

NATURAL **AMBITION**

A Guide to Havering's Natural Environment





Wildflower planting on the green outside Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch

‘From the food we eat to the popular bedtime stories we read to our children, nature touches everyone’s lives more deeply than we can possibly imagine.

The escalating erosion of wildlife from our planet is a direct threat to many facets of our own quality of life. Because of the complex relationship society has with nature, it is obvious that our response to saving it must extend from every possible quarter too.

Sir David Attenborough

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With thanks to Russ Sherriff and Dave McGough from Ingrebourne Valley Visitor Centre for the use of their photographs. Cover photo: Common Blue butterflies by Dave McGough

NATURAL AMBITION INTRODUCTION

More than half of Havering’s area lies in London’s green belt. The borough has 56 per cent of the city’s grazing marsh, 31 per cent of its reed beds and floodplain grassland, 25 per cent of marshland and 19 per cent of the capital’s lakes and ponds.



For more information about Havering’s Nature and Biodiversity Strategy:
<https://www.havering.gov.uk/Pages/Services/Countryside-conservation.aspx>

It doesn’t take much working out that the environment is good for us. It contributes an ‘unseen service’ that regulates climate and air quality, erosion, water purification and pollination, while helping curb diseases, pests and other natural hazards. But the environment also offers a more ‘spiritual’ type of enrichment – in short, it makes us happy.

Caring for our environment is a challenge for us all. In 2013, 25 UK wildlife organisations published the State of Nature report revealing that 60 per cent of wildlife species studied at national level have declined in recent decades.

In Havering, we are uniquely placed to help. Our parks, river valleys and marshlands hold a significant proportion of London’s entire resource of valuable habitats. Our land plays host to important species and provides strongholds for

threatened animals such as Stag Beetles, Water Voles and Great Crested Newts.

Havering Council has legal duties to protect and enhance nature conservation and has long taken a strategic approach to managing our land, rivers and waterways, plant and animal species.

Our recently renewed Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Strategy takes into account current environmental thinking, not least by linking urban centres to natural spaces via ‘green corridors’, establishing a network to help wildlife thrive, while offering residents more opportunity to enjoy it.

This publication supports that strategy by offering a guide to what you can see in the green spaces around us. We hope it will inspire everyone who lives here to help care for our environment and leave a positive legacy for future generations.

RIVERS, LAKES AND WATERWAYS



Havering is rich in lakes and ponds. The borough's two main rivers, the Rom and the Ingrebourne are home to diverse wildlife

The River Ingrebourne in winter

Havering's two main rivers, the Rom (also known as the Beam below its confluence with the Ravensbourne) and the Ingrebourne, are tributaries of the River Thames.

The Rom, which forms the boundary between Havering and Barking and Dagenham, is briefly culverted as it flows through the centre of Romford, but its course runs through a mixture of woodland, grassland, ponds and marshland, providing habitat for Water Voles, Kingfishers and other species.

As part of a series of valuable habitats known as the Blue Ribbon Network, the Ingrebourne is one of London's strategic waterways. It flows roughly north to south through the borough before joining the Thames at Rainham.

The Ingrebourne Valley is a Local Nature Reserve, while Ingrebourne Marshes provides an extensive area of wetland reeds identified as a Site of

Special Scientific Interest.

Havering also has a high density of ponds (two per square kilometre) supporting key species such as Great Crested Newts. Plans are being drawn up by the Council to improve their management, along with associated habitats and, where possible, to improve water flows and drainage.



The River Rom near Collier Row



Clockwise from top left: Ingrebourne Valley wetlands; the lake at Parklands, Corbet's Tey, Upminster, which is banked by Larch, Weeping Willow, Sedge and ancient Oaks; one of Havering's rarest species, the Great Crested Newt; Crested Grebes on the lake at Raphael Park in Romford



WATER VOLES

Water Voles hold the unwanted title of being the UK's 'fastest declining mammal'. The most recent national survey identified just 220,000 animals, down from an estimated pre-1960 population of around 8 million.

This decline, attributed partly to predation by invading American Mink and habitat loss, resulted in the government introducing full legal protection for Water Voles. It is an offence to disturb, damage or obstruct their breeding places.

