

Discover the wild side of our Borough!

SUTTON NATURE EXPLORER MAP

Whether you want to walk, rest, play or explore, there is something for everyone at London Borough of Sutton's nature sites.

Take part, take pride

About Sutton's biodiversity

In the London Borough of Sutton, a total of 46 sites are designated under the Planning Framework as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). Of these, 11 are Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). Many are the result of redevelopment of land, including hospitals and research facilities, whilst others include golf courses, more formal parks and remnants of industrial land.

Sutton contains an impressive array of wildlife—over 1500 species! Nationally declining or rare species, such as the small blue butterfly, legally protected flowering plants such as greater yellow rattle, invertebrates such as stag beetle and birds including skylark, all make their homes in Sutton. The more familiar blackbird, robin and fox, are common too and each has a valuable role in the ecosystem.

Sutton's natural character is influenced by its geology. In the southern half of the Borough, the underlying geology is chalk, whereas the north-east is dominated by gravels and in the north-west, London Clay. Each creates different soil conditions which support specific flora and fauna. The low fertility, light soils on the chalk are ideal for chalk grassland flowers, whereas the clay holds water and therefore supports more of our wetland areas.

This guide will help you to discover the wild side of Sutton.

Play Your Part

Sutton Nature Conservation Volunteers (SNVC) works with the Biodiversity Team to carry out practical maintenance and habitat management throughout the year. Tasks include scrub and invasive species clearance, hedge laying and coppicing—why not join them? Check the blog, Facebook page or Twitter feed for details. Like us on Facebook. Follow us on Twitter @SNCVolunteers.

Many of Sutton's wildlife sites have dedicated Friends Groups who help look after them. Could you help take care of your local site?

Looking after our wildlife sites

All living things have evolved with their environment over centuries. As the landscape has changed, most significantly by human activity, the wildlife it supports has too. The way people used to work the land and created different conditions that supported particular species; examples include hay meadows, coppiced woods, farm ponds and planted field boundaries.

If we stood back and let nature take its course, eventually all our nature sites would turn into low quality scrubby woodland. This is why we work hard to maintain our ponds, cut our meadows and trim our hedges, so that these important habitats are available now and in the future. The timing and intensity of these works is carefully planned to maximise benefit to wildlife.

We all depend on biodiversity to supply us with essential products such as food, fuel, fresh water, and services including nutrient recycling, flood alleviation and climate regulation. This is why it is so important to look after it.

Sutton has its own dedicated Biodiversity Team within the Council which works to protect, manage and enhance biodiversity in the Borough. They achieve this by running an active programme of events and volunteering opportunities, implementing a tailor-made Biodiversity Action Plan (the Sutton BAP) and advising on wildlife issues associated with planning applications.

Sutton Ecology Centre

Sutton Ecology Centre is the main site for environmental education in the Borough. You can attend one of the many events at the Centre during school holidays and weekends or discover the grounds independently by following the trail on site. You will come across many valuable wildlife habitats including trees, hedgerow, pond, old orchard and meadow. The grounds are open to the public every day from 09:00 until sunset all year round.

Nature Discovery Backpacks

In collaboration with the British Ecological Society, the London Borough of Sutton has a number of pre-packed Nature Discovery Backpacks to guide your children's quest for understanding and fun. These backpacks are available to hire at selected events run by the Biodiversity Team. They are aimed at children aged 3-12 years and contain equipment such as binoculars, bug pots and wildlife keys, plus an activity guide - all you need to engage with nature in an enjoyable and educational way.

Chalk grassland

Chalk grasslands are naturally rich in flowering plants and insect life because no one individual species is allowed to dominate, due to the specific conditions. The thin, low-nutrient soils are susceptible to drought and throughout history these grasslands have traditionally been grazed. This adds up to a competitive environment for anything trying to get a foothold. Many species of butterfly and moth are solely associated with this habitat. Signature plants include kidney vetch, field scabious and lady's bedstraw.

Although widespread across the South and North Downs, this habitat is declining in extent and quality as agriculture expands and intensifies, urban development spreads and traditional grazing of these areas wanes. If it is not maintained, scrub encroaches and open grassland is reduced. At some of our sites, we have reinstated winter grazing to reduce the dominant grasses and allow flowers to set seed.

Neutral grassland

Often former hay meadows or pastures, these grasslands occur on soil which is neither acidic nor alkaline, typically on clay. Those which have not been improved (by treatment with agricultural fertiliser) support a unique plant community, and in turn, some rare invertebrates and butterflies.

Our sites in Sutton have all been modified, such that they no longer contain the diversity of species they could do. We are trying to improve species diversity through selective management and spreading wildflower seeds. Species you may come across include bird's-foot trefoil and oxeye daisy.

Wetlands

Watercourses come in all shapes and sizes, providing specific habitats for aquatic life and terrestrial fauna too. Chalk spring-fed streams are particularly valued as the clean water and moderate nutrient levels are ideal for a wealth of plants and invertebrates. Sutton is lucky to have one of the best chalk streams in the London area - the River Wandie. Chalk stream specialities you may see here include stream water-crowfoot and starwort. Like hedgerows and ditches, rivers are key wildlife corridors, linking patches of habitat and allowing wildlife to disperse and maintain healthy populations.

Elsewhere, standing water habitats can provide important over-wintering areas for birds, such as common snipe. Wetland vegetation is often comprised of reedbeds—a declining habitat in Britain and scarce in all but a few of Sutton's wetlands sites.

All these aquatic habitats provide vital foraging grounds for bats and birds as they support the first life stages of many insects.

Find out more

Biodiversity Team, London Borough of Sutton, 24 Denmark Road, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 2JG
Phone: 020 8770 4203 email: biodiversity@sutton.gov.uk
www.sutton.gov.uk/biodiversity

Sutton Nature Conservation Volunteers: www.snvc.org.uk

Sutton Ecology Centre Phone: 020 8770 5820

London Wildlife Trust: www.wildlondon.org.uk

Beddington Farmlands: www.beddingtonfarmlands.org.uk

Field notes

Whenever you visit one of the Borough's nature sites, please remember the following Countryside Code:

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, stick to the paths
- Take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control, on a lead is best
- Consider other site users

The sites listed below are particularly sensitive and are not suitable for walking dogs.

Why not make a note of any species you spot as you visit Sutton's wildlife sites using the form below?

Field notes

Date: _____
Location (be as specific as you can): _____
Species: _____
Number seen: _____
Behaviour: _____

Send these details to the Biodiversity Team, along with any photos, so they can be added to a digital record. The team can help with identification too! email: biodiversity@sutton.gov.uk

1. Sutton Explorer Map Leaflet tiff

SUTTON NATURE EXPLORER MAP

Whether you want to take a stroll, observe and learn about nature, have some outdoor fun or simply relax, this map will help you discover the wildlife on your doorstep.

REST 5 6 7 11 13 15

Spending time outdoors in nature is calming and restorative - it makes you feel good. Throughout the Borough, many of our wildlife sites offer formal places to sit, relax and take in the delightful sounds, scents and views. It's surprising what you can learn when you take the time to stop.

At our grasslands, listen out for crickets, admire the delicate flight of butterflies and look up for kestrels hovering above, looking for voles. Take in the views of London from the north edge of Ruffett Wood or why not take a picnic to the Sutton Ecology Centre grounds? Remember to take your food and litter home though!

WALK 7 8 9 11 12 13 14 15

One of the best ways to discover Sutton's wildlife sites is to explore them on foot. You see a lot more and can have close encounters with nature this way.

Short walks through our woodlands can surround you with birdsong, dramatic autumnal colours, or the scent of wild garlic as you brush past its lush leaves. A visual feast awaits you in our grasslands in summer as pastel shades change to vibrant hues of yellows and purples by July. Stick to the mown paths to avoid disturbing ground nesting birds, such as meadow pipit or skylark.

