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A CASE STUDY FOR
WILDLIFE RESERVES
& NATURE PARKS
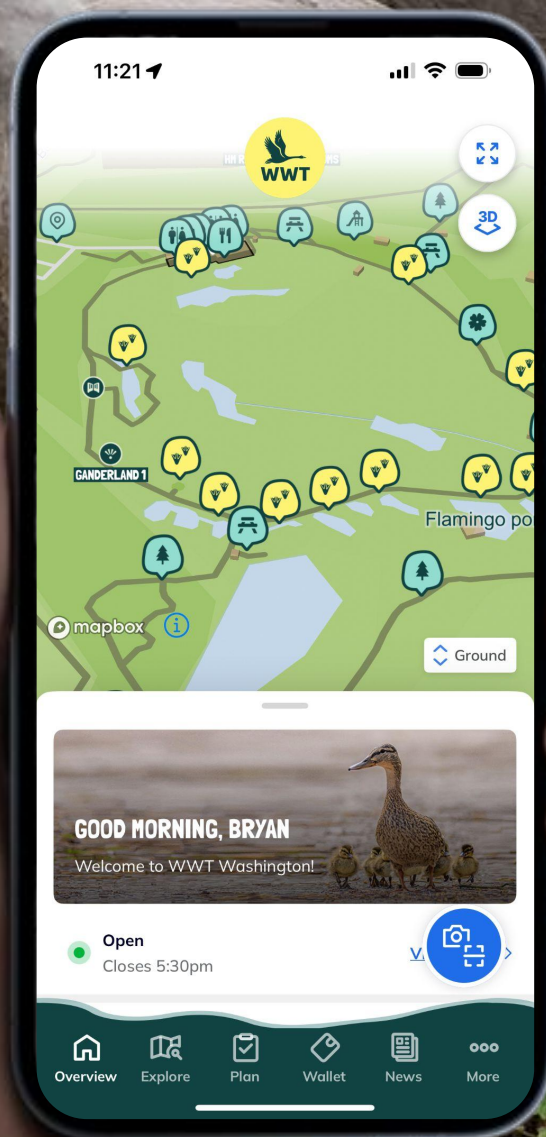
Wildfowl &
Wetlands
Trust
Enhancing
The Guest
Experience

PAGE
Seven

**Implementation
and launch of platform
and guest app**

FOREWORD

WWT Washington Wetland Centre, nestled on the banks of the River Wear in Tyne & Wear, is one of ten wetland sites managed by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT)—the UK's leading wetland conservation charity.

With over 1 million visitors to WWT sites each year, the site sought to enhance its digital capabilities to improve the visitor experience, strengthen conservation messaging, and support its broader education and sustainability goals. The launch of a new visitor app powered by n-gage.io marked a bold step forward in WWT Washington's digital transformation.

Bryan Hoare
Founder and CEO
n-gage.io

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This case study examines how digital technology can reshape the wildlife reserve and nature park experience, offering actionable strategies to create meaningful connections with guests, optimise operations, and generate new revenue streams.

Overview

WWT Washington Wetland Centre, nestled on the banks of the River Wear in Tyne & Wear, is one of ten wetland sites managed by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT)—the UK's leading wetland conservation charity. The 105-acre reserve offers a peaceful, immersive experience where visitors of all ages can connect with wildlife, discover the importance of wetland habitats, and explore nature through hands-on education.

Welcoming families, school groups, conservation enthusiasts, and casual day-trippers alike, WWT Washington plays a vital role in advancing WWTs mission: to create and protect wetland habitats for endangered species and future generations.

The site features rare and exotic waterfowl, native British wildlife, bird hides, sculpture trails, seasonal events, and award-winning learning programmes.

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Associated with:

BIAZA — BRITISH & IRISH ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS & AQUARIUMS

EAZA — EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIA, CORPORATE MEMBER

commercial member — ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS & AQUARIUMS

The Challenge

WWT Washington wanted to create a more dynamic, accessible, and connected on-site experience. Key challenges included:

- A need for interactive navigation tools to help guests explore the reserve more easily

- Opportunities to digitally deliver conservation education without relying on traditional signage

- A desire to promote interactive nature trails that support self-led exploration

- Limited ability to send real-time visitor communications, such as species alerts or campaign updates

- A need to collect behavioural data to inform visitor engagement strategies and improve site operations

- An ambition to reduce printed materials in line with their sustainability commitments

WWT Washington's team turned to n-gage.io to implement a visitor-facing mobile platform that could deliver on all of these fronts—while staying true to the Trust's values of conservation, learning, and public engagement.

The Solution

The n-gage.io solution brought together a fully branded guest mobile app with a powerful attraction management system, enabling the WWT Washington team to deliver real-time content, interactive trails, navigation tools, and targeted messaging—all in one place.

