



NO 16 · JUNE 2023

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

A School of Health Sciences Newsletter

Wildlife friendly gardening

UK wildlife is under threat, but we all have the power to change that. Take the RSPCA quiz [here](#) to find out how wildlife friendly your outdoor space is. You can start by building a hedgehog house.

You will need:

At least 20 old bricks

A couple of paving slabs or tiles – one small and one larger

Tape measure

Small logs, twigs and leaves

- Find a good spot for your hedgehog house – somewhere shady, quiet, out of the wind and rain, and on a flat-ish surface. In a corner of the garden or behind a shed are ideal spots.
- Create the shape of the house in bricks. Include an entrance tunnel at the front (make this around 13cm wide, so the hedgehog can get inside but prey animals can't).
- Add another layer of bricks. Overlap the bricks if you can as that will make the walls stronger.
- Use the smaller paving slab or two or three bricks crossways, to cover the top of the tunnel.
- Add a third layer of bricks to the main house. Try not to leave gaps as it needs to be cosy.
- Put the larger paving slab on top to make the roof.
- Cover the top with soil, logs, twigs and leaves. This keeps the house warm and attracts insects for hedgehogs to eat.
- Lastly, leave a pile of dry leaves outside the entrance. Hedgehogs will drag this inside for bedding.

Once the house is in place you could have a night-time visitor like our colleague did in this [video](#).

This issue:

Wildlife friendly gardening
PAGE 01

Clean rivers? Think again
PAGE 02

Fashion Greenwash
PAGE 06

Recommendations
PAGE 08

Garment-making course
PAGE 09

Contact us
PAGE 06



To clean up England's rivers we need to know how much sewage is dumped – but water firms won't tell us

WRITTEN BY: JAMIE WOODWARD

UK environment secretary Thérèse Coffey has demanded that water companies share plans for how they will reduce sewage discharges into rivers. They could start by coming clean on how much sewage is being dumped. If we don't know how much sewage is actually being released – for at least the worst offending locations – we won't be able to measure environmental and industry improvement with any confidence.

Water companies in England have failed to invest sufficiently in wastewater treatment and sewerage infrastructure to keep pace with increasing populations and more intense rainfall. To take pressure off their sewer networks, companies allow huge volumes of untreated wastewater and sewage to be dumped into our rivers and coastal waters.

In the absence of effective regulation since the Environment Agency's monitoring budget was slashed just over a decade ago, dumping sewage in rivers has contributed to a spectacularly profitable business model. Sewage pollution incidents – many of which were legal – increased 29-fold over five years and countless urban rivers are now effectively extensions of the sewerage network. Our rivers are running out of time.

Water companies are under unprecedented scrutiny from the media, politicians, activists, university researchers like me and the wider public. Politicians know the sewage dumping scandal could cost seats at the next general election.

This is why Coffey is now demanding “every company comes back with a clear plan for what they are doing on every storm overflow, prioritising those near sites where people swim and our most precious habitats”.

Only 14% of rivers in England have “good” ecological status and this figure could fall to just 6% by 2027. In February 2023, campaigns to save Britain's rivers were launched by the Times, the Independent and New Scientist.

