



100
YEARS

NWT Research and Evidence Strategy

norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk

© Chris Gomersall/2020VISION

Foreword

Norfolk Wildlife Trust protects and restores our county's wild spaces by managing over 60 nature reserves, working in partnership throughout the landscape, and inspiring people to enjoy and care for Norfolk's nature through projects, educational activities, events and campaigns.

The UK-wide State of Nature Report (2019)¹ identified that our wildlife has been impacted by centuries of persecution, pollution, habitat loss and degradation. Both the abundance and the distribution of species have, on average, continued to decline since the 1970s and these losses are set to increase due to continued pressure from agricultural management, development, pollution, hydrological change and climate change. There is also a wealth of research that illustrates that our growing disconnect from nature is linked to escalating levels of mental and physical illness and has contributed to the loss of our biodiversity. Empowering our communities to access, enjoy and act for nature is crucial in creating a county-wide movement to protect and restore the very nature we require to prosper.

There is no doubt that these are challenging times, and to continue Norfolk Wildlife Trust's track record of delivering great gains for nature, we need to ensure our actions are informed by strong evidence and employ the latest research. We already generate, collate and use data to ensure our actions are fit for purpose, but the world and technology are changing and we need to build our evidence base to inform our advice, evaluate our impact and interventions, guide our work and help deliver our strategic objectives, as well as to strengthen and build new partnerships.

The Wildlife Trusts recognize that there is a national nature evidence emergency and the Conservation Evidence² initiative reported that almost half of conservation actions had no evidence for them, whilst a further 29% had unknown effectiveness.

Tackling both the nature crisis and the evidence emergency requires collaboration with a diversity of partners, including academic bodies and specialist groups. We hope that our research prospectus will encourage many more partners to work with us and help us make a real difference for Norfolk's wildlife.

Helen Baczkowska

Conservation Research and Evidence Manager, July 2026



NWT Research and Evidence Strategy

Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Research and Evidence Strategy will help to deliver our vision of a wilder Norfolk for all.

The key organisational outcomes of our overarching NWT strategy³ are as follows:

Increasing the abundance and diversity of wildlife in our land and sea:

Creating a resilient environment where wildlife can thrive, both on our nature reserves and across Norfolk.

Creating more space for nature:

Our ambition is to see thousands of hectares of Norfolk restored or created for wildlife, contributing to the national Wildlife Trusts' aim of 30% of the UK's land and sea managed for nature by 2030. These new and wilder spaces will help to draw down carbon, reduce local flooding and provide nature-based solutions (NBS) to the climate crisis, as well as giving struggling species a chance to recover.

Connecting wild spaces for nature's recovery:

Coordinating and collaborating with partners, communities and land managers to help create a nature recovery network for Norfolk, made up of interconnected wild places, where nature can flourish in the future.

This NWT Research and Evidence Strategy also aligns with the principles and intentions of Wildlife Trusts' Evidence Emergency initiative, launched in January 2026. This draws on the Wildlife Trusts Collective Framework⁴, published in 2023, which ensures that the Wildlife Trusts Federation becomes more evidence-led and data-driven. As part of Evidence Emergency we are exploring, testing, learning and sharing evidence and research more openly; we also aim to work more effectively with a range of partners, including academic institutions. Our Research and Evidence Strategy encompasses the evidence, data, technology and science needed to underpin the delivery of our overarching aims and to help us robustly measure our impact on Norfolk's wildlife.



© Chris Gomersall/2020VISION



© Mark Hamblin/2020VISION

NWT research mission

In order for NWT to deliver the ambitious goals and aims of its strategy, we need sound, evidence-informed, long-term solutions to the pressures on Norfolk's wildlife. Science must underpin and inform both our policy and our actions, as it should for all those standing up for nature. This demands building a strong and continually evolving evidence base, embracing new and emerging technologies, and requires the collaborative effort of academic and specialist partners.

Historically there has been a variable disconnect between the efforts of academics, local specialists (such as county recorders) and the work of applied conservation practitioners, with information flow between these groups being irregular to none. If we are to have the greatest impact for nature that we can achieve, we need to open channels and encourage a multi-directional flow of data, evidence and experience. This will optimise decision making, refine applied conservation and nature recovery principles, and crucially enable us to quantitatively measure our impact, which will subsequently feed back into an iterative, ever-improving toolkit for nature conservation.

In addition to becoming evidence-led and promoting collaborative work, this research strategy and prospectus aims, via the projects on offer, to equip incoming generations of conservationists with relevant and meaningful real-world experience and skills, thereby securing an investment in the future of Norfolk's nature.



Our research and evidence objectives

An evidence approach

Ensure all aspects of our work such as advice, management standards and monitoring are underpinned by the most up to date evidence. We are embedding a commitment to consult, utilise and report lacking scientific evidence where appropriate as a step-change across NWT.

Strategic research

Direct our research to be strategically aligned but ensure the breadth of Norfolk's nature is included. Our projects are to meet criteria that favour the greatest need or impact for our efforts, be that the highest priority species, large-scale projects or significant community engagement potential, for example.

Naturally collaborative

Increase the reach and impact of our research by fostering existing and proactively building new connections with our partners; primarily academic bodies, recording groups, other NGOs and local specialists.

