



# **BTO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

**2023–28**



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# INTRODUCTION



**Arjun Dutta**, Youth Advisory Panel member since 2020

Over the course of the past few years, the immense value of wildlife and nature for the human world has increasingly been brought to light.

As climate change and biodiversity loss will affect the lives of the next generations the most, this makes it all the more important to connect more young people with the natural world. The work of BTO is focused on the science behind conservation and species monitoring. The organisation is therefore uniquely placed to offer young people the opportunity to explore the importance of birds, science and conservation – and to secure the future of ornithology. Since February 2020, BTO Youth has had an ever-growing role within BTO's work, providing young people with opportunities to access what the natural world has to offer. Over 50 volunteers under the age of 25 have now represented BTO Youth, either as a Youth Advisory Panellist or Youth Representative.

The first phase of BTO Youth saw a multitude of successful initiatives undertaken to connect, empower and build the confidence of young nature enthusiasts across the UK. In line with our vision, which remains unchanged, giving young

people a voice and an opportunity to learn has been central to BTO Youth's values. Although flexibility and adaptability were required during the COVID-19 pandemic – inspiring online schemes like Birding 101 and Nature Natters and the Equipment Donation Scheme – the Youth in Nature Summit in Manchester in October 2022 showed the potential to return to more in-person events going forward. To build knowledge and connectivity it will be necessary to look towards new initiatives as well as expand on past successes. For example, creating a youth network and an online hub will be at the heart of our future agenda, allowing us to collaborate and foster partnerships with organisations with similar ambitions. Mental health is another area of focus and priority for proposed projects.

The future of BTO Youth is exciting, expressing the positivity, hope and resilience shared by the organisation's Youth Volunteers. By implementing this Strategy and the projects outlined within it, BTO, young people and nature will collectively benefit. We can't do this alone and so, as you read this Strategy, we hope you will help in whatever way you can to see us achieve our vision.

Find out more about BTO Youth, and how you can help, on our website: [www.bto.org/youth](http://www.bto.org/youth)



## BTO: 90 YEARS IN THE MAKING



**Juliet Vickery**, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

We urgently need to ensure a better future for birds and wider nature. So much of the wildlife we love is struggling in the face of a warming climate and changes in how we manage our land and seas. Helping nature to thrive alongside us will require thinking and acting in new and innovative ways. It will also mean finding ways to help everyone connect with the natural world. This is why BTO's new organisational **Strategy 2023–30** focuses on two things: impact for birds and inclusivity for people. Put simply, it's about being better for birds and ensuring everyone feels they belong in our work. BTO Youth, and this Youth Engagement Strategy, are fundamental to delivering both of those things.

The first three years of the BTO Youth programme has shown the true and extraordinary value of listening to, and learning from, young people.

It has also conclusively demonstrated the 'art of the possible' when young people are empowered to design and deliver new initiatives. The next five-year BTO Youth Engagement Strategy builds on strong foundations and a talented and visionary team of young people. It is ambitious – because that is what nature needs. It encompasses many innovative ideas to help the next generation understand and care about nature, ways to enable them to feel part of a community of passionate and like-minded individuals wherever they are and whatever their background. It recognises the power of the natural world at the individual level, for example

**The next five-year BTO Youth Engagement Strategy builds on strong foundations and a talented and visionary team of young people. It is ambitious – because that is what nature needs.**





through helping young people access mindfulness in nature, as well as the need for action at scale, such as through delivering a regular Youth in Nature Summit in partnership with others.

The six guiding values – to be inclusive and accessible, collaborative, innovative and dynamic, youth-led and to help people grow and celebrate their connection with nature – align with our organisational values of being evidence-led, inclusive, collaborative and empowering. The Youth Volunteers' work is integral to BTO's wider goals and ambitions and their voices will be listened to and respected, particularly at leadership and Board level. We will support BTO Youth events, while always looking to them to lead, and we will seek to integrate their work and ideas across the wider organisation. But it's not just about what they can do for us. BTO Youth is part of our present and our future and we will strive to ensure that Youth Volunteers build skills, experience and friendships through working with us.

I have already seen, first-hand, the knowledge, passion and sense of fun of BTO Youth in action and this gives me absolute confidence in their ability to make this ambitious Strategy reality. As CEO, I am deeply proud of all the Youth Volunteers have achieved to date. Through this Youth Engagement Strategy BTO Youth will, without doubt, do even more to help create a better world for birds and people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Miley', is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page.







**Katie Monk**, Youth Advisory Panel member since 2021

BTO's Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) was developed in 2020, whilst the Youth Representative (YR) scheme launched in 2021. With

a growing number of Youth Volunteers, BTO Youth spreads positive impacts for young people in the UK, encouraging more and more young people to become involved with birdwatching and nature. It is important to emphasise that the roles of YAP and YRs are interconnected, but operate in different spheres within BTO. YAP operates 'behind the scenes', focusing on the more logistical and strategic planning and delivery of the Youth Engagement Strategy, particularly large events and projects. YRs are responsible for engaging people locally and creating community networks within their regions, spread all across the UK. YRs support putting YAP's vision into action on the ground, working to make a tangible impact in their communities and nationwide.

YAP members and YRs initially sign on to the programme for a one-year period, with the option to extend at the end of the calendar year. They can continue doing this until they are 25, at which point

**Peer-to-peer support transcends age differences or differences in experience; we aim to foster a collaborative environment where everyone's voice is heard.**

they finish their time as YAP member or YR and move into the alumni programme. Both roles are essential to the achievement of BTO Youth's vision and are key to the success of the Youth Engagement Strategy. The two groups work closely together and often overlap in their roles; YAP members may help YRs at their events, and YRs often attend strategic workshops and provide their input. Alongside this, YAP members are responsible for the mentoring of one or two YRs each, allowing for a peer-to-peer support network within BTO Youth, as well as the support they receive from the staff team. This peer-to-peer support transcends age differences or differences in experience; we aim to foster a collaborative environment where everyone's voice is heard. To that end, all BTO Youth Volunteers work in alignment with our vision and values as outlined in this Strategy.





# GOVERNANCE

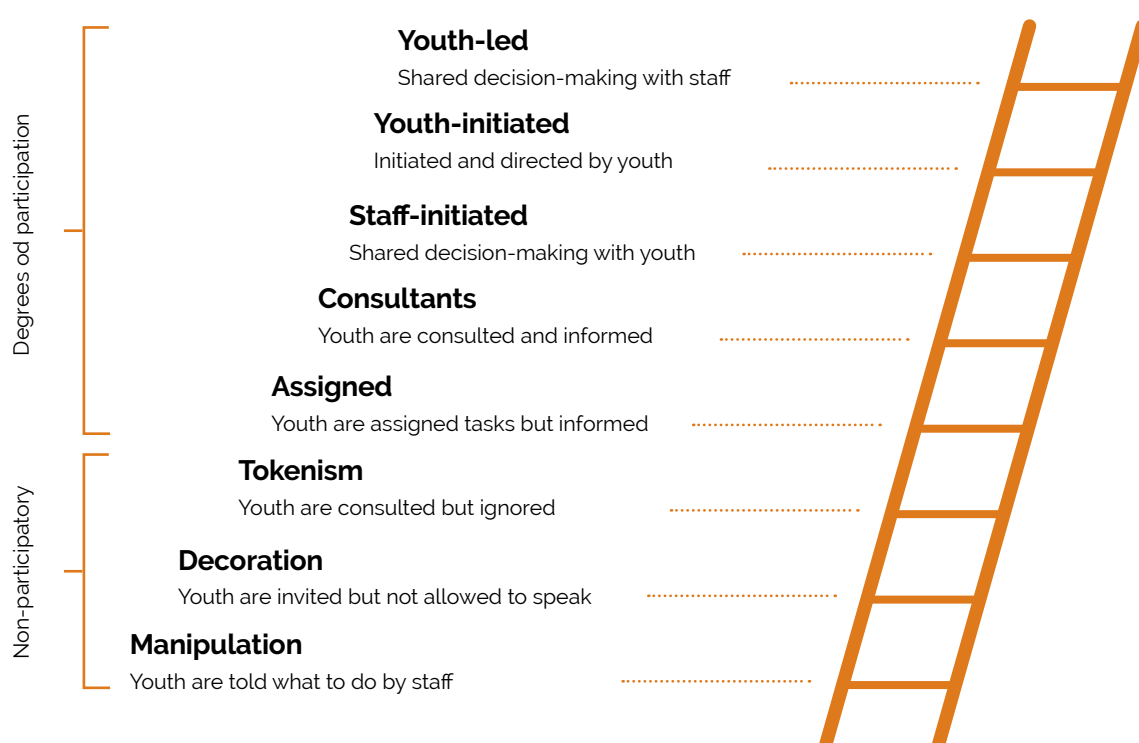


**Emma Thornton**, Youth Advisory Panel member since 2020 and Trustee on BTO's Board of Trustees since 2022

The 2023–28 Youth Engagement Strategy is written, owned, delivered, and evaluated by BTO Youth. The BTO Youth team comprises the Youth Advisory Panel, Youth Representatives, and a team of staff employed by BTO.

The overarching ethos of BTO Youth is giving a voice and power to young people, and this is reflected in the way we are governed. We adopt a way of working whereby the Youth Volunteers are given the decision-making power wherever possible. Visually depicted by and adapted from Hart (1992; Figure 1), this means that any projects which do not fall within the top five rungs of Hart's ladder of participation are rejected.

