

SPRING

As the woods come to life again, carpets of Bluebells and drifts of Anemone mingle with Yellow Archangel, clumps of Primrose, Wood Sorrel and Celandine. Cherry Plum trees and, later, Cherry and Hawthorn put on a superb display of blossom.



Wild Cherry



Yellow Archangel

The drumming of Woodpeckers - hoping to attract mates - can be heard echoing through the woods. Bird song is everywhere as territories are defended. It is the best time to watch birds as they are busy preparing to nest and the leaves are barely out.

Goldcrest



Early butterflies, particularly the Brimstone, take advantage of the spring sunshine.



Buckthorn
The food plant of the Brimstone caterpillar



Lesser Celandine

Mammal activity increases too. Badgers emerge from their winter respite and observant visitors may see paw prints around the setts.



SUMMER

In the heat of summer the woods become a cool, dappled haven where Speckled Wood butterflies flutter in the shade among the Honeysuckle, Bramble and Ferns. The canopy of tall Oak, Sweet Chestnut, Ash and Beech provide welcome shade for people and wildlife.



Seats made from trees felled in the woods provide a resting place from which the visitor can watch and listen. The quiet observer may see Foxes saunter across paths, hear the song of a Chiffchaff, or see a Sparrowhawk circling above the canopy of the trees. The squawking of Ring-necked Parakeets can be heard all over the woods.



Clockwise from above:
Story time at Littleheath
Fallen Oak Field
Meadow Brown Butterfly
Knopweed
Red Admiral Butterfly
Pipistrelle Bat
Red Fox

At dusk Bats may be seen feeding on the abundant supply of insects.



AUTUMN

The changing colour of the leaves indicates that the woodland is preparing for winter. Paths are soon covered with fallen leaves, nuts and fruits. Acorns, Beech Mast, Sweet Chestnuts, Crab Apples, Hazelnuts, Hips and Haws provide a plentiful supply for creatures and birds to feast and fatten on before the cold sets in.



Clockwise:
Littleheath in Autumn
Guelder Rose
Hawthorn

On warm days late butterflies feed on Blackberries which also provide fruit for bramble jelly.

Fungi are abundant in the autumn. Toadstools, like the bright red Fly Agaric, are easy to spot on Fallen Oak Field around the Birch trees. Sulphurtuft fungus stands out too, growing in yellow clumps on rotting tree stumps. Puffballs and Earthballs are easily overlooked as are the tiny Bonnet Caps. Fungi are a valuable food source for Woodmice and Snails, which nibble their edges.



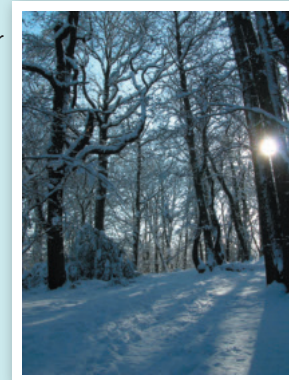
Far Left:
Sulphur Tuft
Left:
Sweet Chestnut



WINTER

Even though the trees are bare there are still sights to see. Flocks of Redwings and Fieldfares, winter visitors from Northern Europe, rampage through the woods, feasting on berries.

When heavy snow makes roads impassable, a walk in the woods is most rewarding. Photographers can capture the beauty of the winter landscape while the more energetic can whizz down the slopes in Fallen Oak Field on a sledge.



The five native British evergreens are present in Littleheath Woods - Holly, Yew, Scots Pine, Juniper and Box.

Winter reveals where squirrels have stripped the bark of Beeches and Oaks or nibbled the growing tips, causing serious damage.

Clockwise from above:
Littleheath in Winter
Yew
Sledging down
Fallen Oak field
Redwing



Winter is the time when old or diseased trees are removed to create small areas. These are replanted with saplings. This method of management is called 'Continuous Cover' and helps ensure that the woods consist of trees of varying ages.



HOW TO GET HERE



ABOUT US

The woods are owned by Croydon Council and were actively managed until 1965 by two council employed keepers. Now **The Friends of Littleheath Woods**, a volunteer group of local residents, work in partnership with Croydon Council to protect and manage the woodland for people and wildlife. Workdays are held every week to which all are welcome. Tasks include pond and path maintenance, coppicing, control of invasive species, construction of seats from felled trees and the planting of new trees and shrubs.