Embrace and benefit from data and technology

Employ ethical and best practice standards of data collection, storage and analysis, aligning our actions with those of the TWT Collective Framework on Data, Research and Evidence. This includes testing new and emerging technology as an aid to nature conservation.

Knowledge transfer

Increase the reach and impact of our research by ensuring our findings and the data generated is shared (where appropriate) and disseminated to our partners and others working in applied and academic conservation sciences. This open and collaborative process is of benefit for all, especially wildlife.

Iterative work flow

Set processes in place that enable evidence and findings of our research to feed into evolving iterations of our advice and standards, as well as future versions of our strategies and objectives.

Reputation building

Raise our reputation as generators and communicators of scientific evidence with our partners, academic institutions, external organisations, government and local commerce, thereby strengthening our future impact further still.

Research themes and topics

There are four broad themes to our research and evidence work and under these themes sit seven research topics that cover all areas of nature conservation, with projects available for a diversity of academic interests and inclusive of a diversity of student abilities.

Theme 1: Biodiversity, species and habitats

Topic 1. Biodiversity & bio-abundance

Understanding the pressures and drivers of decline on the biodiversity and bio-abundance of Norfolk's wildlife, both on land and in a marine environment.

Topic 2. Habitats

Evaluating and improving existing habitat management standards, as well as developing novel methods to conserve, recover, enhance, create and connect quality habitat in Norfolk's landscapes.

Topic 3. Species

Investigate the trends and drivers of decline in priority species in Norfolk, including both marine and terrestrial species. This includes advancement of autecological knowledge and refinement of species recovery approaches. Other work will utilise flagship or umbrella species in landscape-scale projects and/or those with considerable public engagement or of a citizen science focus.

Theme 2: Climate change, nature-based solutions and economic

Topic 4. Climate change and nature-based solutions (NBS)

Understanding and evaluating the local impacts of climate change on nature and people in Norfolk, as well as the development of novel mitigation techniques as a matter of urgency, aiming ultimately to give nature the best possible chance to adapt in time to the existing and incoming challenges. NBS are activities which address societal challenges by restoring and managing habitats and ecosystems in a sustainable way to the simultaneous benefit of both people and nature, which this topic also aims to investigate and analyse.

Topic 5. Economies of nature

Understanding the economic value of nature and its contribution to economic growth, whether that be through provision (e.g. food production), regulation (e.g. clean air and water) or its cultural value. This topic explores nature's 'assets' (natural capital), ecosystem services and sustainable finance and business in Norfolk, and then looks at how these economies can be used to exert real influence on local policy and decision makers for the benefit of Norfolk's wildlife.

Theme 3: Technology for nature conservation

Topic 6. Technology for conservation

Utilising new and emerging technology to aid and increase the efficiency, accuracy and power of our work, for example investigating monitoring via remote sensing and making the most of applications like GIS to analyse and share spatial data for quantitative analysis of our efforts, as well as enhanced collaboration with partners.

Theme 4: People and nature

Topic 7. People & Nature

Measuring the benefits and social value of nature for people in Norfolk, looking at health, wellbeing, education and understanding the impacts of public engagement. Arts-based research can influence how we communicate nature, for example, whilst well-designed citizen science programmes can encourage meaningful action for nature, valuable data collection and engagement.

References

- ¹ Burns, F, Mordue, S, al Fulaij, N, Boersch-Supan, PH, Boswell, J, Boyd, RJ, Bradfer-Lawrence, T, de Ornellas, P, de Palma, A, de Zylva, P, Dennis, EB, Foster, S, Gilbert, G, Halliwell, L, Hawkins, K, Haysom, KA, Holland, MM, Hughes, J, Jackson, AC, Mancini, F, Mathews, F, McQuatters-Gollop, A, Noble, DG, O'Brien, D, Pescott, OL, Purvis, A, Simkin, J, Smith, A, Stanbury, AJ, Villemot, J, Walker, KJ, Walton, P, Webb, TJ, Williams, J, Wilson, R, Gregory, RD, 2023. **State of Nature 2023**, the State of Nature partnership, Available at: www.stateofnature.org.uk
- ² William J. Sutherland, W.J. (ed)., Lynn V. Dicks, L.V. (ed)., Silviu O. Petrovan, S.O. (ed) & Rebecca K. Smith, R.K. (ed). **What Works in Conservation vol.6 (2021)**. Conservation Evidence. ISSN Print: 2059-4232 ISSN Digital: 2059-4240. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0267>
- ³ Norfolk Wildlife Trust (2023). **A Wilder Norfolk for All**. <https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/Strategy>
- ⁴ The Wildlife Trusts (2024) **Data, Research & Evidence: The Wildlife Trusts' Framework 2030**. A collective framework for data, research & evidence in The Wildlife Trusts. The Wildlife Trusts, Newark. [available on request from evidence@wildlifetrusts.org]

Additional

Doar, N., Jamieson, A., Kingscott, J., Siggery, B., Barrios O'Neill, D., Thomas, E. & K. Brown (2024) Wild Science 2024: Data, research & evidence in The Wildlife Trusts – a review & prospectus. The Wildlife Trusts, Newark. TWT_Wild_Science_Report_2024 FINAL.pdf

