

Making Space for Nature in the South Downs

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South Downs Partnership Management Plan
Winchester

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Although nature reserves remain the cornerstone of all conservation efforts, their crucial role is being overwhelmed by countervailing forces

Important drivers:

- **Pollution**
- **Illegal and unsustainable ‘harvesting’ (hunting)**
- **The sheer ‘press of people’ (not least the two Ds – dogs and disturbance)**
- **Construction of infrastructure (roads, railways, homes, factories, offices etc. etc.)**
- **And now climate change**



But the biggest impact impacts are changes in agriculture from Rothschilds lifetime to the present day

This is not an attack on farmers, nor does it ignore the huge importance of growing affordable food – but not at an unsustainable environmental cost.

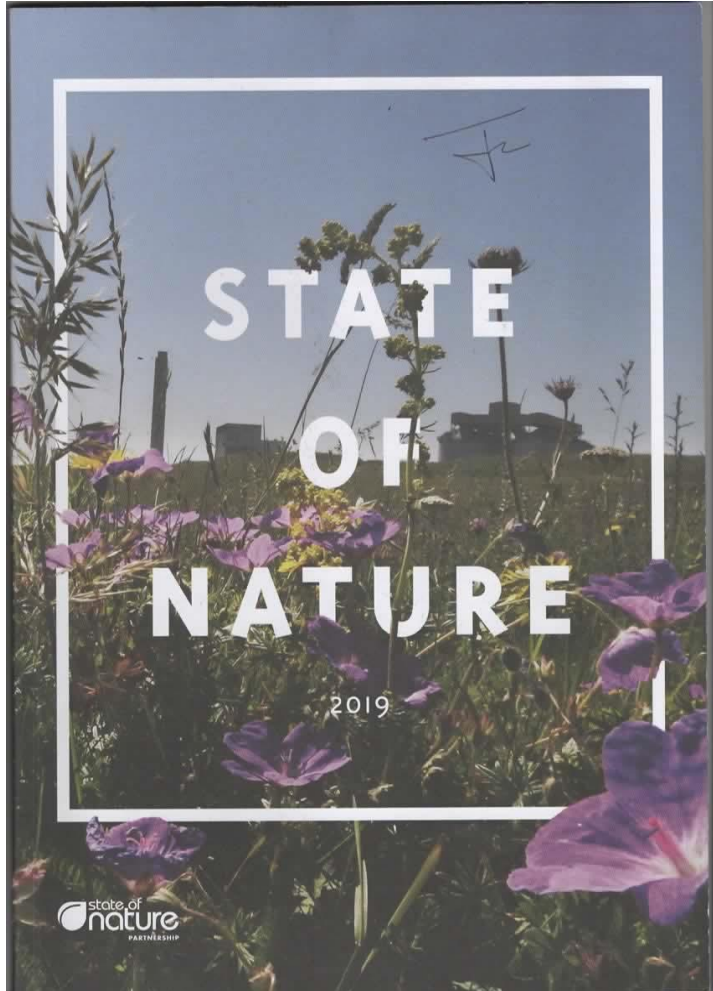


Not much space for nature here



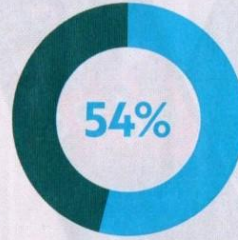
Plenty here

We now live in one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, and it's getting worse

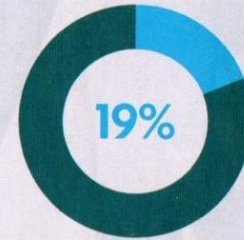


Science

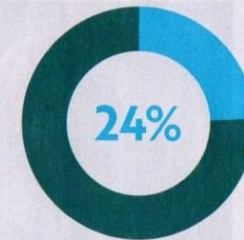
Headline figures from the *State of Nature* report 2023



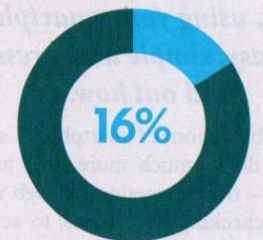
Proportion of flowering plant species whose distributions across Great Britain have declined since 1970.



