

# 4c. Status of threatened species: species of European importance

Type: State indicator

## Indicator Description

Member States of the European Union are required to report every 6 years on the conservation status of habitats and species of community interest (listed in the Annexes of the Habitats Directive). These are habitats and species for which the UK has European level conservation responsibilities.

The assessments need to conclude whether each species of European importance occurring in England is in a: 'Favourable', 'Unfavourable-Inadequate', 'Unfavourable-Bad' or 'Unknown' conservation status. This indicator is based on an evaluation of whether the overall results for the most recent assessment (2019) are better or worse than those for the previous assessments (2007 and 2013).

## Status of species of European importance

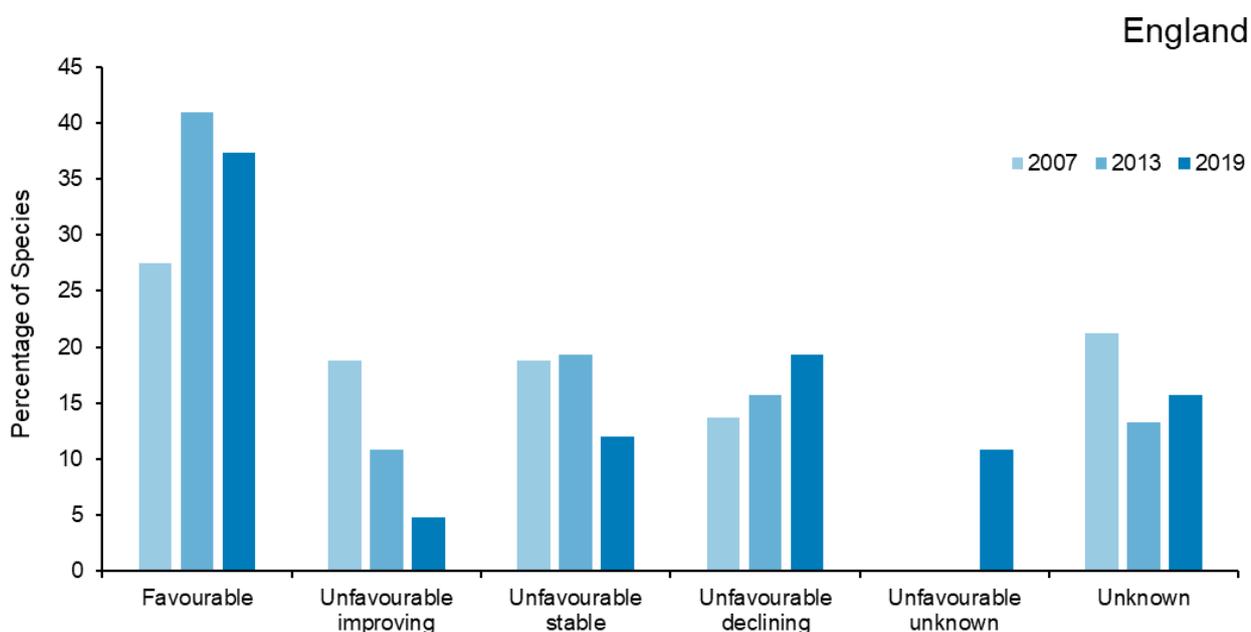
No new data since the previous publication.

In 2007, 28% of species occurring in England that are listed in Annexes II, IV or V of the Habitats Directive were in favourable conservation status; this figure increased to 41% in 2013 and 37% in 2019 (Figure 4c.1).

The conservation status of 19% of the species was unfavourable-improving in 2007, it decreased to 11% in 2013 and 5% in 2019.

The conservation status of 14% of the species was unfavourable-declining in 2007, this increased to 16% in 2013 and 19% in 2019.

Figure 4c.1: Conservation status of species of European importance occurring in England, 2007, 2013 and 2019



## Notes:

1. The number of species assessed was 80 in 2007 and 83 in 2013 and 2019.
2. The graph is based on the species listed in Annexes II, IV and V of the Habitats Directive, excluding vagrants, which occur in England.
3. The 'unfavourable-unknown' category was first introduced in 2019.

**Source:** UK Habitats Directive (Article 17) reports to the EU, 2007, 2013 and 2019.

## Indicator assessment

**Assessment of change in conservation status of species of European importance occurring in England based on the percentage of species in favourable or improving conservation status**

**Long term (2007 to 2019): Deteriorating; Short term (2013 to 2019): Deteriorating; Latest year: Not assessed.**

**Note:** The long and short-term assessments are based on a 3% rule of thumb. See [Assessing Indicators](#). Article 17 reports are only submitted once every 6 years, thus, the short-term assessment is based on a 6 year period and no latest-year change is given as this would simply mirror the short-term assessment.