**Figure 1** - Hart's ladder of participation, adapted from Hart, Roger A. (1992). *Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship*, Innocenti Essay, no. 4, International Child Development Centre, Florence





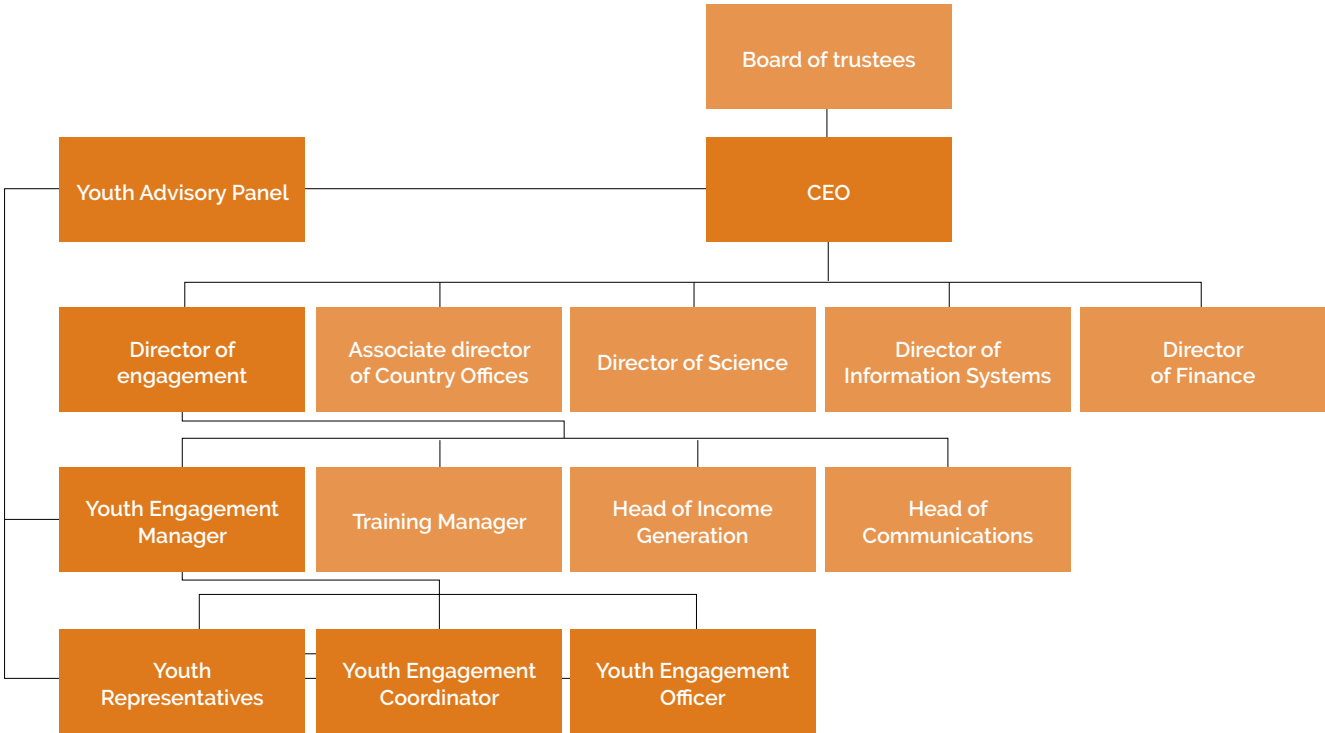


The organisation chart (Figure 2) shows how BTO Youth fits into the wider BTO. The team benefits from the support of BTO Directors and the Board of Trustees. Regular conversations with the CEO ensure that youth perspectives are embedded throughout BTO. The appointment of the first Young Trustee to the Board in 2022 demonstrates BTO's commitment to youth and the value given to the perspectives of young people.

BTO Youth sits within the **BTO Strategy** under action areas 'Embracing everyone' and 'Sustaining supporters,' and aligns with the values of the organisation. To ensure the maintenance of BTO Youth specific values, the Rules of Engagement (Appendix I) and Code of Conduct (Appendix II) are followed by all staff, volunteers and partners engaging with BTO Youth.

Everyone involved with BTO Youth is always open to new ideas and partnerships. We will remain keen to hear from and work with all members, the Regional Network, existing and new partners and other conservation, environmental and science organisations to maximise our impact.

**Figure 2** - BTO Organisational Leadership chart





## LOOKING BACK AT THE 2021-22 STRATEGY



**Maura Burns Zaragoza**, Youth Advisory Panel member since 2020

### Youth engagement in a global pandemic

Our **2021-22 Youth Engagement Strategy** was written by the Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) to provide us with a framework for our work for the period until December 2022, allowing us to prioritise certain areas of Youth Engagement as well as setting out our initial values and target groups. We created our vision for BTO Youth, and set our priorities to engage with 11-24 year olds through building a youth network, engaging with schools and universities, and creating content and resources. The outcomes of those priorities can be seen in Appendix III.

The Youth programme expanded more than expected in this initial phase, but we also faced some difficulties in achieving all our priorities. The continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meant we were forced to organise more online activities, with in-person events such as Bird Camps only returning in mid-2022. We were able to adapt to online events, with Nature Natters and Birding 101 being two highly successful series

**BTO Youth was a constant source of enjoyment, structure and community to our Youth Volunteers and young people more widely while we experienced huge changes in day-to-day life.**

which came from the normalisation and increased ease of running online events. These programmes also gave many young people something to look forward to during very difficult periods during the pandemic; BTO Youth was a constant source of enjoyment, structure and community to our Youth Volunteers and young people more widely while we experienced huge changes in day-to-day life. However, connecting with schools was difficult during the height of the pandemic due to the shift to online teaching. The amount of catching up of the curriculum that students required meant there was less time for extracurricular activities that could involve BTO resources. We found that unless Youth Representatives (YRs) had a pre-established link





with a school, it was difficult to find the right people within a school to contact. We have had lots of schools contact us through the Equipment Donation Scheme and have had initial discussions with our Teacher Panel (consisting of 22 teachers across the UK), and so this is an area that we hope to make more progress in through the new approaches outlined in this Strategy. Our original Strategy was developed for a non-COVID world, having to adjust to a developing pandemic. We will now be re-adjusting to a post-pandemic world for the 2023–28 Youth Engagement Strategy.

### **Getting to grips with the challenges**

We learned about the challenges in starting new projects, which is a complex process and requires being flexible when needed. For example, we had a year-long arts programme planned, which took many volunteer and staff hours to develop into a fundraising proposal. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in securing funding for this project and so had to postpone this idea. From this, we have learned that it can take time to build trust and reputation, and we have a way to go yet in learning how we can best reach a wider audience and support under-represented communities.

Another challenge encountered was that certain timelines did not progress as we expected. One of our priorities was to create a Youth Hub on the BTO website to contain all the resources that we create for young people. This was delayed due to limited BTO staff capacity and due to complex safeguarding measures that needed to be put in place. We are now aiming to deliver the Youth Hub in the time frame of this Strategy, and the delay in setting this up means that we have a bank of resources (such as recordings from Birding 101, blogs and online events) which can be deposited on the Hub as soon as it is running.

### **The pace of change**

We had a timeline in our original Strategy, which was useful when we first began as it gave us an idea of what the next two years would look like. However, as we started projects we found it was difficult to stick to our original plan. This was because new projects started that we had not originally planned or accounted for, many project plans took longer than we expected or were put on hold due to issues with staff capacity, and sometimes something else needed to be prioritised. So while deadlines for individual projects can be useful to keep them on track, we will not have an overall timeline in this



**Having full-time staff members focused on youth engagement was something we saw as essential to the long-term success of the programme. We now have a dedicated Youth Engagement team.**

Strategy so as not to constrict ourselves and to allow more freedom for projects to develop organically.

There are also areas of the 2021–22 Strategy that accelerated faster than we expected. At the time of writing the 2021–22 Strategy in 2020, youth work at BTO was managed edge-of-desk by members of the Engagement team; Youth Engagement was not the sole focus of their roles. Having full-time staff members focused on Youth Engagement was something we saw as essential to the long-term success of the programme and so included in the 2021–22 Strategy. Since 2021 we have a dedicated Youth Engagement team who have the knowledge, skills and experience to work successfully with young people. There are so many ideas and schemes that could not have happened if it were not for having a Youth Engagement team, such as expanding Bird Camps into all four countries, having multiple working groups, and expanding the YR network from the initial

intake. We have also given consideration to the staff team when planning a change of pace; for example, not recruiting more YRs if we do not have the staff capacity to support them effectively.

A lot of this work by YAP, YRs and staff culminated in the BTO Youth in Nature Summit in October 2022, bringing together conservation leaders and young people with the aim of making sure the voices of young people are considered and included in conservation, environmental and science organisations. This is an excellent example of when there have been changes that happened organically through discussions that were right for the programme, but that may not have directly aligned with our initial timelines or priorities. We learned to allow these new projects to develop, always having our aims and vision in mind. Based on this learning and new knowledge, we have created a set of values that will influence our ways of working and how we design and implement projects and programmes. To influence decision-making at the highest level, we previously relied upon having a Youth Engagement Champion on the Board of Trustees, who was the link between the Youth Advisory Panel and the Board. Now, we have a Young Trustee on the board who acts to bring a young person's perspective to Board activities.

With the new values, and all our successes and lessons learned in mind, we look forward to a new era of BTO Youth in this Youth Engagement Strategy for 2023–28.