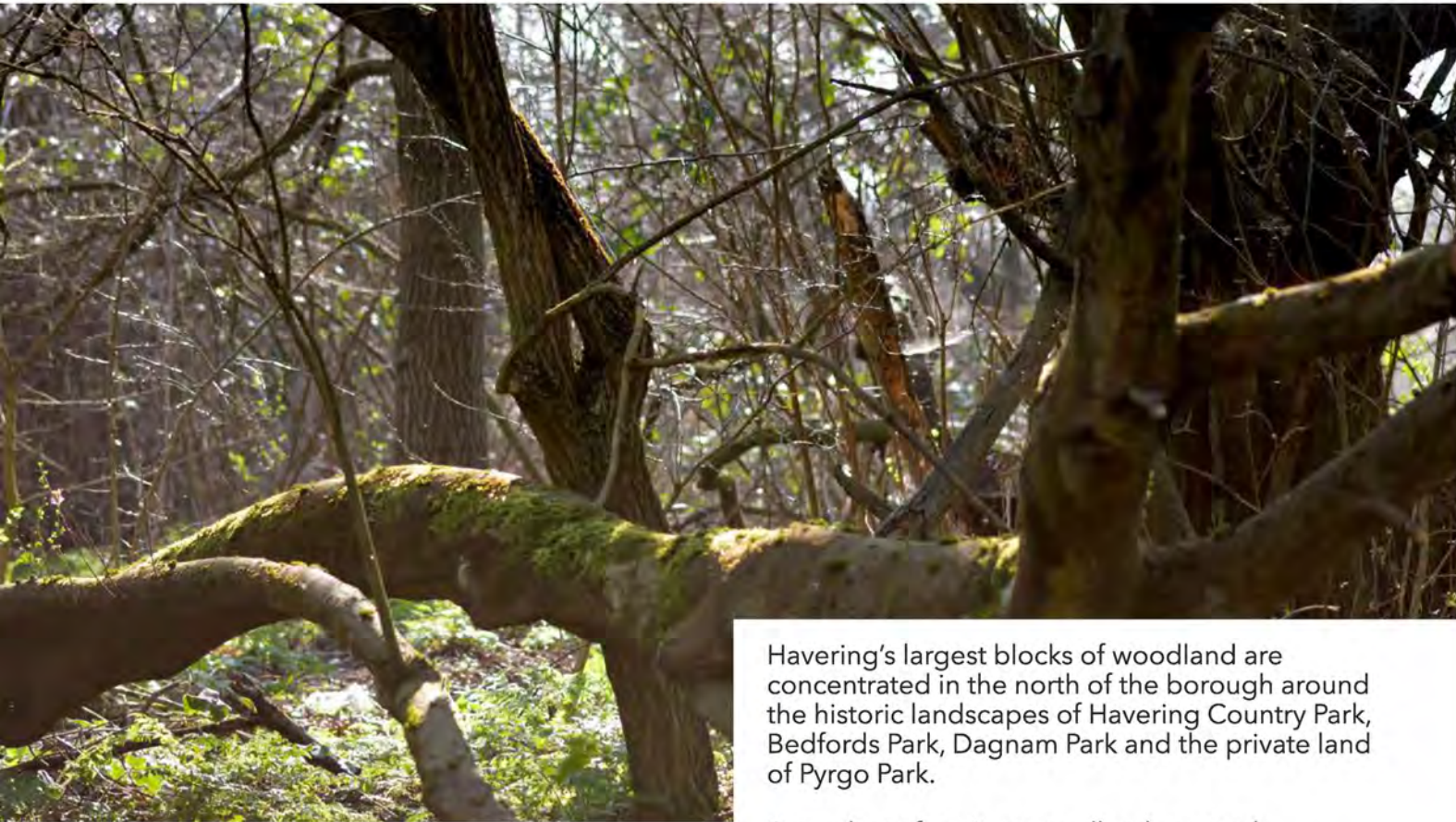
Wildlife Trusts, councils and other organisations are working to protect and restore populations of an animal which, on average, has a lifespan in the wild of about five months. Large conurbations, such as London and Birmingham, and upland areas where American Mink are scarce, remain strongholds.

Havering has important populations of water voles in the Ingrebourne Valley and Rainham Marshes. Bonnetts Wood in Upminster has a vole-viewing boardwalk paid for by the Havering Wildlife Project with funding from Veolia North Thames Trust.



FOREST AND WOODLAND

Softening the visual impact of buildings, defining urban spaces and providing valuable space for wildlife, woodland improves air quality and helps reduce the effects of climate change. Havering is the sixth most wooded borough in London



Havering's largest blocks of woodland are concentrated in the north of the borough around the historic landscapes of Havering Country Park, Bedfords Park, Dagnam Park and the private land of Pyrgo Park.

A number of ancient woodlands around Upminster, Cranham, Harold Hill and Belhus Woods are designated Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation. Substantial areas of scrub, including 10 hectares of Willow Carr at Berwick Woods, represent the largest concentration in Greater London.

Careful management of woodland is essential. In Havering Country Park, for example, work to control invasive Sycamore and Ash has opened the canopy to allow in more light. This encourages scrub, wildflowers and smaller native trees that can be coppiced for wood products while providing habitat for insects and a food supply for birds. A similar scheme in Bedfords Park has led to an increase in butterflies such as the Speckled Wood, which thrives in the dappled sunlight of woodland margins.



HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP

Havering Council has employed Higher Level Stewardship schemes in some of its parks and open spaces since 2009. The schemes are administered by Natural England, the government's advisory body on the natural environment. Guidance and modest financial incentives help landowners manage their land in a more environmentally beneficial way.

Rainham Marshes, Ingrebourne Valley, Bedfords Park, Dagnam Park, Havering Country Park and Cranham Brickfields all have measures, such as woodland, pond and hedgerow maintenance, that are tailored to the needs of the individual site



Red Poll Cattle

Havering was one of the first councils in London to introduce Red Poll cattle, a rare and traditional East Anglian breed, to graze the species-rich meadows at Bedfords Park.

Unlike the uniform mowing of machines, grazing creates patches within the meadows of varying height and density, while reducing the build-up of old vegetation. This allows wildflowers such as Lady's Bedstraw, Sneezewort, Pepper Saxifrage and Pignut to flourish. Grazing is also more sensitive to other animals that live in the grass such as Mice, Voles, Amphibians and Reptiles.

The cattle are gentle and suitable for use in spaces frequented by the public.



Suffolk Punch Horses

A Suffolk Punch heavy horse clears branches in Bedfords Park.

Havering Council and the Forestry Commission agreed to pilot a way to manage some of the borough's woodlands through traditional methods that help reduce the damage to wildlife that might otherwise be caused by using vehicles.

The traditional cycle includes coppicing trees to allow healthy regrowth, thinning, and then using heavy horses to move the wood. This allows for new growth of shrubs, trees and wildflowers, enhancing wildlife diversity, including attracting more species of woodland butterflies such as Speckled Wood, Brimstone and Holly Blue.

Hatters Wood is a remnant of ancient woodland that once covered much of Essex. It includes Hornbeam, Oak, Ash, Field Maple, Hawthorn, Holly, Wild Cherry and Rowan with more recent introductions of Beech, Horse Chestnut, Sweet Chestnut, Cherry Laurel, Turkey Oak and Holm Oak. It is a haven for Nuthatches, Tree Creepers and all three species of British Woodpecker. Summer visitors include Blackcaps, Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs as well as Tortoiseshell, Brimstone and Speckled Wood butterflies. Nearby

Duck Wood is a site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation. **Franks Wood** is a great place to see displays of spring Bluebells. An ancient Hornbeam coppice woodland, it can be reached via Cranham Brickfields. The **Ingrebourne Valley** is home to Emerald Damselfly, Redshank, Reed Bunting, Yellow Wagtail, Tufted Duck, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler and Cuckoo. **Cranham Marsh** is designated as a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation and features Marsh Orchid, Fine-Leaved Water-Dropwort, Golden Dock, Fen Bedstraw, Yellow Loosestrife and Small Sweet-Grass. In the last 50 years some 190 different species of bird have been recorded at **The Chase**, which is jointly managed with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. It is home to Little Ringed Plover, Little Grebe, Yellowhammer, Skylark and Snipe as well as Water Voles, Harvest Mice and rare native black poplar trees. An old royal hunting park, comprising large areas of Oak and Hornbeam in a historic landscape,

Havering Country Park's Wellingtonia avenue is one of only two Giant Redwood (Sequoia) plantations in the UK. **Rainham Marsh Nature Reserve** has a wealth of wildlife and historic agricultural use dating back to when the Celts and Saxons used it for summer grazing.



