



Sydenham Hill Wood



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Welcome to Sydenham Hill Wood, a nature reserve managed by London Wildlife Trust on behalf of Southwark Council. Come in and explore this wonderful woodland.

Please help us protect the nature of Sydenham Hill Wood. Leave nothing but footprints and take nothing but photographs and memories.

Find out more about the history of Sydenham Hill Wood

As you explore Sydenham Hill Wood, you will see five information boards that illustrate the history of Sydenham Hill Wood. There is also information about the Great North Wood, which Sydenham Hill Wood is a part of (map item 6).

The locations are as marked on the map below. Please follow the path network to take them all in.

And for an extra challenge, in each information board, see if you can spot a badger hiding somewhere in the scene!



North



Spot wildlife in Sydenham Hill Wood

Four Great North Wood wildlife spotter sheets are available to help you spot wildlife through the seasons in spring, summer, autumn and winter. You can download these at wildlondon.org.uk/great-north-wood

Sydenham Hill Wood & Cox's Walk

Sydenham Hill Wood, together with Dulwich Wood, forms the largest remaining fragment of an ancient tract of woodland known as the Great North Wood. Stretching from Deptford in the north to Selhurst in the south, the Great North Wood was made up of managed coppices and wood pasture and was at the heart of a thriving woodland economy. It provided charcoal to fuel the ovens and forges of London and Croydon, timber for housing and shipbuilding, and tannin-rich oak bark that was used in the leather tanning industry based in Bermondsey.



The predominately oak and hornbeam woodland was sustainably managed for centuries using a system called coppice-with-standards. Coppicing is the practice of cutting trees on a cycle to provide a continuous supply of wood that can be used for charcoal burning or to make small wooden products. Some trees were allowed to grow into standards that were large enough to provide timbers for shipbuilding.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries the Industrial Revolution brought about great changes that began to affect the traditional woodland economy of the Great North Wood. Coal replaced charcoal, steel replaced timber, and the woodland industries that both relied upon and ensured the continued existence of the Wood, declined and then collapsed. Canals, followed swiftly by railways, opened up transport links to the area, encouraging development out from London. Much of the woodland was destroyed to make way for the city's expansion.

The Great Exhibition housed in the Crystal Palace was relocated from Hyde Park to Penge Place in 1854. This attracted more housing to the area, and in 1865 a railway was opened from Nunhead to the Palace, passing through what is now Sydenham Hill Wood and under Crescent Wood Road via a tunnel. Large villas were established on Sydenham Hill in the 1870s, and some of the woodland that remained was incorporated into the landscaped sylvan pleasure gardens beloved by the Victorian gentry.

The Crystal Palace gradually fell out of favour and eventually burnt down in a huge fire in 1936. The railway, which had attracted little profitable traffic after the 1920s was closed in 1954. Since then, nature has recolonised much of the old trackbed and new woodland has grown on the higher banks of the ridge, where, by 1980, all but one villa had long since been demolished. Sydenham Hill Wood is now a unique mix of ancient woodland and recent woodland, interspersed with remnants of the Victorian garden landscape.



London Wildlife Trust started managing Sydenham Hill Wood as a nature reserve in 1982. Along with the determined support of local people it successfully fought off threats from development, and quickly realised the Wood's potential as a valuable haven managed for the benefit of wildlife and people. It was declared a statutory Local Nature Reserve by Southwark Council in 1990.

Sydenham Hill Wood is home to almost 180 species of trees and flowering plants including wild garlic, wood anemone and bluebells. Over 50 species of birds have been recorded, many of which breed in the Wood such as treecreeper, nuthatch, tawny owl and two types of woodpecker. Also present are countless fungi, rare insects and elusive woodland mammals.

The Great North Wood

The Great North Wood once stretched more or less unbroken, from Deptford in the north to Selhurst in the south and at its widest point spanned from Streatham in the west to Woodside in the east. Today the Great North Wood consists of several ancient woodland fragments, including Dulwich Wood, Sydenham Hill Wood and Biggin Wood, as well as recent woodland that has developed on cleared land such as on One Tree Hill and New Cross Gate Cutting.

The woodland habitat of the Great North Wood stands within a wider network of greenspaces including allotments, cemeteries, gardens, parks, open spaces, and playing fields. To download our leaflet about the Great North Wood so that you can explore it for yourself, please visit wildlondon.org.uk/great-north-wood

Get involved at Sydenham Hill Wood

There are many ways that you can get involved with London Wildlife Trust at Sydenham Hill Wood. You can record species that you've spotted, attend an activity or guided walk, or volunteer to help with the management and conservation of the Wood. Schools can also book curriculum-linked outdoor learning sessions to learn about wildlife in the woods and many other topics. To find out more please visit wildlondon.org.uk

Please help us protect the reserve and wildlife by following these rules

Please keep to the main paths, so as not to trample plants and disturb wildlife. Please leave deadwood where you find it, and do not pick or remove any plants fungi or animal, from the Wood.

Dogs should be kept under control at all times and on a lead from March to August (to protect nesting birds). Please clean up after your dog and take your litter home with you.



London Wildlife Trust is a charity and relies on donations. Become a member today and protect London's wildlife for the future – go to wildlondon.org.uk/join



Find out more at wildlondon.org.uk or search for 'London Wildlife Trust' to follow us on social media