Key features included:

Custom-Branded Mobile App

Visitors use the WWT Washington app to explore the reserve via an intuitive map, receive real-time updates on talk times and species alerts, access rich educational content, and store digital tickets. The app incorporates both GPS and Beacon-based navigation.

Visitors can explore the full 105-acre reserve with live GPS navigation and a customisable digital map

Interactive GPS Map & Wayfinding

Visitors can explore the full 105-acre reserve with live GPS navigation and a customisable digital map, helping them find bird hides, exhibits, rest points, and event areas with ease.

In-App Nature Trails

Using n-gage.io's market-leading digital trails feature, the team created automated, educational nature walks, guiding visitors through key habitats and wildlife zones with audio, media and messaging at every step.

Push Notifications & Species Alerts

Guests receive real-time updates on wildlife sightings, talk times, and seasonal activity—encouraging exploration and extending dwell time.

Rich Content Delivery

Visitors can access species facts, conservation messages, and campaign updates through an engaging mix of video, audio, text and imagery, all delivered in context via the app.
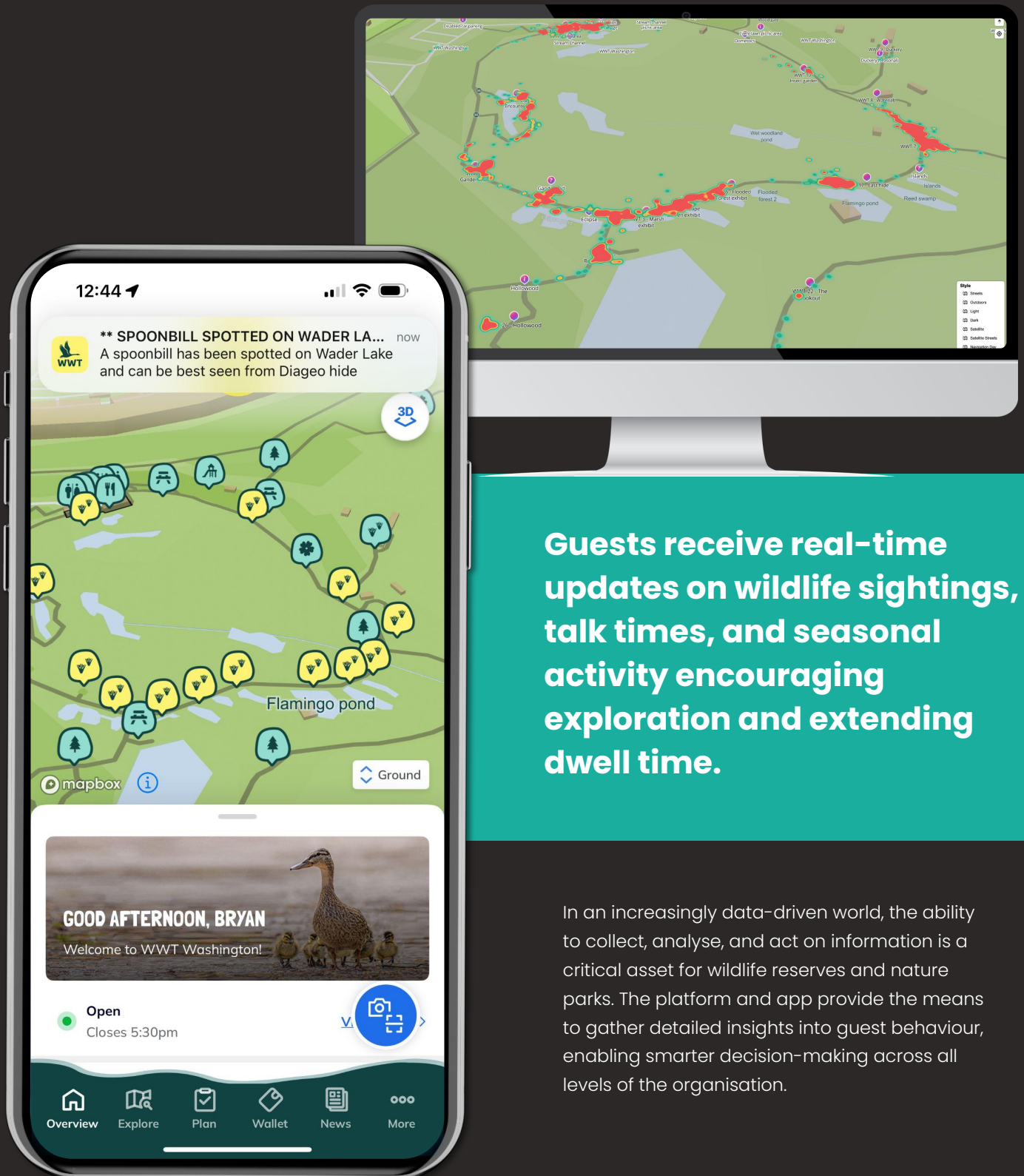
Analytics & Insights Dashboard

The WWT team now tracks visitor behaviour, app usage, popular routes, and content engagement to refine programming and enhance visitor services.