## Relevance

This indicator is relevant to outcomes 1, 2 and 3 in [Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services](#) (see Annex A). It is also relevant to a number of international targets (see Annex B of the aforementioned publication for further details).

## Background

The indicator shows progress with maintaining and/or restoring favourable conservation status for species listed under Annexes II, IV or V of the EU Habitats Directive in 2007, 2013 and 2019. These are species for which the UK has European level conservation responsibilities. An assessment of status and trends for each species is undertaken every 6 years. Trends in unfavourable conservation status allow identification of whether progress is being made, as it will take many years for some species to reach favourable conservation status. The status assessments presented in this indicator are based on 83 UK species listed in Annexes II, IV or V of the Habitats Directive that are found in England.

The information sources on which the assessments are based vary between species – their quality is documented in the database which underpins the assessments. The changes are largely based on evidence, though expert opinion was used in a few cases where evidence was not available.

The first assessment of conservation status of habitats and species listed in the annexes of the Directive was produced in 2007; a second assessment was produced in 2013; and a third assessment was made in 2019. Each individual species assessment requires information on 4 parameters, which are brought together using an evaluation matrix to form an overall assessment. The parameters are: range, population, habitat for the species; and future prospects.

The trend in the overall assessment is based upon an integration of the trend information for the individual parameters (see links for UK approach). Each assessment concludes whether the species is in one of the following states:

- 'favourable';
- 'unfavourable-inadequate';
- 'unfavourable-bad'; or
- 'unknown'.

In 2007, the UK reported on 89 species, 80 of which were found to occur in England. In addition, 28 species classed as vagrants or occasional visitors (4 bats, 16 cetaceans, 4 turtles, and 4 seals) to the UK were not fully assessed. Instead a paragraph of information was provided on the occurrence of each of these vagrant species. In 2013 and 2019, the UK reported on 93 species, and collated information on a further 32 vagrants (6 bats, 1 fish, 17 cetaceans, 4 turtles and 4 seals).

The conservation status assessments quoted in this indicator are for 83 species that are found in England, excluding the 32 vagrant species. The taxonomic breakdown of the 83 species reported in 2019 is:

- Mammals 29
- Fish 12
- Amphibians 4
- Reptiles 2
- Invertebrates 16
- Plants 20

It should be noted that the list of species on the Habitats Directive Annexes was selected with a European emphasis, and therefore only represents a subset of those considered to be of importance for conservation effort within the UK. A full list of these species, together with their individual assessment results for 2007, 2013 and 2019 is presented in the [dataset](#) supporting this indicator.

Within the Habitats Directive, species can be listed on one or more of 3 annexes:

- **Annex II:** Animal and plant species of Community interest whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (46 species in the UK, including one vagrant);
- **Annex IV:** Animal and plant species of Community interest in need of strict protection (81 species in the UK, including 32 vagrants);
- **Annex V:** Animal and plant species of Community interest whose taking in the wild and exploitation may be the subject of management measures (26 species in the UK; no vagrants).

### Assessment of change in conservation status

The indicator is based on an evaluation of whether the results obtained in 2019 are better or worse than those obtained in 2013 (short term) and 2007 (long term). It is likely to take time before species move from unfavourable conservation status to favourable conservation status, so for the unfavourable assessments, an assessment of trend is made to determine if the species is improving, declining, or showing no change. At its simplest (Figure 4c.1), this can be the proportion of species which are favourable, or show an improving trend (i.e. favourable, or unfavourable-inadequate but improving, or unfavourable-bad but improving. This applies to 42% of species assessed in 2019, 52% of species assessed in 2013 and 46% of species assessed in 2007; the measure is therefore assessed as declining in both the long and short term.

Figure 4c.1 combines the unfavourable inadequate and unfavourable-bad assessments which show a similar direction of trend. In all 3 assessments, improving and declining trends were assigned where the evidence allowed a conclusion that improvements or declines in the conservation status of habitats were occurring. Thus:

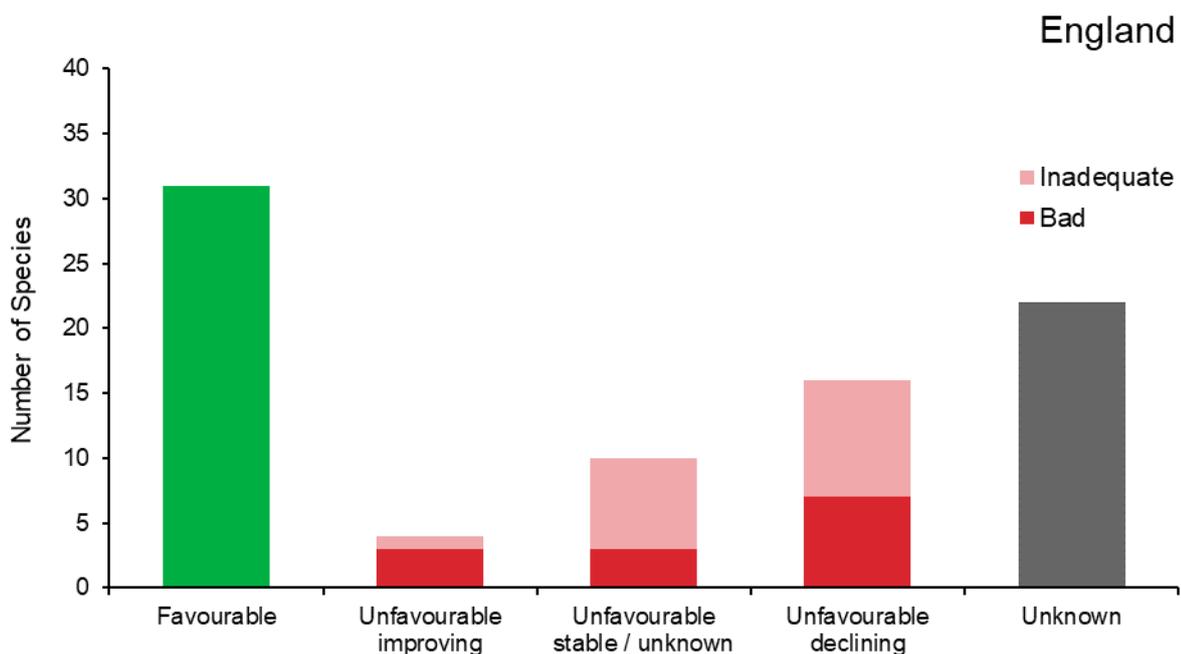
- Unfavourable-inadequate improving, and unfavourable-bad improving were summed to form the category 'unfavourable improving', and
- Unfavourable-inadequate declining and unfavourable-bad declining were summed to form the category 'unfavourable declining'.

In 2007, no trend was assigned to those species which were neither improving nor declining. This included both species for which the trend was unknown, and those for which there was no evidence

of change. For ease of comparison in the figures, unfavourable-inadequate and unfavourable-bad assessments with no trend conclusion in 2007 were summed to form the category 'unfavourable stable'; the same term was used for 2013 and 2019 data, but with more confidence that the trend was neither improving nor declining.

Figures 4c.2 provides a breakdown of Figure 4c.1 by showing the number of species in the unfavourable categories which arise from the unfavourable-inadequate or unfavourable-bad assessment categories in 2019. The picture for species is somewhat better than for habitats (see indicator number 2b), in that relatively more species are in favourable conservation status, and relatively more species which are unfavourable are in unfavourable-inadequate status than unfavourable-bad status.

**Figure 4c.2: Status of species of European importance occurring in England, 2019**



**Notes:**

1. The graph is based on 76 species listed in Annexes II, IV and V of the Habitats Directive, excluding vagrants, which occur in England.
2. Darker red bars show the number of species within a trend which were unfavourable-bad; lighter red bars show the number of habitats within a trend which were unfavourable-inadequate.

**Source:** UK Habitats Directive (Article 17) report to the EU, 2019.

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee and Natural England have carefully collated and considered a wide range of data, using a robust quality assurance protocol, to come to the conclusion for each species, and to ensure changes, including within category changes, have been consistently and accurately discriminated. These changes are ecologically important, as stabilising a decline in a species, for example, is an important conservation achievement. The information sources on which the assessments are based are quite varied – their quality is documented in the database which underpins the assessments. The changes are largely based on evidence, though expert opinion was used in cases where evidence was not available.

## Web links for further information

European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (EIONET): [European guidance on making conservation status assessments](#);

European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (EIONET): [Online report on Article 17 of the Habitats Directive: conservation status of habitats and species of Community interest \(2001-2006\)](#);

European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (EIONET): [EEA Technical report No 2/2015: Results from reporting under the nature directives 2007-2012](#)

Joint Nature Conservation Committee: [EC Habitats Directive](#);

Joint Nature Conservation Committee: [UK Habitats Directive Report, 2007](#);

Joint Nature Conservation Committee: [UK Habitats Directive Report, 2013](#);

Joint Nature Conservation Committee: [UK Habitats Directive Report, 2019](#)

**Last updated:** December 2019

**Latest data available:** 2019