# BTO YOUTH VISION

Whilst BTO Youth has grown and changed since its inception in 2020, its vision has not. Originally written by the Youth Advisory Panel in March 2020, our vision continues to be that of:

**"A diverse, vibrant community of young birders supported by BTO, with accessible, youth-led opportunities inspiring young people to engage with nature and science."**





# GUIDED BY OUR VALUES

As we developed our learning, we understood that our work is underpinned by the values which we believe in. The Youth Advisory Panel has created these six values and associated aims to help us guide the way we work. From continuing existing projects, to developing new programmes and initiatives, all our work will be measured against our values. These six core values, their associated projects and programmes, and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) frameworks, will be what drives us forward in 2023–28.



# INCLUSIVE & ACCESSIBLE

## Our core principles are:

- ▶ Events organised by BTO Youth will always be free
- ▶ Anyone engaging with BTO Youth will be welcomed, and treated fairly and equitably
- ▶ BTO Youth is committed to breaking down barriers that prevent young people from engaging with nature
- ▶ BTO Youth will monitor our progress in tackling these barriers, allowing us to improve constantly



### NEW PROJECT: **Youth membership**

To tie together all the different ways young people will be able to grow with BTO Youth, we aim to offer a new, free Youth membership from 2023 onwards. This membership will include regular updates about opportunities with BTO Youth, as well as bespoke content, events and merchandise. The Youth membership will help us create a feeling of community among our young members, and ensure that we can support them in the ways that are most beneficial to them.

### EXISTING PROJECT: **Focus on mental health and mindfulness**

Young people's mental health is of the utmost importance to BTO Youth and will always be protected. This means young people have the right to step away from any project at any time, and have access to advice and help from trained and supportive staff, as well as to the resources they need. To ensure we have this as a core part of the programme, we have a dedicated BTO Youth Mindfulness and Mental Health (MMH) working group, which works on providing training and programmes to promote good practice.

The MMH working group started in January 2022 as a place for the group to have a space to learn more about the links between nature and mental health. This has now evolved to be a place to talk openly about our own strategies for maintaining our mental health, as well as thinking about ways to incorporate wellbeing into BTO Youth and trialling them within the group. Within the MMH working group, we have had guided meditations, with meetings beginning with sharing moments from our week that brought us joy, known as 'warm fuzzies'.

In BTO Youth more widely, we have incorporated MMH by having sessions about mindfulness at our annual get-togethers, having 1:1s with Youth Mental Health First Aid trained staff where personal aspects of our lives are also given space to be discussed, and by ensuring there are quiet rooms at events. The events we run have always had elements about being mindful

in nature, but we have started to make the link to MMH more defined by including mindfulness sessions at Bird Camps, and linking this to enjoying being in nature. We want to build on this by having clearer opportunities that have more explicit links to MMH both internally within the volunteer group and externally in the events we run. This is emphasised by clearly stating in the new Rules of Engagement (Appendix I) that the mental health of Youth Volunteers comes first, and that the purpose of the MMH working group is to make sure that this is, and continues to be, integral to all parts of the BTO Youth programme.

Internal projects include creating a survey so that we can get more information on what Youth Volunteers do to care for their mental health, and what they want to learn more about. This includes closed- and open-ended questions so that we can make sure that all voices are represented and we can use language that people feel comfortable with. We also have weekly meditation drop-in sessions, which is a way for BTO Youth Volunteers to try out meditation in a comfortable and familiar online environment, in a way that provides separation from other responsibilities within their voluntary role. We will also look to incorporate mindful moments and birdsong more widely into BTO Youth meetings, rather than just in the MMH working group. Additionally, Youth Volunteers will continue to receive relevant training, such as Youth Mental Health Awareness training.

### EXISTING PROJECT: **Equipment Donation Scheme**

Launched in February 2021, the Equipment Donation Scheme (EDS) encourages more young people to become involved with birdwatching by sending second-hand binoculars, telescopes and birdwatching equipment to young individuals, schools and youth groups, increasing their awareness and appreciation of birds. This equipment is donated by birdwatchers from across the UK and ranges from binoculars and scopes to hand lenses and bird guides. With the support of Opticron, we are able to provide equipment to an even wider range of young people as they repair and replace optics and provide financial support. In the Strategy period 2021–22, over 2,300 young people have benefitted from the EDS, allowing young people who may not otherwise have access to such equipment to develop their skills and love for birdwatching. The feedback they provide is then sent back to the donors, to show the impact of their donation.

**"I have loved using the scope I was given, and I know that it will be with me for many more years! It will help me to improve and find more enjoyment in birdwatching. However, the best part for me was when I saw a Curlew through my scope while staying with my grandparents which was INCREDIBLE!"**

**Ella, 13, EDS recipient**





## MONITORING: INCLUSIVE & ACCESSIBLE

Aim	Monitored by	Success measure
<b>Events organised by BTO Youth will always be free</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Checking events are free and cost barriers are removed to the best of our ability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ All events are free</li> </ul>
<b>Anyone engaging with BTO Youth will be welcomed, and treated fairly and equally</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Sending out post-event survey to participants, asking about their perception of BTO Youth's treatment of themselves and others</li> <li>▶ Monitoring demographic data of event participants where appropriate (this is always voluntary)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Post-event survey feedback shows that attendees feel included</li> <li>▶ Demographic data of participants roughly matches that of the UK population</li> </ul>
<b>BTO Youth is committed to breaking down barriers that prevent young people from engaging with nature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continued monitoring of barriers for young people through surveys</li> <li>▶ Continually and regularly devising new methods of removing barriers and working with partners to do so where possible</li> <li>▶ Continuing the Equipment Donation Scheme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Annual report on barriers experienced by young people is published publicly</li> <li>▶ Fewer barriers are mentioned when young people are asked about engaging with nature and BTO</li> <li>▶ The Equipment Donation Scheme regularly sends out donations</li> </ul>
<b>BTO Youth will monitor our progress in tackling these barriers, allowing us to improve constantly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Implementing a clear Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework that helps us determine efficacy of addressing barriers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework is successfully implemented and an annual report shows considered efforts are made to address barriers</li> </ul>

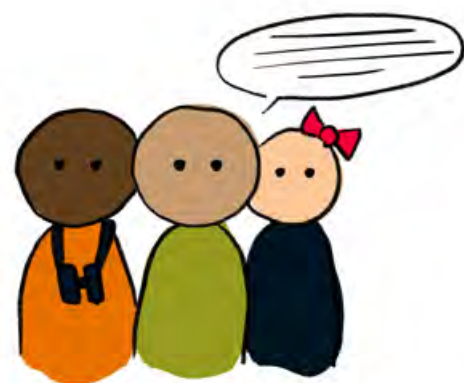
**“Thank you so much for taking the time to pass on the update on our donation. It’s especially pleasing to know that school kids are getting an introduction to birdwatching, and my late partner in practice, who left me the binoculars, would have been absolutely delighted to know where they had ended up.”**

**Pete, donated his late partner’s binoculars to the EDS**

# YOUTH-LED

## Our core principles are:

- ▶ At BTO Youth, young people are valued just as much as adults; their voices are listened to and respected
- ▶ Young people contribute to decisions which bring BTO Youth forward, and lead events where possible, with assistance from BTO staff or others when required, but never to the extent where core leadership is taken away from young people
- ▶ BTO Youth is listened to and informs and supports the wider organisation, including its staff and Board of Trustees



## EXISTING PROJECT:

### Youth Representative scheme

One of the core objectives of the 2021–22 Youth Engagement Strategy was to establish a Youth Representative network of young people aged 16–24. They create a community of young people across the country by engaging them in nature and science through a range of local and online events. We recruited the first cohort of Youth Representatives (YRs) in January 2021 and have continued to grow the network since.

YRs are trained and supported to organise events online or in their communities; so far, these have included events such as youth-led guided bird walks, beach cleans, art sessions, and the online series Nature Natters and Birding 101. In the period of June 2021–March 2023, YRs organised 75 individual

events which reached 2,322 young people.

To ensure YRs have peer support, they are paired with a Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) member who is available to help them with BTO Youth-related work. Alongside this, YRs take part in workshops and events related to YAP's work and contribute to wider BTO work, such as promoting surveys and helping young people access resources. They, like YAP members, are invited to regular training sessions organised by BTO Youth on a range of topics, hosted by a mix of BTO staff and external trainers. Alongside this, we organise an annual get-together for all Youth Volunteers and staff to meet each other to improve team building and work on upcoming projects.



