



According to the River Mole River Watch, record water temperatures and increase in pollution are a threat to local wildlife.

Record high temperatures and an increase in nitrate, phosphate and ammonia are some factors.

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The River Mole has seen concerning levels of pollution in the past few years, and this summer is no different. Recent reports have shown that the River Mole is facing a spike in nitrate, sulphate and ammonia levels, as addressed by the River Mole River Watch, a local research group dedicated to monitoring the river's water quality.

Among all rivers in the UK, the Thames River Basin has the worst water quality recorded, and much of the data states that sewage plants are at fault. It is estimated that 3 billion-10 billion gallons of untreated wastewater are released from treatment plants each year, contributing to the global 80% of wastewater that returns to contaminate the ecosystem.

Water temperatures in the River Mole reached over 20°C this June, which are the highest the River Watch have recorded so far. Over the past 15 months, the Gatwick Stream in Horley has had the

warmest temperature on average, reaching 21°C, and Fetcham Splash measured the coolest water at 18°C. This is often the pattern during heatwaves; however, warm water is also released as discharge from power plants and sewage systems, which further increases water temperatures.

Nitrate levels also reached record-defying numbers. June 2025's catchment showed the highest recorded nitrate concentration levels in the past 15 months, equal to June 2023's catchment. The River Watch found that nitrate concentration particularly increased in streams with sewage treatment works. In Dorking, for example, discharge from the Dorking Sewage Treatment Works is causing an increase in nitrate levels. Further research shows that the Dorking Stepping Stones, located slightly downstream, have been heavily affected. The Stepping Stones are a local wildlife attraction where children enjoy playing in the stream during summer heat waves. However, the high levels of nitrate concentration bring many health risks, making the water unsuitable for recreational purposes.

While phosphate levels in June decreased by 10% in comparison to last summer, the water quality remains poor, especially in the Upper Mole. Average concentrations increased by 27% compared to May's catchment. The River Mole River Watch reports that the highest increase in phosphate concentrations this June were found "downstream of Horley sewage treatment works." They found that generally, streams with sewage treatment works have higher phosphate concentrations.

Ammonia spikes were also a common occurrence this June, reaching the top 3 highest recorded in the last 15 months. The catchment shows that a few streams such as Wallace and Brook have been recording constant high levels of ammonia. Additionally, Hookwood Common Brook, the River Watch reports, have continuously shown high ammonia levels since March.

An Oxford study shows that water companies are legally allowed to release treated and untreated water into rivers, resulting in dire environmental and health consequences. Despite how crucial rivers are for human health and the UK's biodiversity, the quality of UK rivers continues to decline, as recorded by the River Mole River Watch.

With support from the UK Government, the Elmbridge Council and Thames Water, pollution in the River Mole can be reduced, thus strengthening its biodiversity and improving the wellbeing of the surrounding human population. In response to the recent Government Sewage Pledge, the River Mole River Watch states that delivering clean water "demands transparency, financial clarity, realistic engineering planning, and genuine ecological goals." The River Watch also urges the government to commit to achieving 'Good Ecological Status' under the Water Framework Directive, stating that it is a "legal obligation" and a "vital goal for the health of the River Mole".