

East Midlands State of the Environment

Biodiversity

The natural environment is important for plants, animals and people. The ecosystems that support wildlife in England and Wales are a critical part of the natural processes upon which we all depend for fertile land, clean air and clean water.

The region supports key areas of importance for biodiversity, including habitats and species of national importance, but these areas are often limited in extent, geographically isolated and separated by extensive areas with little natural or semi-natural habitat. The exception is The Wash, a marine SSSI of 62,046 hectares of both national and international importance.

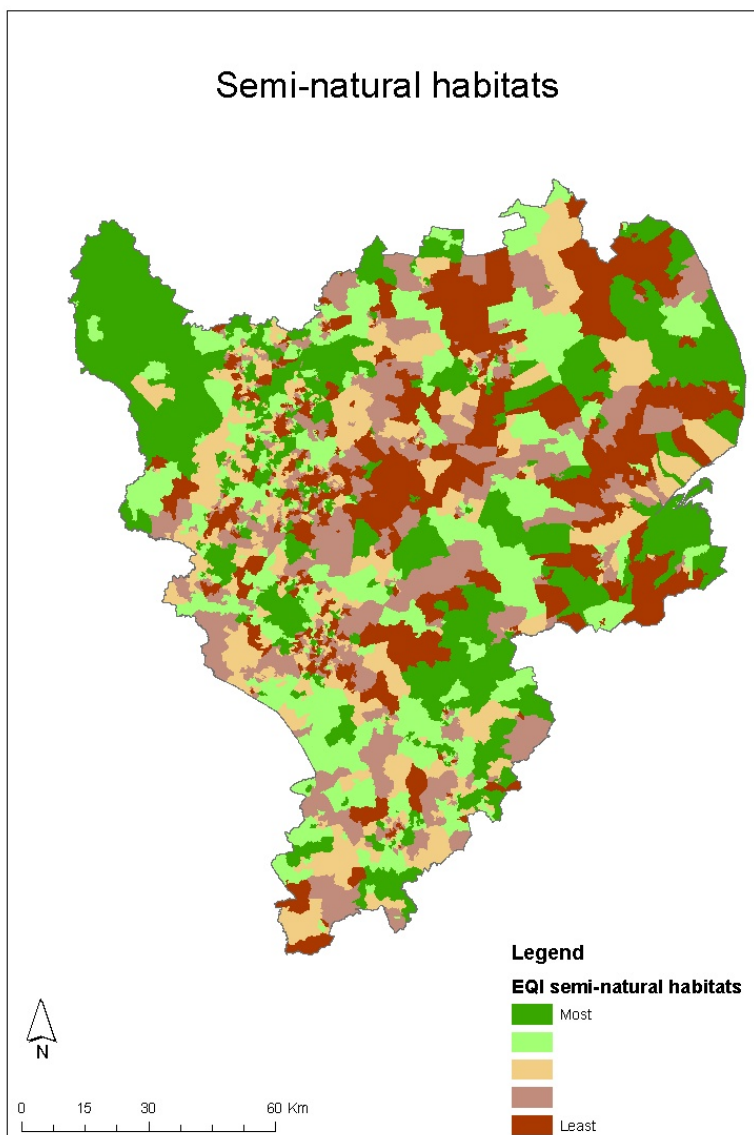
At a glance

- The Region has 392 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), covering an area of 165,000ha. Nearly 40 per cent (62,046ha) is located in The Wash.
- With the exception of Derbyshire, all counties in the East Midlands have less than two per cent of the land is designated as terrestrial SSSI.
- 95 per cent of the region's SSSI land is in favourable or recovering condition. The East Midlands has the highest percentage area of land in favourable condition in England.
- The Wash is the largest SSSI in England, containing 14 per cent of England's coastal SSSI habitat. It is also designated as Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a Ramsar site, and a Special Protection Area (SPA). It holds the largest colony of common seals in the UK – about 90 per cent of the English population.
- Nationally significant heathlands occur in Nottinghamshire and the Lincolnshire Cover Sands (10,536ha designated as SSSI).
- There are two National Indicators for biodiversity: farmland and woodland birds. Between 1994 and 2007 the population index for farmland birds declined by 17 per cent however, the index for woodland birds has increased by 13 per cent.
- The main rivers and their tributaries in the region – Trent, Derwent, Soar, Nene and Witham – provide the main focus for biodiversity. Manmade reservoirs and wetlands such as Rutland Water, Attenborough Gravel Pits, and canals (Cromford, Chesterfield, Grantham) are also important for wildlife and designated as SSSIs.
- The chalk streams in Lincolnshire are an important priority habitat for biodiversity. Characteristic species include lampreys, brown trout, grayling and otters, in addition to five nationally important and 12 locally important invertebrates.

