

Annual Report 2022 -23

This report covers activities from 1st July 2022 to 30th June 2023

Introduction

Over this period most of our work has focussed on the continuing development and maintenance of Gorse Hill Nature Reserve and this report concentrates on our progress and the monitoring of our flora and fauna. The Management Committee met once a month during this reporting period and sub groups met regularly to progress Publicity and Project Development; the principal officers are the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary.

Gorse Hill

All the work on the Reserve is carried out by volunteers; we have no paid staff. Volunteer work parties meet every Wednesday and Saturday. There is also a group of adults with learning difficulties that work on the Reserve on Fridays. Open Sundays are run on the first Sunday of the month from April - September with a cafe and guided walks. The Reserve provides a wide diversity of habitats from ponds and wetlands to meadows, woodland and heathland; encouraging small mammals, birds (both resident and migratory), insects and amphibians.

Meadows

Haymaking in three meadows started in late July, followed by another session in August. The more efficient, new to us, bale accumulator was a delight after so many years of manual handling in the fields. The main labour was now concentrated on unloading and stacking the bales by hand in the new barn. The hay was gradually sold over the year to our regular customers. Little other work took place in the meadows this year.

Polytunnel

Produce continued to be grown in the polytunnel, though one of the tunnels developed a rip along one of the hoops during a particularly windy period. The covering was rescued by taping up the rip from the outside and then the inside. However, the tension in the hoop had been lost and gradually further rips developed over time but we have been able to keep it in one piece. The central span was taken over for work associated with the new polytunnel barn construction.

Polytunnel Barn

West Lancashire Borough Council finally gave permission for the construction of a pole barn next to the polytunnel, after two years of consultation. The barn with one open side would give easy access for the tractor and bale grab. This in future will remove the laborious work of stacking hay bales by hand.

Construction started in August took a year, with the ground needing to be built up, given the sloping site before the 15 posts could be constructed and positioned. Bracing, roofing and Yorkshire boarding followed. The deadline of June was met and the barn was ready to accept the first hay bales.

Orchards

Early work consisted of thinning out excess small fruit, weeding and foliar feeding. The grass in Heritage Orchard was cut in August, allowing the carpet of cowslips and other wild flowers to set seed. 12Acre Orchard was cut sooner and most of the old sheep netting tree guards removed because the posts and wires were wounding the branches.

Apple picking started in mid-August, with many normally later cropping varieties cropping early. It was noticeable that the apples were smaller on the barked trees. Apple juice making started in mid-August and ran through to December. In October we were inspected by Environmental Health and got

a 5* rating. A new bottled juice storage area was constructed next to the Juicing Unit. This houses the crates of apple juice in a logical production date sequence.

During a particularly cold few weeks in the winter, Roe deer ate the bark from the trunks of a third of the apple trees in the Heritage Orchard. Guards were quickly replaced around the trees and we waited to see what impact this would have on fruit production later in the year.

The Apple Weekend was at last free from Covid restrictions, so we were able to run all the activities and were blessed with two rain-free days and the café in the Cabin.

Following this, construction started on a new storage unit in the New Barn for our bottles of apple juice. The insulated area keeps the juice at a constant temperature and allows us to keep the production in date order.

Education and Monitoring

This year our 150 bird boxes were cleaned out over early winter by students from Edge Hill University and any major repairs to the bird boxes made. Recording bird activity during the breeding season was again undertaken by two separate student groups. Two undergraduates surveyed Willow Bank and Bluebell Woods whilst an M.Sc. student undertook Cabin Wood, North and Triangle Woods. One of the new great tit boxes was occupied within a week, whilst a tawny owl box was commandeered by a barn owl for the first time.

We also completed a project to construct and install 2 swift boxes on the west facing elevation of the new barn. This was linked to a loudspeaker on a timer that repeated swift calls for 2 hours after sunrise and before sunset. The swift breeding season of mid-May to mid-July came and went without attracting any birds.

The Moth and Newt evening was a success with visitors able to watch by torchlight, newts swimming around in Seldom Pond and were then able to observe moths being attracted to the moth traps and later being identified.

Likewise, the Blossom and Bluebell Sunday allowed visitors to marvel at the blossoms in the Heritage Orchard followed by the bluebells in Bluebell Wood.

There is also a new attraction in Cabin Wood. Lelia painted and Mitch erected a series of birds with their corresponding egg paintings that formed a new trail through the wood.

Duke of Edinburgh students continue to use us for their volunteering and skills sections of their awards.

Publicity

The website, Facebook and Twitter have been kept up to date and two issues of Nature Trail published for our subscription supporters. The Northwest Bird Watching Festival at Martin Mere was attended with our stand and we gave a Power Point talk in their lecture theatre. We also continued opening on the first Sunday of the month, providing a café and access to Cabin Wood.

Finance and Administration

Our main income streams have come from grants, hay and log sales, subscriptions and gift aid. More detailed finances can be found in the annual accounts for this period.

Conclusion

We are very grateful to the many volunteers who give up their free time to help with the work developing Gorse Hill Nature Reserve. We could not have achieved any of this without the dedication of our volunteers and supporters.

J. Atkins B.Sc. C.Biol. MSB
Secretary to the Trust


INCOME EXPENDITURE REPORT JUL 22 - JUN 2023


Current Account		
Opening Balance	1st July 2022	£27,946.59
Total Income		£32,015.18
Total Expenditure		£43,727.11
Closing Balance	30th June 2023	£16,234.66



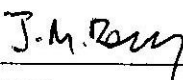
Petty Cash		
Opening Balance	1st July 2022	£157.86
Drawn from Current		£1,458.61
Closing Balance	30th June 2023	£281.33
Petty Cash Spent		£1,335.14

Summary of 2022-2023		
Assets at 1st July 2022		
Cash at Bank		£27,946.59
Petty Cash		£157.86
Total cash		£28,104.45
Assets Changes in 2022-2023		
Total Income		£59,961.77
Total Expenditure (less petty cash drawn)		-£42,268.50
Petty Cash Spent		-£1,335.14
Asset Change in year		
Assets at 30th June 2023		
Cash at Bank		£16,234.66
Petty Cash		£281.33
Total cash		£16,515.99
Net Change in Assets		

THE ABOVE IS A FAIR AND TRUE RECORD OF THE STATE OF THE ACCOUNTS OF NORTH WEST ECOLOGICAL TRUST FOR THE FINANCIAL PERIOD ENDING 30TH JUNE 2023

Hon Treasurer	Dated
	12.10.23
Kate Wildman	

Hon Auditor	Dated
	19 th October 2023
Ian Culshaw	

Trustees	Dated
	26/10/23
Derek Atkins	
	26.10.23
Jonathan Atkins	
	29-10-2023
John Berry	



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

North West Ecological Trust

On accounts for the year
ended

30/06/2023

Charity no
(if any)

327788

Responsibilities and
basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30/06/2020.

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

~~[The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of [insert name of applicable listed body]]. Delete [] if not applicable.~~

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (~~other than that disclosed below~~*) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

Date:

19th October 2023

Name:

Ian Culshaw

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

Address:

27 Westover Road, Maghull

Liverpool

L31 7BT