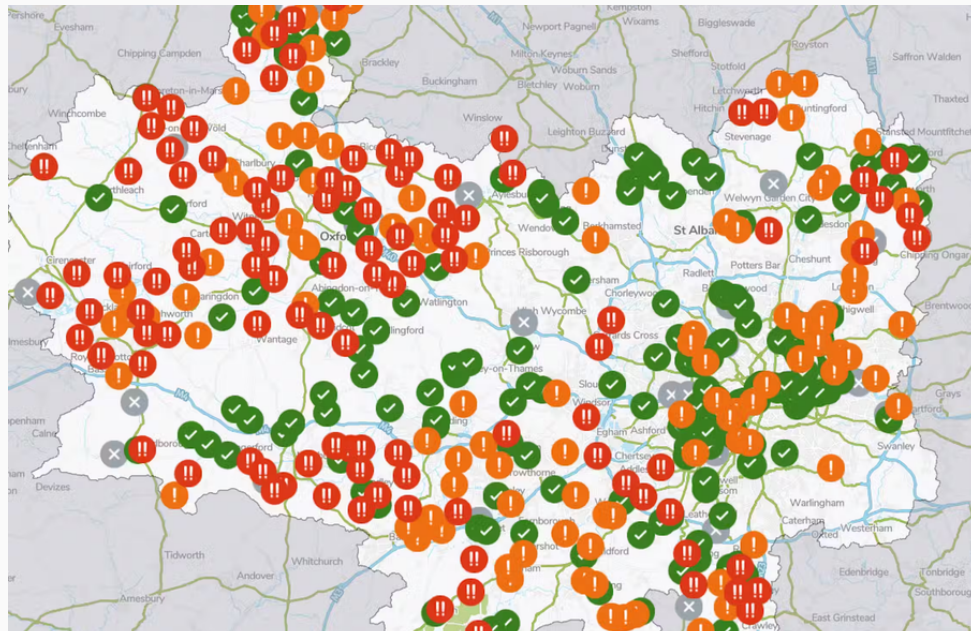




Mapping sewage

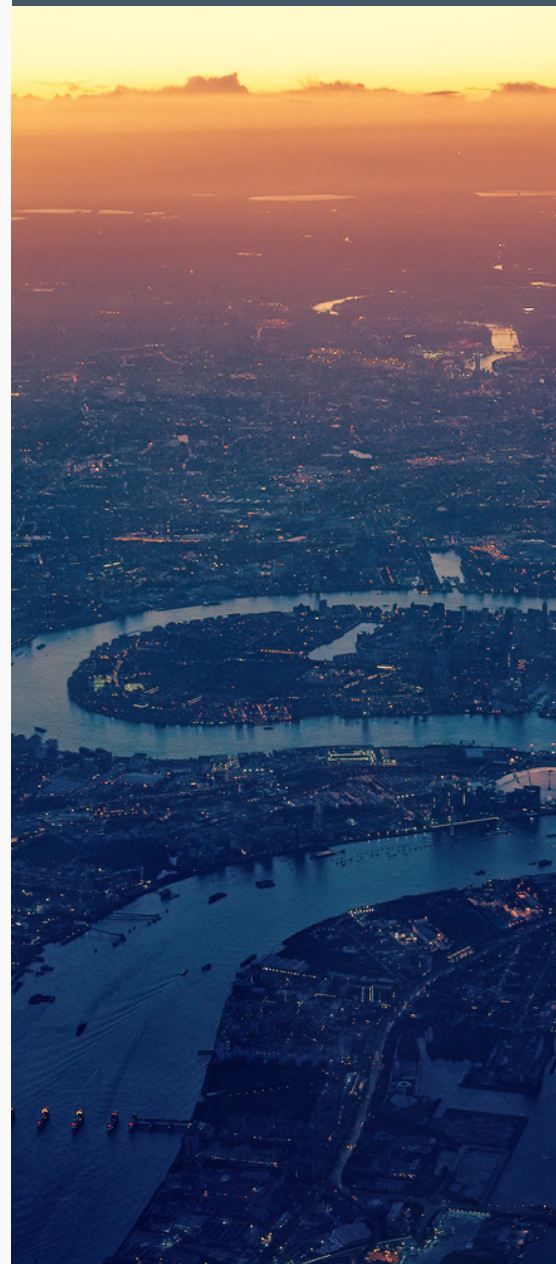
Thames Water recently launched an interactive [map](#) of 468 sewer overflow locations. The map updates every ten minutes, and shows in near real time where the company is discharging untreated wastewater and sewage to rivers.

In the middle of January 2023, after rainfall, about one third of the Thames Water sewer outfalls were discharging and another third had done so within the previous 48 hours. The map has also confirmed that many sewage discharges take place during dry weather.