For more information please visit www.folw.co.uk or contact Croydon Council's Green Spaces Division Tel 020 8726 6900



Countryside Code

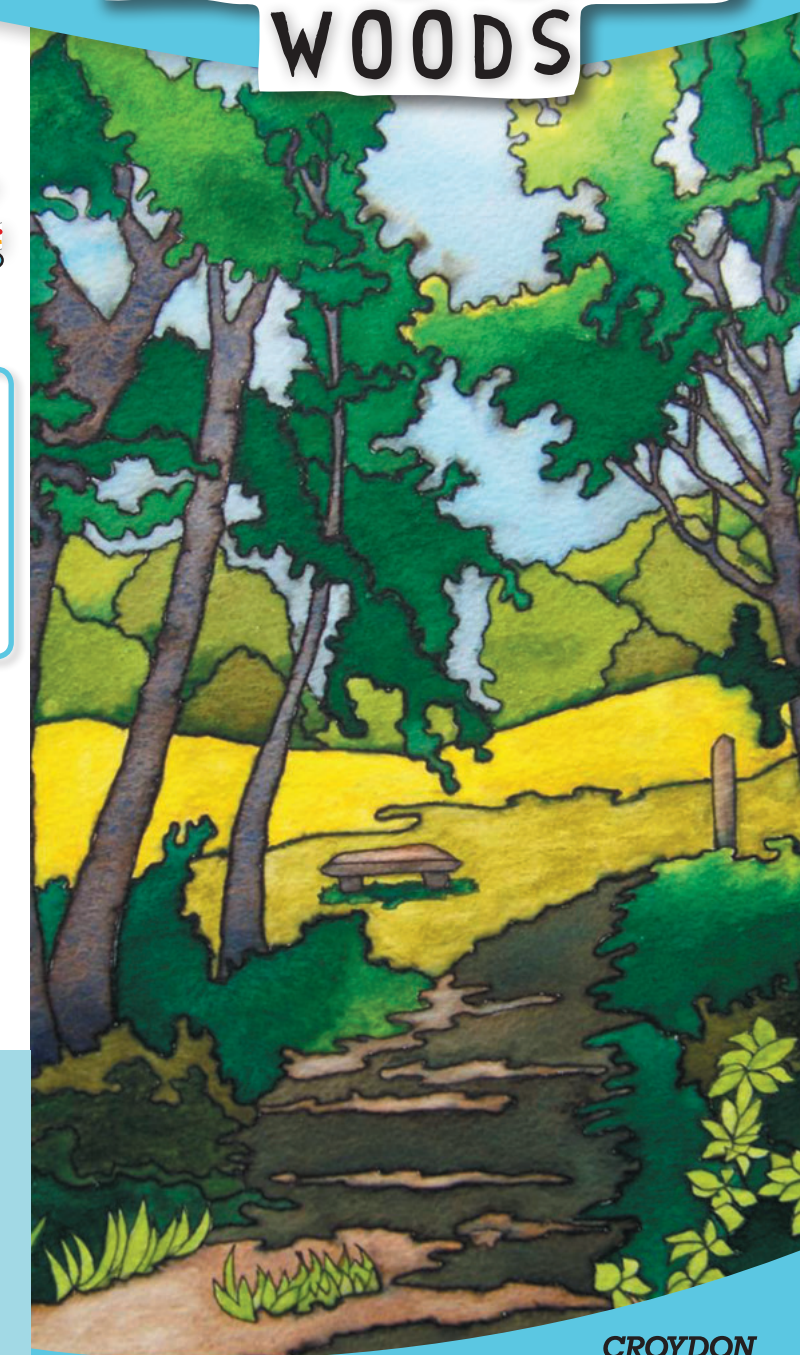
Please respect the woodland area and have consideration for other visitors and for the resident flora and fauna.

- Take your litter home.
- Be a responsible dog owner and clean up after your pet.
- Enjoy the wildflowers where they grow but please do not pick them.
- Remember, the dumping of garden rubbish is illegal - it poses a fire risk, introduces non-native species and is unsightly.

Thank you

Designed & Illustrated by Madeleine Smith

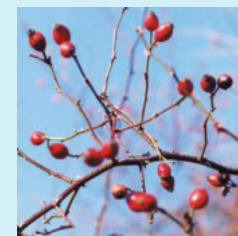
LITTLEHEATH WOODS



CROYDON COUNCIL
www.croydon.gov.uk

WELCOME

Welcome to Selsdon's "Secret Wood" - so called because it's bounded on all sides by houses so that only the tree tops can be seen and even many of Selsdon's residents are unaware of its presence. However, the woods are easily accessible via 13 different entrances and, once inside, you will find an oasis set within the busy suburban environment providing a tranquil setting of great variety.



