

R&A



# BIODIVERSITY CHAMPIONS

Protecting nature and helping it flourish

INTRODUCING

# BIODIVERSITY CHAMPIONS

At golf courses up and down the UK, dedicated members and professionals are working hard to ensure a brighter future for the natural world.

There's a growing network of Biodiversity Champions doing great things to protect nature and help it flourish. Learn more about this vital initiative and its benefits, and meet four of the people involved.



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# INTRODUCING THE BIODIVERSITY CHAMPIONS INITIATIVE

There's no doubt that nature in the UK needs a nurturing hand. The [2023 State of Nature report](#) found that 1 in 6 species are at risk of extinction. Golf is in a great position to help, thanks to the large areas of land on most courses that aren't in play.

Here are just a few of the pressing issues golf can help to address:

Since 1970,  
the distributions of

**54%**

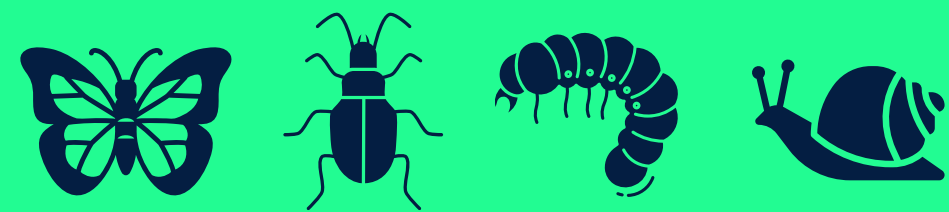
of flowering plant species  
have reduced across  
the UK.



The UK distributions of

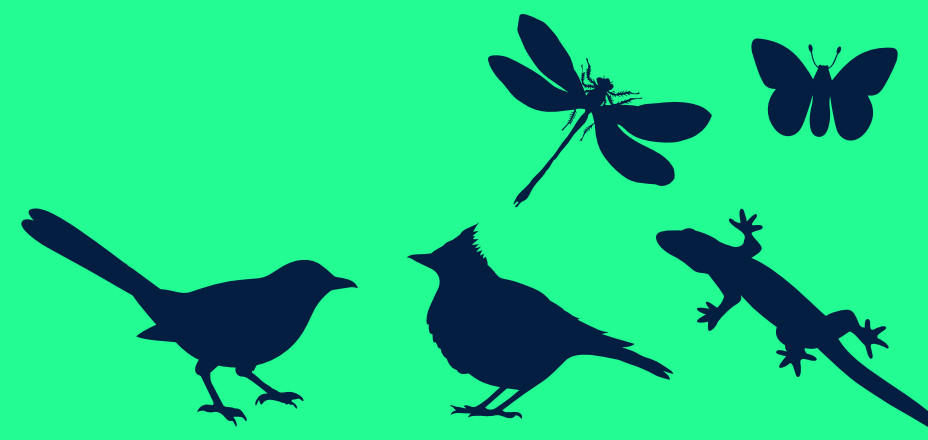
**4,979**

invertebrate species  
have, on average,  
**decreased by 13%**  
in the same time period.



**1,500**

species are now threatened  
with extinction.



The R&A has partnered with Oleo Ecology over the past four years to support Championship venues through the ongoing [Golf Course 2030](#) Golf and Nature study.

At the time of writing, 22 of the 27 courses involved have appointed a volunteer Biodiversity Champion. Sophie Olejnik from Oleo Ecology has been working closely with the Champions.

# WHAT DOES BEING A CHAMPION INVOLVE?

People from various backgrounds have taken on the role, not just greenkeepers and course managers. For example, Lauren Edwards at Royal Porthcawl is also the Assistant Clubhouse Manager, and at Hollinwell, Notts Golf Club, James Boon serves as both a member and the club archivist.

Looking ahead, there are plans to grow the network of Biodiversity Champions in 2026 and beyond. This means more clubs will proactively do the following and more:

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**Conducting wildlife surveys to record and monitor species year on year**

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**Arranging nature walks to educate and engage members**

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**Communicating the biodiversity found on the course to the membership and local groups**

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**Building relationships with local experts and gaining from their knowledge**

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**Having one point of contact between the greenkeepers and the membership.**

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# WHAT DOES BEING A CHAMPION INVOLVE?

John Kemp is the Assistant Director for Sustainable Golf Development at The R&A, and he's delighted with the progress made by the initiative so far.

