

Royal Geographical Society

with IBG

Advancing geography and geographical learning

1. The urban wildlife revolution

In 1980, a few pioneering nature enthusiasts formed the first Urban Wildlife Group in Birmingham (now the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust). There are now similar groups in most UK cities.



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2. Farming for wildlife

Legal protection of nature sites was very weak in the 1980s. At Halvergate Marshes in Norfolk, environmental groups halted a plan to convert a wildlife-rich wetland into drained farmland. This led to better ways forward for nature sites.



© Jeremy Hall, The Wildlife Trusts

3. Protecting peatlands

In the 1990s, internationally important UK peatlands were being destroyed. Environmental organisations joined forces to restore damaged sites and prevent further damage. Flanders Moss – the largest lowland raised bog in Scotland – is one site that was saved. In 2025, the UK Government announced plans to end the sale of peat.



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4. Bringing nature back: the Great Fen Project

In 1998, The Wildlife Trusts started work on extensive landscape scale nature recovery projects across the UK. One of the first of these was the Great Fen Project creating 3700ha of wetland habitats south of Peterborough.



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8. Citizen science: the Big Garden Birdwatch

Launched by the RSPB in 1979, a few volunteer citizen scientists worked across the UK to survey garden birds. In 2025, nearly 600,000 people took part, counting more than 9 million birds.



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7. Nature protection after Brexit

When the UK left the EU in 2020, environmental groups formed the Greener UK coalition. They worked to ensure that the UK's nature protection would be maintained and strengthened with new UK laws. This led to the 2021 Environment Act.

6. Protecting our wildlife-rich seas

In 2013, Lundy Island was one of the first UK Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), safeguarding special areas of the sea so wildlife can recover and thrive. By 2023, there were 97 designated MCZs, covering nearly 33,000 km².



© Keith Hiscock, The Wildlife Trusts



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5. Building better: saving the Gwent Levels

In 1991, a six-lane M4 motorway relief road was proposed that would have cut right through the Gwent Levels, a wetland area of outstanding wildlife value. After 20 years of campaigning by local people, Friends of the Earth Cymru, and the Gwent Wildlife Trust, the Welsh Government cancelled the proposal in 2019.

A future for nature

For over fifty years environmental groups have worked to protect and restore our natural environment. There have been **Protests**, **Policy** work and local **Project** activity.

This poster charts some of the key events – there have been many more across the UK.