

SPRING AND SUMMER

Birds. Lea Valley is major migration route for birds. Winter visitors leave and summer visitors such as house martin, swift, blackcap, whitethroat, common tern, and cuckoo begin to return. Spring is a good time for seeing birds such as tits as they flit among trees, often carrying food for young. Coot, moorhen, and mute swan nest on river banks. House martin, sand martin and swift fly across grassland and along rivers catching insects. Woodpigeons and starlings feed on football pitches. Blackbird, thrush, chaffinch, wren and warblers (chiffchaff, willow warbler, blackcap, whitethroat) sing, and great spotted woodpeckers drum. Heron, and Canada and greylag geese nest on reservoirs and their young are seen later.

Trees. Catkins on black poplar, hazel, alder, pussy (goat) willow. Flowers on cherry, chestnut, elder, hawthorn, lime. Sticky buds on chestnut and red buds on lime. Oak and ash trees bud later.

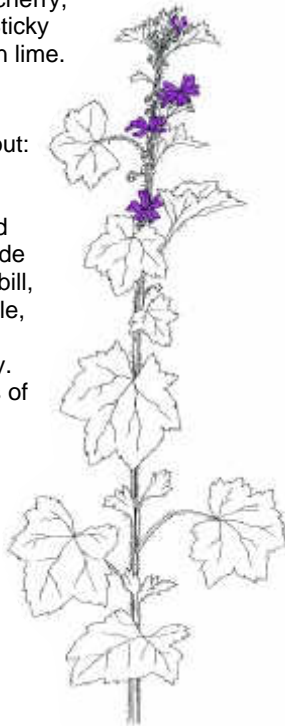
Flowers. Spring flowers flourish under trees before leaves come out: look for celandine (one of the first spring flowers), cow parsley, bluebell, buttercup, foxglove, red campion. Grassland flowers include

ragwort, cranesbill, white dead-nettle, garlic mustard, dandelion, daisy. Look for flowers of wild rose, blackberry, comfrey, buttercup, vetch, mallow, burdock, willowherb, white campion, mayweed, clover, black horehound, yarrow, hawkweed and Himalyan balsam.

Insects and butterflies. Butterflies include orange tip, whites, peacock, small tortoiseshell, meadow brown, speckled wood, painted lady, red admiral, comma and brimstone. Other insects are bees, ladybirds, dragonflies, crickets and grasshoppers.



White Campion



Common Mallow

THE WILDLIFE OF HACKNEY MARSHES

THROUGH THE SEASONS

There are many birds which live and breed on the Marshes throughout the year. On River Lea and Lee Navigation: coot, moorhen, mallard, grey heron, Canada and greylag geese, cormorant, kingfisher and wagtails. Birds of wood, trees and grassland include magpie, jay, woodpigeon, goldfinch, blue tit, great tit, long-tailed tit, robin, wren, chaffinch, starling, blackbird, green and great spotted woodpecker, kestrel and sparrowhawk. Evergreen trees provide shelter all through the year, and animals such as fox, rabbit and squirrel can be seen. Some birds, trees and plants change with the seasons, with winter and summer bird visitors, and the leaves of trees and bushes changing colour and falling.

Please help to protect the wildlife of Hackney Marshes:

- Always put your litter in a bin or take it home.
- If you have a dog, please keep it under control.
- Respect wildlife, plants and trees.



Grey Heron

AUTUMN AND WINTER

Birds. Summer visitors such as warblers, swifts and house martins leave. Winter visitors begin to arrive: first black-headed and herring gull, then teal, chaffinch, tufted duck, and gadwall. Little grebe are seen more on the River Lea in winter. Listen for robin, blackbird, thrush, blue tit, great tit, long-tailed tit, wren, chaffinch and teal. Birds such as wren, chaffinch, great spotted woodpecker and jay can be seen more easily once trees have lost their leaves.



