

# STATE OF NATURE IN KENT 2021

An account of the changing fortunes of Kent's species and habitats, the pressures nature has faced and the conservation efforts undertaken over the last 10 years.



[kentnature.org.uk/  
state-of-nature](https://kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature)



- Drivers for change - pressures
- Headlines
- Approaches that have worked
- Species and habitats
- Biological recording
- Conclusions
- State of Nature and LNRS

Chris Drake – Kent Nature Partnership coordinator  
and Making Space for Nature Project Officer

# Production

**Delivery by KWT project team with  
KNP steering group & KCC input**

## **Funding**

Kent County Council  
Kent Planning Officers Group  
Kent Wildlife Trust

- Produced across 2020 – 22
- Published by KNP in July 2022
- Covers Kent and Medway
- Seven chapters
- 471 pages
- Over sixty contributors



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## Report structure: -

Forward

Chapter 1: Introduction

**Chapter 2: Headlines and key findings**

**Chapter 3: Drivers of change**

Chapter 4: Conservation: towards a Nature Recovery Network

**Chapter 5: The State of Kent's species**

Chapter 6: Landscape-scale conservation in Kent

Chapter 7: Conservation impact case studies

**Conclusion**

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Photos by Jim Higham

# Pressures x

- × Water industry discharges are the biggest contributor of phosphorus to Kent's rivers and lakes, followed by agriculture and private sewage treatment plants.
- × In 2019, 79% of the rivers and lakes in Kent monitored for phosphorus did not meet the required standard for good ecological status as set out under the Water Framework Directive. (Compared to 67% of water bodies across the South East, and 56% throughout England).
- × In 2019, 77% of Kent's groundwater bodies did not meet the required WFD standard for good chemical status and two groundwater bodies deteriorated, in part due to the presence of nitrates in the water. (Across England, nitrates are the most common cause of groundwater test failures).



Chalk stream image by South East Rivers Trust

# Species findings



**Kent came out top for Important Fungus Areas within the UK in 2014, (Evans, Marren and Harper, 2014a).**

**14 species of vascular plant thought to have gone extinct in Kent between 1920 – 2010 have been re-found during the last 10 years**

**Kent holds ¼ of all spider species red listed as threatened with extinction in Britain (Harvey et al. 2017)**

**Ants, bees and wasps: 17 aculeate species have been added to the county list, with the majority of these being discovered in the last decade.**

**Butterflies: No species have been lost in Kent over the last decade. Two of the priority species, Heath Fritillary and Duke of Burgundy, have increased in numbers and range.**


**Moths: Clifden Nonpareil and Dark Crimson Underwing are now breeding in Kent after a long gap.**

**Birds: 2011-2021 - only two breeding species have been lost, and no species have been added as regular breeders, although Black-winged Stilt, Cattle Egret and Red Kite have bred and may be added soon.**


**Two species of bat have been rediscovered in Kent in the last 10-year period, these are the Lesser Horseshoe Bat and the Greater Horseshoe Bat.**

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https://kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature/chapter-4-conservation-towards-a-nature-recovery-network/



About Strategy State of Nature Nature Recovery Publications Statements & Consultations Blog Contact us




# Chapter 4: Conservation – towards a Nature Recovery Network

This chapter looks back at the at the wide range of conservation efforts that have been made over the last ten years from species conservation and environmental policy to people engagement.

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## Highlights




**Duke of Burgundy species recovery programme**

Butterfly Conservation led a three-year project funded by the National Lottery Fund, called the Design Woods project (2007 to 2010). The project focused on landscape/woodland owner engagement to restore favourable habitat to ensure that the Duke of Burgundy butterfly was



**Valley of vision landscape partnership scheme**

The scheme's objective was to: (a) conserve and enhance the Medway Catchment landscape and biodiversity; (b) To improve physical and collective access to them; (c) To engage local landowners, communities, and visitors and involve them in their exploration.



**Heath Frithill species recovery programme**

This was a long-term programme to save the heath Frithill. The work began in the early 1980s, at that time, the heath Frithill was thought to be on the brink of extinction in the UK.

