



New State of Nature report uses local data to highlight the devastating loss of UK nature

- **New report reveals one in six species are at risk of becoming extinct in Great Britain, while widespread animals and plants such as starlings, swifts, hedgehogs and chamomile are becoming rarer¹**
- **Losses of insects, fish and plants can trigger chain reactions affecting other species in the food chain.**
- **The report also reveals that while UK nature is in crisis, some species have managed to thrive and we have the solutions to restore nature.**
- **Conservation projects and strong environmental protections through legislation can have a positive impact on nature, human wellbeing and the natural resources we rely on.**

While starlings or hedgehogs may still be a familiar sight in some gardens in England the new State of Nature 2023 report, published today (Wednesday 27 September), reveals the devastating scale of nature loss across England.

The 2023 report, which has been compiled by leading professionals from over 60 research and conservation organisations contains the best available data on the UK's biodiversity. This includes data from scientists and volunteers monitoring nature in England. It provides a detailed picture of how nature is faring across the UK's towns, cities, countryside and seas.

Now conservationists, scientists and experts are sounding the alarm for nature once again.

The new report shows that the abundance of land and freshwater species has on average fallen by almost a third (32%) across England since 1970. Overall, the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries globally due to human activity, with less than half of its biodiversity remaining²

The report looks at evidence going back more than 50 years, monitoring populations, pressures and threats and identifying large-scale patterns. Conservationists are concerned that all the groups studied show worrying declines in numbers.

Some of the species groups suffering the biggest population losses are insects, plants and some fish, including those found in the North Sea. European eel, lady's slipper orchid, turtle dove and hazel dormouse are all now threatened with extinction in the UK.

While people may be less familiar with these species, which are disappearing from farmlands, uplands, woodlands, wetlands or seas, these at-risk species are often vital parts of the food chain. Some also provide vital ecosystem services such as pollination. Their losses can ripple through our environment, making it harder for other species to survive.

The report shows that almost 1,500 species are at risk of UK extinction and there are multiple challenges that need to be addressed to help them. These include a lack of available food, lack of habitat, the impacts of the climate crisis or pollution.

It also highlights the complex relationships between species, as the loss of a food source may affect the survival of multiple other species.

Conservationists are also warning that the challenges facing nature have a negative impact on human health and the natural resources we rely on, such as food and water. Air pollution and flooding, both of which threaten wildlife, can also pose human health risks. Agriculture produces 11% of UK greenhouse gas emissions and 87% of the UK's ammonia emissions³, which impacts both public health and wildlife.

In many cases, the solutions to the challenges nature faces are known. Projects to restore habitats such as peatlands, wetlands and woodlands are now underway to help capture carbon and save species. The report celebrates the successes of communities, conservation organisations and agencies in restoring nature for wildlife and people.

While local conservation efforts and community action have a vital and positive impact on saving nature, urgent, widespread action is needed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss to put nature on a path to recovery for the benefit of people and planet.

The State of Nature report 2023 identifies practices associated with industrial-scale farming as one of the most significant threats to species and habitats in England, with climate change also highlighted as a key threat.

Over 69% of England is agricultural land, including parts of England. Successful long-term trials of Nature-Friendly farming methods show that with the right support and funding in place, English farmland could be managed to reverse biodiversity loss while still providing high-quality food and produce for consumers.

Michael Copleston, Director of RSPB England, said: *"For anyone who cares deeply about future generations and the state of nature, now is the time to urgently get to grips with the scale of our collective challenge."*

The state of nature report draws on our very best science over decades, and spells out the magnitude of ecological loss and scale of effort that is so urgently needed.

We simply cannot be complacent with words such as extinctions, ecological tipping points, and nature and climate emergencies.

The difference we can make to help reverse the fortune of special wildlife or precious habitats is now urgently a matter of scale. Scale of effort. Scale of investment. Scale of action.

Some of the brilliant and awe-inspiring stories of hope, like restoring populations of Red Kite and Bittern, shows we have many of the tools needed. But we cannot shy away from the fact that once-common wildlife like hedgehogs and swifts are rapidly disappearing. We should be alarmed and we do need to act. Nature needs it and so do we."

Dr David Noble, BTO Principal Ecologist - Monitoring, said: "We are approaching a crossroads in tackling the climate and biodiversity crises. Research and monitoring have identified many solutions, and moreover, provide evidence that these can work when effectively deployed; the challenge is to massively scale up, and, given multiple threats, to incorporate nature friendly practices and policy into all sectors of society. But it isn't just about tracking continuing declines – seeing the success of conservation efforts is a key motivator for the huge numbers of dedicated volunteers engaged in monitoring in the UK."

To download a full copy of the State of Nature 2023 report, visit www.stateofnature.org.uk

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For further information and to arrange an interview, please email:

Engmediaenquiries@rspb.org.uk with details of the interview request.

We can offer a range of in-person and remote interview opportunities at locations across England and help connect you to spokespeople from Partner organisations.

