



The River Ravensbourne to the east provides an attractive walk and the Willow Carr (wet woodland) in the centre of the park provides a seasonally flooded habitat that is surrounded by Willow and Alder trees.

There are several wetland areas, all of different character. The ancient pond to the west of the Mansion House appears on many of the earliest maps.

Wetlands:

Ancient woodland refers to woodland that has existed since before 1600. For many species of animal and plant, ancient woodland sites provide the sole habitat, and are home to more rare and threatened species than any other UK habitat. The park has 20 hectares (49 acres) of ancient woodland containing a wide variety of trees including Oak and Sweet Chestnut, as well as an Ash plantation.

Ancient Woodland:

Beckenham Place Park is the largest open space in the borough and is an exceptional wildlife site. It contains many different habitats for rare species including ancient woodland, diverse grassland, a natural stretch of river and potentially the oldest pond in Lewisham.



Take a walk on the Nature Trail

Point 1

Point 1. Start by the Mansion sign and map. Walk through the hedge to the left of the Mansion House and take the path to the left. See if you can spot the evergreen Holm Oak and also the English Oak. On this path, just past the gardens, there is a gnarled Black Mulberry Tree and large stone squirrel statue.

A little further on you will discover a fallen Turkey Oak which was at least 230 years old when it fell in 2002.

Study the trees near here, and their leaves and buds. Can you notice the difference between the Oaks?



English Oak

Turkey Oak

Continue up toward the woodland past more mature Oaks, a Tulip Tree and a variety of specimen conifer plantings.

A patch of Gorse is on your right just before you enter the ancient woodland. An information sign here indicates some things you might see in the Woodland. Listen out for the screech of the bright green feathered Ring Necked Parakeets, which are a common feature in the park.

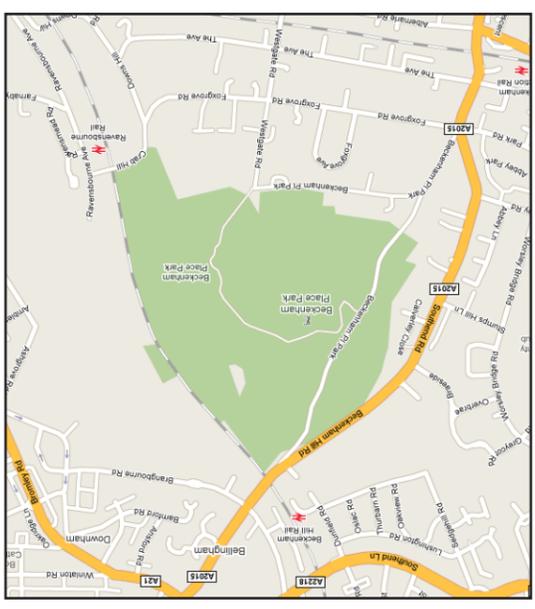
The path eventually reaches a T- junction with a signpost, map and bench. You have now entered Summerhouse Hill Wood.



Illustrations by Barry Small
Tel: 020 83258781
Email: ppp.friends@ntlworld.com
BR3 1TA.
Beckenham, Kent.
18 Greycot Road,
The Secretary,

To join the Friends of Beckenham Place Park, contact:

The "Friends of Beckenham Place Park" organise regular events, guided walks and volunteer workdays. They run the Visitor Centre in the Mansion that contains information and displays on the history and wildlife of the park. It is open on Sundays from 1.30 - 3.30pm throughout the year.



Car parking is available via the entrance on Beckenham Hill Road. There is free access to the park during daylight hours and facilities include a café, bar, toilets, ornamental gardens, an 18 hole public golf course and pro shop, children's playground and a Visitor Centre.

