

A better future for
Somerset's natural
environment

A photograph of a person's legs in grey leggings and black boots walking through a green field with small white and yellow flowers. A silver butterfly is perched on a purple flower in the upper right corner. The image is framed by a green and purple diagonal border.

What is
Biodiversity?



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Biodiversity is, quite simply, the whole variety of life on Earth.

It includes all the different species and varieties of plants, animals and other forms of life, and the complex ecosystems they form. All of us are part of this biodiversity.

Biodiversity is represented by all of the habitats around you, from marshes and meadows, to wetlands and woodlands, and everything in-between. Biodiversity is even found in the houses, gardens, and road verges of our villages and towns!



Biodiversity in Somerset

Somerset is a treasure trove of habitats, each one supporting interesting wildlife, from the common to the rare.

Somerset is one of the most biodiverse counties in the country, with 13,000 species of plants and animals recorded here. Globally threatened species, including the Large Blue butterfly, have a stronghold here. Somerset has many rare species including the Cheddar pink and greater horseshoe bat. Somerset holds 11 internationally designated areas including the Levels and Moors and the Severn Estuary. Distinctive local varieties such as the Kingston Black apple tree add to the diversity.



Why is biodiversity important to Somerset?

Biodiversity is important for a range of environmental, economic and social reasons.

Biodiversity underpins our existence.

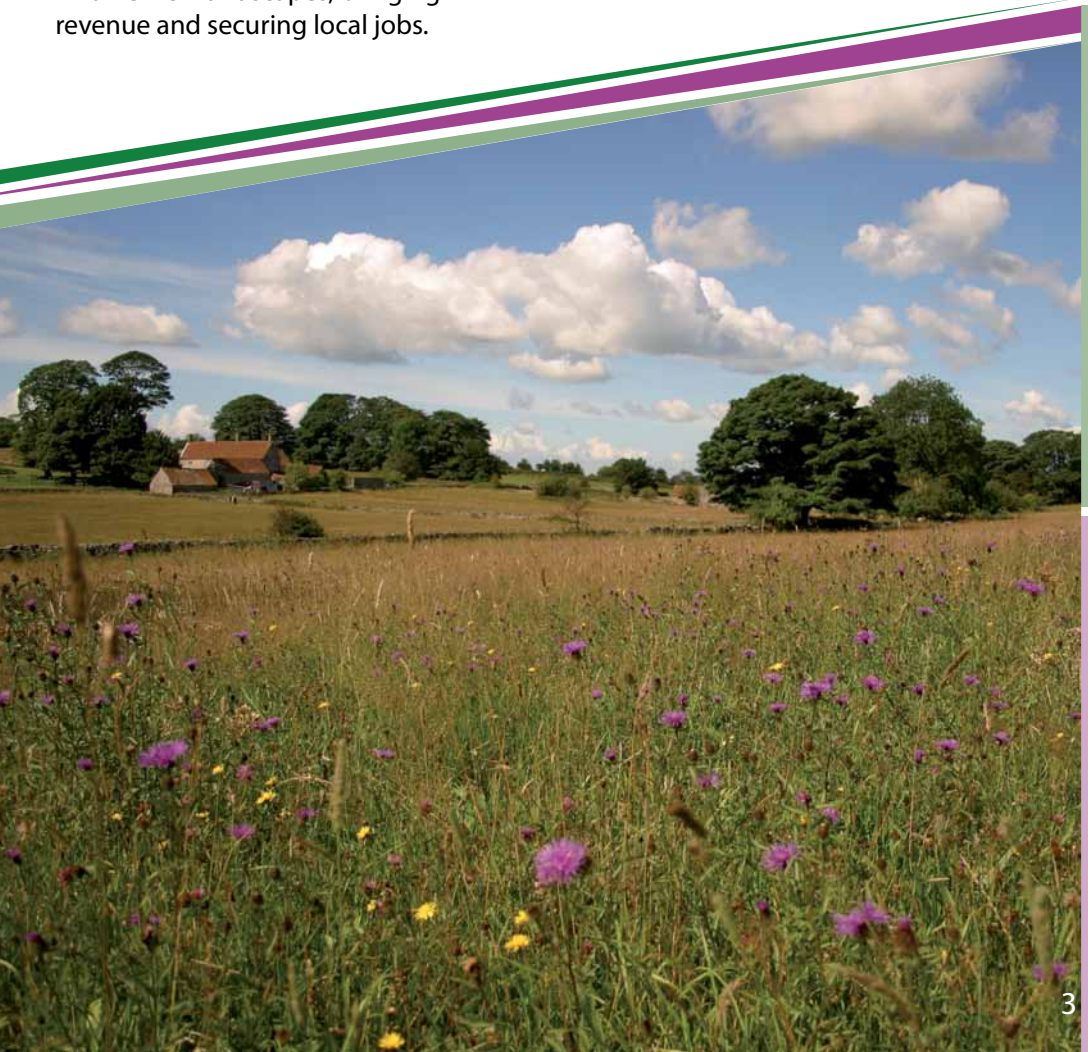
The production of food, fuel, clean water and air all rely upon a healthy, biodiverse natural environment.

