



## Fact Sheet

### What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity, short for biological diversity, is the term used to describe the variety of life found on Earth. This includes ecosystem, species and genetic diversity. The different elements of biodiversity have a strong influence on each other and we have only just started to understand the relationships between living things and their ecosystems. Think of an ecosystem as a woven carpet; if you pull on a loose thread it might only affect the thread and those closest to it or it might unravel the whole carpet.



### Biodiversity on the Avalon Marshes

The Avalon Marshes are very important in terms of the species and habitats that can be found there. Some of the areas are regarded as internationally important for the conservation of wetland species and habitats.



### Birds

Huge flocks of waterbirds spend the winter in the Avalon Marshes. Species staying to breed include bitterns, marsh harriers, snipe, lapwing and the UK's first pair of great white egrets.



### Invertebrates

Not everyone's favourite, but many species of invertebrate in the Avalon Marshes are found virtually nowhere else in the country. And who couldn't love the shining rams horn snail or depressed river mussel?

### Water plants

Wetland plant species have been in massive decline across the UK due to loss of wetlands. However, many species thrive in the Avalon Marshes. Marsh pea is one of the rarer species.



### Mammals

The water vole is Britain's fastest declining wild mammal and has disappeared from many parts of the country where it was once common. However, it still thrives in the Avalon Marshes alongside another wetland favourite: otters.