Photographs:

A selection of photographs for use available here: [Wetransfer](#)

Additional quotes

Action for Conservation

Hendrikus van Hensbergen, Founder and CEO, Action for Conservation said: "We work closely with young people across the nation and see their determination and drive to tackle issues like sewage pollution and biodiversity decline. They know these issues will affect their future and, when given the opportunity, they are taking action to reverse these worrying declines and inspire others to action. The State of Nature report shows the extent to which our elected leaders are failing future generations. Young people's message is clear. We must do more to restore ecosystems to tackle the climate crisis. We must do it now."

Khadijah Haq, Young Trustee, Action for Conservation said: "Young people want to see our Government taking environmental issues seriously, we expect them to put proper legislation in place to protect habitats, species and people. Young people are passionate about fighting for equality and working alongside nature to create a better future for everyone, it's time the adults in power step up and join us."

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

Jim Foster, Conservation Director at Amphibian and Reptile Conservation said: *"The state of England's nature should be of vital importance to all of us. Animals such as frogs, toads, newts, snakes and lizards are a fundamental part of our natural and cultural heritage, but like many of the other species and habitats covered in this report, they are increasingly under pressure from factors such as land-use and climate change. This report shows that it is possible for conservation projects to recover species populations, and how important it is that we scale up our efforts to reverse nature declines."*

Mammal Society

Matt Larsen-Daw, CEO, Mammal Society said: *"Due to the long history of our declining nature, no one alive today has ever actually seen our landscapes as they could be - fulfilling their potential as havens for nature as well as people. Much of our cultural ties to the landscape are linked to the very practices that have contributed to denuding it of wildlife - even those as seemingly harmless as the image of the manicured and pleasant English Country Garden. We need a mind shift to normalise gardens, roads, parks and ground in our landscapes that are frayed around the edges. When people see long grass, scrubland and bulging hedgerows as signs of nature being allowed a place in the landscape, rather than as evidence of neglect and wasted space, we move a step closer to a society that will see the missed opportunities when nature is suppressed or excluded, and demand better."*

National Trust

Ben McCarthy, Head of Nature and Restoration Ecology at the National Trust said: *"This new report is sobering reading especially with its 19% decline in species abundance. But, if we create the right conditions, we can bring back nature."*

"We're committed to doing whatever it takes. We have seen just how quickly nature can recover. For instance, the recent river restoration project on the Holnicote Estate in Somerset where wildlife such as egrets, wagtails, toads and dragonflies have already 'moved' in after just a few weeks."

"Targeted interventions and landscape scale restorations are both required to reverse the plight of the rarest species and recovering whole ecosystems. Now is the time to accelerate this work, to work in partnership and at scale to deliver better and bigger landscapes - a refuge for wildlife and people."

Editors Notes

- The State of Nature (SoN) is a partnership of organisations that are directly involved with conservation evidence and/or conservation delivery, who work together on appropriate science and evidence-based products.
 - The principal role of the SoN Partnership is to improve the collection, collation and efficient use of data from biodiversity recording and monitoring relevant to nature conservation in the UK and its Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories: understanding the status and trends of species, habitats, sites and other environmental variables including those which drive changes in biodiversity, and the causes and consequences of changes in these.
- List of partners: A Rocha, Action for conservation, Alderney Wildlife Trust, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC), Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC),

Bat Conservation Ireland, Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), Biological Records Centre/CEH (BRC), Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland, British Arachnological Society (BAS), British Bryological Society (BBS) (CEH), British Dragonfly Society (BDS), British Lichen Society, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Buglife, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation, CEDAR Centre for Environmental Data and Recording, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH), Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), Chester Zoo, Continuous Plankton Recorder, Earthwatch, Freshwater Habitats Trust, Friends of the Earth, iSpot (The Open University), James Hutton Institute, Jersey Government Department of the Environment, John Muir Trust, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), Local Environmental Records Centre Wales, Mammal Society, Manx BirdLife, Marine Biological Association (MBA), Marine Conservation Society, MARINELife, National Biodiversity Network Trust (NBN Trust), National Forum for Biological Recording, National Trust, National Trust for Scotland, Natural England (NE), Natural History Museum, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), NatureScot, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), Northern Ireland Marine Task Force, ORCA, People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES), Plantlife, Plymouth University, Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Scottish Environment Link, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Shark Trust, States of Guernsey, Ulster Wildlife Trust, University of Sheffield, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT), Wildlife Trusts, Woodland Trust, WWF, Zoological Society of London (ZSL)

Sources

- 1. These species are examples of over 1500 species classed as at risk of extinction as a UK breeding species, based on the JNCC Red Lists assessed within the report.
- 2. Based on data from the Biodiversity Intactness Index, ranking 240 G7 countries, with 240 being the best for biodiversity and 1 being the worst. The UK currently ranks at just 12 (UK 50% BII), with England as the 7th worst performing country for Biodiversity loss (47% BII). Source <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/about-us/48398rspb-biodiversity-intactness-index-summary-report-v4.pdf>
- 3. [Chapter 11: Environment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)