

# How is nature faring in Dorset?



## Why is Dorset's natural environment so special?

Dorset has a diverse geology, and in turn some very special places:

- chalk downland and chalk streams
- clay vales with ancient meadows, woodlands and hedges
- sands underlying our heathland and peatland
- our world famous coast with its natural harbours and limestone cliffs
- a diverse marine environment supporting rocky reefs, sea cliffs, sand and gravel bars and seagrass beds

**12%** of the UK's remaining lowland heathland is in Dorset and the county is a stronghold for our rarest reptiles

Dorset contains the **10km** square with the richest native plant diversity in Britain & Ireland

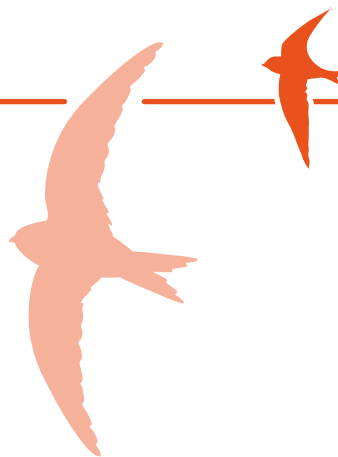
Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole's urban area has **21%** tree canopy cover

## Nature is under threat

● About 1 in 40 species ever recorded in Dorset is now extinct.

● The pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly was lost from Dorset in 2002. Breeding puffins are on the brink of local extinction with only a handful of birds left.

● Only 8% of Dorset's land is legally protected for wildlife, with only just over a third of this in good condition.



**16%**  
of species in Great Britain are now threatened with EXTINCTION

● Dorset has 1,049 km of rivers but less than 15% are in good ecological condition.

● Currently 6.4% of Dorset's area is known to be in good condition with nature thriving – a long way from the target of 30% by 2030.



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## We can help wildlife recover:

- Gull buntings stopped breeding in Dorset in 1971, but have recently returned following successful recovery efforts in neighbouring Devon.
- Reintroductions have helped ospreys and ladybird spiders towards recovery in Dorset.
- At Dorset Wildlife Trust's Wild Woodbury we have seen a 25% increase in butterflies in two years. Harvest mice and other small mammals are thriving, supporting owls, kestrels and other birds of prey.

## People care about nature:

- 75% of people value nature more now than pre-Covid.
- 84% of the public report taking at least one action for nature.

**Nature matters to voters across the political spectrum – almost identical numbers of environmental charity supporters vote Conservative and Labour, and many say they will base voting choice on environmental policies.**



## People are working together for nature:

- 67 farm holdings and over 14,000 hectares of land are within collaborative farm clusters facilitated by Dorset Wildlife Trust.
- Nearly 900 hours of volunteer time were given to Dorset Wildlife Trust's wetland projects in 2023.

## Nature can help in a changing world:

- Targeted green prescribing could save the NHS over £635m per year through improvements in mental and physical health through being in and with nature.
- Natural flood management can help reduce both flooding and pollution through creating buffer areas either side of rivers, restoring natural floodplains, leaky dams and beavers.
- Seagrass can capture carbon 35% faster than tropical rainforests.
- In Dorset we are restoring peat wetlands on 16 heathland sites to capture carbon, help reduce flooding and restore nature.

Find out how you can take action for nature, contact us:

[enquiries@dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk)



**Dorset**  
Wildlife Trust