

Nature conservation organisations call on Government to deliver ambitious vision for nature and people

Embargo: Not for publication or broadcast until:
00:01 hours on Tuesday, October 13, 2015

An ambitious and inspirational long-term plan is urgently needed to save nature and improve our well-being – that is the clear message from the Response for Nature report published today by a coalition of leading conservation organisations.

The Response for Nature report for England, a follow up to the 2013 State of Nature report, will be launched by naturalist, writer and TV presenter, Steve Backshall, and 26 conservation organisations at Church House in London this evening (Tuesday, 13 October), while simultaneous events will be held in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, to launch reports for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Each report makes key recommendations that governments must make to help restore nature in the UK. We are losing nature at an alarming rate, so we must act now to halt and reverse this decline before it's too late – not only for nature itself, but people too.

In 2013, scientists from 25 nature organisations worked side-by-side to compile a stock take of our native species – the first of its kind for the UK. The resulting State of Nature report ^[2] revealed that 60% of the species studied had declined over recent decades. More than one in ten of all the species assessed were under threat of disappearing from our shores altogether.

In his speech at tonight's London launch Steve Backshall will say: "The State of Nature report revealed where we are. Now we need a plan for where we should go. The Response for Nature document starts us on that long road.

“Let us be in no doubt that the public is behind us. An independent survey showed that 90 per cent of the UK population feel that our well-being and quality is based on nature ^[3].

“Action can’t be simply hived off to a single, hard-pressed department in Whitehall. It must run as a matter of course through every department, from Defra to the Treasury. Every department needs to understand that restoring nature will be a key solution to some of our most pressing social, environmental and economic problems. Every individual, from top to bottom, needs to embrace it, and act on it.

“To the Government, I say – please read this report, take note and act on its recommendations. Come back with the details of your 25-year plan. People and nature need you to make it a great one.”

The Response for Nature reports outlines specific asks for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to help save UK nature. To ensure its recovery, nature needs the UK Government, or devolved Government’s, to take the following common actions now:

- **Deliver an inspiring vision for nature** – nature needs to be a part of our lives. Government must set a trajectory for nature’s recovery so that, by 2040, we have a country richer in nature and can see people connecting to nature.
- **Fully implement and defend the laws that conserve nature** – our most important laws that safeguard species and special places, the Birds and Habitats Directives, are under threat. We must resist attempts from Europe to weaken our laws and ensure the full implementation of legislation that aims to reduce pressures on nature.
- **Deliver a network of special places for nature on land and at sea** – we need special places to be protected and well managed, and linked within a wider landscape with room for people and nature.
- **Recover threatened species targeted through programmes of action** – we must halt species extinction, but more than that, we should be restoring priority species to favourable conservation status, where populations recover to a healthy state.
- **Improve the connection of young people to nature for their health and well-being and for nature’s future**
- **Provide incentives (or other financial measures) that work for nature** – we need to reward those who enhance our natural world, and make those responsible pay when we take more from it than we put back.
- **Support people working together for nature** – we all have a part to play in saving nature. Each and every one of us needs to take care about, and take action for, nature – before it’s too late.

Butterfly Conservation Chief Executive, Dr Martin Warren, who will be speaking at the Response for Nature launch tonight, said: “Nature is in trouble, the time to act is now.

Conservation NGOs are keen to play their part but we need a strong lead from the UK

Government. We welcome the commitment to produce a 25 year plan to restore nature but this must be turned into effective action and fast. We need this for nature but also for the health and well-being of the people of this country.”

As the Chancellor considers the Spending Review and budgets for Government Departments, the Response for Nature coalition is urging them not to undervalue the contribution that a healthy environment can make in delivering a host of public benefits including improved health and happiness, more effective planning, flood prevention, sustainable farming and climate change adaptation.

Martin Harper, RSPB Conservation Director, said: “There are some big decisions being made over the coming months about public spending, the future of nature laws and development on land and at sea. These decisions must not erode the basis of nature protection. We need leadership from the Prime Minister to ensure all Government Departments play their part in enhancing the environment for this and the next generation.”

The Response for Nature coalition for England includes the following partners:

- A Focus on Nature
- A Rocha UK
- Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust
- Bat Conservation Trust
- Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland
- British Bryological Society
- British Pteridological Society
- Buglife
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust
- Butterfly Conservation
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
- The Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland
- Freshwater Habitats Trust
- Friends of the Earth
- The Fungus Conservation Trust
- John Muir Trust
- The Mammal Society
- Marine Conservation Society
- National Trust
- People’s Trust for Endangered Species
- Plantlife
- RSPB
- Whale and Dolphin Conservation
- The Wildlife Trusts
- Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
- The Woodland Trust

Ends

For further information and to arrange an interview, please contact:

Harry Bellew, Media Officer: 01767 693418 / Harry-jay.Bellew@rspb.org.uk

Broadcast-quality radio interviews:

To arrange an ISDN broadcast-quality radio interview please contact Harry Bellew at the RSPB press office.

Photographs:

Images to support this story are available from RSPB Images.

To access an image, please click on the hyperlink below and then enter the user name and password when prompted.

Add link

Username:

Password:

Editor's notes:

1. A full copy of the Response for Nature report can found: **ADD LINK**
2. In 2013, 25 nature organisations worked side-by-side to produce the State of Nature report, a stock take on all our native wildlife. The report revealed that 60 per cent of species studied have declined over recent decades. More than one in ten of all species assessed were under threat of disappearing from our shores altogether. A full copy of the State of Nature report can be found: https://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/stateofnature_tcm9-345839.pdf
3. European Commission (2013) *Flash Eurobarometer 379: Attitudes towards biodiversity*. November 2013.

Public attitudes and support for nature reflect the range of reasons why nature conservation is important. An independent survey published by the European Commission revealed that 94 per cent of the UK population believe we have a moral obligation to halt the loss of nature, 90 per cent feel that our well-being and quality of life is based on nature and 88 per cent believe that nature is indispensable for the production of goods, such as food, fuel and medicines

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

The Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL

Press office telephone: 01767 681577

www.rspb.org.uk

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity.
In England and Wales, no: 207076.
In Scotland, no: SC037654.