

PRESS RELEASE

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## **COP15: The UK government must champion an ambitious deal to save and restore nature at the international biodiversity summit and set targets to reverse the decline of nature in Britain**

From 7-19 December the world's governments will convene to try to agree a new set of goals to halt nature loss through the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) at COP15 in Montreal, Canada. They meet against a background of alarming trends in biodiversity loss: a recent report by WWF suggested that 69% of wildlife populations have been lost since 1970.

**A Rocha UK, the UK's only Christian nature conservation charity, is calling for the UK government to champion a bold deal at COP15 to halt and reverse biodiversity and protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030. It is also calling on the government to lead by example at home, by strengthening the UK's nature restoration targets and making them legally binding on the government.**

The key aim of COP15 is to secure agreement on a new international goal to protect at least 30% of all land- and sea-based ecosystems and to halt and begin to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. If this is agreed, the key to delivering it - when previous international goals have been missed - will be establishing targets for different sub-issues and countries making them legally binding in national legislation. Proposed targets under discussion include reducing or preventing the rate of introduction and establishing invasive alien species by at least 50%, cutting pesticide use by two-thirds and eliminating plastic waste.

A Rocha UK calls upon Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to show international leadership by attending the critical summit in person and championing the new proposed high-level goal and legally binding targets to deliver it.

While the UK has a long tradition of nature conservation, it is one of the most nature-poor countries in Europe. Many of the UK's nature protection laws are currently under threat because of their inclusion in the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, which proposes the automatic removal of all EU-derived legislation without further parliamentary scrutiny by the end of 2023. In addition, nature targets under the 2021 Environment Act aim

only to see a 10% restoration of UK nature by 2042 on a 2030 baseline, but with continuing declines predicted over the next decade the UK's nature could be in a worse state in 20 years than it is now.

A Rocha UK is also calling on the government to keep existing environmental protections by removing them from the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill and to set a legally binding target to halt and begin to reverse UK biodiversity loss by 2030.

Andy Atkins, CEO of A Rocha UK, explains: *'The UK public cares deeply about nature, yet we have become one of the most nature-depleted countries in Europe. At COP15, the UK government should champion an ambitious international goal to end nature loss and begin to reverse it by 2030 - and it should reset the UK's targets and protections to match that goal.'*

*'Globally, wildlife numbers are collapsing. It's not just that the world is losing unique species and habitats, but that in doing so we are undermining human life support systems - living soil for growing food, water supply from wetlands, our natural carbon sinks in forests. We all need governments to act fast and boldly to turn this tragedy around in the next decade, and COP15 is their opportunity to do so.'*

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**Notes to Editors:**

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**Spokespeople available for interview -**

Andy Atkins, Chief Executive Officer of A Rocha UK  
Andy Lester, Head of Conservation, A Rocha UK

**A Rocha UK** works to protect and restore the natural world by equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment as a regular part of their individual life and church mission. It runs the popular Eco Church scheme, with more than 5000 local churches registered. It also coordinates the growing Partners in Action network of 37 Christian organisations managing their land for nature and cutting carbon. Visit our website [here](#)

**COP15** - The 15th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

**COP15 Background paper:** More information on COP15, the issues under debate and A Rocha UK's position on them can be found [here](#)