Page 4/2

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38 of 45


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https://kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature/chapter-3-landscape-scale-conservation-in-kent/

Taking the Levett principles one by one, Natural England and Kent Wildlife Trust take a detailed look at what they mean in practice, how landscape scale conservation is being implemented in Kent and Medway, and the challenges for the future.

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## Highlights



**Making space for nature: MORE**

Lawrence Ball, Kent Wildlife Trust


Page 2/11



**Making space for nature: BETTER**

Wendy Hewitt, Natural England, and Paul Crosby-Merrett, Kent Wildlife Trust

Page 2/9



**Making space for nature: JOINED**

Robbie Hill and Paul Crosby-Merrett, Kent Wildlife Trust

Page 3/11

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# WILDLIFE RECORDING

TONY WITTS, KENT & MEDWAY BIOLOGICAL RECORDS CENTRE

## Introduction

Biological recording is the formal process of making a useful observation into a piece of scientifically valid information that can be used to detect changes in the distribution and abundance of species. For a record to be valid, it must have four basic pieces of information:

1. **What** – the species observed, preferably with its scientific name to avoid confusion.
2. **Where** – a named location and a spatial coordinate e.g. Ordnance Survey grid reference.
3. **When** – the date it was observed.
4. **Who** – the person(s) who saw it.

Additional information such as abundance, the name of the person who identified it (the determiner), associated species, food plants, life stage and sex can also be recorded to enhance the value of a record. Kent has a long history of biological recording reaching back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. John Gerard mentions several Kentish locations in *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* of 1597, while Thomas Johnson's *Ken Rariorum (1626) and Descriptio Itinere Plinbarum (1632)* record two botanical excursions through Kent by the author and his companions. With the development of the railway network in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the number of naturalists visiting the county grew; this continues to this day, though coverage tends to be patchy and focused on local biodiversity.

wildlife among the public has increased in the last 20 years or so, with the development of citizen science programmes and concerns over the state of nature. Nevertheless, other than birdwatching, general wildlife recording is still considered to be a rather odd occupation. For many people, wildlife recording only comes to mind when there is an imminent threat of development on their doorstep, by which time it is usually too late (although see Hill & Gibson (2021) for an exception where recording helped defend a site against a potential development). A lack of interest in wildlife and the concurrent loss of general knowledge that enables the labelling of species is a pressure on wild flora and fauna. Nature needs the public to care about it – especially if pressure is to be placed upon politicians and businesses to consider wildlife in their decision making.

The loss of natural history education means that fewer children are exposed to the diversity of wild species in Kent, therefore fewer can take their study further and develop the skills required to find and name species, identifying many plants, fungi and insects is difficult. Without local taxonomic experts, they become effectively invisible, and changes in the environment go unnoted until larger and more obvious species are affected, e.g. farmland birds. It is perhaps in the wider countryside, outside nature reserves, that the effects of these issues are felt most, where species live unnoticed, unprotected and are content to be overlooked.

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# Report Conclusion



**Evidence:** [kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature](https://kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature)

Insufficient evidence has hindered our ability to report on changes over the last ten years. Fit-for purpose monitoring and evidence must be front and centre of strategies to restore Kent's nature and be resourced appropriately.

## **Collaboration:**

Challenges and issues can't be tackled at single organisation or site-scales. We need to work together much more closely to deliver real progress and be innovative in our pursuit of collective action.

## **Investment:**

We need to secure greater investment in nature's recovery, from a wide range of sources. This will involve innovating and diversifying income streams and developing new models of sustainable financing. We need to reduce competition for resources among our community and use evidence to direct investment for the greatest potential impact.

## **Engagement:**

We need to make our countryside even more accessible, to promote its health and wellbeing benefits, and a long-term, meaningful connection with nature that will inspire all to protect and respect it.

[kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature/](http://kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature/)  
[makingspacefornaturekent.org.uk](http://makingspacefornaturekent.org.uk)



Thank you