Mapping sewage Thames Water recently launched an interactive map of 468 sewer overflow locations. The map updates every ten minutes, and shows in near real time where the company is discharging untreated wastewater and sewage to rivers. In the middle of January 2023, after rainfall, about one third of the Thames Water sewer outfalls were discharging and another third had done so within the previous 48 hours. The map has also confirmed that many sewage discharges take place during dry weather.

We know when sewage was dumped – but not how much





But as a geographer and geomorphologist who specialises in rivers and has taken a [keen interest in this sewage crisis](#), I know there is something missing in the data. Sewage discharges to rivers are recorded by sensors known as event duration monitors. These measure the [start and end time](#) of any flow, but are rarely set up to measure the volume of that flow.

This leaves the data open to manipulation. Was an “event” 100 litres or 1 billion litres? 1 billion might sound far-fetched, but [Mogden sewage works](#) next to Twickenham Stadium discharged over 1 billion litres of sewage directly into the River Thames on each of two days in October 2021.

So a water company could in theory reduce the duration and frequency of discharge events – turning the above map from red to green – but still increase the total amount of sewage dumped into rivers.

The absence of reliable baseline data on sewage dumping is a major problem and research has shown that water companies have not reported the [full scale of their discharges](#).

The Environment Agency has a poor record of sewage pollution data scrutiny and several water companies are now routinely declining environmental information requests. How can we address the biodiversity crisis and make rivers safe for recreation if we don’t have reliable data on the volumes of pollutants pumped into them?

People need accurate information on what is happening to their local rivers so they can identify the [worst offending discharge sites](#) and hold water companies to account. The Thames map is therefore a welcome step towards increasing transparency in the water industry and rebuilding trust, but it does not go far enough.





In July 2022, United Utilities, which serves north-west England, announced a [£230 million investment](#) to upgrade wastewater treatment infrastructure on several rivers by 2025. The company states this will reduce the discharge of untreated wastewater and sewage into the region's rivers by "more than 10 million tonnes a year – the equivalent of 4,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools". This is a remarkable admission of sustained sewage dumping on a colossal scale. It appears water companies can provide volumes when it suits them.

Water companies in England have been unwilling to calibrate their event duration monitoring sites to estimate sewage volumes. Yet they routinely collect very accurate data on the volumes of drinking water supplied to millions of homes, in order to calculate water bills. The 2021 Environment Act requires them to make near real-time data about the frequency and duration of sewage discharges publicly available no later than 2025. But if the government's plans to reduce sewage dumping are to be realised, we still need to know wastewater discharge volumes.

The Environmental Audit Committee made such a recommendation in its landmark [2022 report on river pollution](#), but the government argued it was too expensive. If Thérèse Coffey is serious about tackling this scandal, she must reverse that decision.

[Jamie Woodward](#), Professor of Physical Geography, [The University of Manchester](#)

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

We need sewage volume data





FASHION GREENWASH

HOW COMPANIES ARE HIDING THE TRUE ENVIRONMENTAL COSTS OF FAST FASHION

On 24th April 2013 1,134 people lost their lives while making clothes due to the collapse of the Rana Plaza clothing factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Despite a number of labour rights initiatives, and the rise of a global fashion activism movement, including [Fashion Revolution](#) and [Greenpeace's Detox campaign](#), the global fashion industry is more broken than ever. Clothing production doubled from 2000 to 2014, taking an already unsustainable level of production each year to an estimated 100 billion garments.

A recent screening of sustainability claims in the textile, garment and shoe sector suggested that 39% could be false or deceptive. Big brands like H&M and Decathlon have been found by regulators to have been making false green claims. In the UK, authorities have investigated similar claims made by ASOS, Boohoo and George at Asda, as part of a larger effort to develop its Green Claims Code.

In terms of materials, recycled polyester especially is becoming a central sustainability myth for the fashion industry. Clothes are being labelled as 'recycled', even though there's no evidence that they are part of a truly circular system for clothes.

This is potentially misleading – consumers might think that the term 'recycled' means they are made out of old clothes, and can be recycled again into new clothes, when neither is the case.

This is not only creating a false sense of security for customers, but hiding the facts about plastic recycling: as of 2015, only 9% of all plastic waste ever created has been recycled.

