



The River Ravensbourne to the east provides an attractive walk and the Willow Carr (wet woodland) in the centre of the park provides a seasonally flooded habitat that is surrounded by Willow and Alder trees.

There are several wetland areas, all of different character. The ancient pond to the west of the Mansion House appears on many of the earliest maps.

**Wetlands:**

Ancient woodland refers to woodland that has existed since before 1600. For many species of animal and plant, ancient woodland sites provide the sole habitat, and are home to more rare and threatened species than any other UK habitat. The park has 20 hectares (49 acres) of ancient woodland containing a wide variety of trees including Oak and Sweet Chestnut, as well as an Ash plantation.

**Ancient Woodland:**

Beckenham Place Park is the largest open space in the borough and is an exceptional wildlife site. It contains many different habitats for rare species including ancient woodland, diverse grassland, a natural stretch of river and potentially the oldest pond in Lewisham.



**Take a walk on the Nature Trail**

**Point 1**

Point 1. Start by the Mansion sign and map. Walk through the hedge to the left of the Mansion House and take the path to the left. See if you can spot the evergreen Holm Oak and also the English Oak. On this path, just past the gardens, there is a gnarled Black Mulberry Tree and large stone squirrel statue.

A little further on you will discover a fallen Turkey Oak which was at least 230 years old when it fell in 2002.

Study the trees near here, and their leaves and buds. Can you notice the difference between the Oaks?



English Oak

Turkey Oak

Continue up toward the woodland past more mature Oaks, a Tulip Tree and a variety of specimen conifer plantings.

A patch of Gorse is on your right just before you enter the ancient woodland. An information sign here indicates some things you might see in the Woodland. Listen out for the screech of the bright green feathered Ring Necked Parakeets, which are a common feature in the park.

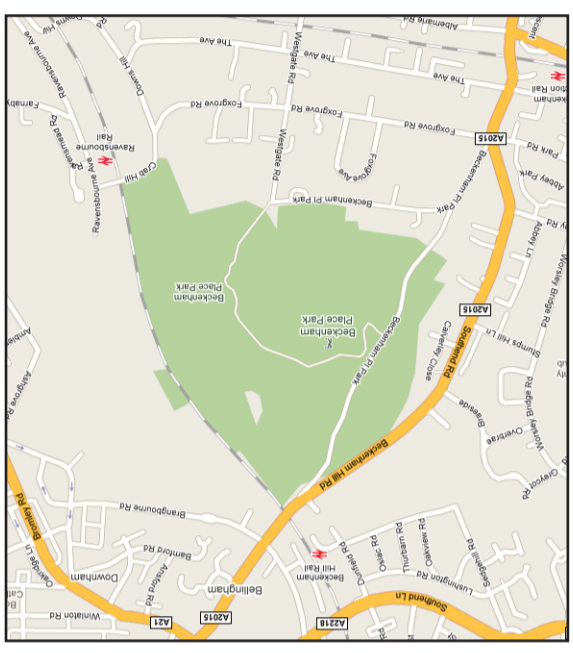
The path eventually reaches a T- junction with a signpost, map and bench. You have now entered Summerhouse Hill Wood.



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To join the Friends of Beckenham Place Park, contact:

The "Friends of Beckenham Place Park" organise regular events, guided walks and volunteer workdays. They run the Visitor Centre in the Mansion that contains information and displays on the history and wildlife of the park. It is open on Sundays from 1.30 - 3.30pm throughout the year.



Car parking is available via the entrance on Beckenham Hill Road. There is free access to the park during daylight hours and facilities include a café, bar, toilets, ornamental gardens, an 18 hole public golf course and pro shop, children's playground and a Visitor Centre.



Summerhouse Hill Wood is dominated by Oak and has existed here continuously since at least 1600.

The woodland contains many plants which are more or less restricted to these 'ancient woodlands' such as Bluebell which forms a spectacular Spring display.



English Bluebell

**Point 2**

To the right there is a Wild Service Tree about 10 metres into the woodland. You may notice recent woodland management in the woodland where Holly, Sycamore and Rhododendron have been removed to allow more light to reach the ground flora.



Wild Service Tree

The tree canopy along this path is predominantly Sweet Chestnut, a species introduced to Britain by the Romans. The tree not only provides edible nuts but its timber is ideal for fencing as the wood has natural preservatives and is easily split into posts & chestnut paling. Squirrel drays can occasionally be found in the trees near here.

They look like a large untidy nest of twigs; if it is winter time see if you can spot any in the tree canopy.



Sweet Chestnut

**Point 3 and 4**

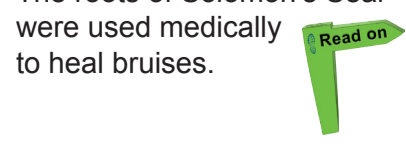
Follow the path right, look for Point 3 and keep straight ahead.

Look at the tree trunks for woodpecker holes; you may hear woodpeckers drumming or calling, they drum more in the spring to mark their territory.