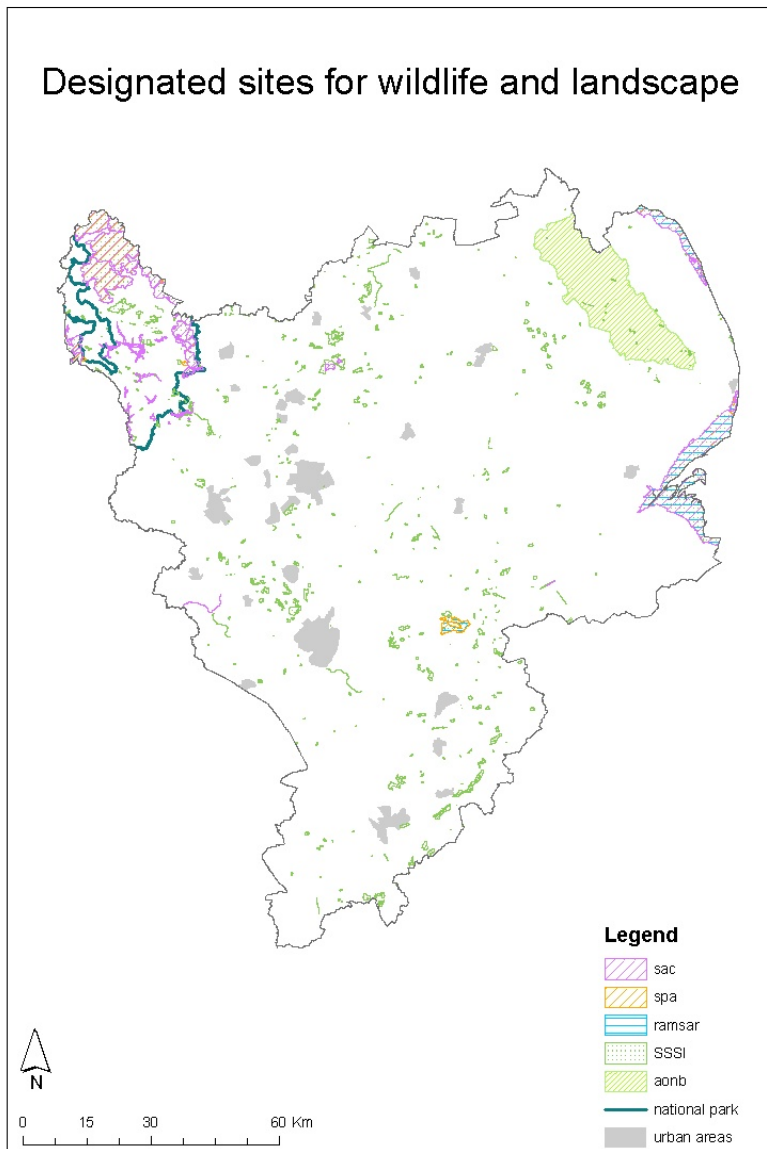
- A new fish pass was recently completed at the historic Calver Weir on the River Derwent allowing migration and restoring the natural fish population upstream. Brown trout, brook lamprey (both Biodiversity Action Plan species) and grayling are the main species present in this stretch of river.
- Key wetland species of the East Midlands include great crested newt, white-clawed crayfish, spined loach, water vole and otter.