BLUEBELL WOODS

In spring, Havering's woodland offers the chance to see one of the most spectacular of Britain's wild displays – bluebells en masse. Bedfords Park and Dagnam Park offer particularly vibrant displays.

Because bluebells spread very slowly they're considered to be an indicator of ancient woodland sites. Foliage grows early in spring before the trees' foliage shuts out the light. The spectacular flowering season represents the end of the cycle.

SSSIs in Havering

Sites of Special Scientific Interest, are conserved and enhanced under the protection of the law. Havering has three SSSIs:

- Ingrebourne Marshes (TQ 538 842)
- Inner Thames Marshes (TQ 528 804)
- Hornchurch Cutting (Geological SSSI) (TQ 547 873)

Havering also has seven designated Local Nature Reserves which are protected for study and to preserve areas of special environmental interest:

- The Chase
- The Manor
- Ingrebourne Valley
- Cranham Brickfields
- Cranham Marsh
- Bedfords Park
- Rainham Marsh

Thames Chase Community Forest

Thames Chase Community Forest is one of 12 Community Forests set up across England in 1990 by the Countryside Agency.

The Forestry Commission became active in Thames Chase in the year 2000 and they now have 10 sites in their Thames Beat holdings within the Community Forest: Pages Wood, Cely Wood, Berwick Glades, Bonnetts Wood, Folkes Lane Woodland, Harold Court Woods, Ingrebourne Hill, Mardyke Woods and Tylers Wood.

Thames Chase Trust is responsible for the whole Community Forest stretching over 40 square miles, including parts of east London and south Essex and most of Havering.

Thames Chase also works with other agencies and landowners who have holdings in the Community Forest, and has been responsible for planting 1.3 million trees and increasing new woodland in the Community Forest by 70% since 1990.

MEADOW AND GRASSLAND



Havering's open expanses of grassland and meadow are vitally important for biodiversity

The borough has an abundance of established grassland and wildflower meadows and the council has introduced new meadows in several of its parks to create new wildlife habitats. Butterflies in particular have benefited from significant investment in shrubs and wildflower meadows.

The expansive meadows of Bedfords Park feature more than 150 species of wildflower, including Cuckoo-flower, Pignut and Ragged Robin. Havering Country Park (an old royal hunting park) also offers expanses of undisturbed grassland bordered by large areas of woodland. Improved management of grassland through the introduction of High Level Stewardship schemes is helping to create greater benefits for wildlife.

Many birds need meadow habitat to thrive, particularly birds of prey for hunting while, on Ingrebourne Hill, Skylarks can be seen, and more importantly heard. Their trilling song was once ubiquitous in the English countryside, but numbers in much of the UK are in freefall as a result of habitat loss. Skylarks are ground nesting, so care is needed when walking in the area and dogs should be kept on leads.

Wildflower planting in St Andrews Park



Wildflower Meadows

After the closure of RAF Hornchurch in the early 1960s, the site was sold for gravel extraction, landfill and storage. In 1980 a massive landscaping project began to create a 104.5 hectare park containing woodland, grassland and wildflowers such as Agrimony, Mugwort, Chicory and Birdsfoot Trefoil.

Another designated local nature reserve at Cranham Brickfields contains a mix of woodland, wildflower meadows, and scrub. Plant species include Briar Rose and common wild flowers such as Bird's-foot Trefoil and Black Knapweed along with the somewhat rarer Dyer's Greenweed (a significant food source for certain types of moth and butterfly).

View towards the recently opened
Ingrebourne Valley visitor centre
run by Essex Wildlife Trust.
Photo: Lindsay Matthews

WETLAND AND MARSHLAND

Havering holds a quarter of London's marshland, vital habitat for wild birds, insects and small mammals

The estuarine habitats neighbouring the River Thames support large numbers of overwintering and breeding birds, rare plants and invertebrate species, as well as diverse marine wildlife.

One of London's few remaining ancient natural landscapes is now part of the RSPB's reserve at Rainham Marshes. Once a Ministry of Defence firing range, which kept the land closed to the public for more than a century, it provides habitat for thousands of wild birds, insects and small mammals. The reserve is part of Wildspace, an area of more than 640 hectares comprising Rainham, Wennington and Aveley Marshes.

The range of species is too vast to even begin to do it justice, but Avocets (the bird that provides the model for the RSPB's logo) Lapwings and Little Egrets are frequent visitors. The marshes are also rich hunting grounds for birds of prey, including Marsh Harriers and Peregrines, especially in autumn and winter.



Hornchurch Country Park contains the largest freshwater reed bed in London, while the Ingrebourne Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the largest single area of floodplain grassland and the largest continuous reed bed in Greater London, an important home for Water Voles and wading birds such as Redshank.

Gadwall, Teal and Pochard take refuge from the winters of the far north here, while spring and summer brings Reed, Sedge and Cetti's Warblers to the banks of the River wlngrebourne.

Take a walk on the wild side

There are opportunities for people of all ages to get involved with nature

The abundance of wild space in Havering provides opportunities for the public to get close to nature. The RSPB at Rainham Marshes and the Essex Wildlife trust visitor centres in Bedfords Park and the Ingrebourne Valley offer educational activities, including guided walks, events for birdwatchers and activities for children such as pond dipping, planting and making homes for insects. There are also opportunities for volunteering.

