# Wildfires threaten UK’s rarest wildlife and habitats in unprecedented crisis



An unprecedented wave of wildfires sweeping across the United Kingdom is severely impacting some of the country’s rarest and most endangered wildlife species, with experts warning the ongoing habitat destruction could accelerate the extinction of certain animals. The National Trust has described 2025 as "the worst year ever" for wildfires in Britain, underscoring the scale and severity of the crisis.

The fires, which have consumed more than 110 square miles of land—a region larger than the city of Birmingham—are devastating critical habitats. Among the sufferers are notable species such as the hen harrier, golden plover, and water vole, the latter being officially recognised as the UK’s fastest-declining mammal. Nationally, the situation has raised alarms among conservationists about the survival prospects of these animals.

At Abergwesyn Common in Powys, Wales, ongoing wildfires have reportedly destroyed what is believed to be the "last remaining" breeding grounds for golden plovers in the area. This represents a significant setback for one of Britain’s most captivating upland birds. The National Trust’s head of nature conservation, Ben McCarthy, conveyed the extent of concern over the situation to the Daily Star, saying, “We're extremely worried, this is looking like it's going to be the worst year for seeing our wildlife going up in flames.”

Wales has endured particularly severe impacts, with fire crews responding to nearly 1,400 wildfires across the nation. Emergency services have urged the public to “act responsibly” and report any suspicious incidents to help combat this widespread issue. The fires are not confined to Wales; Northern England and Northern Ireland have also experienced extensive damage. For example, in West Yorkshire’s Marsden Moor, thousands of newly planted trees have been destroyed by fire. Meanwhile, Northern Ireland’s Mourne Mountains have seen local reptiles and invertebrates literally "torched alive," exacerbating ecological disruption across food chains.

One of the rarest habitats affected is the Celtic rainforest at Allt Boeth near Aberystwyth in Wales—a habitat considered more threatened than the Amazon rainforest. The fires have severely damaged its unique ecosystem, including protected species such as bluebells, along with irreplaceable lichen and fungi.

Ben McCarthy identified a combination of environmental factors behind the catastrophic fire season: “Record dry spells, scorching March temperatures, and a build-up of vegetation from a quiet fire season last year has created a dangerous cocktail for disaster.” These conditions have created favourable circumstances for the fires to spread rapidly, overwhelming efforts to contain them.

The destruction of invertebrates in particular carries wide-reaching consequences. McCarthy explained, “That then cascades through the food web because without the invertebrates you don't get the birds who are reliant on them for food,” highlighting the fragile interconnectedness of these ecosystems.

Rob Parry, representing the Initiative for Nature Conservation Cymru (INCC), warned that the consequences for the water vole are especially critical. “They’re the fastest-declining mammal ever. Their last foothold [in Wales] is in the uplands so when those sites are burned it is awful for that particular population, but from a UK point of view we are one step closer to the extinction of an entire species,” he said.

Parry also expressed concern for barn owls in the Amman Valley, where just five breeding pairs remain. “A few weeks ago they had all of this area to find food for their chicks and suddenly they don't have that any more. I don't know how they are going to cope. A wildfire just makes that habitat disappear overnight,” he added.

The sense of urgency among conservationists is prompting calls for increased government support to help upland farmers and land managers restore peat bogs, ecosystems which can reduce fire risk and store climate-warming carbon. However, the current combination of frequent and intense wildfires poses a significant challenge in a country regarded as one of the most nature-depleted in the world.

The Daily Star is reporting that the ongoing wildfire crisis in the UK is inflicting extensive and potentially irreversible damage on some of the nation’s rarest species and habitats, with experts warning the environmental toll could be felt for years to come.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)