Data and Trends

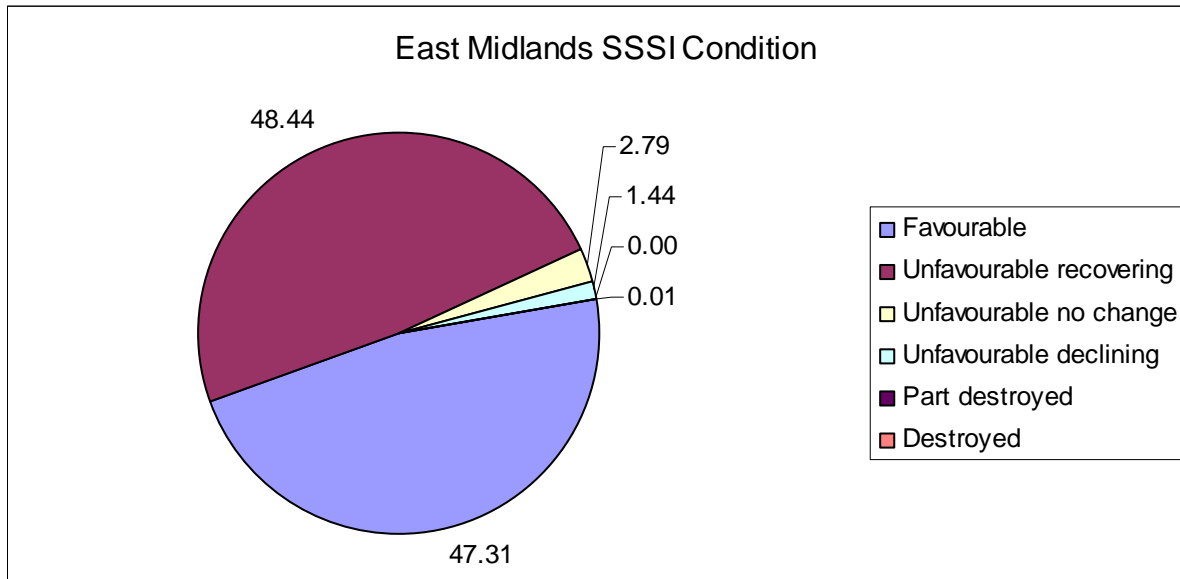
The following map shows information from the Landcover 2000 database giving percentage of semi-natural habitats for each East Midlands Lower Super Output Area (area with approximately 1500 people), mapped to five categories. The best areas may be expected to support a more diverse wildlife.



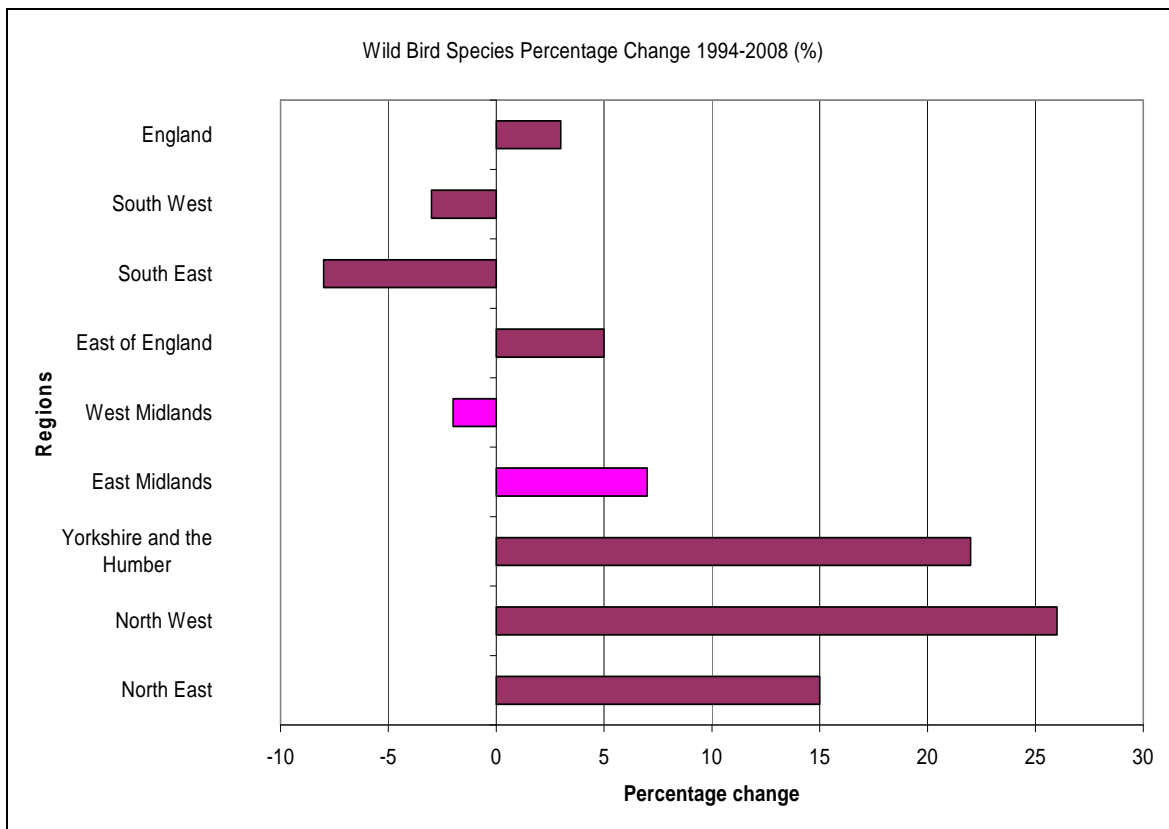
The map below, of designations shows that important habitats are located around the periphery of the region and that most of the 392 SSSIs are fragmented. The coast and Wash and the Peak District SSSIs are also of international importance (Special Areas for Conservation, Special Protection Areas). The Lincolnshire Wolds are an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Lincolnshire Wolds are an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