## MONITORING: YOUTH-LED

Aim	Monitored by	Success measure
<b>Young people are valued just as much as adults; their voices are listened to and respected</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Sending out an anonymous annual Youth Volunteer survey which includes questions on whether Youth Volunteers feel like they are listened to</li> <li>▶ Measuring the amount of opportunities created for Youth Volunteers to feed back into systems, projects and processes at BTO</li> <li>▶ Monitoring number of 1:1s held with Youth Volunteers per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Answers in the Youth Volunteer survey regarding their voices and representation are scored highly by Youth Volunteers</li> <li>▶ Youth voices are regularly and standardly included in the creation of new projects and processes at BTO</li> <li>▶ Youth Volunteers have quarterly 1:1s that they consider helpful</li> </ul>
<b>Young people contribute to decisions which bring BTO Youth forward, and lead events where possible, with assistance from BTO staff or others when required, but never to the extent where core leadership is taken away from young people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Anonymous annual Youth Volunteer survey which includes questions on whether Youth Volunteers feel like they have decision-making power</li> <li>▶ Anonymous annual Youth Volunteer survey which includes questions on whether Youth Volunteers feel empowered but not out of their depth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Answers in the Youth Volunteer survey around feelings of ownership over the programme are scored highly</li> <li>▶ Answers in the Youth Volunteer survey show that Youth Volunteers feel empowered and not out of their depth</li> </ul>
<b>BTO Youth is listened to and informs and supports the wider organisation, including its staff and Board of Trustees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Monitoring the number of meetings with Youth Volunteers and staff per year</li> <li>▶ Explaining organisational structure as part of induction for Youth Volunteers</li> <li>▶ Encouraging new BTO staff to have an induction with BTO Youth</li> <li>▶ Sending regular newsletters to Youth Volunteers and staff to update each other on the work that is happening</li> <li>▶ Youth Volunteers meeting with the Board of Trustees and/or the CEO when needed to provide or ask for input</li> <li>▶ Monitoring the number of opportunities for Youth Volunteers to contribute to projects</li> <li>▶ Creating a clear link to the Board of Trustees through an appointed Youth Champion (a member of the Board who attends BTO Youth meetings and provides support)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Answers in the Youth Volunteer survey around their knowledge of the organisation are scored highly</li> <li>▶ Youth Volunteers and staff have a clear induction process</li> <li>▶ Newsletters are sent monthly to Youth Volunteers and staff</li> <li>▶ The CEO meets with Youth Volunteers at least twice a year to discuss upcoming work</li> <li>▶ The Youth Champion on the Board of Trustees attends BTO Youth meetings at least once a quarter</li> </ul>

# HELPING PEOPLE GROW

## Our core principles are:

- ▶ BTO Youth is committed to opening doors for young people to develop skills and build connections
- ▶ BTO Youth is committed to engaging young people who may not normally be involved with STEM, surveys, and the natural world, establishing BTO as a science-led organisation for everyone and for birds
- ▶ Being a part of BTO Youth should benefit the Youth Volunteers, other young people, and BTO as a whole
- ▶ BTO Youth will provide opportunities to give young people the skills, knowledge, confidence and access to contribute to BTO science now and in the future



## NEW PROJECT:

### Making science accessible

Hands-on introductions to BTO science are currently available through work experience weeks, whilst opportunities to contribute to citizen science specifically created for young people have previously existed (e.g. the *What's Under Your Feet?* project). Engaging larger numbers of young people with BTO science on a casual basis will partially rely on making the science more accessible to young people. To achieve this, BTO Youth Volunteers will work with BTO scientists to identify articles of interest and then produce free, concise and accessible content summaries of BTO science, published on the Youth Hub. This should lead to young people being more engaged with BTO science, both as an observer and with the aim of motivating them to contribute to citizen science or take



part in work experience. Alongside this, we will work with the Science team to identify opportunities for young people to participate in large-scale citizen science projects as they are developed, taking into consideration barriers they might experience and finding ways to encourage participation.

**"I was amazed by how many other young people were also really interested in wildlife, as I have been through six years of not knowing anyone who shares my interest."**

**Rufus, 13, Bird Camp Wales 2022**



### EXISTING PROJECT: **Young Leaders Course**

Since 2019 BTO has run a Young Leaders Course, which was taken over by BTO Youth in 2021. From 2019 to 2022, the Course was run in partnership with Spurn Bird Observatory. Going forward, we aim to move the event to different locations across the UK regularly to provide access to more young people.

The course is free and open to those aged 16–24, focusing on the skills needed to be a successful leader in conservation. Sessions are hosted by existing and aspiring leaders in the environmental sector, and often include current and past CEOs of environmental NGOs. The group is kept deliberately small (no more than 15 participants) to ensure we can build rapport with each young person and they can learn from each other as well as session leaders. Sessions focus on skills such as networking, management, running events, ethical leadership, and career building. Skills are put into action during the course through youth-led activities and role-play scenarios. The



first outcome is achieved upon completion of the course: a new network of peers, leaders, and friends.

The course wouldn't be possible without the support of our partners and funders, such as the Cameron Bepolka Trust and Opticron, who help us run this course and provide travel bursaries for young people who would otherwise be unable to attend.



### NEW PROJECT: **Duke of Edinburgh's Award partnership**

As an Approved Activity Provider (AAP) with the Duke of Edinburgh Award, candidates for the Award can contribute to BTO Surveys to fulfil their volunteering requirements. Not only does this aid students and other young people with completing their Award requirements, partaking in citizen science, and developing new skills in surveying and identification, but it also helps to monitor the wider population of birds in the UK. Alongside this, the Award will help us reach a wider audience of young people from a range of backgrounds.





### EXISTING PROJECT: **Bird Camps**

In-person opportunities are unparalleled – they allow young people to be safely immersed in nature whilst meeting like-minded individuals. Putting this into practice is excellently illustrated by the Bird Camps, reaching young people in all four UK countries. Making these types of experiences more easily accessible to young people is at the heart of this Strategy, which is why all Bird Camp places are free of charge. Since 2016, BTO have run Bird Camps in England and since the founding of BTO Youth we have been able to expand these across the four countries.

The Camps are three-day residentials, set in a natural setting, to help young people aged 11–17 to access nature and develop their birdwatching skills. The programme includes visits to bird colonies, bird ringing demonstrations, and sessions on surveys, but also has a focus on art and mindfulness. Where possible, we encourage young people to present what they have learned at the end of the Camp to their parents and

carers. Alongside this, the Camps are a great learning opportunity for the Youth Volunteers. They support the delivery of the Camps, learning important skills around working safely with young people, leading activities, and public speaking. Having Youth Volunteers at the Camps also provides more peer-to-peer learning for the campers.

The Camps wouldn't be possible without working in partnership with others. We aim to work with local Wildlife Trusts, the RSPB, Scottish Ornithologists' Club, National Trust and Field Studies Council. Alongside this, we work with local artists to offer arts activities as part of the camps. It is important that we continue to work in partnership in delivering what is one of our most anticipated and most engaging events for young people across the UK. With life-long friendships forged and birdwatching skills honed, it is clear that the Camps are important to continue into the future.

**“My world has opened up so much as a result of Camp and my knowledge of birds and nature has thrived from speaking to so many like-minded people.”**

**Adam, 15, Bird Camp England 2022**





## MONITORING: HELPING PEOPLE GROW

Aim	Monitored by	Success measure
<b>BTO Youth is committed to opening doors for young people to develop skills and build connections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Monitoring number of events for young people to create connections</li> <li>▶ Monitoring number of training opportunities for Youth Volunteers and wider public</li> <li>▶ Sending out an anonymous annual Youth Volunteer survey which includes questions on the training programme</li> <li>▶ Continuing the Young Leaders Course</li> <li>▶ Continuing the Bird Camps across all four countries of the UK</li> <li>▶ Continuing the Youth in Nature Summit to bring together young people active in environmental NGOs</li> <li>▶ Collating anecdotal experiences of young people and Youth Volunteers regarding skills and connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Post-event surveys or follow-up surveys show that young people have maintained contact with people they have met at BTO Youth events</li> <li>▶ BTO Youth volunteers report that training opportunities are helpful and offered often enough</li> <li>▶ Young Leaders Course feedback continues to be positive</li> <li>▶ Bird Camp feedback continues to be positive</li> <li>▶ Youth in Nature Summit is continued and receives positive feedback</li> <li>▶ Anecdotal evidence shows that young people and Youth Volunteers develop skills and build connections</li> </ul>
<b>BTO Youth is committed to engaging young people who may not normally be involved with STEM, surveys, and the natural world, establishing BTO as a science-led organisation for everyone and for birds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Monitoring responses in pre-event survey on how young people rate their own skill or experience level with birds and/or nature</li> <li>▶ Monitoring number of events organised with partner organisations that service under-represented groups</li> <li>▶ Monitoring that science is embedded into all events; be it through surveys, research or citizen science projects</li> <li>▶ Creating educational resources, and/or videos and events pitched specifically at young people to help them get started with surveys</li> <li>▶ Sharing stories of young people volunteering with BTO widely and publicly to create visible representation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Self-reported skill levels of young people increase</li> <li>▶ Increased number of events organised with partner organisations</li> <li>▶ All events have a clear science, surveys or research element included</li> <li>▶ Increased number of young people participating in BTO surveys</li> <li>▶ Young people are visible on the website and on social media as part of surveys</li> <li>▶ Steady increase in resources available online for young people to participate in citizen science</li> </ul>

