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The Sutton Group of London Wildlife Trust

Much of the work that takes place on the island is undertaken by the volunteers of the Sutton group of London Wildlife Trust. The group organises workdays at Wilderness Island on the last Sunday of most months and at Spencer Road Wetlands, the other London Wildlife Trust reserve in Sutton, on the first Saturday of most months. For more information on events phone 020 7261 0447 or email enquiries@wildlondon.org.uk.

A historical review of Wilderness Island by Andrew Skelton and Bob Steel can be found at the Local Studies and Archives Centre, Sutton Central Library, St Nicholas Way, Sutton, SM1 1EA



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Wilderness Island

Mill Lane, Carshalton, London SM5 2NQ

Wilderness Island is a Local Nature Reserve in the London Borough of Sutton. The island is situated between two branches of the River Wandle. London Wildlife Trust has managed Wilderness Island since 1987 on behalf of the council; protecting and enhancing the island's habitats to benefit wildlife whilst also creating better public access. We run regular events where we welcome help from the local community.



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London Wildlife Trust

London Wildlife Trust is the only charity dedicated solely to protecting the capital's wildlife and wild spaces, engaging London's diverse communities through access to our nature reserves, campaigning, volunteering and education. Join London Wildlife Trust and support our work at wildlondon.org.uk

London Wildlife Trust is a registered charity number 283895

Map: Full Circle Design

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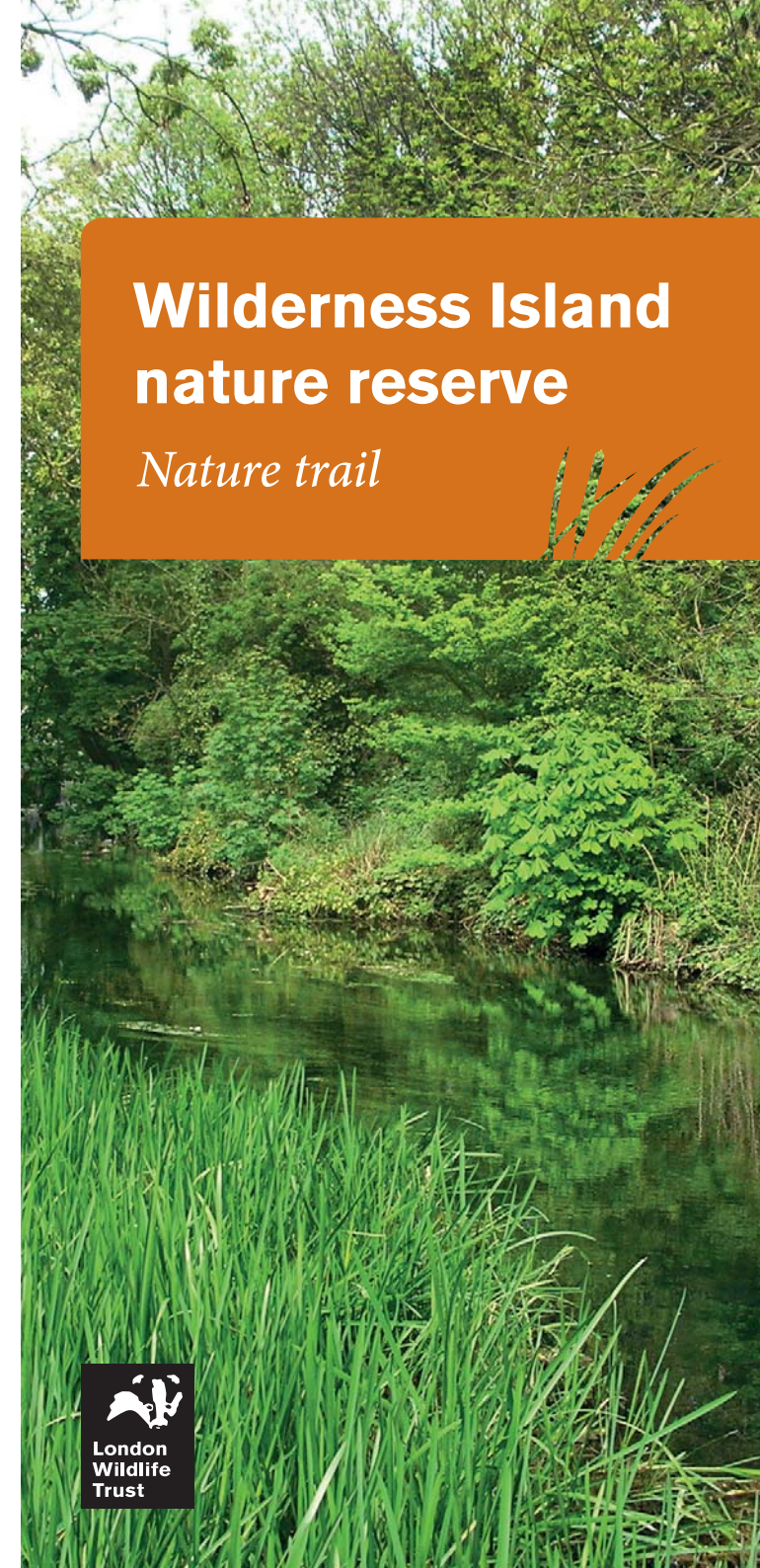


