

SAVING NATURE: WHERE HAS OUR WILDLIFE GONE?



One in six species in the UK are at risk of extinction

THE UK's wildlife is in serious trouble. In this *FYI Investigates*, Scarlett and Jeriah look into the state of nature in the UK, learn about the species struggling to survive and meet those fighting to protect the natural world before it's too late.

WATCH THE FILM

FYI Investigates are short documentaries from our partner weekly news show that dive into fascinating topics such as vaping, gaming and mental health. Watch the full film *Saving Nature: Where Has Our Wildlife Gone?* and more episodes of *FYI Investigates* at [first.news/investigates](https://www.first.news/investigates) or by asking a responsible adult to scan the QR code.

sky kids



**SAVING NATURE:
WHERE HAS OUR WILDLIFE GONE?**

A GROUP of leading conservation organisations called the State of Nature Partnership has recently found that on average, wildlife in the UK has fallen by around a fifth since 1970, with one in six species threatened with extinction. They believe that there are several main reasons for this, including climate change, intensive farming, overfishing, invasive species and pollution. It's sad to know that all of this is happening, but the good thing is, you can do things to help out! Let's look at some of the animals and habitats that are suffering, and why, and find out how you can help them to recover.

Rivers

One of the factors having an impact on the UK's biodiversity is pollution. In the last year alone, there were over half a million recorded incidents where sewage flowed into rivers and lakes.

Scarlett wanted to find out more about the impact of pollution in waterways and where it comes from, so went to meet wildlife presenter and naturalist Steve Backshall. He lives by the River Thames and has been monitoring river water there for several years. Over that time, he's seen a decrease in wildlife and an increase in pollution. Steve tells Scarlett that pollution is a big threat facing UK rivers, and it mainly comes from farming and sewage.

THERE were half a million recorded incidents where sewage flowed into rivers and lakes in England And Wales last year. That's the same as sewage pouring in for about four and a half million hours.



What can you do to help UK rivers?

Learn about wildlife in UK rivers and help to raise awareness of how we can protect it. You could also join a campaign against pollution in rivers. Charity Earthwatch says one simple thing you can do is to only put the three Ps down the toilet: pee, poo and paper!

Butterflies



The *State of Nature* report, about the UK's wildlife, found that over the last 50 years, the number of pollinating insects like moths, bees and butterflies have fallen.

The Butterfly Conservation charity

has even declared a butterfly emergency. But one person who is trying to help them, is Becca. She is very passionate about protecting butterflies, and has been since she was just three! This summer, Becca and 85,000 others took part in a big UK survey called the Big Butterfly Count. It found that butterfly numbers are down nearly half compared to last year. Butterflies are a key indicator of climate change, so if numbers are low, it can mean climate change is getting worse. There are lots of reasons the number of butterflies is falling, including:

- New buildings taking away their habitats
- The use of chemicals that are harmful to butterflies
- Wet and windy weather

How can you help to boost butterfly numbers?

Find out which butterflies are in your local area and plant some wildflowers as food for them. You could also find out where your local wildlife meadow is and get a group of friends together to help take care of it!

Butterfly numbers are down nearly half compared to last year.

Becca and Jeriah outside the butterfly farm she created in her back garden

Red squirrels

There used to be 3.5 million red squirrels in the UK, but now they are one of our most endangered animals. This is mainly due to an invasive species, the grey squirrel.

The grey squirrel is a problem because it has been out-competing red squirrels for food and habitats. It also carries the squirrelpox virus, which is really harmful to red squirrels. In the film, Scarlett goes to a Scottish nature reserve where a team are doing everything they can to increase the population of red squirrels there. She learns that the only effective way to help red squirrels is by controlling the greys. This means taking them out of the environment and humanely killing them. Although it is really sad to kill an animal, it's essential to improving biodiversity and the numbers of native species.

What can you do to help?

Monitor and report any squirrel action in your garden. If you are lucky enough to have a red squirrel, leave out some food for it, like nuts and seeds.



Scarlett speaks to wildlife presenter and naturalist Steve Backshall about pollution in UK rivers



Trees

It's not just animals in the UK that are under threat, trees are too!

Britain is covered in woodland and forest, and trees are more than just a part of the landscape, they're nature's superheroes! They're a powerful tool in the fight against climate change, providing homes for wildlife and even reducing pollution from cities. Without them, our world would look very different. Jeriah heads to Kew, a Royal Botanic Garden in London, that is the world leader in plant science. He finds out that because of climate change, over half of UK trees could be at risk by 2090. To help the situation, the team at Kew are using cutting-edge science in labs. They're testing to see which trees can live the longest without water, so that they can survive drought. They've also started introducing trees from other warmer countries. Kew's experts are hoping that these trees might be more resilient to less rainfall, and better suited to our changing climate.



TREES are nature's superheroes!
They provide homes for wildlife and help to remove pollution!



In 2022, there was a big drought in the UK that caused the loss of 400 trees at Kew

How can you protect trees?

You could plant a tree in your back garden. Just one tree can make a big difference! If you don't have a garden, you could campaign with friends to protect trees in your local area.

Birds

Many animals depend on our trees, including birds, which have seen a devastating decline in recent years.

Bird charity the RSPB says that since 1980, there has been a loss of one in six breeding birds. That's 600 million birds! One of the worst affected birds is the skylark. They are vulnerable to being disturbed because they build their nests on the ground. This means that people walk very close to them, and so do dogs. When this happens, the birds often abandon their nests.

Skylarks build their nests on the ground, which makes them very vulnerable



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biodiversity – the variety of plant and animal life in an environment
extinct – when there are no animals of a certain species left alive
endangered – any type of plant or animal that is in danger of disappearing forever
conservation – the protection of things found in nature
ecosystem – all the living and non-living things in an area
invasive species – when a species is introduced from another country or area and upsets nature's balance



*"Please **use your voice and believe in yourself**. Every single last one of you is important. You are not just a drop in the ocean. Because what is an ocean, but a multitude of drops. Every drop counts."*

You count. Use your voice for change. Demand that change. Put your case across. If you put a good case across then people will start to act upon it."

– Chris Packham

What can you do to help skylarks?

If you see a sign saying that skylarks are nesting, make sure to stay on footpaths. If you have a dog, keep it on a short lead.

Marine life

Biodiversity isn't just being affected on land. Climate change and pollution are affecting our seas too.

In Cardigan Bay in South Wales, a group of young people are helping to monitor and protect their coastline. The Living Seas Youth Forum takes part in beach cleans and dolphin surveys to monitor wildlife and make sure it isn't decreasing.

Some of the challenges that marine life is facing are:

- Plastics
- Pesticides
- Nets washing up on beaches

What can you do to protect our seas?

Go and join in with a beach clean. Or if you don't live near a beach, help to clear up rubbish wherever you live. Less plastic pollution in general means a safer marine environment for all animals!



Use your voice!

BRITAIN is a nation of animal lovers, but if we aren't careful, we could soon be left with just our pets. Our wildlife has suffered a devastating decline over the last 50 years and now we need to do our bit to stop it disappearing forever.

In the film, Scarlett and Jeriah discover what young people are doing to save nature for future generations, and look at how you can make a difference.

It's so important to use your voice to spread awareness of the decline in nature so we can better protect it!

What is the government doing about it?

FYI asked the UK government what it is doing to help our wildlife. It said: "The government has strict targets to meet to restore nature, and is taking action to do this by creating habitats which provide homes for our wildlife, helping to increase their numbers. We have also said that we will take serious action against those who pollute our rivers and lakes."

You can watch the show every week on the *First News* app, at first.news/tv, or on Sky News and Sky Kids.



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