Turn left at Point 4. In this short section, before you reach Point 5, on your right you will see a variety of ferns, the most common being the bracken fern. In May and June the drooping waxy white flowers of the lily Solomon's Seal can sometimes be seen. The roots of Solomon's Seal were used medically to heal bruises.



Great Spotted Woodpecker





## Point 5

At Point 5 along the path on your left is a depressed wet area which may be the remains of a natural spring indicated in old maps of the area. There are two iron marker posts nearby showing the old parish boundaries, the larger one is for Lewisham and the smaller one for Beckenham.

## Point 6

Carry on to the edge of the woodland where it meets the

grassland/meadow of Crab Hill, Point 6. At this point, you might like to roam around Crab Hill and look at the impressive views over the brow

of the hill of Crystal Palace and Beckenham. Look and listen for insect species including grasshoppers, butterflies, bees and several striking day flying moths

such as the Cinnabar and 6 Spot Burnet Moth. On late summer evenings,

Pipistrelle Bats can be seen foraging over the meadow. See if you can find two

wildflowers that have similar yellow flowers but

completely different shaped leaves. Creeping

Cinquefoil has almost hairless leaves, whereas as,

Creeping Buttercup is characterised by having

three-lobed hairy leaves.

## Point 7 and 8

Point 7 is on your left.

As you walk downhill there is a good viewpoint

across the railway and Ravensbourne Valley, which was

historically a flood plane. Turn right and walk along the sunken lane pathway. Just

before leaving the wood note what appears to be a lump of concrete containing

pebbles. This 'conglomerate' (rock containing a mixture of stones cemented by

finer sediment) was laid down in shallow water some 10 million years ago, during

the Palaeocene period. It forms part of a series of strata known as the Blackheath

Beds, a geological layer in which small fossil shellfish and sharks teeth have been

found.

From Point 8 leave the park turning left down the hill and over the railway bridge

to Ravensbourne Avenue. At the end of the road turn left and walk back towards

the park. Take care NOT to follow the Green Chain signs as they lead in the wrong

direction. Go through the entrance at the bottom of the lane, this part of the park is

called Summerhouse Field.

## Point 9 and 10

Point 9 marks the beginning of the

riverside walk. Follow the River

Ravensbourne downstream. The River

Lewisham into which all the Borough's

other rivers run. Here it is mostly still

within its natural gravelly bed and

provides a valuable habitat for Kingfishers. Look for trees such as Crack Willow

(aptly named as it 'cracks' and breaks easily) and Alder, as well as wetland

species such as Marsh Marigold. Among the bankside nettles, the spectacular

Butterbur, a rare plant in Lewisham can sometimes be seen. It has ghostly,

pale pink flower spikes which appear in spring followed by huge green heart

shaped leaves that are grey and downy on the underside. This path leads to

Summerhouse Field, followed by the grassed area known as the Common.

Following the route of the river on your right you may see

Ducks, Coots and Moorhen and on your left numerous

crows which, on careful inspection, have more colour than

you might think with iridescent blue in their feathers. At

the end of the Common you reach a tarmac footpath

which runs to the rear of the houses.



Crack Willow



Kingfisher



Pipistrelle Bat



Six Spot Burnet Moth

Cinnabar Moth



Stag Beetle

## Point 13



Dead trees are important habitats for many invertebrates including the rare Stag & Lesser Stag Beetle. Both species are common in the park.



Ash Tree leaf and twig

There are fallen trees throughout the park but many fell here in the storm of 1987 and are still alive because their roots remained in contact with the damp soil.

## English Hawthorn flower and hips



Be sure to keep right at Point 12 or you will be heading back down the other side of the old lake bed and former floodplain of the River Ravensbourne.

Point 11 is at a junction where there is a Green Chain marker post and a dog bin. Keep right, the sunken area on your left is the bed of an old ornamental lake. This part of the woodland is called the Ash Plantation and although it was a managed woodland once, it is still part of the ancient woodland where amongst the brambles Bluebells can still be found. Alder and Sycamore trees have colonised this area along with Himalayan Balsam. This plant grows up to 3 m tall and is arguably the tallest annual plant found in the UK. A native of the Western Himalaya, it was introduced in 1839 and because it is very invasive it has to be managed to stop it from spreading.

## Point 11 and 12



- Nature Trail
- Green Chain Walk
- Other Pathways
- Steps/Slope
- Waymarkers
- Cycle Route
- Woodland
- Meadow Area
- River
- Ornamental Garden
- Railway
- Roads
- Parking
- Toilet
- Entrances
- Childrens Playground
- Golf Course
- Picnic Area

Turn left here and follow the path turning left again at Point 10. This will take you back over the railway via a bridge bounded by Horse Chestnuts, Hawthorns and another old Oak tree to your right. Keep to the main path (beware of maintenance vehicles). Here you may hear or see Green or Great Spotted Woodpeckers.