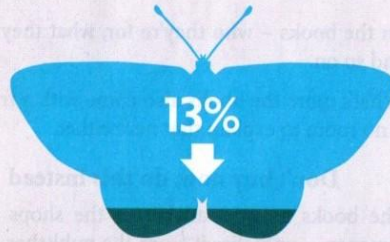
Average drop in the abundance of 753 terrestrial and freshwater species across the UK since 1970.



Drop in the abundance of 13 UK seabird species since 1986; that figure is a worrying 49% for 11 seabird species in Scotland.



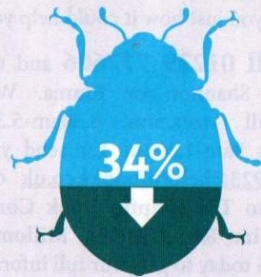
Proportion of 10,008 species assessed that are threatened with extinction from Great Britain (12% in Northern Ireland).



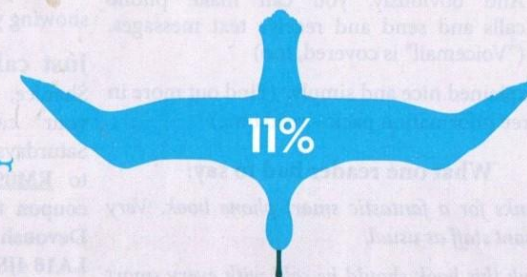
13% decrease in UK distributions of 4,979 invertebrate species on average since 1970.



18% decrease in UK distributions of pollinator species.




34% decrease in UK distributions of pest control species.



11% of 6,557 species assessed across UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies are threatened with global extinction.

 % of UK species declining in range or abundance since 1970

And above  % of just over 10,000 UK species threatened with extinction

What do we do?

In 2010 I chaired an expert committee that produced a report entitled *Making Space for Nature*

‘Executive Summary’ is the now familiar mantra “**More, Bigger, Better and Joined**”
Otherwise known as the “Lawton Principles”

More Designate and/or create new sites

Bigger Increase the size of current wildlife sites

Better Improve the quality of current sites by better habitat management

Joined Join up sites, with physical corridors, or ‘stepping stones’

All of which we know from ecological science will slow, halt and reverse species loss

(25 years later that’s exactly what you, and many others, are trying to do)



What is nature recovery?

Illustrated for woodland habitats

Landscape matrix:

A mosaic of habitats that allows safe movement of species between two core areas

Restoration areas:

Areas where species and habitats can be restored to create new sites for nature.

Stepping stones:

A series of small habitats, such as small copses, not physically linked but close enough to provide wildlife with shelter, food and rest between core areas.

Core areas:

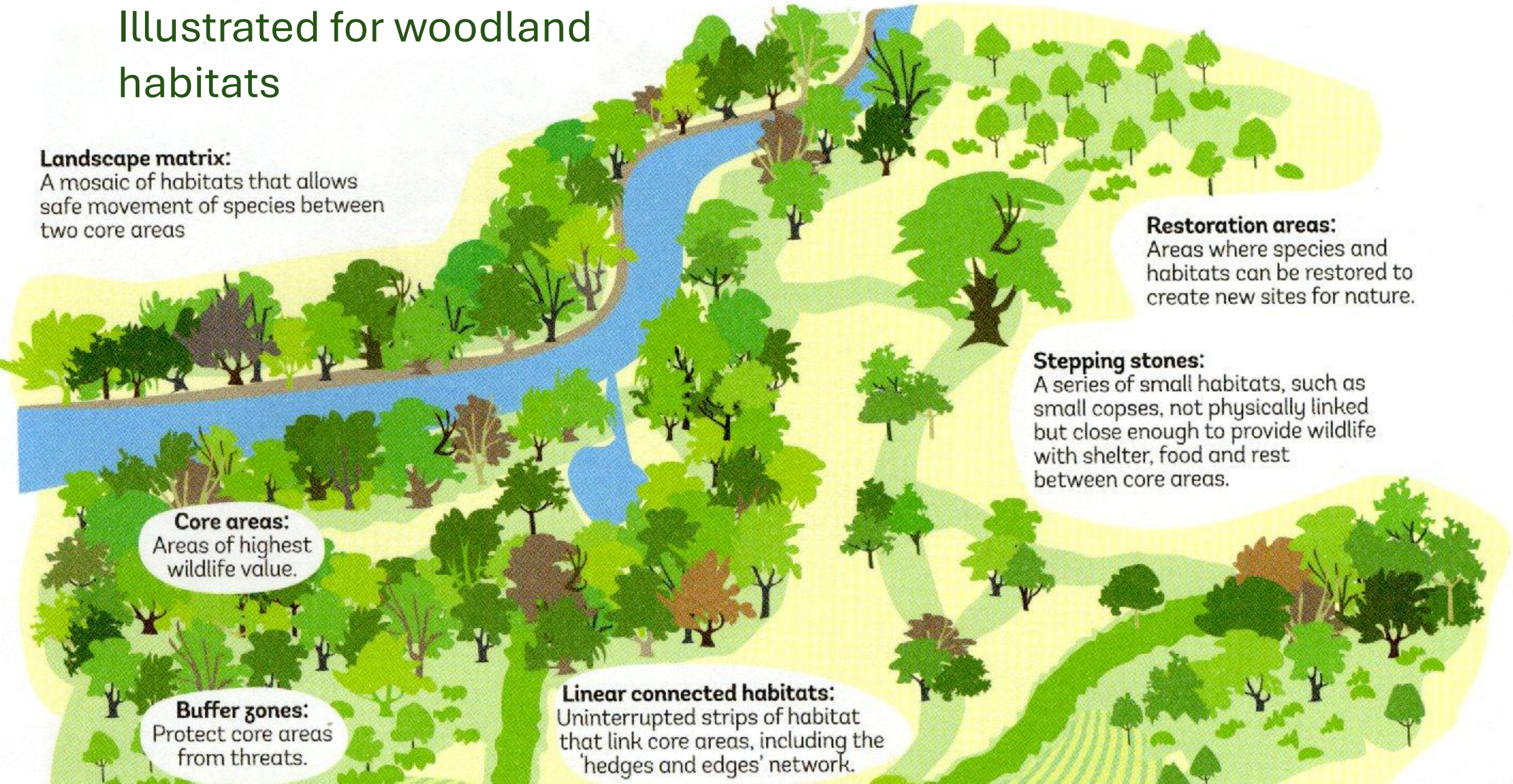
Areas of highest wildlife value.

Buffer zones:

Protect core areas from threats.

Linear connected habitats:

Uninterrupted strips of habitat that link core areas, including the 'hedges and edges' network.



Examples of what we can do in practice, at all spatial scales from the very small to very large

MORE AND BIGGER

CONNECT (JOIN UP)

<p>Acquisition of new nature reserves in existing 'good' habitat</p> <p>Habitat restoration and re-creation (including rewilding)</p>	<p>Creation of wildlife corridors and 'stepping stones'</p> <p>All "more and bigger" actions often also increase connectivity</p>
<p>Agri-environment schemes</p> <p>Wider collaboration with farmers</p> <p>Natural flood management</p> <p>Peatland restoration</p> <p>Reservoirs</p> <p>Forestry (carbon storage)</p> <p>Nature-friendly gardening</p>	<p>More nature-friendly management of existing 'linear infrastructure' in the environment (roadside verges, railway and motorway embankments, canals, drainage ditches etc.)</p>



'JUST' FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

CHANGING THE WAY IN WHICH WE MANAGE OTHER SOCIETAL BENEFITS

ALONE OR IN ALL SORTS OF COMBINATIONS

You can only do this by creating partnerships of the willing

And this can be:

- **complicated**
- **time-consuming**
- **frustrating**

But hugely rewarding

Putting nature back into working landscapes, for the benefit of people and nature



Final Comments

- There will obviously be specific habitat and species that you will want to make more space for
- But otherwise, don't be too prescriptive
- Where you can:

Don't be too tidy. Nature loves tangled messes. "Weeds" are good!
Just add watery bits

Make space for nature and it will come. We may not be able to predict what will come, but it will.



My own garden is a bit like that

Thank you!

And I'm sorry I'm not with you to answer questions

