

WOODS & TREES



Heavy horses at Beaulieu Heights



Easter walk at Birchwood

There are many woods in Croydon which you can visit. In the north, fragments remain of the Great North Wood, which originally covered a large part of South London. Today you can visit its remnants in Biggin Wood, Beaulieu Heights and Grangewood Park. Further south, there are fine examples of ancient woodlands, which we know have been wooded since before 1600, because they appear on old maps. Selisdon Woods and King's Wood are spectacular in Spring, when bluebells and other flowers bloom before the leaves of the trees emerge and cast a deep shade. In the autumn, colourful fungi appear. Woodlands are good places for seeing and hearing birds. If you are very lucky and walk quietly you might also spot a roe deer, fox or badger.

Woods need active management to provide a varied habitat for many species and to ensure the healthy growth of the next generation of trees. Coppicing and selective removal of trees are carried out today to create a mosaic of light and shade. Coppicing is an old woodland craft. Trees such as hazel, sweet chestnut or hornbeam are cut down to ground level. The poles which grow back can then be cut again when they have reached the required size.



Sweet Chestnut

Heavy horses are used to pull timber on sites unsuitable for heavy machinery. Timber extracted gets turned into countryside seats, fences, gates and firewood. Any leftover wood will be turned into BBQ charcoal, firewood and bean poles by local woodland volunteer groups.

Bodging at South Norwood Country Park



Roe Deer



Fly Agaric fungus



Bell Heather

CHALK GRASSLAND

Chalk grassland is found mainly in the south of the borough, and is part of the North Downs. Two of the largest areas, Farthing Downs & Happy Valley, and Riddlesdown are nationally important, and are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), because of the variety of plants and animals found there.

What you can see

On sunny days, a rich colourful mix of grasses and wild flowers is alive with butterflies and other insects. You may recognise the smell of the kitchen herbs marjoram and thyme. In early summer orchids flower on the sunny chalk slopes. Some are very rare and all are protected by law.

In the past, chalk grassland was kept open by grazing, but the decline in agriculture in the early 20th century caused many meadows to be invaded by trees and shrubs. Removal of these plants and cutting the grass every year has restored many sites. In recent years, sheep, cows and goats have returned to ensure this habitat is maintained.



Field Scabious



Small Blue Butterfly

Marjoram

Wild Thyme

HEATHLAND

Why is it important?

Heathland in London originates from historic clearance and traditional management of 'common' land over London's more sandy and gravelly soils. Due to a drastic change in land use this is now a rare and declining habitat in London and across the UK. Addington Hills, Shirley Heath and Croyham Hurst are heathland refuges for plants and animals which occur nowhere else in Croydon.

What is done to preserve it?

Heather does not survive growing in the shade, so to keep the heathland open, young trees and scrub are regularly removed to encourage the heather to flourish.



Goldcrest



Cross-leaved Heath



Ling



Gorse

PONDS & LAKES

Croydon has very little open water, but there are more than forty ponds, from the largest at South Norwood Lake and South Norwood Country Park, where you can get good views of water birds, to small ponds hidden in woodlands. South Norwood Lake is the only water body open for fishing and sailing. All other public ponds and lakes are maintained for wildlife. South Norwood Country Park provides a resting and feeding place for many migrating bird species.

Great Diving Beetle



Great Crested Grebe



Pond at Bradmore Green



Grey Heron



Pond dipping at South Norwood Country Park



Above & Below - Addington Hills



Common Lizard



What to see

Heathland areas are characterised by expanses of heather and gorse. The warm dry conditions are ideal for lizards, slow worms and many insects. In the summer you can hear grasshoppers and crickets chirping in the long and dry grass. Wild bees and honey bees love the heather flowers, and you can buy local honey at open days, fetes and other events.