Biodiversity supports our rural economy.

16.5 million visitors come to Somerset each year, drawn by our beautiful, wildlife-rich landscapes, bringing revenue and securing local jobs.

Biodiversity gives us a sense of place.

Our social and cultural heritage is tied up in the landscapes around us, shaped by our hands over generations. The wildlife we see today is a direct result of thousands of years of human interaction with the local landscape.



Biodiversity under threat

We are heading towards an ecological recession due to the way we manage our land and natural resources.

In Somerset and the rest of England, the diversity and abundance of plant and animal species is being threatened by wildlife habitat loss, development, intensive food production, and climate change. Invasive plant and animals also present a serious threat to our native species such as the white-clawed crayfish, which could be extinct in the south west within five years.

We are losing wildlife rapidly. Species that were once a common sight, such as the hedgehog and sparrow, are currently counted as endangered. Pearl bordered fritillary butterflies are amongst the species already thought to have become extinct in Somerset in recent years.



Biodiversity Action Plans



A Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is part of an internationally recognized programme addressing threatened species and habitats and is designed to protect and restore biological systems. As well as taking action nationally, a large number of organisations are part of the Somerset Biodiversity Partnership and the Biodiversity Forum, and are working together on Somerset specific Action Plans.

The framework is set out in "Wild Somerset", the Somerset Biodiversity Strategy 2008-18. Each District Council area has its own plan fitting in with the County strategy.

In "Wild Somerset", the main action themes are:

- Sustainable development through planning
- Landscape scale habitat restoration
- A secure future for sites containing the best wildlife habitats
- Enabling communities to experience nature by volunteering
- Wildlife-friendly land management and farming
- Encouraging recording of species and habitats
- Successful partnership working
- Biodiversity in business





Somerset's Biodiversity Action Plans provide guidance on conservation priorities and necessary actions for these habitats and species:

- Arable land with rare wildflowers
- Calcareous and neutral grassland
- Coastal and Marine
- Ditches and Ponds
- Dry Stone Walls on the Mendip Hills
- Gardens and Urban Greenspace
- Heathland
- Hedgerows and Hedgerow Trees
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture
- Roadside Verges and Green Lanes
- Traditional Orchards
- Water and Wetlands
- Wood Pasture, Parkland and Veteran trees
- Woodland
- Adder
- Bats
- Lapwing
- Long Eared Owl
- Otter
- Waxcap fungi
- Wood White butterfly

There are projects running or planned in Somerset for all of these.



Get involved

Everyone in Somerset can help conserve wildlife!

Here are six easy and fun ways to boost biodiversity in your area:

- Make your **garden** more attractive to wildlife by planting wildflowers and by using organic methods
- Find out about the **activities** of the conservation groups in your area. Someone you know may already be a member, making it a fun way to get involved in managing natural habitats, tree planting, restoring ponds and more
- Discover more about biodiversity in Somerset by attending walks, talks or events organised by local conservation organisations or voluntary groups
- Take part in local and nationwide **surveys** of key biodiversity habitats and species such as hedgerows, orchards, bats, otters and waxcap fungi to help inform conservation work
- Organise **litter picks** in and around your community and coastline. Certain items of rubbish are lethal for local wildlife
- Explore one of the many and varied Local Nature Reserves, and record the wildlife you see with the Somerset Environmental Record Centre (SERC)
www.somerc.com

Contact details

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The following two websites contain much more information on biodiversity work in Somerset, the Biodiversity Action Plans, links to conservation organisations and ways to get involved:

**[www.somersetwildlife.org/
biodiversity](http://www.somersetwildlife.org/biodiversity)**

www.somerset.gov.uk/



This leaflet was produced with funding from the Wessex Water Partners Programme



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