Rosehips

The charm of Littleheath Woods lies in its diversity. Its 25 hectares (61 acres) include a variety of habitats from woodland to grassland, a range of soils from chalk to clay and from sand to Blackheath Pebbles, as well as wet areas and seasonal ponds. All are set amongst a network of narrow paths and wide rides which meander through the woodland taking in its highest point in Gee Wood at 161m above sea level to its lowest in Fallen Oak field at only 125m.

The range of heights, soils and habitats offers an attractive variety for visitors and wildlife alike - cool and shady in the heat of summer, sheltered and magical in the depths of winter, there is much to explore and discover.



From the top:
Wood Sorrel
Greater Stitchwort
Rowan
Right: Gorse

PONDS, MEADOWS AND WOODLAND...



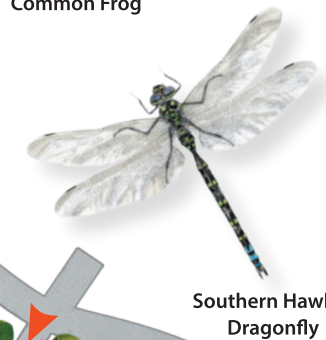
Masses of frogs gather to lay spawn in the shallow edges of the Keyhole Pond as soon as the weather warms up in Spring. Dragonflies and Damselflies glide around the ponds in summer.



Common Blue Damselfly



Common Frog

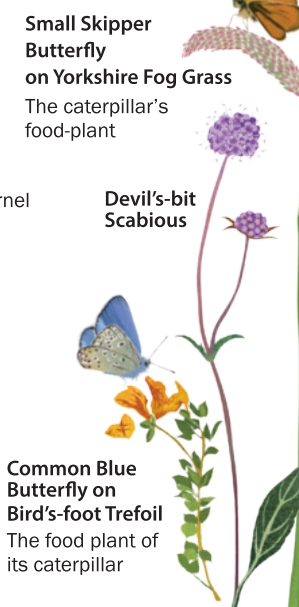


Southern Hawker Dragonfly



Above: Yellow Pimpernel
Left: Soldier Beetle

During Summer the grasses and wild flowers in the fields host Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Common Blue and Small Skipper Butterflies as well as Grasshoppers, Bugs, Spiders and Soldier Beetles. Bees feed on nectar from Buttercup, Knapweed, Bird's-foot Trefoil and Stitchwort flowers.



Small Skipper Butterfly on Yorkshire Fog Grass
The caterpillar's food-plant



Common Blue Butterfly on Bird's-foot Trefoil
The food plant of its caterpillar



Above: Hazel leaves & Speckled Wood Butterfly
Left: Coppice stool
Right: Bluebell

Some areas of Hazel in the woodland are coppiced. This involves cutting all the tree's growth back to its stump called a "stool" every 8 - 15 years. It will then regrow, providing straight stems for use as bean poles, plant stakes or fencing.

This process extends the tree's life significantly and if coppiced regularly it may never die. The dappled shade and habitat created by coppicing supports a particular range of wildlife that needs open woodland to thrive.

Piles of felled wood are usually left for invertebrates to inhabit throughout the year. Occasionally wood is turned into charcoal.

THE PAST

The first documentary evidence of the woods and fields which make up the present Littleheath Woods dates back to 1493. The present names first appear on an 1803 map of Croydon.

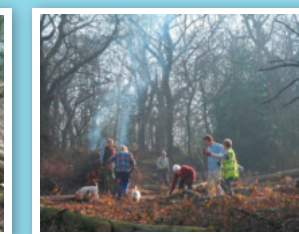
The original 4 woods - Foxearth, Littleheath, Gee and Queenhill Shaw became joined when the Gruttendens field ceased to be farmed and trees took over. There are two remaining fields - Clears Croft and Fallen Oak Field. Historically the former was planted with potatoes and the latter used for grazing.



Nuthatch



Making Charcoal



Work party in the wood

The building boom that began in the 1920s, gave us Selsdon as we know it and the woodland was in danger of being included in the housing plans. The Selsdon Residents Association enlisted the help of Malcolm Sharpe, a local conservationist. Together with council assistance, nearly £6,000 was raised to purchase the land (£1,900 of which was from public subscription). Littleheath Woods was officially declared a public open space in 1932.



Left: Wood Mouse
Right: Beech