Sustainability Support

The app reduces the need for paper-based materials, contributing to WWT's commitment to environmentally responsible operations.

n-gage.io

Guests receive real-time updates on wildlife sightings, talk times, and seasonal activity encouraging exploration and extending dwell time.

In an increasingly data-driven world, the ability to collect, analyse, and act on information is a critical asset for wildlife reserves and nature parks. The platform and app provide the means to gather detailed insights into guest behaviour, enabling smarter decision-making across all levels of the organisation.

Implementation and Launch

The mobile platform launched at WWT Washington in early 2024, following a smooth and collaborative onboarding process with n-gage.io's implementation team. From content migration and Beacon setup to staff training and app configuration, the entire launch was executed in alignment with WWTs goals for accessibility, inclusion, and education.

The launch generated immediate momentum:

- Over 4,000 app downloads.

- 45% email opt-in rate, strengthening WWT's digital communications

Beacon placements were strategically located throughout key zones

- Average visit duration of 3 hours 49 minutes, showing increased on-site engagement and content discovery

- The app has since been used across events and seasonal campaigns with strong feedback from both staff and guests.
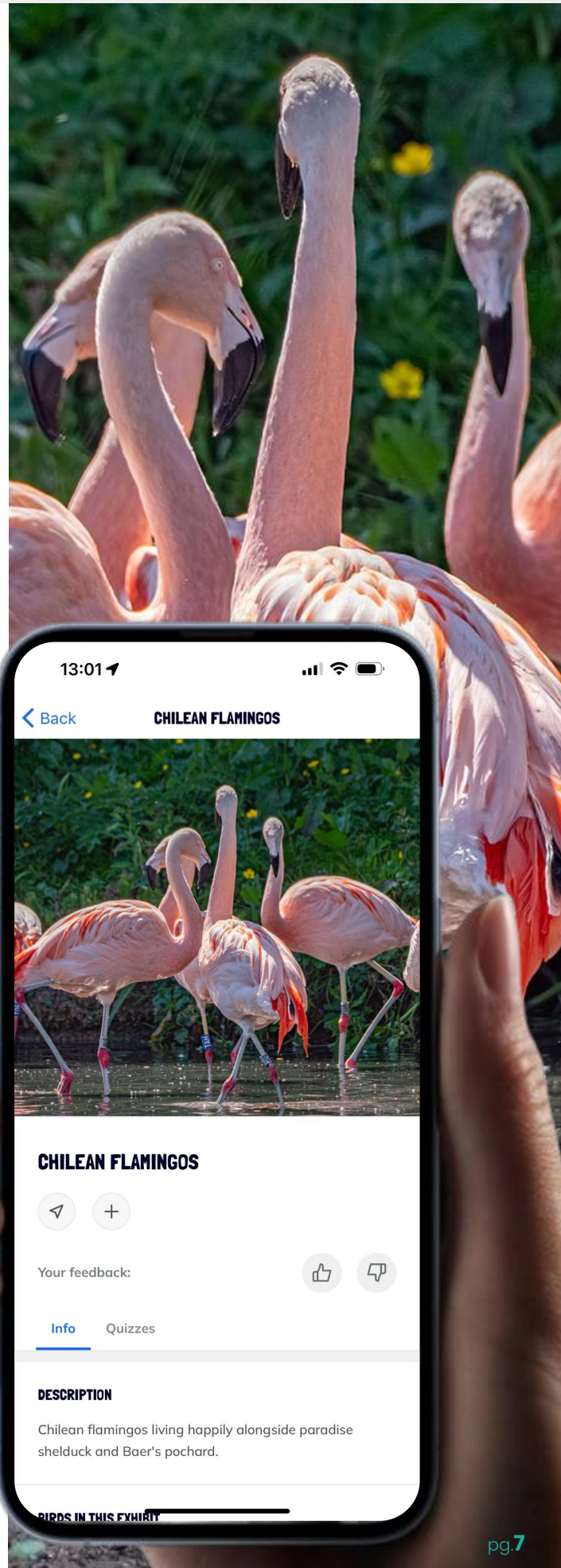
Key Outcomes

Since implementing n-gage.io, WWT Washington has achieved measurable success in both visitor experience and operational impact:

- Improved navigation & flow as visitors are now better equipped to explore the site at their own pace, reducing confusion and improving access to key features.

- Over 40% email opt-in rate through the app, greatly expanding the reserve's digital audience and marketing capability.

- Greater educational impact as trails, media content, and real-time messages have strengthened WWT's ability to engage and inform visitors.

- Higher dwell time & repeat visits as the introduction of interactive features and notifications has encouraged deeper exploration and more return visits.

- Better campaign reach & engagement with in-app messaging allowing the team to deliver updates on conservation efforts, fundraising, and seasonal activities directly to guests.

- Data-Led Decision Making as staff can now analyse visitor trends to shape marketing, improve signage, plan staff resources, and build future trail experiences.

- Sustainability Gains as digital-first delivery has reduced WWT Washington's reliance on printed maps, flyers, and interpretive signage—saving costs and supporting environmental targets.

- Seamless live app updates allowing the reserve operations to react to any changes on site such as limiting access to enclosures and making special announcements.

- SaaS Software license fee now funded through in-app discounted ticket offer with additional profit revenue generation.

Client Testimonial

Deborah Nolan, Marketing and Communications Manager at WWT Washington, praised the value and results of the partnership:

"We're really pleased with the launch of our new mobile app, developed in partnership with n-gage.io. It helps us engage with visitors in real-time, deliver important conservation messages, and make the site more accessible and enjoyable to explore."

"As the UK's leading wetland charity, we're always looking for ways to improve the way we connect with the public. The app is already proving to be a powerful tool for delivering targeted messages and inspiring people to care more about wetlands and wildlife."

Why It Matters for Other Nature Reserves and Wildlife Centres

WWT Washington's success offers a compelling roadmap for other nature parks, reserves, and conservation-focused visitor attractions.

With n-gage.io, wildlife organisations can:

- Improve visitor orientation and wayfinding with digital mapping
- Create self-led educational trails that support school groups and families
- Deliver real-time messaging and species alerts to deepen engagement
- Reduce print dependency and align with sustainability goals
- Collect behavioural insights to improve services and planning
- Build digital channels that extend the impact of conservation campaigns

Conclusion

By embracing n-gage.io's platform, WWT Washington has successfully modernised its visitor experience, creating a deeper, more personal connection between guests and the natural world. From navigation and education to sustainability and insight, the platform now plays a central role in advancing the Trust's conservation and engagement mission. As WWT continues to lead in wetland preservation across the UK, this app provides a scalable digital foundation to support more meaningful experiences—now and into the future.

Next Steps

To discover how n-gage.io can help your nature park or wildlife reserve embrace digital transformation, book a discovery call or request a demo today at www.n-gage.io.

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FEATURES

All-in-one, attraction management software & highly customisable mobile app for wildlife reserves and nature parks.

Just some of our key features:

Digital Ticketing & Memberships
Reduce entry congestion with tickets & memberships displayed in-app.

Interactive Maps, Trails & Wayfinding
Help audiences find their way, by navigating to places of interest or facilities.

Messaging & Notifications
Segment audiences to send personalized messages, offers & notifications.

Trigger Activations
Use the powerful trigger system combined with beacons and QR codes.

Day Planning with Reminders
Feed and talk times with event reminders, navigation & feedback tools.

Interactive Content
Create interactive & engaging content using text imagery, audio and video.

Digital Adoptions
Create individual & corporate adoptions with search and find in-app.

Learning & Education
Create fun in-app species quizzes to aid learning or use the lesson planning tools.

Audience Insights
Gain valuable insights into audience behavior, to help plan operations.

Capture Their Day
Create fun interactions using customizable photo frames to share on social.

Gamification & Achievements
Set up interactive achievements to challenge and reward visitors.

Promote Sustainability
Using a mobile app helps improve sustainability, and reduce paper.
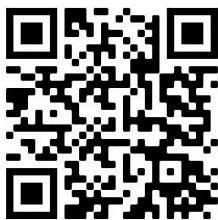
**Attraction Management Software
and Mobile App**

n-gage.io®

CONTACT

For more information about
how n-gage.io can help your
wildlife reserve or nature park
to enhance the guest the experience,
gain valuable insights and drive
revenue growth, request a
free demo of the all in-one
attraction management software
and guest mobile app at:

www.n-gage.io/request-a-demo

Or simply scan below

www.n-gage.io

WWT

13:29

EXPLORE   Clear all

Events   Exhibits   **Facilities**   Trails

Map view   All facility types ⌄   Access

Hawthorn Wood hide
Hawthorn Wood
Open

Hollowood
Hollowood
Open

Insect garden (seasonal)
Domestic ducks,
orchard and allotment
Open

Lagoon View hide
Saline Lagoon
Open

Mobility scooters and wheelchairs
Visitor centre
Open

Overview   Explore   Plan   Wallet   News   More