

LONDON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
Registered Charity 206228

Report of the society for the year ending 30 June 2025

Objects

The objects of the London Natural History Society are the study and recording of natural history, archaeology and other kindred subjects within twenty miles of St Paul's Cathedral, the promotion of scientific investigations, the appreciation and conservation of the natural environment and the publication in the Society's journals of scientific and educational papers. Activities and achievements in respect of these objectives are described below.

Governance: Council, Committees and Sections

All positions within the Society are undertaken by volunteers. The Society is governed by a Council of Trustees comprising 3 officers, up to ten members' representatives and one representative from each of the Society's five sections.

The President's role has been vacant since AGM 2022. James Lovely was appointed as Treasurer at AGM 2024 to replace Mike West and handover is complete. Annie Wilson continues to act as Secretary. The members are represented by Liz Andrew, Robin Blades, Noel Brock, Wendy Knight, Cassandra Lee, Joanne Maddox, Tony Madgwick and Pete Mantle. The section representatives are Cecilia Derrick (London Bird Club), Maureen Parry (Botany), Anke Marsh (Ecology and Entomology) and Kat Duke (Hampstead Heath Survey). The post of Bookham Commons representative is vacant.

The Administration and Finance Committee, chaired by Michael Wilsdon, meets five times a year to deal with delegated business, and Robin Blades continues to manage our membership despite moving to Harrogate. Council would like to acknowledge the work of Michael and Robin to fill the space left by the absence of a President and keep the society running day-to-day.

The Trustees are extremely grateful to everyone involved in delivering LNHS activities who so generously volunteer their time and expertise. And many thanks to the continuing support of our members. We are very keen to encourage members to help deliver the society's activities, both indoors and outdoors - you do not need to be an expert in natural history.

Finances

The annual financial report accompanies this report. Many thanks to Mike West, the retiring Treasurer, and Robin Blades, the Assistant Treasurer, who have helped James Lovely to settle in to the role of Treasurer. The Society continues to benefit from members who subscribe to the gift aid scheme, for which we are very grateful. Members who qualify to use the gift aid scheme but have not signed up are encouraged to consider doing so. The Society has also been the grateful recipient of several generous bequests.

Activities

The Virtual Talks team continues to host 'online' talks using Zoom, which are available for a limited time on YouTube after the meeting. These talks remain very popular and still attract new audience members from more geographically diverse locations than in-person meetings. The Society thanks our many speakers, who generously share their time and expertise to entertain us and recognises the hard work of the Virtual Talks team who facilitate and support the talks. If you are interested in helping to organise and deliver the virtual talks, please contact the Secretary.

A full and varied programme of field meetings was offered throughout the year. The walks across all sections of the society have been well supported, regularly attracting new attendees who sometimes became members. Many thanks to everyone who volunteers their time and knowledge to make these events happen. New leaders and attendees are always welcome.

Regular monthly Saturday field meetings at Bookham Commons continue despite the lack of a committee. The LNHS ecological survey of Bookham Commons, a Site of Special Scientific Interest near Leatherhead in Surrey, has been running continuously for more than eighty years with the result that Bookham Commons is one of the best-documented sites in the UK. Members are strongly encouraged to visit this wonderful site and contribute to the survey. We would love to be able to form a new committee to guide this work.

The Society took part in the Green Meet at Fulham Palace in May. Tony Madgwick, the Society's Hymenoptera (bee and wasp) recorder was invited to lead bee walks. The Council was discussing the logistics of hosting an LNHS Open Day for the first time after Covid, so agreed that this would be a good opportunity to have a trial run. The bee walks proved very successful, as always, and some useful lessons were learnt.

Journals and other publications

The London Naturalist 103, edited by Clive Herbert, was distributed to members in September 2024. It comprised annual reports from officers and articles of interest covering natural history of the London area contributed by members. Many thanks to the contributors and editorial team who continue to produce a high-quality journal of which the Society is proud.

The London Bird Report No 88 for the year 2023 was published in May 2025. This annual publication is a well-regarded high-quality record of London's bird observations for 2023. Many thanks to the numerous individuals who contribute significant time and effort to its production.