The park contains many thousands of creatures that rely on the varied habitats and complex food webs. Small mammals including the Woodmouse and Bank Vole live in the woodland and Pipistrelle Bats can be seen at twilight hunting over some of the meadow areas. There is an abundance of birds such as Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Tawny Owl, Great and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, Spotted Flycatcher and Sparrowhawk, to name a few. On the golf course the Green Woodpecker can be seen probing the ground for insects along with groups of Stock Doves picking seeds from the mown grass. The meadows in summer abound with moths, bees, grasshoppers, butterflies and ladybirds.

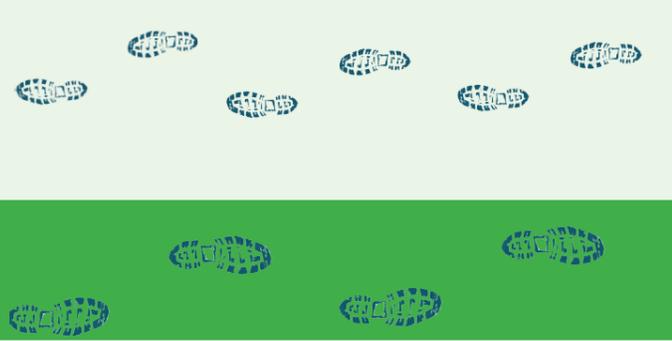
Fauna:

The woodland ground flora includes a number of ancient woodland indicator plants including Bluebells, Wood Anemones, Dog's Mercury and various grasses. There are numerous fungi including Chicken of the Woods and the rare Zoned Rosette. In the wetland areas Bittersweet, Yellow Iris, Trifid Bur-marigold and Common Duckweed can be found. The meadow has many grasses including Yorkshire Fog, Common Sorrel and Buttercup.

Flora:

A variety of grasslands including acidic grassland, which is rare in Lewisham, occurs in the golf course. Railway Field, part of the Common and Crab Hill are managed as meadow to promote wild flowers, insects, butterflies and birds.

Grassland:



The tree canopy along this path is predominantly Sweet Chestnut, a species introduced to Britain by the Romans. The tree not only provides edible nuts but its timber is ideal for fencing as the wood has natural preservatives and is easily split into posts & chestnut paling. Squirrel drays can occasionally be found in the trees near here.

They look like a large untidy nest of twigs; if it is winter time see if you can spot any in the tree canopy.



Sweet Chestnut

Summerhouse Hill Wood is dominated by Oak and has existed here continuously since at least 1600.

The woodland contains many plants which are more or less restricted to these 'ancient woodlands' such as Bluebell which forms a spectacular Spring display.



English Bluebell

Point 2

To the right there is a Wild Service Tree about 10 metres into the woodland. You may notice recent woodland management in the woodland where Holly, Sycamore and Rhododendron have been removed to allow more light to reach the ground flora.



Wild Service Tree

Point 3 and 4

Follow the path right, look for Point 3 and keep straight ahead.

Look at the tree trunks for woodpecker holes; you may hear woodpeckers drumming or calling, they drum more in the spring to mark their territory.

Turn left at Point 4. In this short section, before you reach Point 5, on your right you will see a variety of ferns, the most common being the bracken fern. In May and June the drooping waxy white flowers of the lily Solomon's Seal can sometimes be seen. The roots of Solomon's Seal were used medically to heal bruises.



Great Spotted Woodpecker



Point 5

At Point 5 along the path on your left is a depressed wet area which may be the remains of a natural spring indicated in old maps of the area. There are two iron marker posts nearby showing the old parish boundaries, the larger one is for Lewisham and the smaller one for Beckenham.

Point 6

Carry on to the edge of the woodland where it meets the

grassland/meadow of Crab Hill, Point 6. At this point, you might like to roam around Crab Hill and look at the impressive views over the brow of the hill of Crystal Palace and Beckenham. Look and listen for insect species including grasshoppers, butterflies, bees and several striking day flying moths such as the Cinnabar and 6 Spot Burnet Moth. On late summer evenings, Pipistrelle Bats can be seen foraging over the meadow. See if you can find two wildflowers that have similar yellow flowers but completely different shaped leaves. Creeping Cinquefoil has almost hairless leaves, where as, Creeping Buttercup is characterised by having three-lobed hairy leaves.

