these became 'available' via the NBN Gateway (the first data sharing platform).

In recent years, we put our shoulder behind the roll-out of the NBN Atlas, and within the last 18 months the [NBN Atlas Northern Ireland](#)  has been successfully launched. Currently, in excess of one million records from the CEDaR databases have been made available to this web-based platform. In launching the Atlas, yes we are trying to make the records stored by CEDaR available to a wider audience, but we have also tried to ensure that the information based within the Habitas suite of websites continues to be utilised. For example, a search within the NBN Atlas may inform an enquiry that the species is a NI Priority Species. By selecting 'Online Resources' they can then link directly to additional information on the Habitas website. It is this ability to combine information (records) and knowledge at a national and local/regional level that is a particular strength of the NBN Atlas.

So, what of the future to come. The NBN Atlas is our preferred choice for the continued dissemination of records at a UK-level. Ideally, all records will be Open Source, but we have accepted that this may not always be the case; at least not in the immediate to short-term. We will continue to make additional datasets available to the NBN Atlas, and ideally all CEDaR-based records will be viewable at 'some' resolution via this system. We look forward to continuing the development of the local NBN Atlas, but also with an eye to national development and progression. This phase that we have now entered is exciting for all involved, but rest assured change will continue. However, the maxim remains, the true value of information can only be achieved by its wider dissemination.



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### Report from Adam Rowe, Manager, South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc)



SEWBRc  is the Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC) covering the bulk of south Wales from the tip of Gower in the west to the River Wye, which forms the English border, in the east. For the past 15 years, SEWBRc has been proud to be a stakeholder, data provider, member and user of the National Biodiversity Network. This case study will explain some of the ways we work with the NBN Trust and why we choose to.

Since its inception, SEWBRc's key aim has been to make appropriate local biodiversity information available to all those who need it, to help ensure that decisions which affect local biodiversity are made using best available data. This has been achieved via our data enquiry service and has in recent years been delivered online via a customer-focused module of our Aderyn website.  These services provide local users with the detailed data they require, however, SEWBRc also recognises the importance of a view of its data being available at the UK level via the NBN Atlas (and the NBN Atlas Wales).

SEWBRc is one of the largest data providers to the NBN Atlas, with the current species record count standing at 2,688,012 across 32 different separate resources. Statistics on the NBN Atlas show that since we started sharing data via the NBN Atlas, nearly 28 million records have been downloaded, with 9.4 million records downloaded in the past 12 months alone.

The licence applied to the data we share is determined by the principle that we will be as open as we can be with our data, as long as it is not detrimental to our income streams and therefore our business model. Some of the data we share is owned by Natural Resources Wales and is shared with the OGL licence. Data that we captured through the Mary Gillham Archive Project is shared via a CC-BY licence, as the work was Lottery funded. The same licence is applied to all our Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) data (which is shared at full capture resolution), as we want no restriction on who can access and fully utilise this data. But, the bulk of our data is uploaded with the CC-BY-NC "non-commercial" licence which prohibits the use or download of data for all commercial purposes. This data is also only shared at the coarsened 10km square resolution.

We are very fortunate that the LERCs in Wales, including SEWBRc, continue to receive the strong support of Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales. As part of this support, it is specifically recognised that, whilst we are required to share as much data as we can via the NBN Atlas, the LERCs also need to maintain a level of control on public access to their data. This recognition effectively allows LERCs to utilise the CC-BY-NC licence for the bulk of the data we share via the NBN Atlas, thus allowing us to maintain sustainable income streams by making charges for data searches requiring capture-level data for commercial use.



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SEWBreC has not been pressurised to be more open with its data, instead our wish to provide appropriate data access has been supported. This balanced approach to data sharing and openness has been critical to SEWBreC's ability and willingness to engage with the NBN Atlas. We believe that access to volunteered data is a privilege and not a right and that those requiring access to LERC data must be prepared to support the costs of running LERCs, entering funding agreements or by paying for individual data searches.