Parks Friends Groups organise work parties and run events and activities to raise funds.

Schools play an important role in stimulating children's interest in nature and conservation. While not specifically included in the National Curriculum, pupils can learn about the issues through geography and science lessons. Havering's parks and open spaces provide schools with a fully interactive outdoor living classroom. The Thames Chase Trust has opportunities for self-led school groups, including equipment and education room hire. Phone 01708 642970 or email: enquiries@thameschase.org.uk. The Forestry Commission hires out 'Ranger in a Bag' packs suitable for a class of children. Contact the Community Ranger on 01708 642964 or thameschase@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Essex Wildlife Trust
<http://www.essexwt.org.uk>

RSPB Rainham Marshes
www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/rainham-marshes/

Friends of Parks in Havering
<https://www.havering.gov.uk/parkfriends>



From top: Little Egret, Heron and Buzzard.
Opposite page: A Black Tailed Godwit, which breeds in the Arctic but comes south to over-winter
Photographs: Russ Sherriff

RSPB RAINHAM MARSHES

Entry to the spectacular eco-friendly RSPB Centre at Rainham Marshes is free on production of evidence of residence in Havering (such as a utility bill or driving licence). There is access for wheelchairs and pushchairs via boardwalks.
Open November to March 7.30am-4.30pm
April to October 7.30am-5pm
Closed Christmas Day and Boxing Day
01708 899840
rainham.marshes@rspb.org





The 'Cockney' Sparrow is in decline across much of London, but Havering remains a stronghold. Below: Kestrel chicks in a tree hollow in Bedfords Park

WILD BIRDS

Whether it's goldfinches and blue tits in our gardens, rare wading birds visiting wetlands, or birds of prey swooping over marshland, Havering is rich in birdlife

Where Spitfires once duelled above the Ingrebourne Valley, Skylarks, Woodpeckers, Long-tailed Tits and, for those prepared to look a little harder, Yellowhammers, Meadow Pipits, Long-eared and Tawny Owls, Cuckoos, Egrets and countless song birds now rule the skies.

Havering's country parks are great places to see birds of prey such as Sparrowhawk, Kestrel and Buzzard and even migrant Ospreys have been spotted passing overhead.

Crested Grebes, famed for their waterborne



courtship dance, have been seen on the lake at Raphael Park, just a short walk from central Romford.

Bedfords Park, one of Havering's most beautiful and richly diverse parks, is home to flocks of breeding birds. It's also a great place to see Britain's smallest bird of prey, the Hobby, along with Great and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and seasonal visitors such as Swifts and House Martins. In winter the park is host to a large Corvid roost, in which hundreds of Rooks, Crows and Jackdaws gather in suitably raucous cacophany.



Cuckoo populations are in reported decline across the country and the bird is becoming a conservation priority, but, in spring it is not only possible to hear these elusive birds throughout Havering, but also perhaps see them in surprisingly sleek flight.

Waterbirds are abundant, from the ubiquitous Canada Geese and Mallards in urban parks and gardens to rarer visitors such as Little Ringed Plover, Water Rail and Little Egret.

Sparrows and Starlings, so strongly associated

1. Grasshopper Warbler. 2. Cetti's Warbler, 3. Whitethroat, 4. Willow Warbler, 5. Chiffchaff, 6. Reed Warbler,

Photographs by Russ Sherriff

with London's urban areas are in much-publicised decline nationally, but still boast healthy numbers in Havering. There are also large populations of song birds, particularly Goldfinches and Greenfinches, whose numbers are on the rise thanks to an increasing variety of habitats.

HAVERING'S NATURE IN NUMBERS

93%

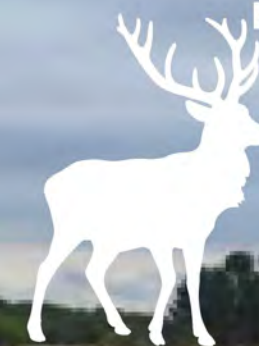
of the 47,000 respondents in a survey by Natural England (2012) agreed that having green space close to where they live is important



31%



of London's reed beds are in Havering



Havering has more than

100

parks and open spaces

100



Hectares of new woodland has been planted by the Forestry Commission within the Thames Chase Community Forest since 1990

60%

of all species studied at national level have declined in recent decades



25%

of London's marshland is in Havering



19%

of all lakes and ponds in Greater London are in Havering



Havering is the

6th

most wooded borough in London



56%

of London's grazing marsh is in Havering

Wildspace is an area of more than

640

hectares covering Rainham, Wennington and Aveley Marshes. It is designated as the Inner Thames Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest



31%

of London's floodplain grassland



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH



ANIMAL MAGIC

Fallow deer in Dagnam Park

Even in the most heavily built up areas it is possible to see beautiful wild animals across Havering

As one of London's greenest boroughs, Havering is rich in animal life. In urban areas, Grey Squirrels and Foxes are common sights that raise few eyebrows. Those with garden ponds and water features will also be accustomed to seeing Common Frogs and Newts, while wood and leaf piles and compost heaps may play host to Hedgehogs, Toads and perhaps even Slow Worms.

Further out into the open spaces, there is an abundance of Fallow and Roe Deer as well as Muntjac, Wild Rabbits, Badgers, Stoats and Weasels (the former has a black tip on the tail) and other small mammals including Voles, Harvest Mice and Wood Mice (it is estimated that there is one Wood Mouse for every two people in the UK).

Bat boxes are common features in many parks. There are colonies of the UK's smallest bat, the Common Pipistrelle, as well as smaller colonies of Soprano Pipistrelles (the difference is in the frequencies of their echolocation calls, Sopranos being higher), Natterer's Bat and Daubenton's Bat. Reptiles include Grass Snakes, Common Lizard and in more secluded areas a small Adder population.

While not everyone welcomes the presence of urban animals, Frogs, Toads and Hedgehogs can be regarded as 'gardeners' friends' as their diet includes snails and invertebrates considered to be pests. Foxes provide a similar, unheralded, service in controlling rat populations.