Aim	Monitored by	Success measure
<p><b>Being a part of BTO Youth should benefit the Youth Volunteers, other young people, and BTO as a whole</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Sending out an anonymous annual Youth Volunteer survey which includes questions on whether Youth Volunteers benefit from the programme</li> <li>▶ Collecting and collating anecdotal evidence on benefits experienced by youth volunteers, the public, and BTO</li> <li>▶ Sending out post-event surveys to gain feedback from young people from the public on whether they benefited from events</li> <li>▶ Having an annual round-up conversation or survey with Board and senior management on achievements for BTO more widely through BTO Youth</li> <li>▶ Monitoring social media content about BTO Youth</li> <li>▶ Adding regular updates to the Youth Hub on the website about the work of the Youth Volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Feedback from the annual Youth Volunteer survey shows that they benefit from being part of BTO Youth</li> <li>▶ Anecdotal evidence shows that young people benefit from BTO Youth</li> <li>▶ Surveys distributed after events show positive reactions to BTO Youth events</li> <li>▶ An annual survey of staff and the Board of Trustees shows that they value and benefit from BTO Youth Volunteers' perspectives</li> <li>▶ Social media responses to BTO Youth content are positive</li> <li>▶ Articles on the BTO Youth Hub are read by an increasing number of visitors</li> </ul>
<p><b>BTO Youth will provide opportunities to give young people the skills, knowledge, confidence and access to contribute to BTO science now and in the future</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Monitoring number of young people taking part in BTO surveys</li> <li>▶ Sending out an annual survey of young people taking part in BTO surveys to gain feedback on their experiences as a BTO volunteer (separate from BTO Youth volunteer survey)</li> <li>▶ Monitoring efficacy of newsletter(s) to young people sharing news about BTO and opportunities</li> <li>▶ Monitoring number of young people taking part in BTO Youth or BTO training</li> <li>▶ Monitoring number of science stories written specifically for a young audience, by Youth Volunteers</li> <li>▶ Monitoring number of young people taking part in BTO surveys through Duke of Edinburgh's Award</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increasing number of young people taking part in BTO surveys and training</li> <li>▶ Positive feedback in Youth Volunteer and public youth surveys</li> <li>▶ High opening and click-through rate of youth newsletter</li> <li>▶ Increased visibility of BTO science for young people</li> <li>▶ Increase in uptake of work experience opportunities at BTO</li> <li>▶ Increase in number of science stories written for a young audience</li> <li>▶ Youth Volunteers report having developed science communication skills</li> <li>▶ Steady increase in number of Duke of Edinburgh's Award participants</li> </ul>



# COLLABORATIVE & TRANSPARENT

## Our core principles are:

- ▶ BTO Youth ensures decisions are made inclusively and as a team
- ▶ BTO Youth encourages collaborations within BTO as an organisation, and across different organisations in the UK
- ▶ BTO Youth will always acknowledge who we work with, and be transparent about who delivered work, ideas or resources



### NEW PROJECT: **Working in partnership**

Working in partnership is an integral part of the future of our Youth Engagement work. We currently have the chance to bring together conservation organisations that have similar aims to us through working in partnership in a way that hasn't been explored before. This is a new part of our Strategy and something that has been slowly gathering pace and momentum since the inaugural Youth in Nature Summit in 2022. Together we can empower more young people, and working as one will help to increase the engagement that the conservation sector strongly needs to stay afloat in the future. Over the next five years we aim to continue to expand our work in partnership with other organisations. We will be engaging the young people of today while helping to inspire the conservationists, scientists, and wildlife enthusiasts of the future.

We look forward to building on our strong partnerships with the organisations outlined at the end of this Strategy, as well as continuing to expand the range of organisations we work with. These partnerships allow an exchange of information and a more fruitful way to develop new schemes and projects. Whilst working together, partnerships effectively encourage more young people to become involved with the BTO and our projects, allowing a wider range of people access to opportunities, education and experience with birdwatching.



**"I felt so empowered after the Summit and it was great to be able to network and engage with other young people as well as gain different perspectives from the leaders of some of the charities."**

**BTO Youth in Nature Summit attendee**









**"I was amazed by how many other young people were also really interested in wildlife, as I have been through six years of not knowing anyone who shares my interest."**

**Rufus, 13, Bird Camp Wales 2022**

## MONITORING: COLLABORATIVE & TRANSPARENT

Aim	Monitored by	Success measure
<b>BTO Youth ensures decisions are made inclusively and as a team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Monitoring number of meetings with YAP and YRs on projects</li> <li>▶ Using a clear checklist for projects to determine if young people have decision-making power</li> <li>▶ Monitoring number of Youth Volunteers involved in key decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ There is high participation in decision-making meetings</li> <li>▶ Decisions are made with a majority of the decision-making team present</li> </ul>
<b>BTO Youth encourages collaborations within BTO as an organisation, and across different organisations in the UK</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Creating new and expanding on existing opportunities for partners to be involved with BTO Youth work</li> <li>▶ Creating and developing a youth network across environmental NGOs in the UK</li> <li>▶ Ensuring the Youth in Nature Summit focuses on collaboration within the environmental NGO sector</li> <li>▶ Monitoring the promotion of the work of others on our social media channel and our work promoted on theirs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Consistent or increasing number of collaborations with partners</li> <li>▶ A successful youth network is implemented</li> <li>▶ Continuation of the Youth in Nature Summit</li> <li>▶ Increasing input from partners and other organisations</li> <li>▶ Regular cross-organisational promotion on social media</li> </ul>
<b>BTO Youth will always acknowledge who we work with, and be transparent about who delivered work, ideas or resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Using a checklist for accurate and clear crediting, in print and online</li> <li>▶ Ensuring BTO Youth working documents are made available publicly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Outputs have clear partnership mentions</li> <li>▶ Partners mention feeling valued by BTO Youth</li> <li>▶ Clear section on Youth Hub with working documents</li> </ul>



# INNOVATIVE & DYNAMIC

## Our core principles are:

- ▶ BTO Youth has a creative, original, and bold approach to engaging young people with nature
- ▶ BTO Youth is committed to an in-depth Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning programme, embracing change so we remain modern, relevant, and relatable



### EXISTING PROJECT:

#### Online resources

Not only does BTO Youth run a wide range of in-person events, we also provide online projects and resources. Hosting free events online has allowed us to become accessible to an audience of young people all across the UK, contributing towards the value of inclusivity. The successful youth-led and youth-presented Nature Natters and Birding 101 series provide a valuable insight into a future in conservation, as well as an understanding of different areas and expertise in the field, inspiring a younger audience. Looking forward, we aim to not only build relationships with other organisations in the sector to

continue creating a strong basis of online content, but to also collate content in a Youth Hub, making information easy for young people to access.

Opportunities for growth are also presented to our Youth Volunteers, allowing them to develop, thrive and build skills in aid of our ongoing projects. For example, workshops run by both BTO staff and external partners on public speaking, partnership in nature and social media training have enabled stronger outreach and built volunteer confidence.

Alongside this, we aim to use our online platforms to amplify young voices. The BTO Youth blog and

newsletter are one way of doing so, as well as regular appearances by Youth Volunteers on our social media channels.



### EXISTING PROJECT:

#### Training young people

As part of our current programme we offer free training, both in live Zoom sessions and in self-taught sessions on YouTube, called Birding 101. This series is completely written and delivered by our Youth Volunteers. The series is aimed at helping young people develop their identification and field skills, and encourage them to take part in BTO surveys. Alongside this, we will work with the BTO Training team to offer opportunities for young people in their training programmes. We will also look to work with the BTO Training team to train our Youth Representatives (YRs), as well as some Regional Representatives (RRs), on how they can deliver training to more young people in their regions and on carrying out some of BTO's core surveys. This will give YRs the tools they need to train more young people to be able to carry out surveys such as the BTO/RSPB/JNCC Wetland Bird Survey and BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey. This will allow them to contribute to BTO's citizen science data for years to come and give YRs important training and public speaking skills. Training the YRs alongside RRs will strengthen the bond between the two volunteer groups and encourage them to work in closer collaboration for events and opportunities, both for young people and the wider public.

### EXISTING PROJECT: **Innovation with MPhil in Conservation Leadership**

BTO works closely with the MPhil in Conservation Leadership at the University of Cambridge, providing six-week consultancy projects as well as summer placements. The MPhil partnership allows the students to gain knowledge from BTO as an organisation, whilst contributing to BTO by providing research and sharing information from a global network of students and alumni. Previous students have contributed work to our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework, assessed the efficacy of the Youth Engagement Programme, and helped develop a Youth Network in the UK.



**“I thoroughly enjoyed the day, I found it amazing to be able to network with so many fantastic young people who enjoy the same things as me. I haven’t been to anything else like that before, it was by far one of the best things I’ve ever been to!”**

**BTO Youth in Nature Summit attendee**

### EXISTING PROJECT: **Youth in Nature Summit**

On 28th October 2022 BTO Youth held the first Youth in Nature Summit at the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester, which was attended by around 120 young people and leaders from the conservation sector. The day had plenary speakers, workshops, networking opportunities, pledges, and panels with voices from young people in the sector as well as those in leading positions within nature organisations. The idea behind the Summit was to create a 'gold standard' in youth engagement as well as uniting an array of organisations within the environmental and conservation sector, some with large amounts of experience in youth engagement, while others were just starting out. The aims of the event were to inspire and empower young people in the room;

start conversations between young people and leaders; and emphasise the importance of embedding young people into organisations. It was an incredible day and couldn't have been run without the financial support of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

Following on from the first event, we have reached out to partner organisations to co-create the next Summit in partnership, incorporating as many young people into the planning of the event as possible. The Summit gives us the chance to grow our outreach and continue to inspire other organisations that youth engagement is worthwhile for the future of conservation organisations, whatever shape or form they come in.