Point 7 is on your left.

Point 7 and 8

As you walk downhill there is a good viewpoint across the railway and Ravensbourne Valley, which was historically a flood plane. Turn right and walk along the sunken lane pathway. Just before leaving the wood note what appears to be a lump of concrete containing pebbles. This 'conglomerate' (rock containing a mixture of stones cemented by finer sediment) was laid down in shallow water some 10 million years ago, during the Palaeocene period. It forms part of a series of strata known as the Blackheath Beds, a geological layer in which small fossil shellfish and sharks teeth have been found.

From Point 8 leave the park turning left down the hill and over the railway bridge to Ravensbourne Avenue. At the end of the road turn left and walk back towards the park. Take care NOT to follow the Green Chain signs as they lead in the wrong direction. Go through the entrance at the bottom of the lane, this part of the park is called Summerhouse Field.

Point 9 and 10

Point 9 marks the beginning of the riverside walk. Follow the River Ravensbourne downstream. The River Lewisham into which all the Borough's other rivers run. Here it is mostly still within its natural gravelly bed and provides a valuable habitat for Kingfishers. Look for trees such as Crack Willow (aptly named as it 'cracks' and breaks easily) and Alder, as well as wetland species such as Marsh Marigold. Among the bankside nettles, the spectacular Butterbur, a rare plant in Lewisham can sometimes be seen. It has ghostly, pale pink flower spikes which appear in spring followed by huge green heart shaped leaves that are grey and downy on the underside. This path leads to Summerhouse Field, followed by the grassed area known as the Common.



Kingfisher

Following the route of the river on your right you may see Ducks, Coots and Moorhen and on your left numerous crows which, on careful inspection, have more colour than you might think with iridescent blue in their feathers. At the end of the Common you reach a tarmac footpath which runs to the rear of the houses.



Crack Willow

Turn left here and follow the path turning left again at Point 10. This will take you back over the railway via a bridge bounded by Horse Chestnuts, Hawthorns and another old Oak tree to your right. Keep to the main path (beware of maintenance vehicles). Here you may hear or see Green or Great Spotted Woodpeckers.

Six Spot Burnet Moth



Cinnabar Moth

to roam around Crab Hill and look at the impressive views over the brow of the hill of Crystal Palace and Beckenham. Look and listen for insect species including grasshoppers, butterflies, bees and several striking day flying moths such as the Cinnabar and 6 Spot Burnet Moth. On late summer evenings, Pipistrelle Bats can be seen foraging over the meadow. See if you can find two wildflowers that have similar yellow flowers but completely different shaped leaves. Creeping Cinquefoil has almost hairless leaves, where as, Creeping Buttercup is characterised by having three-lobed hairy leaves.



Pipistrelle Bat



Stag Beetle

Point 13

On your way to Point 13 you will pass some large Sweet Chestnut trees. Look out for two waymarker posts, when you reach this point, you have a choice of route to take. The short route to the right takes you up to Point 13 and left via some steps back to Point 2. The longer route to the left will avoid steps and take you to Point 3. From either Point 2 or Point 3 turn right and you will follow the Green Chain Walk back towards the Mansion House and the end or start of the trail.



Ash Tree leaf and twig

Dead trees are important habitats for many invertebrates including the rare Stag & Lesser Stag Beetle. Both species are common in the park.

- Nature Trail
- Green Chain Walk
- Other Pathways
- Steps/Slope
- Waymarkers
- Cycle Route
- Woodland
- Meadow Area
- River
- Ornamental Garden
- Railway
- Roads
- Parking
- Toilet
- Entrances
- Childrens Playground
- Golf Course
- Picnic Area

