

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.

Adapting to change

The increase in extreme weather events is adding to pressure on the Heath's biodiversity, for instance by increasing treefalls and flooding. Heath habitats play an important role in addressing our climate emergency. Woodlands and rough meadows store carbon well. Ancient woodlands are particularly good at this. Protective fencing around veteran trees reduces root compaction and helps these woodlands to survive.



Veteran Oak

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Photo by Lidunka Vocadlo

Bearded Tooth Fungus

Photo by David Humphries

Alder cones and catkins

Photo by Adrian Brooker

Mandarin Ducks

Photo by Adrian Brooker

Wood Anemones

Photo by Adrian Brooker

Photo by David Humphries

FIELD NOTES:

Woodpeckers drum for mates

The Heath's woods in winter are quiet, but still full of birdlife. Great Spotted Woodpeckers will start drumming on hollow branches to attract mates for the Spring.

Rare fungi on veteran trees

More than 480 veteran trees, some over 300 years old, can be found in Ken Wood, North Wood, and along ancient field margins on the Heath. They support a fauna and flora of uncommon species, including the Bearded Tooth Fungus.

Catkins on winter trees

Alder trees growing by ponds will be putting out their cones and catkins as Spring approaches.

Ducks on ponds

Colourful ducks gather on Heath ponds in winter, including Mandarin, Shoveller, Pochard and Teal.

Harbingers of Spring

As the winter ends, early spring wildflowers appear in Heath woodlands and wetlands, including Wood Anemone and Lesser Celandine.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Heath supports a number of birds of prey. Tawny owls can be heard on winter evenings. Kestrels hunt voles in meadows, while Sparrow Hawks mount surprise attacks on small birds, like siskins feeding in alders. Buzzards can be seen and heard overhead.



Sparrow Hawk

Photo by Adrian Brooker

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LONDON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



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