SEWBreC has always actively supported the NBN Trust in its development of the NBN Atlas (both the UK version and the bilingual NBN Atlas Wales) as an effective “shop window”, showcasing and giving a taste of the full data services that are available from LERCs. More can and should be done to signpost NBN Atlas users towards the additional data that is available from LERCs and SEWBreC will continue to push for this.

In the meantime, our engagement with the NBN Atlas allows us to achieve two key goals:

1. Ensuring that there are no inaccurate and misleading gaps in national distribution maps (either when viewed directly on the NBN Atlas, or indirectly via web services) for the SEWBreC area.
2. Showcasing LERC data in a way which leads to further commercial income for SEWBreC, thereby enabling us to continue our work in collating data, promoting recording and supporting our local recording community

Ultimately, as key partners in the NBN, LERCs like SEWBreC facilitate the flow of valuable data into the Network ... and by working together, we can make it stronger.

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## Report from Pete Tomlin, Senior Data Management and Monitoring Officer, Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust's Data for Nature project

**Sheffield & Rotherham**



Data for Nature was an eighteen month project, funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund at Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust (SRWT), which ended in December 2019.

This project followed on from the publication of the [State of Nature Report for Sheffield](#)  which identified major data gaps in our knowledge of important local habitats and species. The project's main aim was to lead a step change in how the Trust manages its nature reserves for conservation.

The project staff and volunteers implemented a new adaptive ecological monitoring framework; leading a process of creating vision statements for each of SRWT's nature reserves and designing robust monitoring protocols to assess their condition and collect the data necessary to make long term assessments of trends for key species.

A new data management system called Nature Counts was also created, which is based on Indicia/iRecord, enabling SRWT to amalgamate all of its historic biological records into one place (these were previously in a range of different filing cabinets and databases), and encouraging the take up of biological recording by members of the public in and around Sheffield and Rotherham.

Trust volunteers contributed a huge amount to Data for Nature, with 62 volunteers giving over 2000 hours of their time to the project, and 1279 hours spent in the field carrying out monitoring! Data inputting volunteers collated and uploaded a whopping 15,000 historic biological records to Nature Counts, alongside 1671 new biological records generated by the project, all of which have been made available on the NBN Atlas.

The overall aim of the Data for Nature project was to make SRWT a more evidence-based organisation, following national best practice. Sharing our data on the NBN Atlas has enabled us to achieve this, with our data now available for use nationally and locally for research and conservation. Similarly, SRWT has implemented a range of best practice policies, for example, utilising the NBN sensitive species guidance. SRWT were also happy to become NBN Trust members as a result of the project.

## Nature Counts

10,000 records in just 3 months

1,671 new biological records produced by volunteers



## Species recorded

13 Harvest mice nests found

82 individual great crested newts counted

30 lapwing spotted at Hammonds Field

5 skylark territories recorded

37 bird species recorded at Blacka Moor

## Volunteering

Over 2,000 hours of volunteer time

62 volunteers

Over 15,000 historic records uploaded

1,279 hours monitoring/surveying



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Through the work of the Data for Nature project team, SRWT is now better able to collect and analyse data about the species and habitats on its reserves, thus enabling the Trust to make evidence-based management decisions.

*"The data generated by the Data for Nature project has already been very helpful in demonstrating the effectiveness of our nature reserve management. At Woodhouse Washlands the grassland compartment which we fenced off to prevent disturbance to ground-nesting birds has provided habitat for five or six pairs of skylark, whilst our survey found hardly any evidence of skylark breeding in the unfenced areas of the reserve."*

*Elsewhere at Woodhouse Washlands, the Data for Nature survey found a thriving population of great crested newts in the complex of ponds, including four new ponds which have been colonised since they were created 18 months ago".*

Nabil Abbas – Living Landscape Manager (South).

SRWT is now moving into a new phase of the project 'More Data for Nature', which is developing approaches to landscape scale monitoring and working with other Wildlife Trusts to standardise monitoring and data collection across the movement.

More information on the project can be found on the [Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trusts website](#). 