A helping hand for wildlife is always welcome and providing a water supply is a sure way to attract animals and birds. Diverse planting and leaving areas of gardens to grow wild also helps.

Hedgehogs need to forage far and wide and may travel 2km in a night in search of food, mates and nesting sites, so leaving a small holes in a fence, or a channel underneath, is a simple way to help.

Essex Wildlife Trust has a wealth of information about the rich and varied wildlife heritage in Havering and the surrounding areas.
<http://www.essexwt.org.uk>

For more information about Havering's nature and biodiversity, including its strategy and action plan, please visit:
<https://www.havering.gov.uk/countryside>

Havering does not offer a pest control service and is not able to identify insects. Please seek advice from the British Pest Control Association.
<http://www.bpca.org.uk>

The National Biodiversity Network involves wildlife conservation organisations, government and environmental agencies, environmental records centres and voluntary groups.
<http://nbn.org.uk>



A fox sleeping on a garage roof in Hornchurch
Photo: Lindsay Matthews



Magpies find a convenient perch in Bedfords Park



c. Martin Le-May

The Weasel and the Woodpecker

In 2015, amateur photographer Martin Le-May took this famous photograph in Ingrebourne Valley of a Weasel (the world's smallest carnivore) riding on the back of a Green Woodpecker, which had taken flight in a bid to escape the animal's attack. This remarkable battle for survival was described by BBC Radio 5 Live as 'the perfect wildlife photo'. It became an internet sensation and was viewed by millions of people around the world.



Hedgehog numbers are in decline

Spotters' guide

Many academic and research organisations increasingly rely on 'citizen science' to help them chart the movement and health of important species. BBC Nature lists a number of studies and events on its website www.bbc.co.uk/nature/22694347. Some of the most popular include:

● The Big Garden Birdwatch

Run by the RSPB every January, observers spend an hour watching their garden to record the number of visiting birds: www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoy/nature/discoverandlearn/birdwatch/

● The Big Butterfly Count

The world's biggest survey of butterflies. www.bigbutterflycount.org

● National Hedgehog Survey

Recent figures suggested that numbers of this much loved animal fell by more than a third between 2003 and 2012. A population of more than 50m animals in the 1950s is down to fewer than 2m today. <http://ptes.org>

● The Great Stag Hunt

Havering is one of this insect's remaining strongholds. <http://ptes.org/get-involved/surveys/garden/great-stag-hunt/>

● Plantlife

Celebrating and protecting wild flowers, plants and fungi, this organisation offers informative guides. www.plantlife.org.uk

Havering Wildlife Project

A local environmental group that runs numerous wildlife recording surveys.

Haverling is a stronghold for one of Britain's most spectacular, but endangered, insects



Endangered: Stag Beetles

INSECTS AND INVERTEBRATES



Caterpillar of the Cinnabar Moth

Stag Beetles take their name from the appearance of the male's large jaws, which look like antlers. But these impressive beetles, which can grow to the size of a matchbox, are quite harmless.

Stag Beetles are endangered and Haverling is one of the few areas where they retain a stronghold. They lay their eggs below ground in rotting wood, particularly tree stumps and old fence posts, so leaving garden log piles undisturbed is an important way to help them to flourish.

Increasing the volume of natural space is a priority



Common Blue Damselfly

for the council and the acquisition of around 190 acres of former agricultural land means Dagnam Park more than doubled its original acreage to become the largest park in Haverling. Mainly comprising meadow, woodland, hedgerows and natural ponds, it is home to 28 recorded species of butterfly and 16 species of dragonfly and damselfly.

Hornchurch Country Park, another area of extensive grassland, is home to the rare Brown-banded Carder Bee and the Phoenix Fly. The park is also London's only known home to the five-banded digger wasp.

THE PLIGHT OF THE BUMBLE BEE

Three types of bee

There are 24 British species of **bumblebee**, of which around a dozen frequent gardens. They live in nests of up to 200.

Honeybees live in hives and are a source of honey and beeswax.

Britain has around 260 species of **solitary bee**



Bumblebee on lavender, Langtons Gardens

"Oh, what a wonderful thing to be, a healthy, grown up busy busy bee..." It's not just for musical reasons that Arthur Askey's cheery old tune, The Bee, now sounds outdated. Modern bees are struggling.

Scientists and beekeepers around the world have been perplexed by the dramatic decline in wild bee populations. Research has linked this to various diseases, the parasitic Varroa mite, threats from pests, neonicotinoid pesticides, the effects of invasive species and habitat loss through changing agricultural techniques.

The economic value to the UK of honey and bumble bees as pollinators of commercially grown crops is estimated at £400m per year. The British Beekeepers Association states that 70 different crops depend on, or benefit from, visits by honey bees, which also pollinate many of the plants that feed farm animals and wildflowers, in turn providing food for other wildlife.

Help for bees

Gardeners can help bees with sympathetic planting and by placing hollow stems such as bamboo canes in sheltered parts of the garden, or drilling small holes into fence posts or logs for solitary insects. The British Beekeepers Association has information and advice, including how to adopt a hive, at:

www.bbka.org.uk

Information about Romford Beekeepers can be found via Essex Beekeepers ebka.org/contact-us/ A Bee Saver Kit is available from Friends of the Earth friendsoftheearth.uk/bees



Speckled Wood Haynes Park

Butterflies fight back

Grass and woodland provides an ideal habitat for many species of butterfly. Recorded sightings in Haverling's parks include: Large and Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Clouded Yellow, Purple Hairstreak, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady, Ringlet, White-letter Hairstreak, Brimstone and Silver-washed Fritillary. Feedback from residents and surveys by nature conservation groups show an increase in the numbers of Small Heath and Small Skipper and the Six Spot Burnett Moth. Planting of Cuckoo-flower is helping the Orange Tip, while Bird's-foot Trefoil is the favourite food plant for the Common Blue.