## MONITORING: INNOVATIVE & DYNAMIC

Aim	Monitored by	Success measure
<b>BTO Youth has a creative, original, and bold approach to engaging young people with nature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Monitoring number of new collaborations and partnerships</li> <li>▶ Monitoring number of events or projects that use a novel approach or an existing approach in a new context</li> <li>▶ Sending out an anonymous annual Youth Volunteer survey to gain feedback on whether Youth Volunteers feel they have the space to be creative and propose new and innovative ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ BTO Youth is approached by others for advice on innovative thinking or creating youth programmes</li> <li>▶ The BTO Youth programme is considered innovative and dynamic internally and externally</li> <li>▶ New events and projects are developed and implemented</li> <li>▶ Results from the annual Youth Volunteer survey show that Youth Volunteers feel encouraged to be creative and propose new and innovative ideas</li> </ul>
<b>BTO Youth is committed to an in-depth Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning programme, embracing change so we remain modern, relevant, and relatable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Reviewing the MEL framework each quarter</li> <li>▶ Reviewing all BTO Youth work based on feedback and MEL at least once a year</li> <li>▶ Checking each programme and project meets the values outlined in the Strategy and meets the criteria of Hart's ladder of participation (see page 8)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ MEL framework is successfully implemented across all projects</li> <li>▶ Relevant changes to BTO Youth are made based on MEL findings</li> <li>▶ Projects meet values and the criteria of Hart's ladder of participation before they are implemented</li> </ul>

# CELEBRATING PEOPLE'S CONNECTION TO NATURE

## Our core principles are:

- ▶ BTO Youth understands that people go to nature for different reasons and that this may not be rooted in science, birds, or volunteering
- ▶ BTO Youth is committed to helping people learn more about nature
- ▶ BTO Youth is focused on optimism, sharing positive stories and successes with our volunteers, partners and the public
- ▶ To help people engage with nature in a way that is accessible to them, BTO Youth will organise a variety of events, ranging from science talks and guided walks to art workshops and mindfulness sessions



## NEW PROJECT: Helping people connect through mental health

Alongside our internal focus on Mindfulness and Mental Health (MMH), we are also keen to bring the benefits of this programme to a wider audience of young people. We will have more in-person events with a specific focus on MMH, supporting young people to learn how being in nature can help their mental health, and learn skills that they can then implement into their own nature walks. Additionally, this will be a way to engage with new audiences who may not have previously thought about citizen science being beneficial beyond the scientific contribution.

We will also look to have consistency across events, so that no matter what BTO Youth event a young person attends, they will be able to see MMH implemented; for example, by including mindful moments into Nature Natters and Birding 101. We will also create mindfulness scripts (short documents outlining a guided meditation or mindfulness session) which will be easy to use and accessible to those who may want to include

mindfulness in their events but may not know where to start or feel confident enough to create something themselves. This will be used at BTO events such as Bird Camps and guided bird walks, but could also be used by university societies, school groups, and bird clubs. We will build on these ideas using the outcomes of the annual survey we send to BTO Youth Volunteers. We will also look to collaborate with other organisations that have experience with youth mental health, using BTO's expertise as a leading citizen science charity.

There will always be limits to what BTO can do in terms of mental health and there are many causes of poor mental health that we cannot solve; however, we can work to make sure that all of our events leave participants feeling better than when they started. We will especially focus on our values of helping people grow and celebrating people's connection to nature, and making sure participants feel that their engagement with BTO is reflective of these.



# MONITORING: CELEBRATING PEOPLE'S CONNECTION TO NATURE

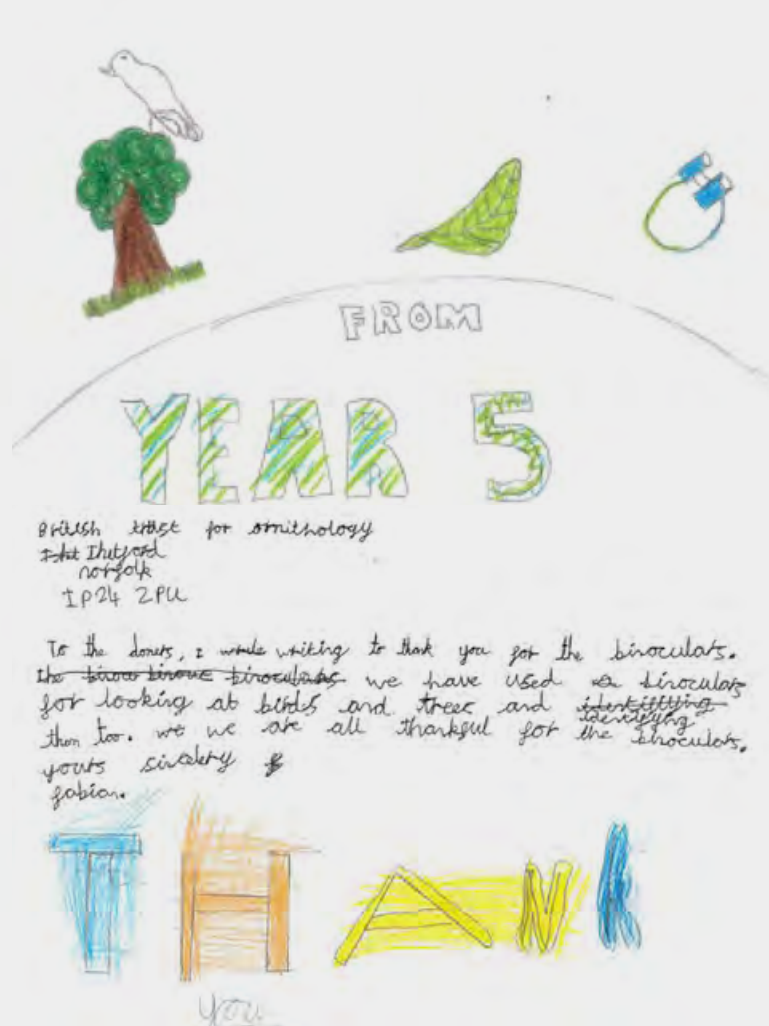
Aim	Monitored by	Success measure
<b>BTO Youth understands that people go to nature for different reasons and that this may not be rooted in science, birds, or volunteering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Regularly reviewing literature on people's connection to nature</li> <li>▶ Sending out an anonymous annual Youth Volunteer survey which includes questions on why Youth Volunteers go to nature</li> <li>▶ Sending out post-event surveys to young participants including questions about their connection to nature</li> <li>▶ Collecting and collating anecdotal evidence of young people's connection to nature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Annual report on young people's reasons to go out into nature based on information collected is published</li> </ul>
<b>BTO Youth is committed to helping people learn more about nature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continuing events related to learning skills around nature; e.g. bird ID skills</li> <li>▶ Sending out post-event surveys to young participants including questions about and self-assessment of learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increased participation numbers for all events</li> <li>▶ Post-event survey feedback is positive and indicates learning</li> </ul>
<b>BTO Youth is focused on optimism, sharing positive stories and successes with our volunteers, partners and the public</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Monitoring number of good news and success stories in the BTO social media feeds and BTO Youth newsletters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Consistent number of good news and success stories shared</li> </ul>
<b>To help people engage with nature in a way that is accessible to them, BTO Youth will organise a variety of events, ranging from science talks and guided walks to art workshops and mindfulness sessions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Monitoring total number of events organised</li> <li>▶ Monitoring total number of locations where events are organised</li> <li>▶ Monitoring number of events organised that are not traditional bird walks or based on volunteering or science</li> <li>▶ Monitoring number of collaborations with community groups that do not interact with nature for science, birds or volunteering</li> <li>▶ Monitoring number of events that include mindfulness or mental health aspects</li> <li>▶ Sending out post-event surveys to young participants including questions on their connection to nature through mindfulness and impact of nature on mental health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Consistent delivery of sessions and events</li> <li>▶ Events are organised across all four countries of the UK</li> <li>▶ Increasing number of events with a focus on nature not through science or volunteering</li> <li>▶ Increasing number of collaborations with community groups</li> <li>▶ Majority of events include an element of mindfulness or mental health</li> <li>▶ Post-event survey responses show that young people's mental health benefits from being in nature</li> </ul>

**“Mindfulness and meditation immediately had a positive impact on my life and mindfulness is now an essential tool in my life. I have been able to work with the other Youth Volunteers to find ways of incorporating mindfulness into birdwatching!”**

**Youth Representative working as part of the Mindfulness and Mental Health working group**







## HOW WE'RE FUNDED



**Michael Naidu,**  
Head of Income Generation

When the Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) was founded in 2020, BTO launched the **"Our Future" appeal** to raise funds to kickstart the ideas and drive the impact YAP planned to bring to BTO. This appeal helped us raise funds to develop our Youth Engagement Strategy, recruit a Youth Engagement Manager, and support YAP in their first phase.

To help us recruit our first group of Youth Representatives (YRs) at the end of 2020 we received grants from the British Birds Charitable Trust (£2,000) and a total of £29,219 from individual donors.

In 2021, we received a £110,000 grant from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The fund was developed by Defra and its Arm's-Length Bodies. This was delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission. The grant supported us in growing the YR network and engaging young people with nature all across the UK. We organised over 100 events, engaged thousands of young people, and hosted the first ever Youth in Nature Summit. This funding was secured based

on the Youth Engagement Strategy 2021–22, written by YAP, and was in itself an important lesson on the importance of fundraising, reporting, and continued learning. Additional match funding came from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (£7,500; we continue to receive support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation; £12,000 was used for existing BTO Youth activities) and Opticron (£7,000).

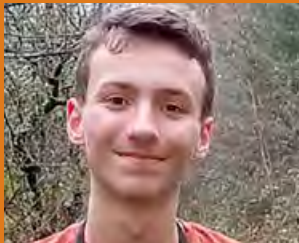
The Cameron Bepolka Trust provided funding for our Young Leaders Course and Bird Camps, contributing a total of £11,538 from 2021 to 2022. In 2021 grants were also received from The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust (£4,000) and the British Birds Charitable Trust (£2,860) towards the extension of our Bird Camps in 2022.

