

STATE OF NATURE

A SUMMARY
FOR SCOTLAND



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ERIN CURTIS, 17
YOUNG CONSERVATIONIST

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STATE OF NATURE 2019 REPORT
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#STATEOFNATURE

THE STATE OF NATURE 2019: A SUMMARY FOR SCOTLAND

The *State of Nature* partnership consists of over 70 partners drawn from conservation NGOs, research institutes, and the UK and national governments. We have worked together to assess the state of the UK's wildlife, and to understand this in the light of the pressures on nature and the responses being made to recover our natural heritage.

The *State of Nature 2019* report uses data collected by tens of thousands of expert volunteers. These data are analysed using rigorous statistical methods to report on the state of nature across the UK and in the UK's Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories and at the scale of the UK's constituent nations. Here, we summarise the report's findings for Scotland.

Scotland holds some of the most diverse landscapes in the UK. From the remote montane habitats of the UK's highest peaks and the extensive expanses of blanket bog and upland heath to wooded glens, Caledonian pine forests, lochs, coasts and sea, Scotland's varied habitats support a wide variety of wildlife, including species found nowhere else in the UK. Such species include the Scottish Wildcat and Capercaillie, and the endemic Scottish Primrose, Northern February Red Stonefly and White-script Lichen.

The marine environment is a critical component of Scotland's natural history. The area within 12 nautical miles of the coast is greater than its total land area. The deep seas host the UK's only underwater mountains, known as seamounts. Scotland is also recognised as being of international importance for its breeding seabird colonies and marine mammals.

Further information on the state of nature in Scotland, including details of the data and analyses underpinning our findings, can be found in the UK *State of Nature 2019* report:

 www.nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019

At the UK scale, the abundance and distribution of species has, on average, declined over recent decades and many measures suggest this decline continues. There has been no let-up in the net loss of nature in the UK.

KEY FINDINGS

Of the 6,413 species found in Scotland that have been assessed using the IUCN Regional Red List criteria, and for which sufficient data were available, 642 (11%) are currently threatened with extinction from Great Britain (Scotland-specific assessments are not available).

The abundance indicator for 352 terrestrial and freshwater species for which Scotland-specific trends are available shows a significant decline in average abundance of 24% since 1970, and 12% over the past 10 years.

Within this indicator, the proportions of species increasing and decreasing since 1994 are similar, but over the past 10 years more species have decreased (46%) than increased (39%), with 15% showing little change. Scotland's wildlife is

undergoing rapid change in abundance; the proportion of species defined as showing strong changes in abundance – either increases or decreases – rose from 45% over the long term to 62% over the past 10 years.

Our indicator of average species' distribution has fallen by 14% since 1970. This indicator includes data on 2,970 terrestrial and freshwater species over a much broader range of taxonomic groups, including invertebrates and plants. Because species tend to decline in abundance before they disappear from a site, this change could reflect more severe underlying abundance declines that we are currently unable to quantify.

Within this indicator, more species have decreased than increased. Since 1970, 33%

of species have decreased and 20% have increased in distribution, with 47% showing little change. Over the past 10 years, 37% of species have decreased and 30% have increased in distribution, with 33% showing little change. Scotland's wildlife is undergoing rapid change in distribution; the proportion of species defined as showing strong changes in distribution – either increases or decreases – rose from 23% over the long term to 45% over the past 10 years.

Within the marine environment, the abundance indicators for fish species show signs of recovery from deep historic lows in the Celtic and North Seas; however, the Scottish breeding seabird indicator shows a 38% decline since 1986.

HEADLINES

Prior to the 1970 baseline used by the *State of Nature 2019*, we know there was widespread loss and degradation of habitats across Scotland, dating back many centuries, from which the country's wildlife has not recovered.

While pressure on Scotland's special landscapes has resulted in both losses and gains for biodiversity since 1970, the measures of both average abundance and average distribution in the *State of Nature Scotland 2019* report show that Scotland's wildlife has declined substantially in recent decades. The rate of change in Scotland's species appears to be increasing: our statistics indicate that over the last decade nearly two-thirds

of the species for which we have data have shown strong changes in abundance, and nearly half have shown strong changes in distribution.

Pressures upon wildlife come from many sources, including agricultural management, urbanisation, pollution, hydrological change, woodland management and invasive non-native species. Climate change is driving widespread changes in the abundance, distribution and ecology of Scotland's wildlife, and will continue to do so for decades or even centuries to come.

Scotland's extensive seas are also subject to a range of pressures. Progress has been made on improving water quality, contaminants and eutrophication (excess nutrients) in coastal waters

and some fish stocks are showing signs of recovery. Other pressures, such as those associated with climate change and ocean acidification, are still challenging and there is evidence of change in open sea habitats and plankton communities.

The *State of Nature 2019* report showcases just a few of the exciting conservation initiatives intended to help nature flourish across Scotland, delivered through partnerships of individuals, landowners, NGOs and government.

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PARTNERSHIP

The *State of Nature 2019* report is a collaboration between the conservation and research organisations listed below:

