

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday, 28 September 2023

State of Nature Report 2023: Christian conservation charity calls for government to act to reverse precipitous decline in UK wildlife

A major new report by nature conservation organisations, including the Christian environment charity, A Rocha UK, shows that approaching one in six UK wildlife species are at risk of extinction. This compares with one in ten at the time of the last report in 2019. A Rocha UK is calling on the government to reverse damaging farming policies and take much faster action on climate change, which has now become a major driver of damage to nature.

The State of Nature Report, was released on Wednesday 27 September by more than 60 organisations including the RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, Woodland Trust and A Rocha UK. It brings together the latest scientific data and expertise on how wildlife is faring across the whole of the UK. The results show a precipitous further decline in the abundance of UK wildlife in recent years with around one in six species at risk of extinction in the UK. The report finds that 43% of UK birds are under threat, red squirrel numbers have declined by 37% in the last 20 years and only a fifth of farmland is farmed in a nature-friendly way. A limited 11% of UK land is protected and 7% of woodlands in the UK are considered to be in an ecologically good state.

The latest State of Nature report provides the clearest evidence yet of climate change becoming a major driver of damage, alongside damaging farming practices such as over-use of pesticides.

While the UK has a long tradition of nature conservation, it is one of the most nature-poor countries in Europe. The UK government recently signed up to an international goal to halt and begin to reverse nature loss by 2030, but the report shows that its policies will not achieve this and are, in some cases, making things worse. The State of Nature Report sets out the actions that will be necessary to meet biodiversity and climate targets including implementing nature friendly farming at a much wider scale, expanding and managing protected areas for nature, and restoring and creating carbon-rich habitats to unlock co-benefits for nature and climate.

Along with other contributors to the report, A Rocha UK is calling on the government to take its international obligations seriously by halting damaging policies and investing instead in wholesale nature restoration.

Andy Atkins, CEO of A Rocha UK, explains: *'UK wildlife numbers are collapsing and we have become one of the most nature-depleted countries in Europe. The public cares deeply about nature and the government has signed up to the international goal to end nature loss and begin to reverse it by 2030. But this report reveals that so many of its policies, such as allowing sewage dumping in our rivers and seas - are taking us in reverse. Increasingly Churches and Christians are acting practically to protect nature where they are; but the government has the most powerful levers of all to turn this tragedy around and they must use them urgently.'*

Andy Lester, A Rocha UK's Head of Conservation said: *'It's not just that the UK 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. As an election approaches, Christians who care about God's Creation, should call on all political parties to commit to effective policies to reverse this disaster.'*

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Notes to Editors:

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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 6,500 local churches registered. It also coordinates the Partners in Action network of 45 Christian organisations managing their land for nature and cutting carbon. Visit our website [here](#)

State of Nature 2023 report: <https://bit.ly/stateofnature23>