Field Maple

animals. Some trees, such as prunus and blackthorn, flower in winter. Hazel catkins and pussy willow are seen in January.

Fruits, berries and seeds. Red berries of rowan, hawthorn, rose hips and viburnum, pink spindle berries, black buckthorn, bramble and elder berries. Apple, crab apple and pear fruits. Keys of maple, sycamore and ash, plane tree bobbles, alder cones, horse chestnut conkers, acorns which were buried by squirrels and jay.

Flowers. Mallow, yarrow, white campion, white dead-nettle, clover, bindweed, ragwort, black horehound, dandelion and daisy continue to flower, sometimes into the winter. Birds such as goldfinch eat seeds of teasel, burdock, thistle and willowherb.

Fungus grows in abundance in wet and warm autumns: ear fungus, fairy rings, ink spots.

Insects. Speckled wood butterflies, dragonflies and bees as late as October.

Trees. Autumn colour of leaves: maple (Norway, silver, and field), oak, cherry, ash. Coloured stems of dogwood and willow. Look for shape of trees, bark, buds and cones. Evergreen trees include cedar, pine, holly, holm oak and yew. Oak and blackberry often keep some leaves and provide shelter for birds and



Spear Thistle

TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND

Many of the tall trees round the edge of the Marshes (black poplar, plane, lime, ash, and willow) were planted over 100 years ago when the Marshes came into public ownership. The collection of rare, native black poplars on the Marshes is unique to London. Many species of native and specimen trees have been planted over the last 40 years, including poplars (balsam, grey, Lombardy, aspen), oaks (English, sessile, holm oak), willows (crack, goat, white, weeping, olive), Spanish and horse chestnut, rowan, alder, hawthorn, cherry, tree of heaven, hazel, blackthorn, birch, false acacia, maple (field, Norway, ash-leaf, silver), southern beech, zelkova, willow-leaved pear, mulberry, wayfaring tree and cedar. Hedges, bushes and shrubs, such as blackberry, hawthorn, yew, buckthorn, viburnum and elder, create an understorey under trees that provides shelter; and they are an important source of food for birds, such as chaffinch, robin, wren and dunnock. Dead wood provides a habitat for fungus and mini-beasts.



Woodland birds include magpie, jay, long-tailed tit, blue tit, great tit, chaffinch, wren, great spotted woodpecker, sparrowhawk, whitethroat, blackcap, thrush and blackbird.

Woodland flowers include foxglove, comfrey, cow parsley and woody nightshade.

Animals and insects include squirrel, mice and hedgehog. Speckled wood butterflies enjoy areas of sunlight in woodland.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

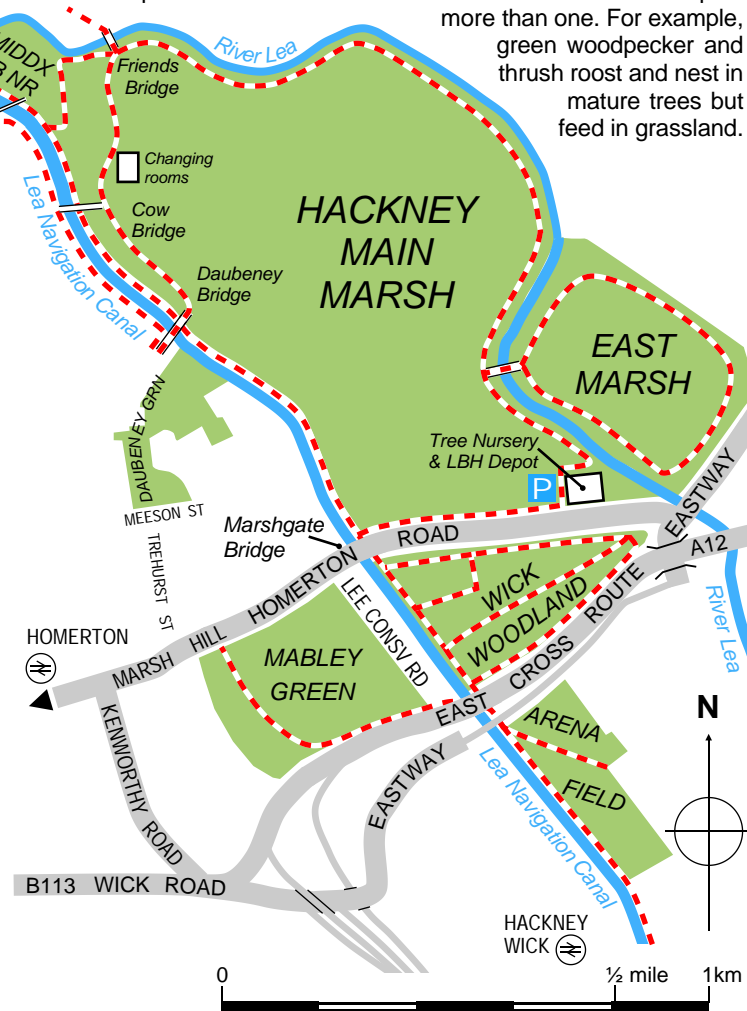
Buses 236, 276, 308 & W15 to Homerton Road. 242 to Millfields Road & Cow Bridge. 48, 55 & 56 to Lea Bridge Road and walk along Lea Navigation.