Thanks as always go to Mark Burgess and contributors for the quarterly Newsletter which continues to provide members with regular news on the activities and operation of the Society. We encourage all members, old and new, to consider submitting items for publication. The Newsletter is now available as a digital download. Members are encouraged to sign up to receive the digital version and help us reduce our carbon footprint.

Many thanks to Noel Brock and his team who produce the twice-yearly programme.

At the end of 2024, Leslie Williams (LNHS Butterfly Recorder) completed his major update of 'Butterflies of the London Area', originally published in 1987, and sent it for publication through

NatureBureau. It is available at a good nature bookshop near you! Colin Plant (LNHS Moth Recorder) and Les Evans-Hill continue to work on an updated version of 'Larger Moths of the London Area', and Mark Spencer (LNHS Flowering Plant Recorder & Vascular Cryptogam Recorder) is making good progress on an updated edition of 'Flora of the London Area', both last published in 1983. Each of these publications will contribute to the conservation of London habitats and wildlife. The Publications Committee was reconvened to manage these imminent publications and help bring them to fruition.

We thank all of our social media editors for publicising the Society and its events. All platforms - website, Facebook, BlueSky and Instagram - continue to prove useful in keeping members up to date and attracting new joiners.

Membership

119 new members joined the society during the membership year ending 30/09/2025, up by 21 on the previous year. The total membership at 30/09/25 was 954, down from 963.

While many new members are attracted by our programme and social media presence, we are very grateful to existing members who recruit friends because they think will enjoy what we have to offer. We encourage people to keep doing this and help the Society to continue to grow. Everyone is welcome to join field meetings or virtual talks to get a taste of the Society before they join.

We are very sorry to record the deaths of the following members during the year (date of joining in brackets), and thank them for their support of the Society, in some cases over many decades. The list includes a number of the society's Vice Presidents and Honorary Vice Presidents. Dr Paul Bartlett (1993), Mr Philip Baumber (1957), Mr John Bedford (1952), Dr Colin Bowlt HVP (1975), Mr Rodney Burton HVP (1964), Mr Sean Huggins (1992), Mr Jeremy Ison (2009), Dr Douglas Model (1999), Mr David Montier HVP (1960), Mr Roger G. Payne (1992), Ms Nicola Pyne (1995), Mr Patrick Sellar VP (1957), Mr Raymond Uffen (1955).

Recording and research

Thanks go to all our recorders for their support and continuing hard work. They do an invaluable job of gathering data on most of the species to be found in the London area, ensuring that the information is shared, and generously help individuals with their enquiries.

In 2022, the LNHS was awarded a grant from the City of London Corporation to map key flora, fungi and lichens in the different habitats on Hampstead Heath. The project, known as the Millennial Flora of Hampstead Heath Project 2022, led by Liz Andrew (the Hampstead Heath Survey Chair), completed the survey phase in 2024. This year the project team has worked on analysing the plant, fungi and lichen data resulting from the surveys and producing reports. The project budget has been spent as planned and the final items of work are being completed. Nature's Calendar phenology part of the project will be continued by the Hampstead-based charity Heath Hands and their volunteers.

Library

The LNHS library, located in the Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity in the Natural History Museum, is an important resource for both the public (for reference) and LNHS members (for borrowing) providing access to a wide range of out of print and hard to find natural history titles. The library is open every Wednesday and the third Saturday every month, thanks to Leslie Bolsover, the Librarian, and James Lovely and Ron Dionne. The library regularly hosts popular Study Days, making good use of the facilities and specimens in collaboration with the Angela Marmont Centre. Leslie and her team have worked hard to increase borrowing and raise awareness of the collection. In addition to an increase in book borrowing, journals are also being borrowed and the collection is being used regularly for research and identification. Members are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this very valuable asset. Anyone interested in helping Leslie to keep the library open is strongly encouraged to step forward – library experience is not essential.

Conservation of the natural environment

Rich habitats are still under threat from developers. The Society is often asked to lend its voice to protest against such developments. Council's view is that an appropriate campaigning body in such cases is the London Wildlife Trust, the LNHS being better positioned to provide evidence-based advice if required. Our partnership with GiGL will help ensure that our high-quality validated records are widely available for such purposes.

This report has been prepared with due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.