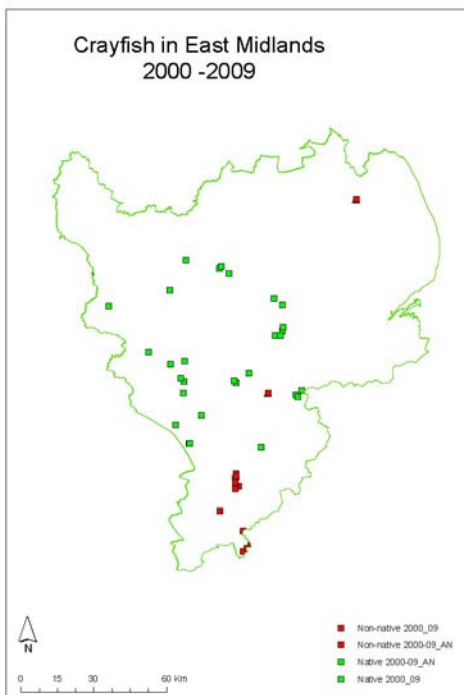
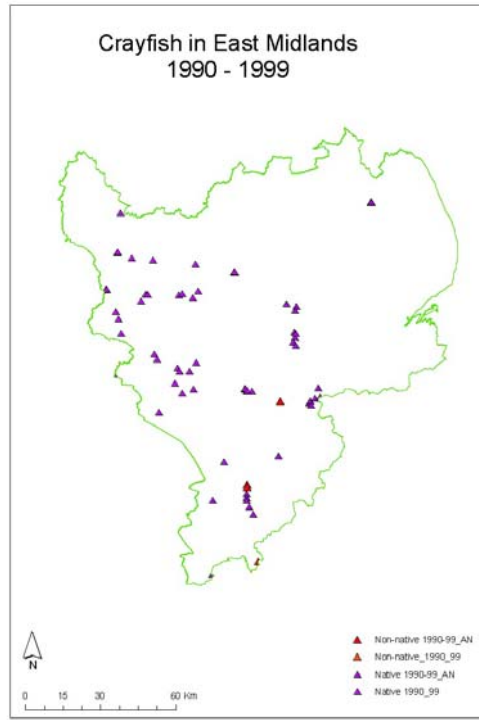
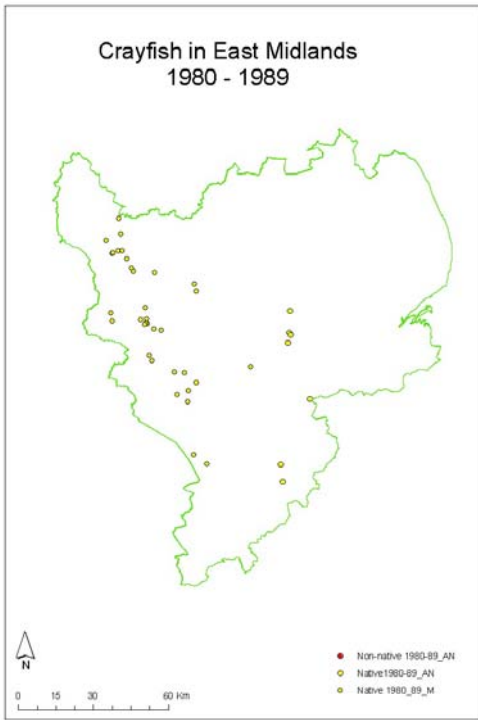
The chart below shows that over 95 per cent of SSSIs in the East Midlands are favourable or recovering.



