LONDON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
Registered Charity 206228
Report of the society for the year ending 30 June 2026

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 three officers, up to ten members' representatives and one representative from each of the Society's five sections.

Tony Madgwick was appointed as President at AGM 2025. James Lovely continues as Treasurer, following his appointment at AGM 2024, and Annie Wilson continues as Secretary. The members are represented by Liz Andrew, Robin Blades, Noel Brock and Kat Duke. The section representatives are Kennedy Cruickshank (London Bird Club), Leslie Williams (Ecology and Entomology), Jo Maddox (Hampstead Heath Survey) and Pete Mantle (Bookham Commons). The post of Botany representative is vacant. Robin Blades continues as Membership Secretary and Assistant Treasurer, despite moving to Harrogate in 2024. Many thanks to Anke Marsh and Wendy Knight who completed their 5 year term as Trustees last year.

Michael Wilsdon stepped down as chair of the Administration and Finance Committee. The Trustees are grateful to him for fulfilling the role since 2012. Jo Hatton, Secretary of A&F, has kept things going with support from the rest of the committee. The group meets five times a year to deal with delegated business.

The section leads are Liz Andrew (Hampstead Heath Survey), Keiron Brown (Ecology & Entomology), Mark Spencer (Botany), Pete Mantle (acting chair) (Bookham Commons) and Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne (London Bird Club).

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.

The society carried out a review of its processes and procedures in accordance with the Charity Commission guidelines. Updated versions of the Health & Safety and Safeguarding processes are available on the website.

Finances

James Lovely has fully settled into the role of Treasurer. The transfer of administration rights for the society's accounts was completed earlier this year, which required an unexpected degree

of patience with some of processes of the organizations involved. James has been active in reviewing the society's investments and identifying areas for possible reinvestment.

The annual financial report accompanies this report. Many thanks to James for his perseverance in the production of this year's report – a change of personnel at the Independent Examiner introduced additional complications.

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.

Once again, 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.

Pete Mantle has been active in leading the regular monthly Saturday field meetings at Bookham Commons, and the society has renewed the contract with the National Trust for use of the hut. The LNHS ecological survey of Bookham Commons, a SSSI 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. Additional walk leaders would be very welcome.

The Society took part in the Green Meet at Fulham Palace in May. Tony Madgwick, the President and the Society's Hymenoptera (bee and wasp) recorder, was invited once again to lead bee walks, supported by members of the society. The Council is considering an LNHS Open Day, and some useful lessons were learnt.

Journals and other publications

The London Naturalist 104, edited by Clive Herbert, was distributed to members in September 2025. It comprised annual reports from officers and articles of interest covering natural history of the London area contributed by members.

The London Bird Report No 89 was published in May 2026, reporting on more than one million bird sightings of 227 species by 5054 observers across approx. 250 sites. This publication is a well-regarded high-quality record of London's bird observations.

Many thanks to the numerous contributors and editorial teams who continue to produce the high-quality journals of which the Society is proud.

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 strongly encouraged to sign up to receive the digital version and help us reduce our carbon footprint.

Production of the twice-yearly programme transferred from Noel Brock and his team to Monica Dawes. Many thanks to both parties for their hard work.

At the end of 2024, Leslie Williams (LNHS Butterfly Recorder) completed his major update of 'Butterflies of the London Area', originally published in 1987. It is available at good nature bookshops – or contact us directly for a copy.

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.

We thank all of our social media editors for publicising the Society and its events via our website and Facebook, BlueSky and Instagram platforms.

Membership

Robin Blades continues to provide excellent support to the society as Membership Secretary. To reduce the workload and simplify the renewal process Robin spent the summer implementing the on-line membermojo system for the society. This will allow members to manage their own details, e.g. contact information, publication requirements, and annual renewal.

89 new members joined the society during the membership year ending 30/09/2026, down by 30 on the previous year. The total membership at 30/09/2026 was 928, down from 955.

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 they will enjoy what we have to offer. We encourage people to keep doing this and help the Society to grow. Everyone is welcome to join field meetings or virtual talks to get a taste of the Society before they join.

We were 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. Mr William Balmer (2009), Dr Leo Batten (1977), Mr Gilbert Best (1995), Mr David Bevan (Honorary Vice President) (1980), Mr Mathew Frith (2004), Mr Brian Meadows (1957), Mr Clive Schofield (2004), Miss Pat Wortley (1948). It is noted that Pat Wortley was the society's longest serving member. Obituaries of David Bevan, a former President of the Society, Leo Batten and Mathew Frith were published in The London Naturalist 105.

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 and the final items of work are being completed. A report on the Mosses and Liverworts of Hampstead Heath (authors JG Duckett, L Andrew, J Kowal, K Adams) was produced for submission to the Journal of Bryology, and two videos of bryophytes on the Heath were created by Jeff Duckett.

The Nature's Calendar project, which monitors trees and shrubs on three transects across Hampstead Heath weekly, run by the heath-based charity Heath Hands and their volunteers, using data analysis provided by Liz, is now in its fourth year.

Library

The LNHS library, located in the Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity in the Natural History Museum, provides access to a wide range of out of print and hard to find natural history titles for both the public and LNHS members. 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 team carried out a major exercise to relocate 8 archive cabinets to create space for the NHM, a thorough stocktake and addition of 90 new volumes. The number of visitors increased significantly from 33 to 88 this year, including artists, students and citizen scientists. In addition to an increase in book borrowing, journals are also being borrowed and the collection is being used regularly for research and identification by both LNHS members and NHM staff. 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.

The library regularly hosts popular Study Days led by Keiron Brown (Chair of Ecology & Entomology), making good use of the facilities and specimens in collaboration with the Angela Marmont Centre. Cathy Ching (LBC Field Meetings Organiser) hosts a bi-monthly book club at the library which is well supported by members.

Conservation of the natural environment

Rich habitats are still under threat from development which has the potential to harm wildlife or wildlife habitats. 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.