

Rivers

Rivers are important

- Thousands of species like otters, kingfishers, salmon, dippers, water voles and herons rely on safe wetland habitat.
- Healthy wetlands and rivers can provide protection from flooding by holding water in the landscape and slowing the flow of water through river systems to the sea.
- They save can money by naturally filtering the impurities from our water, providing us with cleaner drinking water and reducing money spent by water companies.



Rivers are under threat

- Over 10% of our freshwater and wetland species are threatened with extinction in the UK.
- We've lost 90% of our wetland habitats in the last 100 years.
- Pollution comes from the surrounding landscape, largely from unsustainable farming and development practices, urbanisation, and modification of wetland features like adding concrete sides to streams.
- Rivers and wetlands are rapidly affected by extreme weather conditions.
- When it gets hot, water can't hold as much oxygen. Fish can suffocate in warmer water and blue-green algae can outcompete other plants and be toxic to humans and animals. With less water present, pollutants become more concentrated
 - More sediment sinks to the bottom, which can choke insects and fish eggs
 - Fish and other species may become trapped as water levels drop, imprisoned by barriers like weirs that they can no longer get past
 - Conditions may favour the spread of invasive non-native species, like Himalayan balsam that can quickly colonise newly-exposed banks at the expense of native plants
 - Sections of river may become uninhabitable for species that rely on a particular depth or water quality

- Wetlands suffer too, as habitats dry out and trees and scrub encroach. Habitat for amphibians, aquatic insects and wetland plants may be lost

Sources:

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/water>

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/blog/some-like-it-hot>

How Wildlife Trusts help

- Caring for over 6,000km of watercourses across the UK, providing a home for wonderful wildlife like dippers, otters and beavers
- Working with water companies, government agencies, landowners and other NGOs to improve our freshwater environment for wildlife and people.
- Devon Wildlife Trust is trialling the introduction of beavers to positively re-shape waterways <https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/devon-beavers-2020>
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust's Winnal Moors nature reserve has reduced the impact of flooding in Winchester. <https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/we-campaign-and-influence/rivers>
- Wiltshire Wildlife Trust has lots of projects to protect river habitats, including rare chalk streams <https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/pages/category/the-water-team>
- Dorset Wildlife Trust is holding a talk about their work to protect and enhance Dorset's wild rivers, on 18 October 2019. <https://www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/events/2019-10-18-dorsets-wild-rivers-protection-and-enhancement-partnership>

How people can help

- Membership helps provide vital income towards protecting local rivers and wetland habitats.
- We can provide water habitats in your garden with wildlife ponds, water baths and bog gardens – tips here: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-provide-water-wildlife>
- We can take pressure off our water systems by conserving water at home including – tips here: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how- conserve-water>

Other resources

- www.wildlifetrusts.org/habitats/freshwater/chalk-rivers
- www.wildlifetrusts.org/water
- www.wildlifetrusts.org/blog/some-like-it-hot
- canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-and-river-wildlife
- www.theriverstrust.org/



Brown Trout by Jack Perks