



# STATE OF NATURE

A SUMMARY  
FOR ENGLAND



“

I WHOLLY BELIEVE THAT IT IS OUR DUTY TO PROTECT NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT AS A RECIPROICATION TO HOW NATURE TAKES CARE OF US EVERY SINGLE DAY. NATURE ALLOWS US TO EAT, DRINK, BREATHE, LIVE. THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS PROTECT IT.”

YETUNDE KEHINDE, 17  
YOUNG CONSERVATIONIST

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*STATE OF NATURE 2019* REPORT  
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#STATEOFNATURE

# THE STATE OF NATURE 2019: A SUMMARY FOR ENGLAND

**The *State of Nature* partnership consists of over 70 partners drawn from conservation NGOs, research institutes, and the UK and national governments. We have worked together to assess the state of the UK's wildlife, and to understand this in the light of the pressures on nature and the responses being made to recover our natural heritage.**

The *State of Nature 2019* report uses data collected by tens of thousands of expert volunteers. These data are analysed using rigorous statistical methods, to report on the state of nature across the UK and in the UK's Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories and at the scale of the UK's constituent nations. Here, we summarise the report's findings for England.

England's landscapes have been modified by human activity for millennia. Few if any English habitats can be described as truly "wild", as humans have created the semi-natural habitats on which their characteristic fauna and flora depend.

Changes occurred throughout recent centuries; for example, the drainage of Fenland started in the 17th century. Despite this, England still contains a range of internationally important habitats, such as its lowland heathlands, ancient woodlands and chalk grasslands in the south, the blanket bogs along the Pennines, and the coastal estuaries and saltmarshes, while sea cliffs and offshore islands support internationally important numbers of breeding seabirds.

Further information on the state of nature in England, including details of the data and analyses underpinning our findings, can be found in the UK *State of Nature 2019* report:

 [www.nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019](http://www.nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019)

**At the UK scale, the abundance and distribution of species has, on average, declined over recent decades and many measures suggest this decline continues. There has been no let-up in the net loss of nature in the UK.**

## KEY FINDINGS

Of the 7,615 species found in England that have been assessed using the IUCN Regional Red List criteria, and for which sufficient data were available, 971 (13%) are currently threatened with extinction from Great Britain (England-specific assessments are not available).

The indicator for 241 terrestrial and freshwater species for which England-specific trends are available shows little change in average abundance – it has fallen by 1% since 1970, and 3% over the past 10 years. This measure is dominated by vertebrates, particularly birds, many of which are rare and localised species that have recovered from low numbers or colonised recently, so is poorly representative of nature more widely.

Within this indicator, the proportions of species increasing and decreasing are similar. Our wildlife is undergoing rapid changes in abundance; the proportion of species defined as showing strong changes in abundance – either increases or decreases – rose from 40% since 1970 to 48% over the past 10 years.

Our indicator of average species' distribution has fallen by 5% since 1970. This indicator includes data on 5,942 terrestrial and freshwater species over a much broader and representative range of taxonomic groups, including invertebrates and plants. Because species tend to decline in abundance before they disappear from a site, this change could reflect more severe underlying abundance declines that we are currently unable to quantify.

Within this indicator, more species have decreased than increased. Since 1970, 31% of species have decreased and 24% have increased in distribution, with 45% showing little change. Over the past 10 years, 39% have decreased and 32% have increased, with 29% showing little change. Our wildlife is undergoing rapid change in distribution; the proportion of species defined as showing strong changes in distribution – either increases or decreases – rose from 23% since 1970 to 45% over the past 10 years.

## HEADLINES

Prior to the 1970 baseline used by the *State of Nature 2019*, we know there was widespread loss and degradation of habitats across England, dating back many centuries, from which the country's wildlife has not recovered.

In recent decades, pressure on England's diverse landscapes caused by human activity has resulted in both losses and gains for biodiversity. The rate of this change appears to be increasing: our statistics indicate that over the last decade nearly half of the species for which we have data have shown strong

changes in abundance, and nearly half have shown strong changes in distribution.

Pressures upon wildlife come from many sources, including agricultural management, urbanisation, pollution, hydrological change, woodland management and invasive non-native species. Climate change is driving widespread changes in the abundance, distribution and ecology of England's wildlife, and will continue to do so for decades or even centuries to come.

England's seas are also subject to a range of pressures. Progress has been made on

improving water quality in coastal waters and some fish stocks are showing signs of recovery. Other pressures, such as those associated with climate change and ocean acidification, are still challenging and there is evidence of change in open sea habitats and plankton communities.

The *State of Nature 2019* report showcases just a few of the exciting conservation initiatives intended to help nature flourish across England, delivered through partnerships of individuals, landowners, NGOs and government.