CONNECTING TOWN & COUNTRY

Havering Council is working on a 'joined up' approach to linking urban and green spaces

Urban areas don't have to be only urban. Parks, gardens, street verges, trees and hedges that make our homes and business areas more attractive can also serve as a vital connecting link between otherwise isolated green spaces, reducing the barriers to wildlife movement.

Formal parks and open spaces, allotments, street verges, churchyards and cemeteries and, of course, residents' gardens all feed into this network. A review of the 'green corridors' concept by the Havering Wildlife Project shows that they

often follow natural and man made features, such as water courses, roads and railways.

Protecting and enhancing these 'green corridors' allows significant areas of green space to join together, helping counter habitat fragmentation.

Sensitive grounds maintenance and the creation of wildflower and grass meadows, reed beds, butterfly and bee borders and bird and bat boxes will help. As well as providing for wildlife, green routes also provide ways for the public to reach the countryside to engage in healthy activities such as walking and cycling. The London Plan, a wider city-wide initiative, also stresses the importance of rivers as a valuable set of habitats known as the Blue Ribbon Network.

Being part of this network fosters links to sites outside the borough, such as Hainault Forest to the north-west and Thorndon to the north-east, linking into Havering's own Thames Chase Community Forest and Inner Thames Marshes SSSI and the Thames Corridor.

Street trees

Havering Council owns an estimated 50,000 street trees, which make a major contribution to urban attractiveness and provide valuable space for wildlife.

Regular maintenance to improve and increase tree stock includes high quality planting and landscaping, enforcing preservation orders and educating residents and businesses about the value of trees and encouraging greater involvement in their care.



The council prunes trees according to guidance from the European Arboricultural Council. Techniques include:

- **Thinning the crown** by removing a small portion of secondary and smaller branches to allow more light to pass through and reduce wind resistance.
- **Crown lifting** by removing lower but not main branches to allow in more light and give clearer access to traffic.
- **Crown reduction** by reducing the height or spread of the tree while retaining the natural shape as far as possible.

For further information about Havering's trees:

<https://www.havering.gov.uk/trees>



Walking the dog

Dogs are great companions, improve health, reduce stress and provide a great reason to go for a walk. Please keep dogs under control near other people and particularly wildlife such as water birds. Also bag and bin dog waste, it's not good for the soil, and is very unpleasant and possibly dangerous for anyone unlucky enough to come into contact with it, especially children. Dog owners should always ensure that brushed dog hair is put in rubbish bins.

Streetlife: (main picture) trees and hedges on the Gidea Park Estate. **Opposite left:** Ludwigshafen Place in Romford is an oasis of green in the heart of the busy town. **Above:** street trees in Upminster and (right) Elm Park Library's green roof



Walking for Health

To get exercise, enjoy someone's company away from the distractions of modern life, or just be alone with your thoughts, regular short walks make a major contribution to the 150 minutes of weekly physical activity recommended for adults by the Department of Health.

Havering Walking for Health supports active lifestyles. Qualified walk leaders offer activities for all levels varying from 30 minutes to two hours.

All walks are free and everyone is welcome, there's no need to book. There are also buggy walks for those with small children.

www.walkingforhealth.org.uk

Sustrans

Sustrans is a charity that encourages sustainable travel on foot, by bike or public transport.

www.sustrans.org.uk or for Havering specific information please see: <http://bit.ly/1TgTF1F>



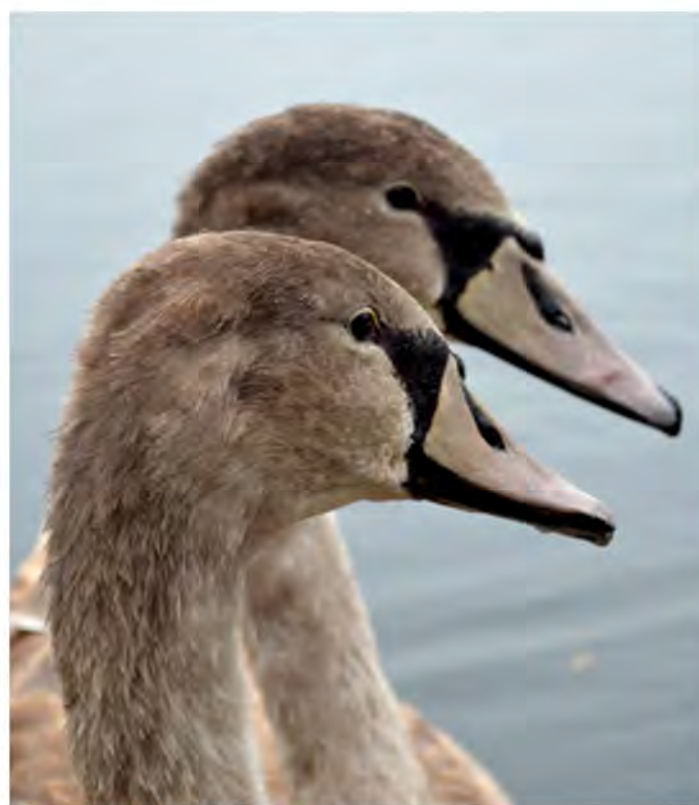
WHY NATURE IS GOOD FOR US

England's wildlife and landscapes have inspired and delighted through generations. There are strong moral arguments for recognising the intrinsic values of other species and for passing on the natural riches we have inherited to future generations.

We have also recently begun to better understand (or perhaps remember) that our natural world is not a luxury: it is fundamental to our wellbeing, health and economy.

The natural environment provides us with a range of benefits – ecosystem services including food, water, materials, flood defences and carbon sequestration – and biodiversity underpins most, if not all, of them.

Making Space for Nature
The Lawton Report 2010



Two of a brood of seven mute swan cygnets raised on Albyns Farm Lake during summer 2015

In 2010, the Lawton Report, Making Space for Nature, became the latest study to emphasise the intrinsic value of the environment.

People not only take pleasure from beautiful landscapes and watching wildlife in its natural surroundings, they also find satisfaction in helping to conserve and improve the world around them. Getting out and about and getting involved, the government-commissioned report concluded, enriches people's quality of life, along with their health, well-being and development.