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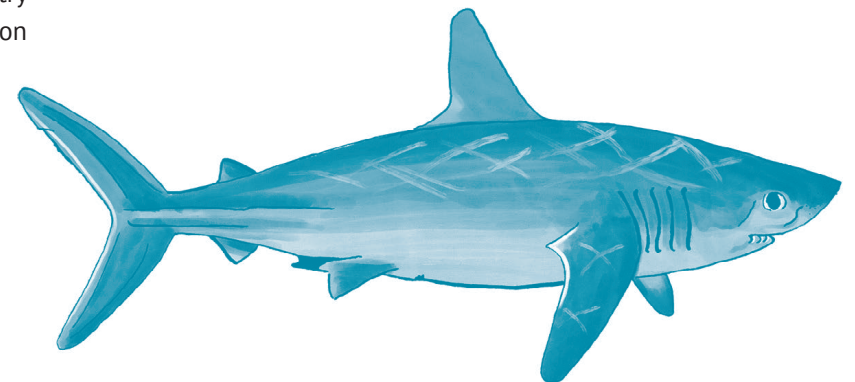
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As this piece is being written, we are still in various stages of lockdown across the UK. Aspects of 'normal' life have returned for some of us, but who knows how long they will last, with change almost becoming the new norm and we are still far from being back to the way things were. Nor do we have a clear timetable on when, or even if, we might be. Therefore, much in the short and medium-term is uncertain. However, this does not mean that we should not be ambitious in our plans for the future.

The NBN Trust has been reasonably fortunate to date, the majority of our funding for the 2020/21 financial year has not been affected by the pandemic. We are also confident that, with some adjustments, we will be able to continue to deliver our business as usual and project work for the year. We have scheduled in some big pieces of development work for the NBN Atlas, including how to make polygon and pre-defined search results more accurate, as well as some improvements to the user experience, including revamping the record overview tab and information on the species pages. We are also going to be consulting with data providers on behalf of the Country Nature Conservation Bodies and Joint Nature Conservation Committee on how to increase the accessibility of data via the NBN Atlas.

The successful delivery of our work plan for this year and, to a certain extent, the ambition of our strategy for the next five years, will depend on our ability to bring in enough funding for this and subsequent years. We have traditionally relied heavily on funding from government agencies, but as their budgets have been slashed, so has the amount available for the Trust and parts of the Network and we are having to provide ever greater justification of our value for money. The Lottery funding we received in 2019 comes to an end in 2021, and while the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation grant continues until 2023, we need to find additional income just to continue to function at our current level. In order to assist us with identifying new sources of funding, we have taken on three volunteers, a fundraising co-ordinator and two fundraising interns, part-time for four months. They have already made an impressive start in identifying grant-making bodies who may fund aspects of the NBN Trust's work, and, if there is time, will start to pull together some ideas for increasing corporate sponsorship.



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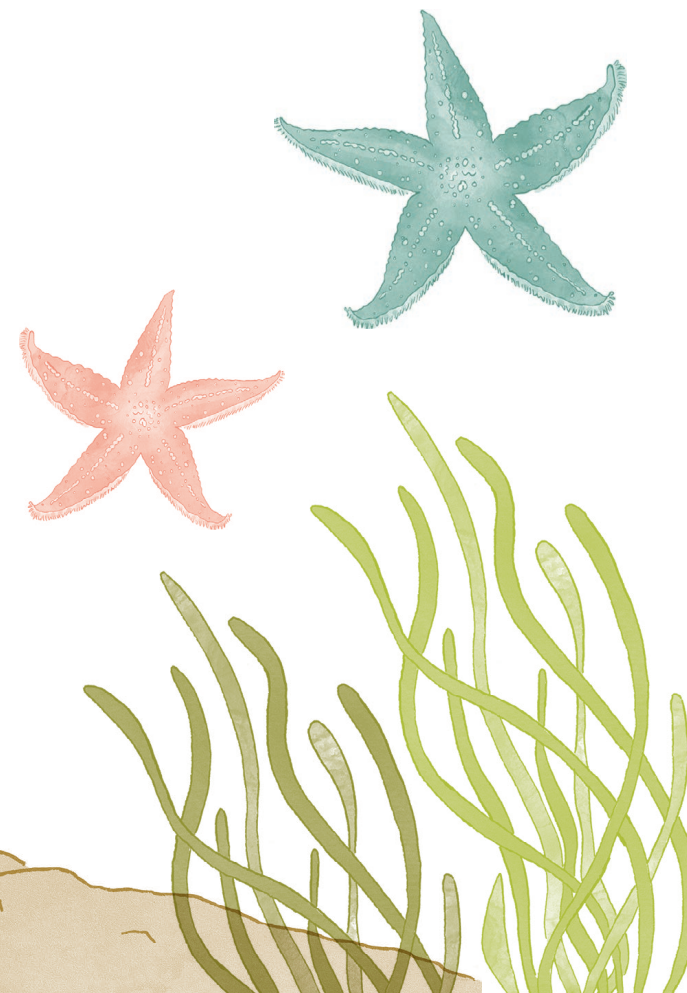
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At a strategic level, we will be developing the plans for the NBN Trust for the next five years. While delivery of a new strategy will rely heavily on engagement and collaboration with our partners, members and key stakeholders, this strategy, in contrast with the previous one, will be for the NBN Trust alone. The strategy will set out the direction for the Trust, our objectives and the activities that the Trust can be held accountable for over the period 2021 – 2025. We will be consulting with key stakeholders, partners and members throughout the development process, with the aim of launching the agreed strategy in April 2021. We very much hope that you will engage constructively with the process to ensure that we have a strategy that aligns with the goals of the Network as a whole and produces a stronger Network, increases the sharing, use and accessibility of biodiversity data and, ultimately, benefits our natural world.





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Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating the income and expenditure account) for the year to 31 March 2019.

The Trustees are pleased to present their annual directors' report, which includes the financial statements of the charity for the year ending 31 March 2020 which are also prepared to meet the requirements for a directors' report and accounts for Companies House.

The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the NBN Trust's Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (as amended for accounting periods commencing from 1 January 2016).



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## Financial summary for the year ended 31 March 2020

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
<b>Income and endowments from:</b>				
Donations and legacies	210,797	197,982	408,779	445,047
Other trading activities		10,600	10,600	-
Investments	1,800	-	1,800	1,409
Other income	18,329	-	18,329	20,576
<b>Total income</b>	<b>230,926</b>	<b>208,582</b>	<b>439,508</b>	<b>467,032</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>				
Raising funds	332	*10,600	10,932	392
Charitable activities	231,692	244,764	476,456	389,999
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<b>232,024</b>	<b>255,364</b>	<b>487,388</b>	<b>390,391</b>
<b>Net income/(expenditure) for the year</b>	<b>(1,098)</b>	<b>(46,782)</b>	<b>**(47,880)</b>	<b>76,641</b>
Fund balances at 1 April 2019	141,458	94,554		236,012
<b>Fund balances at 31 March 2020</b>	<b>139,452</b>	<b>48,680</b>	<b>188,132</b>	

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.  
All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities.

\* This figure relates to the funds held on behalf of the Recorder 6 Steering Group and balances the income received shown under other trading activities.

\*\* The Trust's net expenditure was greater than incoming resources within the year resulting in a negative in year balance of (£47,880). This was mainly due to a funding payment of £95,250 from the National Heritage Lottery Fund received in 2018/19 while the majority of the work associated with this funding did not commence until 2019/20.



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## Balance Sheet

As at 31 March 2020

		2020	2019
	£	£	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>			
Tangible assets		2,338	107
Investments		2	2
		2,340	109
<b>Current assets</b>			
Debtors	11,507	30,523	
Cash at bank and in hand	203,798	226,360	
	<u>215,305</u>	<u>256,883</u>	
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	(29,513)	(20,980)	
<b>Net current assets</b>		185,792	235,903
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		188,132	236,012



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## Trust reserves


The unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets ('the free reserve') held by the charity is £137,114.

Annually, the Finance and Management Committee (FMC) reviews the free reserve figure and the amount required to meet the reserve policy (i.e. three months running costs) to ensure that adequate reserves are met.

At the start of April 2020 the amount required in order to run the Trust for three months is £142,390. Therefore, there is a deficit of £5,276. The Trust will work towards ensuring that the reserve amount is met in full by monitoring spend.

## Risk Register

The FMC has reviewed the major risks to the Trust and has systems designed to manage them.

Details of the principal risks are available in the financial statements, a copy of which can be found on the [NBN website](#). 


## BioD Services Ltd

The NBN Trust has one wholly owned subsidiary company, BioD Services Ltd, which was set up to help the Trust develop the Network through contractual work. It was incorporated as a company limited by shares on 13 March 2001.

The Articles of Association allow the company to transfer profits or income to the NBN Trust as gift aid. For 2019/20 there were no profits from BioD Services to be donated to the NBN Trust as gift aid.

Its income in 2019/2020 was £493 and its net assets were £9,479.



More detailed financial statements are available for either the NBN Trust accounts or BioD Services Ltd. Please contact the NBN Trust's Finance and Business Officer via email [s.hyslop@nbn.org.uk](mailto:s.hyslop@nbn.org.uk)  if you would like a copy.



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The National Biodiversity Network Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 3 April 2000 and registered as a charity on 25 August 2000.

The company was set up under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objectives and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association.

### Charitable Objects and public benefit

The NBN Trust's charitable objects are specifically restricted to the following:

*“The objects of the Charity are for the public benefit, to advance, formally and informally, public participation in and public understanding and enjoyment of, the conservation of biological resources, together with their sustainable and wise use, by providing public access to biological records, data or information pertaining to the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man (“the Objects”). In these Articles, where the context permits or requires, “biological records, data or information” shall mean records (in any form) of kinds, numbers and habitats of wildlife and assemblages of organisms, living and fossil.”*

The NBN Trust carries out these objects for public benefit by:

- Maintaining and developing the NBN Atlas, its data sharing infrastructure, to become the leading website to share, view, analyse and use this data. It is accessible to everyone from schoolchildren, students and academic researchers to commercial users, government agencies and the general public.
- Encouraging and facilitating activities carried out by Network members to further the collection and sharing of wildlife data. The unparalleled aggregation of biodiversity data on the NBN Atlas, along with the expertise within the Network means that the NBN Trust is uniquely placed to provide expert advice and input into the development of government biodiversity policy.
- Running the NBN Awards for Wildlife Recording, an annual scheme which recognises and celebrates young people, individuals and groups who record wildlife to improve our understanding of the UK's biodiversity.
- Running student internships with individuals undertaking postgraduate research, normally at Masters level, where the student's area of interest furthers the objects of the charity.

The NBN Trust's priority is to grow the national commitment to sharing and using this wildlife data and information. By focusing on the above areas of work we achieve our strategic priorities of mobilising wildlife data; making wildlife data available to everyone; captivating and engaging people about wildlife; providing the best biological information management infrastructure; and supporting the development of the Network.

Through this we provide a comprehensive, unparalleled and authoritative understanding of our natural world and use that knowledge effectively to educate and inform.



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## Directors/Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2020

The Trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

**Dr R Fairley**

**Mrs W Harper**

**Mr N Hodges**

**Dr B Howell**

**Mr M Postles**

**Mrs E Proctor**

**Ms M Rudd**

**Ms H Wilkinson**

**Mr A Wood**

## Registered office

NBN Trust  
Unit F 14-18 St Mary's Gate  
Lace Market  
Nottingham  
NG1 1PF

## Accountants

Rogers Spencer  
Chartered Certified Accountants  
Newstead House  
Pelham Road  
Nottingham  
NG5 1AP



## Acknowledgements

The NBN Trust Secretariat would like to thank the following people and organisations for their contributions to this report:

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**Dr Claire Cresswell**, University Centre Sparsholt

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**Adam Rowe**, SEWBRc

**Elizabeth Rollinson**, The Linnean Society, London

**Pete Tomlin**, Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust

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