A new Greenpeace report has exposed the biggest false green claims made by major global fashion labels.

Only 3% of clothes are made from recycled materials.

Most of the 3% is fabric made from plastic drinks bottles. It is not recycled again but burned or dumped.

Less than 1% of all clothes are made from old textiles.



The Greenpeace report examines the sustainability claims made by 14 brands through their self-defined special 'eco-friendly' or 'responsible' collections. In doing this, the report was able to assess which brands are the most guilty of greenwashing. Well known brands' supposedly sustainable collections that are in the greenwash danger zone include:

Decathlon Ecodesign
H&M Conscious
Mango Committed
Primark Cares
Tesco F&F Made Faithfully
Zara Join Life

The promises made by brands on these labels were found to be lacking in a number of ways, such as:

- Confusing labelling for customers, including false 'certifications' which are simply named after company sustainability programmes.
- Lack of in-house or even third-party verification on environmental, social and human rights measures.
- Lack of public information from across the chain of production.
- No attempt to slow the production of large volumes.
- Misleading claims of 'circularity' relying on recycled polyester from plastic bottles
- Using 'sustainable' or 'responsible' on materials which are only slightly better
- Promotion of fabric in blends such as polycotton, which is unrecyclable.
- Continued reliance on discredited measurement tools such as the Higgs Index on Materials Sustainability.
- Lack of breakdown of information about materials.
- Relying on small scale changes when large changes in volume production are needed.

Article taken from the [Greenpeace website](#).

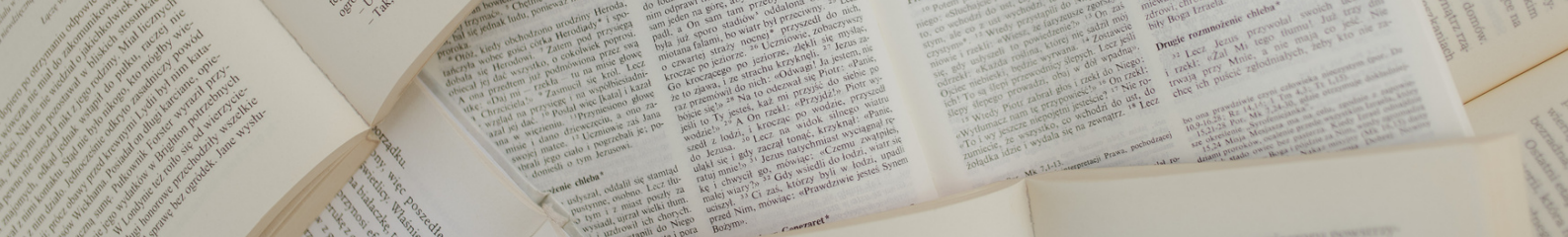
What must fashion companies do?

The only true way to make fashion companies green claims work is for them to reduce the amount of clothing they're making. But many fashion companies won't even tell us how many clothes they produce each year.

The textile industry is responsible for five to ten percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. 85% of its greenhouse gas emissions come from the supply chains which are mostly located in the Global South.

Reducing the volume of clothing made will bring these environmental costs down, and stem the flow of clothing waste – again to countries less able to deal with it. Worldwide, one truckload of clothing is incinerated or landfilled every single second.

The simple truth is that fast fashion will never be sustainable. Companies are virtually writing their own sustainable fashion rules themselves. Many of them are refusing to even publish volumes, let alone reduce them.



Recommended read:

BEAK, TOOTH AND CLAW: WHY WE MUST LIVE WITH PREDATORS
MARY COLWELL

Mary Colwell travels across the UK and Ireland to encounter the predators face to face. She watches their lives in the wild and discovers how they fit into the landscape. She talks to the scientists studying them and the wildlife lovers who want to protect them. She also meets the people who want to control them to protect their livelihoods or sporting interests. In this even-handed exploration of the issues, Mary provides a thoughtful and reasoned analysis of the debates surrounding our bittersweet relationship with predators.