Little Owl. Photo: Dave McGough

From walking, cycling or playing sport to painting or just contemplating the world around us, there are many opportunities to participate in activities beneficial to our physical and mental health. Access to nature is also important for those with disabilities.

Numerous studies have identified links between health and wellbeing and access to the natural environment. These range from reductions in incidences of asthma and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children, to improving recovery times for surgical patients and helping people who have dementia.

Despite a wealth of research, encouraging an active lifestyle and engagement with nature, Britain faces an increasing 'obesity' challenge. In October 2013, the RSPB reported that only one in five children in the United Kingdom are 'connected to nature' and suggested that this lack of contact, and associated lack of knowledge or interest, in the environment presents one of the biggest threats to our nature, and our health.



Play area at Lodge Farm Park. It is important for children to be able to play surrounded by nature

Bird's-foot Trefoil

The value of the environment

Between 2001 and 2005 more than 1,300 global experts compiled the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which offered the most comprehensive review of the state of the global environment to date.

The report defined 'ecosystem services' as an unseen 'regulating service' controlling air quality, climate, erosion, water purification, pollination and natural hazards, including pests and diseases. The report noted the cultural contribution that nature provides for spiritual and recreational enrichment.

- Supporting services necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services, including soil formation, plant photosynthesis, primary production, nutrient cycling and water cycling.
- Provisioning services: the products obtained from ecosystems, including food, fibre, fuel, genetic resources, biochemicals, natural medicines, pharmaceuticals, ornamental resources and fresh water.
- Regulating services: including air quality, regulation of the climate, water and erosion, water purification, disease and pest regulation, pollination and natural hazard regulation.
- Cultural services: non-material benefits that people get from the environment such as spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection, recreation and aesthetic experiences.

Bumblebee attracted to Ragwort

GET ACTIVE AND GET INVOLVED

Our gardens are a significant natural resource. Ponds, bird feeders and sympathetic planting attract wildlife and help link urban spaces to the wider environment



Garden ponds are excellent for wildlife

Whatever the size of your garden, even if you have a small space like a balcony or a rooftop, you can contribute to Havering's ecology.

Bird feeders and water features or garden ponds will attract wildlife, but try not to top it up from a tap – filling and drying out is part of the natural cycle and wildlife will adapt.

Don't be too tidy. Leave wild flowering plants in place. Although much-maligned, Ivy is a thick evergreen climber that provides winter shelter for insects and in turn a food supply for birds. Contrary to popular belief, it doesn't damage trees. Many species regarded as 'pests' are not harmful and can be controlled by encouraging natural predators with native plants. Ladybirds, Lacewings, Frogs, Hedgehogs and many birds feed on aphids and slugs. Wasps and Hoverflies are also effective pest predators and pollinators.

Planting for birds

As well as seeds from feeders, birds also need natural foods, so varied planting is helpful. Consider planting trees where appropriate, which give birds nesting space, food and shelter.

Rowan (Mountain Ash) is a good choice for small and medium gardens. It doesn't get too big and provides autumn berries. Birds also love hedges and evergreen Holly and Pyracantha (Firethorn) provide essential cover and food via winter berries and contribute to the corridors that join up green spaces for small mammals.

Planting for insects

Lavender has an almost magnetic attraction for bees and butterflies, and provides food for birds when the blooms go to seed. Honeysuckle attracts nectar-loving insects, including bees and moths, as do Salvias, Scabious, Verbena and Hebe. It is advisable to aim to plant at least two kinds of bee-friendly plants for each flowering period from spring through until late summer.

Seek out flowers that are rich in pollen and nectar. The Royal Horticultural Society has checklists at: www.rhs.org.uk

Try to avoid plant species that may become invasive, especially if you live near a wild habitat. For further guidance, see: www.plantlife.org.uk

Safe use of pesticides

Do you use pesticides in your garden? Havering Parks and Open Spaces in association with Friends of the Earth Havering offers a guide to the alternatives

It has been widely recognised that indiscriminate use of pesticides in the past has led to significant environmental damage and damage to human health.

The use of pesticides without full knowledge of environmental and health implications is no longer acceptable. Due caution in their use is enshrined in legislation and regulation both at European and national level.

What is a pesticide?

A pesticide is defined as any organic or inorganic preparation, substance for the control of unwanted plants or weeds (herbicides), insects (insecticides) and disease causing fungi (fungicides), defined as 'pests'. The term pesticides also includes plant growth regulators, soil sterilants, animal repellents and wood preservatives.

Why is the London Borough of Havering reducing the use of pesticides in its parks?

Some pesticides can cause serious illnesses and birth defects. Children and animals are particularly vulnerable. Pesticides are also associated with declining bird and bee populations. The use of pesticides should be the last resort when trying to manage any pest problem. There are a range of alternatives that can be used instead.

What can you do to limit pesticide use in your garden?

Use other methods of controlling the pest:

● **Toleration** the main reason for controlling weeds on hard surfaces and shrub beds is aesthetic (it looks neat and tidy). Do you really need the path/shrub bed to be 100% weed free?

● **Mulching** a range of products can be used for mulching shrub beds, such as bark, spent mushroom compost, well rotted farmyard manure, organic compost, leaf litter, forest bark, sawdust shredded prunings/wood chips, gravel/shingle. All mulches should be applied to a weed free surface.

● **Hoeing** the garden is one of the main weapons used to control weeds.

● **Strimmers** can be used to remove weeds from hard standing. They should not be used for weeding beds as they catch stones and can throw them considerable distances.

● **Manual weeding** is still the only effective way of removing plants from certain situations without causing any collateral damage.

● **Burning** There are a number of devices on the market that can be used to control weeds by burning. Flame control of weeds should only be used for hard surfaces.

● **Planting densities** Weeds germinate and grow best when they have opportunity to do so and there is little competition, or where the weed is able to suppress the competition. Planting shrubs closer increases competition and suppresses weed growth.

● **Sweeping** On hard surface areas, a broom will remove newly germinating weeds.

