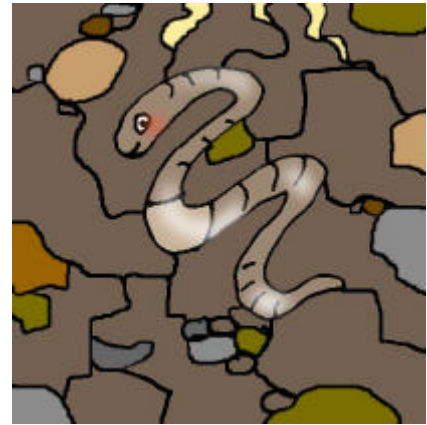


Soil

What is soil?

Soil is made from the breakdown of solid rock (by weathering, or glaciation) and the collection of organic matter. The UK has a great variety of soil types, due to its geology, geography, climate, the effect of water and historical land-use. Soil is the layer on which plant and animal communities depend; and is the main repository of zoological and botanical remains and archaeological artefacts from previous natural and cultural environments. Soil is central to the hydrological cycle; and it determines land use options and practices in agriculture and forestry.



Soil is a living resource – a typical English lowland loamy soil will contain 25 tons of micro-organisms per hectare – including 4 tons of earthworms, 10 tons of fungi, 1 ton of springtails, spiders, beetles and snails. Yet soil flora and fauna have not been considered worthy of inclusion in nature conservation or biodiversity strategies. (National Trust Strategy for soil)