

LONDON'S WILD PLACE

Discover Hampstead Heath's changing habitats and wildlife

The Heath, managed by the City of London and English Heritage, comprises 800 acres of historic countryside. Season by season, we introduce you to the Heath's special habitats and species, and explain how you can help keep the Heath a valued refuge for nature and people.

Managing natural habitats

While the Heath looks wild, it is in fact extensively managed for nature and people. Reedbeds are being extended on the edges of ponds to improve water quality and biodiversity. Mowing of meadows is timed to maintain species diversity and new wildflower meadows are seeded. Veteran trees are managed and native saplings planted to replace them. Invasive plants are removed before they overgrow our native flora.



FIELD NOTES:

Rise of the Reed Warblers

As reedbeds have been extended, the shy Reed Warbler has colonized more Heath ponds. Listen for its chattering song from deep inside the reedbed.

A reserve for Whitethroats

Whitethroats nest in only a few scrubby habitats on the East Heath. A reserve has been created for them by roping off an area of bramble and wild rose to reduce disturbance by walkers and dogs.

Butterflies in different habitats

Most of the Heath's butterflies, like the Peacock, can be seen on wildflowers in meadows during Summer, but the Speckled Wood prefers the dappled shade of woodland paths.

Bats on summer nights

Just after sunset, watch for bats foraging for flying insects along woodland edges or over ponds. The Noctule is the largest of the nine species found on the Heath.

The Heath's changing flora

A millennial survey of plants on the Heath recorded over 650 species. You can even find orchids on the Heath! This year a new survey will assess changes to this flora twenty years on.

DID YOU KNOW?

Grazing livestock, once common on the Heath, is being trialled again to improve biodiversity. These Longhorn Cattle, part of the Kenwood dairy herd, were painted by Julius Caesar Ibbetson in 1797. The painting is on display at Kenwood

