



## **STATE OF NATURE REPORT - HOW EVERYONE CAN HELP**

Many people will have seen the latest State of Nature Report which stated that the **UK is now one of the most nature-depleted countries on Earth.**

Have you ever wondered how scientists know this with such certainty?

It is through the collective efforts of thousands of people, most of whom are volunteers, who monitor and record the wildlife around them, that scientists can collate and report on the state of nature. Without their enthusiasm and commitment, it would not be possible to understand the pressures on nature, or find out whether efforts to address these pressures through conservation action have been effective.

In the UK we have a wealth of data on which to assess the state of nature. There are two types of data:

a) **Abundance data** from structured monitoring schemes in the UK measures the average change in numbers across hundreds of species, including, but not exclusively, those that monitor birds, mammals, butterflies, moths and marine fish.

b) **Distribution data** measures the change in the proportion of occupied sites. For many species, distribution is the most appropriate way to measure status; for instance, by looking at changes in where they can be found tells us a lot about both the animals themselves and the pressures on their habitats. Climate change may also be a factor - for example a species may be found in a similar number of sites, but those sites may be found farther north in the country than previously. We know for example, that willow warblers and cuckoos are doing well in Scotland, but less well in southern England. The monitoring and recording focus on species native to the UK as well as those that have arrived more recently (eg little egret, which has only settled here in the UK in the last two decades) and also those that may have been introduced.

Plumpton Wildlife & Habitat Group is planning on making **2024 the Year of the Bird**. Everyone can help – you don't need to be an expert. You just need to spend a few minutes every week jotting down the birds you see.

Simply by noting down your sightings of birds, whether from kitchen window, your back garden, on the village green or top of the Downs, you can make a real contribution to their conservation across the UK.

People have been studying birds in Britain for hundreds of years and bird recording is now more popular than ever. British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) offers many ways for people to get involved in this hugely enjoyable, stimulating and worthwhile activity. Sending in your data to BTO then enables scientists to try to work out why there are decreases or increases – may be habitat change – but could be climate change, and helps them decide where conservation action can best be directed.

If you would like to get involved go to <https://bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw>.

It's the time for thinking about New Year's resolutions - so why not make getting outdoors more often, and record the birds that you see. It's fun, good for your health, and is helping scientists monitor what is happening to nature.

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