Protecting London's
wildlife for the future



Wilderness Island nature reserve

Nature trail



Exploring Wilderness Island

The Island is open throughout the year and is free to visit. Please keep to the paths to minimise disturbance to wildlife. We ask that dogs are kept on leads at all times and cycling is not permitted. Bicycles can be locked to cycle stands at the site entrance.

The entrance to Wilderness Island is at the junction of Mill Lane and Strawberry Lane in Carshalton, where a kissing gate and a wider gate (which can be opened with a RADAR key) lead to a flat bridge. A gentle slope leads up to a wide, circular gravel path. The second half of the island is accessed via steps and a narrow footbridge. Paths on this part of the island can be narrow, uneven, close to the river edge and muddy in places. Please take care when using these paths.

Use the map to explore the island's wildlife and habitats. The numbered paragraphs below match the numbered posts on the nature trail.

1 The woodland in this first section of the nature reserve provides valuable habitat for many species of birds and invertebrates. Many birds are easier to hear than see, listen out for the distinctive drumming sound of male great spotted woodpeckers in spring and singing chiffchaff (their song sounds like their name). You may also hear the fluting calls of blackcaps nesting in the tangled bramble. We have erected bird boxes, bat boxes and a large sloping box designed for nesting tawny owls.

2 This mature oak tree has a colony of purple hairstreak butterflies, whose caterpillars feed on the oak leaves. The butterflies can be seen spiraling at the top of the tree on sunny summer evenings. Several other species of butterfly can also be seen in these woodland sections, including speckled wood, holly blue and comma.

3 Steps lead down to a small bridge that crosses a channel known as the Cut, which connects the Croydon and Carshalton branches of the River Wandle. We have encouraged native wetland plants to colonise the banks of the Cut, such as purple-loosestrife and marsh-marigold.

Nature trail



Wilderness Island is a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation and a Local Nature Reserve.

The reserve by-laws are available from the Trust or Sutton Council.

4 A channel connects one of the ponds to the River Wandle here, allowing river species to use the quieter waters of the pond for resting, feeding and breeding. The river supports fish such as stickleback, chub and barbel and invertebrates such as caddis fly, which emerge and swarm in large numbers above the water in summer.

5 At the most northern point of the island the two arms of the River Wandle meet before flowing over a weir. The river supports good numbers of wildfowl for an urban river, such as moorhen and mallard. Grey wagtails can often be seen near the weir and have bred nearby. You may also spot little egret, a white heron that is returning to southern Britain after an absence of over 400 years.

6 This side of the island supports a wetland habitat of sedge beds, dominated by greater pond sedge with some great willowherb, hemp agrimony and blackcurrant. Large sedge beds like this are scarce in London and this site provides a valuable habitat for wetland species. The bed could become overgrown by trees so we remove them while still small.

7 The island's ponds were originally dug as carp ponds for the owners of the Shepley Estate in the 18th century. Without management the ponds would silt up and become overgrown, so sediment is occasionally removed to ensure open water. If you look across the pond you can see a kingfisher bank we have constructed from some of the silt. Kingfishers burrow into sandy banks to create tunnels in which they nest, and have been seen using the bank.

8 Meadow areas are carefully mown to encourage a rich mix of plants. Cow parsley can dominate in spring and nettles in summer but you may also catch the characteristic aroma of wild onion, or spot the flower heads of teasel, an important winter food resource for goldfinch. The meadows are important for insects and during the summer you may spot butterflies such as meadow brown, gatekeeper and ringlet as well as more uncommon species.