“We'd like to thank all the Biodiversity Champions for stepping up and making a positive difference at their courses. It's been inspiring to see so many great initiatives taking place, from the wonderful wildflowers at Royal Troon to the large numbers of butterfly species thriving at Minchinhampton Golf Club. We're only just getting started, and are keen that the work done so far acts as a beacon for other clubs to follow by appointing their own Biodiversity Champions”, he states.



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# HOW DO CLUBS BENEFIT?

Participating clubs have discovered many benefits of designating a Biodiversity Champion.

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They can **lighten the load** on the greenkeeping team and the course manager

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A greater presence and increased reputation in the **local community**

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Being able to **identify funding opportunities** for biodiversity projects, such as grants from the government or local authorities

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A more engaged membership that takes **greater pride in the natural environment** they're part of

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A consistent and structured approach to things like **recycling, habitat creation** and **wildlife monitoring**

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**It's important to re-emphasise that all Biodiversity Champions are passionate volunteers, so there's a hugely positive return on investment for clubs.**



# PASSION FOR NATURE **IN ACTION**

We spoke with four of the Biodiversity Champions to learn more about what they've been doing at their respective clubs. You'll find their case studies in the toolkit.

## **JAMES BOON**

Member and Archivist,  
Hollinwell at Notts Golf Club

"Whether it's the wildlife or the heritage, if you took those away from the club, members would notice a big hole. Trying to communicate that is a priority for me going forward."



## **HARVEY ROSSELLI**

Assistant Greenkeeper,  
Minchinhampton Golf Club

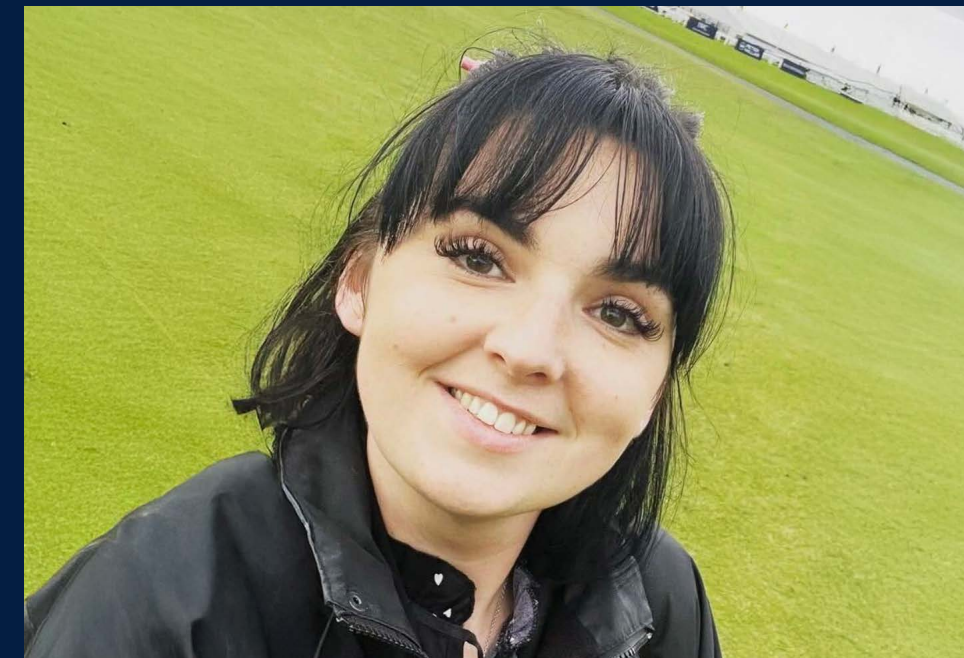
"There's a lot of opportunity to create habitats along the boundaries of the golf course, including out-of-play areas, where the visual appearance and the playing experience are unaffected."



## **LAUREN EDWARDS**

Assistant Clubhouse Manager,  
Royal Porthcawl

"It felt like a lot to take on at first, but I've really enjoyed it and we're now at the stage of keeping on top of things and looking at ways to keep improving."



## **CALUM DONALD**

Greenkeeper, Royal Troon

"It can be a bit isolating when you're working away on the course alone, but it's reassuring to know there are other people out there with the same drive to do more for nature."



# PASSION FOR NATURE IN ACTION

Another important benefit of being a Biodiversity Champion is being able to learn from and support others in the same role.

Some of the Champions met at the Fairways to Nature Conference in Paris in February 2025.

We can all help make space for nature by improving biodiversity and stopping the decline of so many incredible species.



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