In this new Strategy period, we will use the lessons we have learned from our funding experiences to date to ensure the financial stability for the future of BTO Youth. We will:

- **Raise funds from existing and new supporters** to support the Youth programme
- **Work with the Fundraising team** to maintain financial stability, and report on our work both internally and with external funders
- **Continue to value and recognise our ongoing strategic partners**, such as Opticron and the Cameron Bepolka Trust

# THE TEAM

## 2023 Youth Advisory Panel members



**Adam**, 16, Kent  
(on YAP since 2023)



**Alicia Hayden**, 23, North Yorkshire / Bristol (on YAP since 2021)



**Arjun Dutta**, 20, Greater London / Cambridgeshire  
(on YAP since 2020)



**Elizabeth Fitzpatrick**, 22, West Yorkshire  
(on YAP since 2021)



**Emma Thornton**, 22, Surrey / Oxfordshire  
(on YAP since 2020)<sup>1</sup>



**Esther**, 16, Gloucestershire  
(on YAP since 2023)



**George Rabin**, 21, Somerset / Oxfordshire  
(on YAP since 2021)



**Katie Monk**, 19, Lothian  
(on YAP since 2021)



**Matt Lonsdale**, 23, Norfolk  
(on YAP since 2020)



**Maura Burns Zaragoza**, 22, Glamorgan / Oxfordshire  
(on YAP since 2020)



**Megan McCleverty**, 20, Buckinghamshire / Bristol  
(on YAP since 2020)



**Rosie Johnson**, 17, Isle of Wight  
(on YAP since 2023)



**Samuel Levy**, 22, Greater London / Dorset  
(on YAP since 2020)

## 2023 Youth Representatives



**Alice Marlow**, 21, Essex (YR since January 2021)



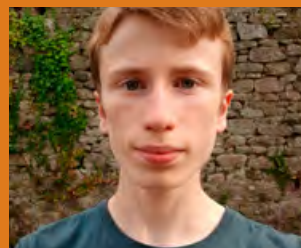
**Belinda Betts**, 25, Norfolk (YR since January 2021)



**Benjamin Jamieson**, 22, Northern Ireland  
(YR since January 2022)



**Carla Hill**, 23, Cornwall (YR since January 2022)



**David Raffle**, 20, Cornwall (YR since January 2021)



**Emily Deeming**, 22, Yorkshire (YR since January 2022)



**Georgina Tugwell**, 21, Fife (YR since January 2022)





**Gethin Jenkins-Jones**, 24, Glamorgan (YR since January 2021)



**Hannah Curry**, 18 Lothian (YR since January 2022)



**Hannah Westhenry**, 24, Dorset (YR since June 2021)



**Jasmine Canham**, 21, Gwynedd (YR since January 2022)



**Josh Hill**, 19, Shropshire (YR since January 2021)



**Kate Fox**, 23, Dorset (YR since January 2021)<sup>2</sup>



**Keir Chauhan**, 20, Greater London (YR since January 2021)



**Lucy Williamson**, 22, Oxfordshire (YR since January 2022)



**Luke Marriner**, 18, Oxfordshire (YR since January 2021)



**Maria Farooqi**, 25, Nottinghamshire (YR since January 2021)<sup>3</sup>



**Mya Bambrick**, 20, Dorset (YR since January 2022)



**Siân Mercer**, 18, Shropshire (YR since January 2021)

## Alumni

**Conor John**, Glamorgan. On YAP January 2020–June 2021.

**Ellie Micklewright**, Shropshire. On YAP January 2020–December 2022.

**Emily Cooper**, Greater Manchester. On YAP January 2021–December 2022.

**Greg Palmer**, Cambridgeshire. On YAP January 2020–June 2021.

**Sorrel Lyall**, Lothian. On YAP January 2020–January 2021.<sup>4</sup>

**Amy Hall**, Cornwall. YR from January 2021–August 2021

**Dara McNulty**, Northern Ireland. YR from January 2021–December 2021.

**Florence Gyax**, West Lothian. YR from January 2021–December 2022.

**Jake Micallef**, Kent. YR from January 2022–December 2022.

**Joe Parham**, Warwickshire. YR from January 2021–July 2021.

**Lizzie Waring**, Ceredigion. YR from June 2021–December 2022.

**Mark Pitt**, Lanarkshire. YR from January 2021–December 2022.

**Soha Salem**, Greater London. YR from January 2022–December 2022.

## Staff



**Faye Vogely**, Youth Engagement Manager since January 2020.<sup>5</sup>



**Chris Marais**, Youth Engagement Coordinator since October 2021.



**Rachael Griffiths**, Youth Engagement Officer since April 2023.



**Anna Dupont-Crabtree**, Youth Engagement Officer, September 2021–June 2022.

<sup>1</sup> Also serves on the BTO Board of Trustees since 2022.

<sup>2</sup> On BTO staff as Training Officer since 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Also Regional Ambassador for Nottinghamshire.

<sup>4</sup> On BTO staff as Ripple Project Officer since 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Initially worked on BTO Youth while Social Media Manager; title changed to Youth Engagement Manager in April 2021 when the role was created.

# ALUMNI PROGRAMME



**Emily Cooper**, Youth Advisory Panel member from 2021 to 2022

As BTO Youth continues to grow, so does its cohort of alumni. While the Youth programme has a high retention rate, averaging 83.3% over its first three years, it is inevitable that people will

move on – whether that's as a result of ageing out, or due to other reasons. It's important that the connections built during a young person's time as a Youth Volunteer aren't lost when they leave. The development of a strong alumni programme will not only preserve those connections, but help to strengthen the Youth programme as a whole.

Alumni are very positive about their time spent with BTO Youth. When surveyed, 100% stated that they felt like they had a positive impact and contributed to the Youth Engagement Strategy. Furthermore, alumni rated their time with the BTO as 4.7 out of 5, and 100% of the alumni felt welcomed and included at BTO. 100% stated that they would consider a job at BTO if a suitable one came up, which further suggests that alumni are keen to stay involved with the organisation.

The formation of an alumni programme provides an excellent opportunity – and there is definitely an appetite for it amongst current alumni. Survey results show us that out of the alumni surveyed:

- ▶ **100%** would like joining BTO Youth training sessions
- ▶ **100%** would like quarterly alumni newsletters
- ▶ **67%** would like to join alumni events (online or in-person)
- ▶ **67%** would like to receive continued support from staff
- ▶ **33%** would like to join the get-togethers
- ▶ **33%** would like to join the Christmas party

Due to the fact that until the start of this Strategy period there has not been a substantial cohort of alumni, developing the alumni programme is a priority for the 2023–28 strategic period. Some of the highest-rated options above, such as the ability to join training sessions or alumni newsletters, will be relatively easy to implement and have a high impact in terms of strengthening the relationship between alumni and current BTO Youth Volunteers.

As the alumni programme continues to grow, so will its ambition. Already, BTO Youth alumni work and study in roles spanning the environmental sector and beyond. This provides ample opportunity to not only promote the value of youth engagement, but also to provide value for BTO Youth. Creating a mentorship network, for example, could create useful opportunities for both alumni and current Youth Volunteers.

With survey results suggesting that alumni remember their time at BTO Youth with great positivity, it's important that leaving the Youth programme does not spell the end of a young (or not so young!) person's connection with the BTO.

**"I feel important because I love it, and because it feels like I matter, and that what I do as part of a team (or individually) really does make a difference. I feel valued, and like I belong."**

**Anonymous Youth Volunteer,  
BTO Youth Anonymous Feedback Survey 2022**





# THANKS TO

## Funders

Green Recovery Challenge Fund  
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Opticron  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
Cameron Bessel Trust  
Mike Archer  
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Callum Macgregor  
Mark Wilson  
Nina O'Hanlon

Kelvin Jones  
Ben Darvill  
Steve Willis  
Jenny Gill (previous Chair of BTO's Board of Trustees)  
Fiona Barclay (BTO Vice-president and previous BTO Youth Champion) and the entire Board of Trustees

## Partners, consultants & contributors

Action for Conservation

RSPB

WWF

MPhil in Conservation Leadership  
Cambridge Conservation Initiative  
Creativity Unbound

Tina Hobson

Sonnet Advisory

2022 Youth in Nature Summit  
collaborators

London Wildlife Trust

Osprey Leadership Foundation

Butterfly Conservation

UK Youth for Nature

Reserva Youth Land Trust

Chester Zoo Youth Board

A Focus on Nature

# APPENDIX I: RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

These rules outline how BTO Youth works with young people at BTO (e.g. with our Youth Advisory Panel and our Youth Representatives), and how we will promote and expect external engagement, for example by partner organisations.

These rules of engagement are based on BTO Youth's six core values, which are:

**Inclusive & accessible | Helping people grow | Youth-led | Collaborative & transparent | Innovative & dynamic | Celebrating people's connection to nature**

## **Inclusivity**

Young people will be respected and treated fairly, regardless of their background or protected characteristics; these include factors such as age, race, sex, gender, gender identity, religion and belief, disability, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background. Staff and young people are aware of, and abide by, **BTO Youth's Code of Conduct**. Events will be promoted to as diverse an audience as possible, working with communities and under-represented groups directly, where possible.