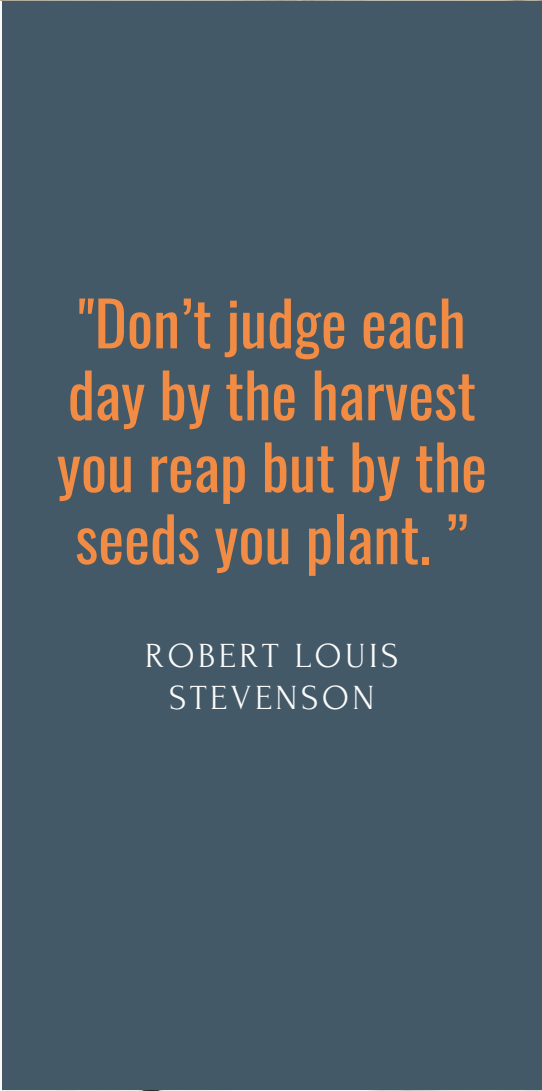
Recommended listen:

BIRDSONG RADIO

With Birdsong Radio, you can enjoy the dawn chorus anytime and anywhere. The benefits of bird song From helping you relax to boosting productivity, listening to bird song has so many benefits. You could use it:

- To help you switch off and de-stress
- As an alarm clock, for a gentle way to start the day
- To help you focus while studying or working
- As a soundtrack for meditation
- To bring some calm to your daily commute

However you choose to listen, we hope that bird song will brighten your day.





GARMENT MAKING 4-WEEK COURSE **[JULY 2023]** **WITH STITCHED UP CO-OP**

Always wanted to make your own clothes but not sure where to start? Or have you already made some garments but need some help with technique? This 4-week course is for you! Over four two-hour sessions, Stitched Up tutor Sarah will be on hand with expert guidance as you create a garment from a pattern of your choice. No need to fear tricky construction such as inserting invisible zips or fathoming sleeve plackets!

Bring along your pattern and fabric and Stitched Up will help you take it from there. The course takes place at their pop-up in Stretford Mall on the following dates:

Tues 4th July, 6:30 – 9:00pm
Tues 11th July, 6:30 – 9:00pm
Tues 18th July, 6:30 – 9:00pm
Tues 25th July, 6:30 – 9:00pm

This is a mixed-ability class, so you'll learn at your own pace. What you can complete in four weeks will depend on the complexity of your garment and how fast you work! As an example, you can expect to complete a straightforward shift dress to a good standard in this time. Fast stitchers are welcome to work on more than one project during the course.

For details about the space and where to find it:
<https://stitchedup.coop/customer-info-stretford-workshops/>

DATE
Jul 04 - 25 2023

TIME
6:30 pm - 9:00 pm

COST
£100.00

**Stretford Mall, Chester
Road, Manchester, M32
9BB**

SIGN UP HERE:
<https://stitchedup.coop/customer-info-stretford-workshops/>





**If you have any feedback, ideas for any future events
or want to get involved with this newsletter, please
email: alexandra.prodan@manchester.ac.uk**