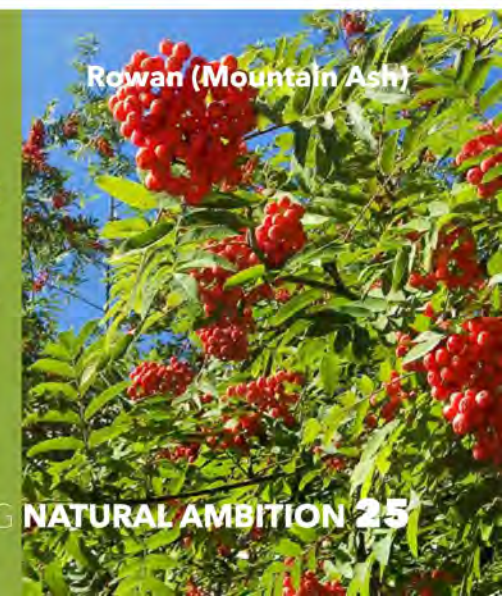
Do not throw any pesticide down the drain. Place the container in a plastic bag and take it to your local civic amenity site. Never use pesticides unless there is no alternative and the pest must be controlled. Pesticides are dangerous to you and the Environment in which you live.

Further information and home and garden tips are available on the Pesticide Action Network website www.pan-uk.org

Garden tips

- Plant nectar-rich plants and wildflowers. Check that these are from genuine native seed. Perennials are more beneficial than bedding plants.
- A water feature or pond offers birds a place to drink and bathe and a place for dragonflies and amphibians to lay eggs.
- Use a water butt to save rainwater for watering.

- Recycle green waste. Havering Council has a green refuse collection system.
- Choose peat-free compost to preserve precious habitat in the UK and Ireland.
- Dead and decaying wood and leaves provide shelter for Ladybirds, Lacewings and Hoverflies, which feed on aphids and other 'pests'.
- Buy Forestry Services Commission (FSC) accredited garden furniture and charcoal for barbeques.



Rowan (Mountain Ash)

PARTNERSHIPS AND VOLUNTARY GROUPS

Professional organisations and voluntary groups make a significant contribution to the management of Havering's green spaces through practical help or by monitoring, lobbying for improvements and contributing to conservation work



Bedfords Park Visitor Centre run by Essex Wildlife Trust

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

The RSPB manages 137 acres of marshland, south of the A13 and has a visitor centre just beyond the borough boundary in Thurrock. Its Homes for Wildlife project encourages wildlife friendly activities.

www.rspb.org.uk

Essex Wildlife Trust

The EWT manages the visitor centres at Bedfords Park and Ingrebourne Valley. Focusing on community activities and environmental education, the EWT brings together organisations to work on improving the 'living landscape'. Volunteers help with everything from monitoring species to riverbank restoration.

<http://www.essexwt.org.uk>

Veolia North Thames Trust

Veolia North Thames Trust has made a significant contribution to improving the quality of the local environment and promoting biodiversity in Havering, through the financial support it has given to many local projects.

<http://opencharities.org/charities/1084805>

Friends of the Earth Havering

The Havering Branch of Friends of the Earth aims to highlight the importance of nature. Recent campaigns include an initiative to help protect bees through appropriate planting of species friendly flowers and reducing the use of pesticides.

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/groups/havering>

Thames Chase Conservation Volunteers

The Trust has more than 80 volunteers, who run the Visitor Centre at Broadfields Farm, support walking, health and wellbeing, environmental education and wildlife projects in Havering as well as carrying out twice weekly conservation tasks throughout the forest.

www.thameschase.org.uk

Havering Wildlife Project

HWP is a voluntary body offering expert advice on ecological matters and biodiversity. Partners include the Environment Agency, Essex Wildlife Trust, Friends of the Earth, Friends of Parks Groups and the Council officers. HWP has an important advocacy role for improving and recording habitats and species. It produces the Havering Wildlife Indicators guide to encourage residents to monitor the wellbeing of species and offers advice on how to undertake 'living landscape' surveys.

Parks Friends Groups

Friends groups support schemes such as the restoration of Raphael Park and Langtons Gardens and improving the lake habitat at Lodge Farm Park. At Bedfords Park, Clear Village is working with the Friends Group on restoring the Walled Garden and developing a food growing project to promote biodiversity.

<https://www.havering.gov.uk/parkfriends>

The Environment Agency

The Environment Agency is the government body responsible for environmental protection and regulation in England and Wales, including flood warning systems and emergencies; air quality; land quality (including waste management); water quality; water resources; fishing and navigation. Havering is covered by the Agency's south east region and the partnership focuses specifically on the Ingrebourne and Rom/Beam rivers and Rainham Marshes.

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Natural England

Natural England is the body responsible for protecting and improving England's land, flora and fauna, fresh water and marine environment, geology and soils. By promoting 'green infrastructure' it helps people enjoy, understand and access the environment. Natural England works in partnership with Havering Council on management of SSSIs and administers the Defra High Level Stewardship grant.

www.naturalengland.org.uk

Greenspace Information for Greater London

GiGL is the capital's environmental records centre. It collates and manages detailed information on London's wildlife, parks, nature reserves, gardens and open spaces. GiGL acts on behalf of partners, including Havering, to provide data on protected sites, species and habitats. Partners include the Greater London Authority, Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trust and local naturalist groups such as the London Bat Group and the London Natural History Society.

www.gigl.org.uk

Forestry Commission England

The Forestry Commission manages and protects the country's public forest estate, including native woodlands and other important habitats for wildlife and conservation such as heathlands and bogs.

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk>



The Walled Garden at Bedfords Park



Friends of Raphael Park hoist the green flag



Grey Towers allotments

Allotments

Havering Council has 27 allotment sites. For a small annual charge, a standard size plot of around 250 square metres offers holders the chance to exercise and unwind after a busy day by working to produce their own freshly-grown produce. It's also a great opportunity for families to get closer to nature. Allotments also make an important contribution to wildlife.

<https://www.havering.gov.uk/allotments>

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