## **Decision-making power**

Young people have real decision-making power over the project(s) that they engage with. Depending on the project, this may be absolute (young people have the final say), democratic (either between the young people themselves, or with staff), or consultancy-based (young people do not make the final decision but are consulted throughout and are given explanations for decisions made by others). Expectations of the level of decision-making power of young people will be set out at the start of the project(s).

## **Fair compensation**

Young people are compensated fairly, with all expenses (including subsistence) covered in advance, without requiring young people to ask for reimbursement afterwards. The easiest transport routes are chosen, putting the safety of the young person first when travelling. Where appropriate, young people are paid for work done outside of the role they signed up for and where we would normally recruit professional services. Rates of pay are made clear from the beginning and reflect current market rates and will never be below the Real Living Wage.

Compensation for volunteering will be through training and skills development, e.g. by providing free access to conferences, training courses, or learning materials.

## **Mental health first**

Young people's mental health is of the utmost importance and will be protected. This means young people have the right to step away from any project at any time, and have access to advice and help from trained and supportive staff, as well as to the resources they need. To ensure we have this as a core part of the programme, we have a dedicated BTO Youth Mindfulness and Mental Health working group, which works on providing training and programmes to promote good practice.

## **Safeguarding**

Young people are protected through rigorous **safeguarding protocols**. Anyone engaging directly with young people should, as a minimum, have a basic understanding of safeguarding (either by attending training organised by BTO staff or demonstrated through work experience or external training); this includes anyone on BTO Youth, staff, and partner organisations' staff or volunteers. Staff and young people will follow government guidance on being DBS-checked when engaging with young people. BTO Youth staff should be trained in First Aid, and have a Mental Health First Aid for Youth certificate where possible.

## **Accessibility**

Young people will have free access to events for young people, and any events organised by BTO Youth will always be free. Where possible, transport to events should be provided and accessibility statements provided on whether or not venues, sites, or events are accessible. Young people and staff will make any and all reasonable adjustments required by those who request them and will plan projects and events with accessibility in mind. This includes providing equipment where needed, such as binoculars or scopes, but can be as wide-ranging as colouring equipment for arts events, to subsidising mobile data for those without access to the Internet.



## APPENDIX II: CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code of the Conduct is for all young people representing BTO Youth, including the staff, the Youth Advisory Panel members, and the Youth Representatives.

Why we have a Code of Conduct:

- ▶ To make sure all BTO Youth activities and events are safe and inclusive for young people, BTO Youth staff and others who might be there.
- ▶ So it is clear how we expect you to behave and how you can expect other young people and staff to behave towards you.

The Code of Conduct applies not only to face-to-face events, but also online events, digital interactions (texting, messaging, email, digital meetings) and any other activity where you are representing BTO Youth and BTO.

### What we expect from you:

- ▶ Represent BTO with passion, commitment and enthusiasm.
- ▶ Respect your peers, participants, staff and anyone else linked to BTO.
- ▶ Be inclusive and supportive to everyone.
- ▶ Challenge negative and discriminatory behaviour and attitudes.
- ▶ Promote a positive working environment that helps others to feel comfortable and confident; be a role-model.
- ▶ Behave in a professional manner.
- ▶ Stick to all health & safety, confidentiality and safeguarding policies and guidelines that have been shared with you.
- ▶ Respect other people's right to privacy. For example, do not share photos or people's names on social media without their permission.
- ▶ Remember that BTO is a non-campaigning organisation, so when representing BTO this means being considerate when talking about topics such as bird persecution. You can ask staff for help with this at any time.

### What you can expect from us:

- ▶ All our staff will also uphold the Code of Conduct and treat you with respect.
- ▶ We will challenge discrimination and promote equal opportunities across our work.
- ▶ All young people involved in BTO Youth's work have the right to be respected and feel and be safe.
- ▶ We will make sure all our activities are inclusive and accessible.
- ▶ We will manage behaviour and act appropriately.

- ▶ We will respond to all complaints quickly and with respect.
- ▶ You will have regular communication and support from the BTO Youth staff team.

### Misconduct procedure

Although we never hope to need to use this procedure, if at any stage we receive a complaint or are concerned about behaviour shown by any one of our Youth Volunteers, we start a "three-strikes and you're out" process. The strikes are as follows:

**Strike one** - We'll have a conversation with you about what happened or has been reported, and we'll follow this up with an e-mail as well. That way you have a chance to understand what went wrong, and there's a written record of what we talked about.

**Strike two** - If the same behaviour happens again, we'll remind you of what the issue is and how we hope to fix it. We might offer you training or 1:1 support with someone to help you develop the skills you need. It might also involve a conversation with the person who filed a complaint, in which case this will always be with someone from the BTO Youth staff team and you can also bring someone you want for support.

**Strike three** - At strike three, we will have a direct conversation with you about whether we think BTO Youth is the right fit for you and, if needed, we will remove you from the programme.

*In some cases, we might move directly to strike two if we think this is appropriate.*

### How to report an issue:

If you are concerned about someone's behaviour or have a complaint against a young person, volunteer or a member of staff, please initially speak to someone on the BTO Youth Team (Faye Vogely or Chris Marais). If you feel they are not listening to you, or the complaint is against them, please contact Siân Knott at [people@bto.org](mailto:people@bto.org).

By signing this form you agree to the Code of Conduct. If you have any questions, please ask Faye or Chris.

***I confirm I have read and am willing to follow the BTO Youth Code of Conduct.***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX III:

# LOOKING BACK AT 2021–22

**Maura Burns Zaragoza**, Youth Advisory Panel member since 2020

Commitment in 2021–2022 Strategy	Outcome
<b>Building a Youth Representative network</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Bridge generational gap</li> <li>▶ Plan and deliver activities in local areas</li> <li>▶ Offline and online conversations about birding, including social media</li> <li>▶ Annual waves of new Youth Reps (YRs)</li> <li>▶ Work with the Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) and BTO staff to test other activities aimed at young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ We have had 37 YRs since 2021, who have lead an average of 45 activities per year, contributing over 1,500 volunteer hours per year</li> <li>▶ We have had different social media drives, including advertising events but also entire virtual, YR-led pieces of content</li> <li>▶ Created key online series led by YRs including Nature Natters, Birding 101 and Draw-Alongs</li> <li>▶ YRs have been continuously consulted on Strategy decisions</li> <li>▶ YRs and YAP have received training from BTO Staff and external providers</li> <li>▶ Organised ongoing annual get-togethers to bring together Youth Volunteers for team building and celebrating achievements as a group</li> </ul>
<b>Working with schools, colleges and universities</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Work in schools, colleges and universities to overcome travel, money, time and confidence barriers</li> <li>▶ Empower students or staff to start their own birding clubs</li> <li>▶ Create a link to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award</li> <li>▶ Clear steps and a library of resources to begin doing citizen science with BTO</li> <li>▶ Consult with teachers and university bird societies to understand their needs</li> <li>▶ Trial YRs working with educational institutions in their regions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Developed and worked with a Teacher Panel of over 20 teachers to learn what they need</li> <li>▶ Empowered schools through the Equipment Donation Scheme, which is ongoing</li> <li>▶ Became an AAP for Duke of Edinburgh; young people can now volunteer for BTO as part of their Duke of Edinburgh's Award, through BirdTrack and Garden BirdWatch</li> <li>▶ Engaged with university groups via YRs and YAP members to develop new nature-related societies and events</li> <li>▶ Learned there are serious barriers to working with the education system; we did not achieve all outcomes</li> </ul>
<b>Shared content and resources for young birders</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Create an online Youth Hub on the BTO website; it is live, used and well received</li> <li>▶ Existing BTO membership will be reinvigorated</li> <li>▶ Engaged social media presence</li> <li>▶ Create an Equipment Donation Scheme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The Youth Hub is not yet live but is in progress</li> <li>▶ New BTO Youth membership is due to launch in 2023</li> <li>▶ Youth Volunteers involved and represented in social media campaigns on main BTO accounts</li> <li>▶ Equipment Donation Scheme was launched in February 2021 and as of spring 2023 had received over 900 items as donations, and distributed these to 160 recipients, including schools, benefiting an estimated 2,300 young people</li> </ul>



## APPENDIX IV: BARRIERS TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN NATURE

**Conor John**, Youth Advisory Panel member from 2020 to 2021

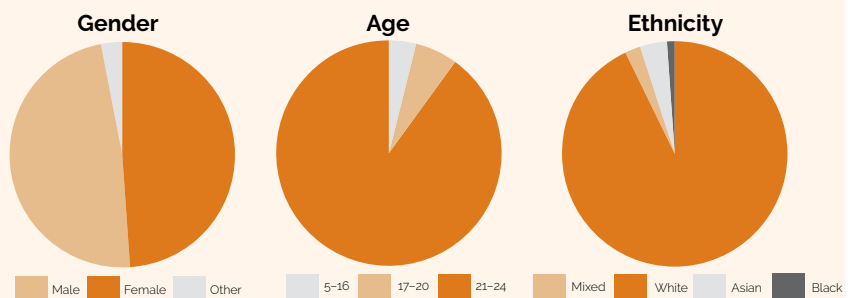
A copy of the survey transcript can be found [on our website](#).

The survey was designed by Conor John with the help of the Youth Advisory Panel and staff. It was then distributed across social media, including on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. Influencers and partner organisations shared the message, and we sent this out in BTO's e-newsletters as well.

Results were condensed into the infographic below. Raw data are available on request by emailing us at [youth@bto.org](mailto:youth@bto.org).

### Who responded?

**230**  
young people



### What barriers do young people face in birding?



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