Trains BR stations: Hackney Wick; Homerton.

WILDLIFE AREAS OF HACKNEY MARSHES

Parts of Hackney Marshes are designated as of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. The Marshes are valuable for wildlife because they are managed to provide a variety of habitats: short and longer grassland and meadow, waterways and river bank, trees, hedges and woodland.

Some plants and animals live in one habitat but others require more than one. For example, green woodpecker and thrush roost and nest in mature trees but feed in grassland.



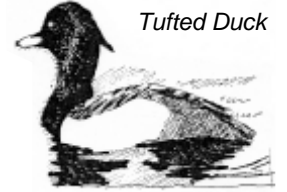
Prepared by Anne Woollett, Prue Poulton and Mike Trier.
Botanical illustrations by Eleanor Burdett. For copies of the leaflet, contact (020) 8985 1256 or see www.hackneyenvironment.org.uk

Based on Collins mapping - www.collinsmaps.com

OPEN WATER AND RIVER BANK

Old River Lea on the east side of the Marshes is tidal, so water levels change. On the west side is Lee Navigation, opened in 1768 to assist the passage of boats and barges.

Birds. The waterways are an important migration route for birds. Look for mallard, grey and pied wagtail (also in car park), tufted duck, teal, little grebe, cormorant and gulls. Swan, mallard, coot, moorhen and kingfisher nest along the waterways. Kingfishers show as flashes of blue flying along the river. Fish and frogs spawn, and dragonflies lay their eggs in the water.



Tufted Duck



Black Poplar

Trees and plants. The mature trees include native black poplar, ash, plane and willow. Willows overhang the river and provide shelter for ducks. Plants growing in and along the waterways include celandine, arrowhead and reeds; and invasive species such as giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam.

OPEN GRASSLAND AND MEADOW

Areas of longer grassland and meadow lie around the closely-cut sports pitches.

Birds and animals. Kestrels sit on goal posts looking for small mammals. Rabbits and flocks of geese, woodpigeon, starlings and gulls feed on the football pitches. Swifts, and sand and house martins, chase after insects. Ants colonise longer grassland and are food for green woodpecker.

Plants: plaintain, cranesbill, clover, cinquefoil, nettles, vetch, burdock, garlic mustard, willowherb, ragwort, dandelion, daisies, mayweed, mallow and yarrow. Grasses, plants and flowers are food for birds, butterflies (orange tip, white, meadow brown and skipper), spotted burnet moths, crickets and grasshoppers, and even grasssnakes. Goldfinch eat the seeds of teasel and thistle.



Yarrow