There are also a number of walking routes through the Borough. The family-friendly Oaks Park Nature Trail, the Wandie Trail (also accessible by bicycle) following the course of the River or the Sutton Countryside Walk each take you through a number of formal and informal landscapes, meadows or near water features.

- ### SUTTON'S WILDLIFE SITES
- Cuddington Recreation Ground**
Nearest buses: 293, E16
train: Stoneleigh
 - Sutton Common**
Nearest buses: 80, 93
 - Anton Crescent Wetland LNR**
Nearest bus: 80
train: West Sutton
 - The Warren**
Nearest buses: 407, S3, 455, 463
 - Devonshire Avenue Nature Area LNR**
Nearest buses: 80, 280, S3, S4
train: Belmont
 - Belmont Pastures LNR**
Nearest buses: 80, 280, S1, S3, S4
train: Belmont
 - Cuddington Meadows LNR**
Nearest bus: 166
train: Banstead
 - Carshalton Road Pastures**
Nearest buses: S4, 154, 166
 - Ruffett and Bigwood LNR**
Nearest buses: 463, 166, 434
 - Wellfield**
Nearest buses: S4, S3, 154
 - Queen Mary's Woodland**
Nearest buses: 154, S4
 - Roundshaw Woods**
Nearest bus: 127
 - Roundshaw Downs LNR**
Nearest buses: 154, 455, S4
 - Wilderness Island LNR**
Managed by London Wildlife Trust
Nearest buses: 127, 157, 407, X26, 154
train: Carshalton
 - Carew Manor Wetland**
Nearest buses: 407, 410
 - Beddington Farmlands**
Nearest bus: 463
train: Hackbridge
 - Therapia Lane Rough**
Train: Therapia Lane
- LNR = Local Nature Reserve
NB: this map shows selected sites only

KEY

- Bat walks take place here
- Sheep grazing
- Cattle grazing
- Grassland
- Woodland/scrub
- Wetland/pond
- Train station
- Tram stop
- Footpath

Seasonal Interest: Summer, Autumn, Spring, Winter

- Education events
- Interpretation on site
- Volunteer activities
- Good views
- Restricted access
- Car park
- Limited street parking may be available in this area
- Public conveniences

EXPLORE 7 8 9 11 12 13 14 15 16

Enthusiasts will love the range of flora and fauna our Borough's nature reserves support.

Interpretation boards at many of our sites highlight key species of note, so you can put your observation skills to the test. Can you recognise the field signs of nocturnal mammals, or know which flower to watch for small blue butterflies?

Each year, a programme of training courses is available to expand your knowledge and identification skills of such things as spiders, wildflowers, trees in winter, birds and butterflies.

SUTTON'S NATURE TRAILS & WALKS

- Wandle Trail
- Wandle-Oaks Links
- Sutton Countryside Walk
- Shorter route
- Oaks Park nature trail
- Sutton & Cheam Tree Trail
- Carshalton Tree Trail

Scale: 0 200 400 600 800 1km
0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 mile

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2. Sutton Explorer Map

PLAY 1 4 5 15 16

For the fun-seekers among you, Sutton's wildlife sites have plenty to keep you entertained and enlightened. A range of activities and events for all ages run throughout the year including pond dipping and insect hotel building at Sutton Ecology Centre.

At selected events, children can be kept amused for hours with our Nature Discovery Backpacks, while adults can try their hands at traditional hedge-laying, take the family on a wildlife cycle ride or to an evening bat walk.

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PROJECT	REV	DESCRIPTION	DATE	BY	STATUS
DA24014 - Langley Court	1	1 : 1	19/03/24	SA	PLANNING
Client	Skyline Construction Group				
Title	Sutton Explorer Map				
Project No.	DA24014.		303.	Rev.	
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LOTTERY FUNDED

Production of this map was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund