# Weeks of wildfires in the UK cause severe damage to wildlife and habitats



Weeks of wildfires across the United Kingdom have caused extensive damage to ecosystems, endangered species, and conservation efforts, according to warnings from several charities. This year’s fire season ranks among the worst on record, driven by one of the driest March periods in decades and above-average temperatures in April.

One of the most severe incidents occurred at Abergwesyn Common in Powys, Wales, where a wildfire ravaged approximately 1,600 hectares—equivalent to about 400 times the size of Cardiff’s Principality Stadium. The National Trust’s countryside manager for Mid and South Wales, Chris Smith, described the scale of the destruction as difficult to comprehend. He told The Irish News (Belfast), “As a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the impacts on wildlife are widespread, with birds’ nests, insects, amphibians and reptiles all scorched by fire. Whole ecosystems have been decimated and will remain altered well into the future.”

Smith also highlighted concerns for the area’s last known population of golden plovers, a rare and protected upland moorland bird, whose breeding habitat is believed to have been destroyed. The fire’s impact extended beyond surface damage, affecting peat bogs that the National Trust has been actively restoring and rewetting. Smith warned that “where the flames burnt down to the peat soils, they will take hundreds of years to recover,” noting the increased vulnerability of these peatlands to erosion, further fires, and carbon loss.

The frequency of wildfires in Wales has surged dramatically. South Wales Fire and Rescue Service reported 34 wildfire callouts between 1 January and 10 April 2024. However, during the same period in 2025, this figure leapt to 445—a staggering 1,200% increase. Across Wales, fire services have responded to over 1,300 grass fires so far this year.

Northern Ireland’s Mourne Mountains have also been affected by recent fires, which have scorched habitats used by a variety of wildlife, including small heath butterflies, rove beetles, skylarks, and peregrine falcons. These species form an interconnected food chain, with smaller birds like skylarks feeding on insects and beetles, and birds of prey relying on these smaller birds for sustenance. The National Trust noted, based on post-fire monitoring following a significant blaze in 2021, that wildfires have a substantial negative impact on the diversity and abundance of wildlife species in the area.

Other regions have faced similar challenges. On Exmoor, at Trentishoe, and in the Peak District at Howden Moor, wildfires have destroyed land that conservationists have been working to restore for years. A recent two-kilometre fire at Howden Moor was assessed to have caused £30,000 worth of damage. Ben McCarthy, head of nature conservation at the National Trust, emphasised the need for “urgent Government action” to mitigate and adapt to wildfire risks and other climate-related threats.

In response to the rising threat of wildfires, the National Trust has been implementing landscape adaptations aimed at reducing fire risk. These include efforts to maintain wetter and boggier areas through planting water-holding mosses and creating wetlands that serve as natural fire breaks once established.

Environmental organisations have issued statements underscoring the severity of the wildfires in the context of climate change and biodiversity loss. Gareth Clubb, director at WWF Cymru, called the wildfires “devastating” and highlighted that “one in six assessed species at risk of extinction in Wales already” are further imperilled by these events. Speaking to The Irish News (Belfast), Clubb said, “The solutions exist across every sector to make our diverse habitats more resilient to extreme weather made more frequent and severe due to worsening climate change. Now is the time to act to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030.”

Similarly, Kathryn Brown, director of climate change and evidence at The Wildlife Trusts, emphasised the long-term consequences of wildfires on natural habitats and species. She remarked, “Damage from wildfires can take decades to recover from and sometimes that damage is irreversible. The Wildlife Trusts, along with others, are hard at work to restore nature, and for species like rare golden plovers and sand lizards, these recent fires could present a real setback in terms of their recovery.”

The ongoing wave of wildfires across the UK has thus severely affected a wide range of habitats and species, posing challenges to conservation and restoration efforts amid rising climate pressures.

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

## References

* <https://news.sky.com/story/uk-may-be-on-track-to-see-worst-year-for-wildfires-data-shows-13348827> - This article corroborates the claim that 2025 is shaping up to be one of the worst years for wildfires in the UK, with increased blazes and burned area compared to previous years.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/detailed-analysis-of-fires-england-april-2023-to-march-2024/detailed-analysis-of-fires-attended-and-response-times-by-fire-and-rescue-services-england-april-2023-to-march-2024> - This document provides context on the general trend of fire incidents in England, which can relate to increased wildfire activity due to changing environmental conditions.
* <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65705b7a7391350013b03bbc/HECC-report-2023-chapter-10-wildfires.pdf> - The report discusses the health impacts and environmental implications of wildfires in the UK, aligning with concerns about ecosystem and wildlife damage.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-statistics-monitor> - This collection of fire statistics provides insight into the frequency and impact of wildfires and other fire incidents across England, supporting the narrative of increased wildfire challenges.
* <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/climate/climate-and-environment/climate-change> - The Met Office provides information on climate change impacts, including increased temperatures and changing precipitation patterns, which contribute to wildfire risk.