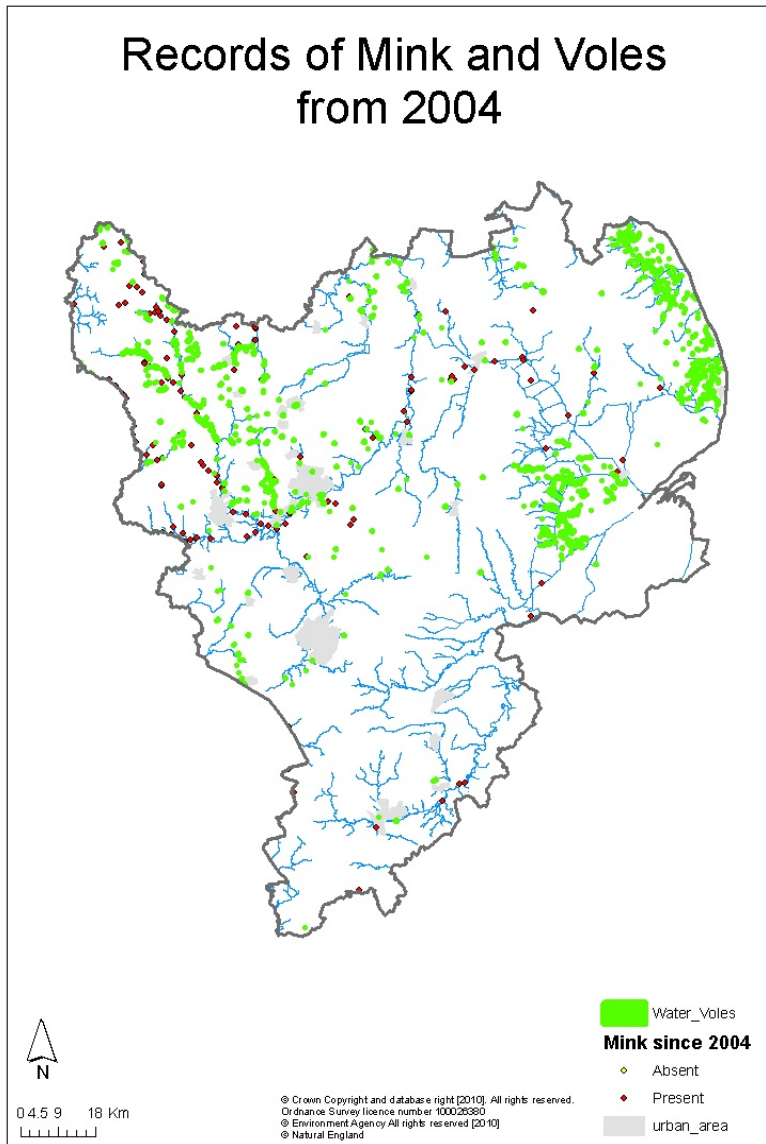
The National Indicator for wild bird species which includes farmland and woodland birds has shown improvements in populations in wild bird species since 1994. The improvements in East Midlands are greater than the national average for England as shown in the graph below.



The distribution of native and non-native crayfish is of national concern. The East Midlands has been a stronghold for the native white-clawed crayfish but is increasingly under threat from non-native species. These non-natives are bigger, more aggressive and carry a disease to which our own crayfish is susceptible. The three maps below each show a decade of occurrence in our routine invertebrate samples. In the 1980s there were no non-native crayfish found but in the last decade natives have reduced and non-natives have become established.



In common throughout England, the East Midlands have seen reductions in water vole populations. The map below shows that the distribution of records of water voles is mainly to the north of the region. Mink are thought to impact on water voles. However surveys are not carried out routinely and the records may not reflect the true distribution.



Our role

The Environment Agency has an important role in conservation and ecology. We have a duty to improve biodiversity under the Environment Act 1995, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and international legal obligations such as the Habitats, Birds and Environmental Liability Directives.

- We work in partnership with others particularly Natural England and take a lead role in many habitat and species action plans notably those dependent on the aquatic environment.
- In freshwater, wetland and coastal areas, we help to protect wildlife habitats by controlling pollution and regulating the amount of water taken from rivers, lakes and groundwater.
- Our work on flood risk protects vulnerable habitats and creates new places for biodiversity.
- We have a specific duty to conserve and maintain the diversity of freshwater fish, salmon, sea trout and eels.
- We also monitor the numbers and health of fish in rivers and the number of salmon and sea-trout returning from the sea.

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