

# 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



skylark



*Alauda arvensis*

Greater yellow rattle



*Rhinanthus angustifolius*

Small blue butterfly



*Cupido minimus*

## 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.

stag beetles



*Lucanus cervus*

## 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 created different conditions that suited 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.



**Meadow cutting**

## Play Your Part

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

Like us on Facebook 

Follow us on Twitter @SNCVvolunteers 



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

English bluebells



*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*

## Sutton's Habitats

### Woodland and scrub

Britain was once largely wooded but due to agricultural and urban development and reduced demand for wood products, only 12% remains. Areas classed as ancient woodland (under continuous tree cover since at least 1600AD) are rarer still and are highly prized for their unique plantlife. There are remnants of ancient woodland in Sutton, indicated by the presence of plants like sanicle and bluebell.

Healthy woodland should contain several layers which provide niche habitats for a range of birds, mammals and insects. Good management will maintain these layers and may involve thinning to reduce competition, or coppicing (cyclical cutting of stems) to alter structure and light levels.

Scrub is often found at the edge of woodland or grassland, where a transition between the two is occurring. It is a habitat in its own right, offering shelter and food to birds and small mammals and protecting seedlings from trampling or browsing. Common scrub species you may encounter are bramble, blackthorn and hawthorn.



## Sutton Ecology Centre 15

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.



## Chalk grassland 4 7 8 10 13



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.

Hawthorn



*Crataegus monogyna*

Field scabious



*Knautia arvensis*

## 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.



**Please note**, while many of Sutton's wildlife sites are fully open to the public, others have limited access (look for the padlock symbol on the map). Most of these can be explored during one of the scheduled events or volunteer activities.



### 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 range 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.



Oxeye daisy



*Leucanthemum vulgare*

## Find out more

**Biodiversity Team, London Borough of Sutton,**  
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Phone: 020 8770 4203 email: [biodiversity@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:biodiversity@sutton.gov.uk)  
[www.sutton.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.sutton.gov.uk/biodiversity)



**Sutton Nature Conservation Volunteers:** [www.sncv.org.uk](http://www.sncv.org.uk)

**Sutton Ecology Centre** Phone: 020 8770 5820

**London Wildlife Trust:** [www.wildlondon.org.uk](http://www.wildlondon.org.uk)

**Beddington Farmlands:**  
[www.beddingtonfarmlands.org.uk](http://www.beddingtonfarmlands.org.uk)



## Rivers, ponds and wetlands 1 2 3 14 16 17

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 Wandle. 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.



**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 Borough records. The team can help with identification too!*

*email: [biodiversity@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:biodiversity@sutton.gov.uk)*