



Gwent Wildlife Trust

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Nature Matters - The importance of a healthy natural environment

Badgers and Bovine TB

Nature Matters - The importance of a healthy natural environment

Join us

Protect local wildlife



We depend entirely on a healthy natural environment for our wealth and wellbeing. It is fundamental to our economy and social structures, our homes and neighbourhoods, our ability to create and construct things, and to our health and happiness. Human beings are part of the natural world; we are one species amongst millions and have evolved to be part of nature, not apart from it.

While millions of people regularly watch TV programmes about nature and wildlife, the membership of nature conservation organisations is growing but really needs more support to help wildlife for the future. Legislation intended to protect nature is becoming more abundant and a growing area of land (and more recently, sea) is being designated as having special protection. However wildlife and wild places have been declining in quantity and quality for decades and continue to do so. The high value that people often attach to nature on a personal, individual level, is rarely translated into public policy or the investment and spending decisions of government, organisations and private companies.

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If we're going to succeed in this, and these Living Landscapes and Living Seas are going to spread and last, then a far greater part of society will need to be inspired to take action for nature, and enabled to both feel and understand the full extent of how valuable nature is to us and our communities.

Nature matters simply because it does, but also because it brings people huge emotional value, it delivers a wide range of valuable goods and services that are of practical benefit to society, and much of the emotional and practical value that it generates has financial value which contributes to the economic performance of the UK. It is central to addressing many of the UK's most pressing social and economic problems (such as declining mental health, increasing non-communicable diseases, declining social cohesion, increasing inequality, increasing flood risk, increasing urbanisation) and to maintaining the productivity and quality of life of a growing and aging population).



Ecosystem Services

We know that the natural environment provides us with a wide range of 'ecosystem services': all the things that people need and want that come from the natural world of which human beings are a part.

We receive provisioning services (food, fibre, energy, drinking water, building materials, natural medicine). We get regulating services (pollination, waste breakdown, regulation of flood, drought and local climate, control of pests, disease and pollution). And we get cultural services (meaningful places, access and recreation, tourism, creative inspiration and spiritual enrichment). At its foundations, there are several 'supporting services' that underpin and enable all the others: water and mineral cycling, energy flow, and ecological interactions such as food webs, species distribution, vegetation structure, soil and water. Not to mention other services that we are yet to discover.

The living part of the natural world – the wild plants, animals and fungi with which human beings share the Earth; the wildlife – is a vital part of the whole. All the other services depend on it.

Different people recognise the value of the many things that the natural world provides to us in different ways:

- Some recognise that nature and wildlife have intrinsic value... They are valuable in their own right and we have a moral responsibility to look after them, irrespective of any benefit humans might get from them.

- Many draw emotional value from nature and wildlife. Seeing it, or even just knowing it is there, makes us feel good. We enjoy it.
- Unquestionably, nature provides goods and services to us that are of practical value to us and to the rest of society. Food production, flood control and improved physical and mental health and wellbeing all have practical, societal value.
- And many (but certainly not all) aspects of nature, the goods and services that it provides, can be bought and sold. They have financial value.

A central part of Trust work is to open people's hearts and minds to help them to understand and to enable people to make the right decisions and take the right action to reflect the whole range of value that nature provides to us.

One of the reasons why the full value of nature hasn't been recognised effectively until now is that often those who recognise nature's intrinsic value have refused to acknowledge that it can also have financial worth; or vice-versa. Or those who value nature for the tradable financial value it generates have failed to recognise that its financial value is dependent on its ability to generate emotional or societal value – its ability to generate emotional connections or to deliver useful goods and services.

Inspiring People

To inspire people, Gwent Wildlife Trust along with the other Trusts aim to communicate and demonstrate that nature matters, in all its different ways. We tailor how we communicate to address the preferences and priorities of the people with whom we are communicating.

Nature matters because it is priceless... It is great; we love it... It is useful; our wellbeing depends on it... And it is productive; it creates monetary wealth. And these basic messages lie behind what we are trying to



communicate.

Leading Communities

To lead communities, we will need to build the commitment of people to our cause by enabling them to appreciate why The Wildlife Trusts matter to them and their communities. We as Trusts champion nature's recovery. We look after

great wild places. We aim to increase the wellbeing of local people. And we increase the prosperity of the communities of which we are a part.

Probably most importantly of all, through all of these we are inclusive and welcoming and we work with other people to establish common cause. We lead communities from within, by inspiring, advising, guiding, helping and supporting people to share our journey with us, and we share their journeys with them.

Enabling Action

We can establish common cause with people and motivate them to act by making it clear why they matter to The Wildlife Trusts, and why they matter to nature. Their decisions and actions count. There are things they can do that will help both The Wildlife Trusts and the natural world... and we can help them to do them. Because they are the ones that will ultimately make the biggest difference... not us. And ultimately, no-one will take action if they don't understand what they can do, or feel why it's important for them to do it... Why they matter.

People matter because... they can demonstrate that nature matters, to others like them. They can share their enjoyment of nature; they can work with The Wildlife Trusts to take action for nature and they can invest money (and other resources) in nature's recovery.

We will know that we are making significant progress towards this goal when the UK's natural environment is improving – when its stocks of natural capital (the part of the natural environment that generates value to people) are growing, when its wildlife is thriving and when recent significant downward trends in the quantity, quality and distribution of the natural environment are heading in the opposite direction. In short, we are aiming to achieve a resilient natural environment that has recovered substantially from past declines and within which wildlife flourishes and ecological processes function effectively.

Living Landscape

TWT believe that this will be achieved when individual natural landscapes across the UK are bigger and more joined up. When the whole landscape functions ecologically; when it is rich in wildlife and it delivers substantial personal, social and economic benefits to people throughout our towns, cities and countryside.

Living Seas

Beyond our shores, we will know when we have succeeded in our mission when the UK has an ecologically coherent marine network with marine ecosystems that function well and thriving marine wildlife; when development is planned and regulated to cause minimal harmful impact and fisheries are managed sustainably.

A Society Connected to Nature

A further crucial aspect of TWT's ambition is that the communities within which we work and society as a whole should feel connected to the natural environment. It should be a real and palpable part of everyone's life. When we have succeeded in our work, society will value the natural environment highly and it will be the norm for people to invest money, time, physical and mental effort and emotional commitment to bring about nature's recovery. They will take action for nature because it is simply the done thing.

Nature Matters

When this goal has been achieved, people will have a lifelong love of and connection to nature. They will be consciously aware that they and their communities are benefiting socially and economically from what nature provides. Communities and organisations (including businesses and public bodies) will feel inspired, motivated and empowered to invest time, money and effort to help bring about and sustain nature's recovery.

And it will be well positioned to inspire, lead, motivate and empower people – to communicate the value of nature to people through our mass communications and our face to face personal contacts – at our centres, on our sites, within the communities where our work takes place and with the business leaders, politicians and influential thinkers who we encounter in the course of our lives. To bring the value of nature into people's lives and make it explicit to them.

If we manage to achieve tangible progress towards creating a bigger, better, more joined up landscape that is rich in wildlife, and towards a healthy marine environment within which ecosystems function and wildlife thrives, these will further help to demonstrate the value of nature to society and to the economy – helping to build a connection with nature and awareness of humanity's dependence on a healthy natural environment. They will also help to demonstrate how nature can be enabled to recover and the parts that different people can play in that.

The work of Wildlife Trusts to lead communities and inspire people to value and take action for nature is particularly important – partly because as active, practical, local organisations we have a stronger local presence and better connections into many communities – particularly those in urban areas and the business community – than any other



major environmental organisation in the UK.

It is also particularly important because the more people are inspired, motivated and empowered to value and take action for nature.

Sunrise image courtesy of Don Sutherland

Red kite in flight courtesy of Lee Parsons

Children investigating grass courtesy of Matthew Roberts

Bottlenosed Dolphin jumping, courtesy of Eleanor Stone

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