

Biodiversity in Sanders Park

What is biodiversity and why does it matter?

Biodiversity is a measure of variety amongst all living things, including the plants, fungi and animals that we can see, as well as things like microscopic bacteria and single-celled organisms.

Together, living organisms and their environment form interconnected eco-systems or habitats. They interact with each other in a carefully balanced way and do some really important jobs to help keep life going on earth. These are sometimes referred to as 'eco-system services' - see one example in the diagram below.

Through study, we have discovered that these systems work better and are more resilient to changes if they are more biodiverse. The loss of even one or two species from a habitat can put it out of balance.

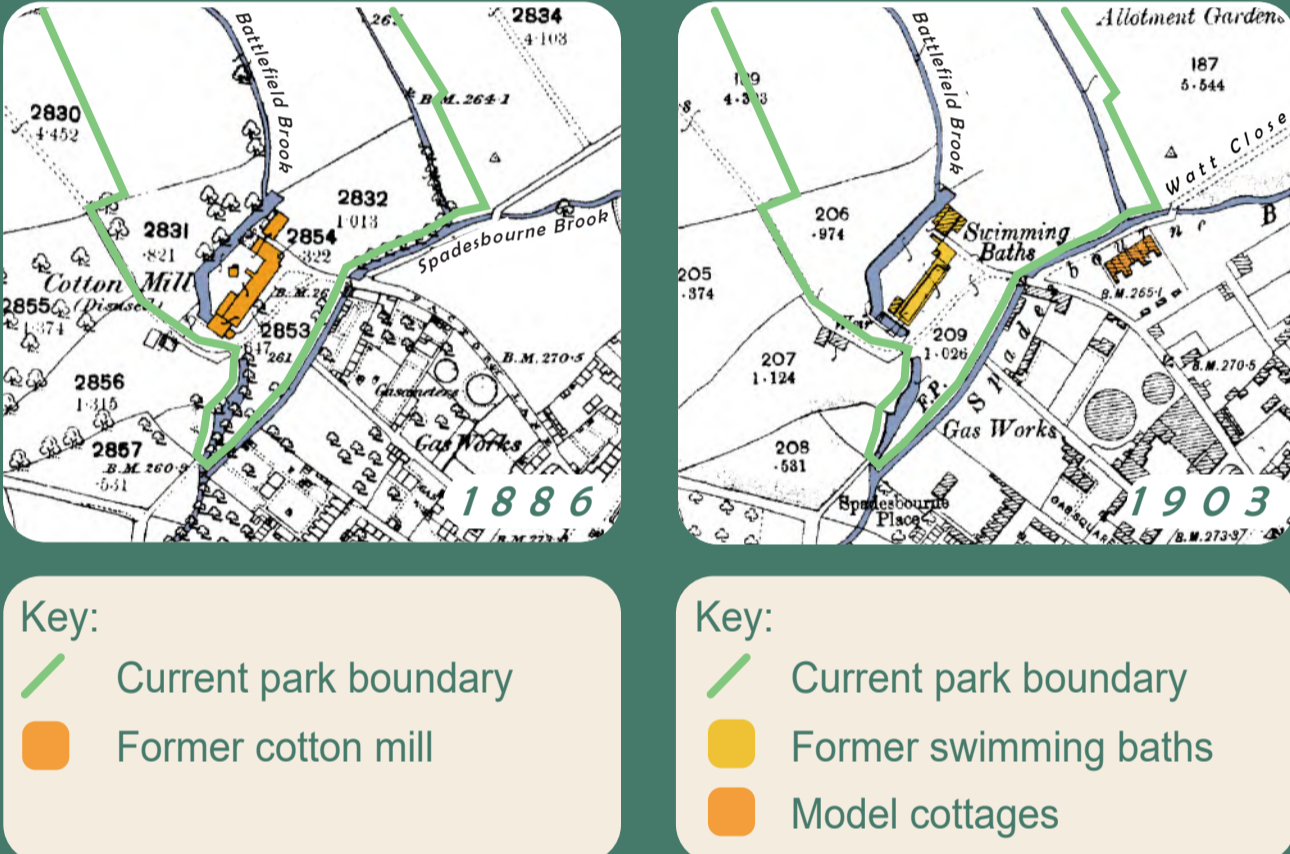
Biodiversity in the UK has been in decline in the past 60 years as habitats have been lost or broken-up through a combination of built development, industry and changes to farming. However, growing recognition of the importance of biodiversity to our environment and the benefits of nature mean that many of us are increasingly valuing our outdoor spaces and are working to restore and create new habitats.



Biodiversity success story

Sanders Park was created using land given to the town in 1952 by a pair of forward-thinking sisters, Lucy Mary Sanders and Mary Beatrice Sanders. They were the daughters of Benjamin Hadley Sanders, a former Town Clerk of the Urban District Council.

The family owned a cotton mill powered by Battlefield Brook, which was demolished in 1892, but was on land in this southern part of the park. The bricks from the mill were used to build the model cottages that you can see nearby on Watt Close. An open-air swimming pool was constructed in place of the mill for local residents, but it was closed in 1939 due to its proximity to a nearby gas works.



Although the mill is no longer there, a sycamore tree stands at the location of the weir for the mill and a historic barn from the same period can still be found to the west of the mill site, outside the park. The meadow area on the site of the former mill is mowed only once a year to create a diverse grassland habitat for birds and insects.

The course of Battlefield Brook has changed over the years, including a diversion to avoid a rubbish tip that was located in the park between the World Wars. This resulted in straightened parts of the brook with concreted sides.

From 2009 to 2018, much of the brook was restored to a more natural state, significantly enhancing local biodiversity. The restoration involved reshaping the brook and planting native vegetation along the banks to stabilise the soil and provide food and shelter for wildlife.



Supporting biodiversity at Sanders Park

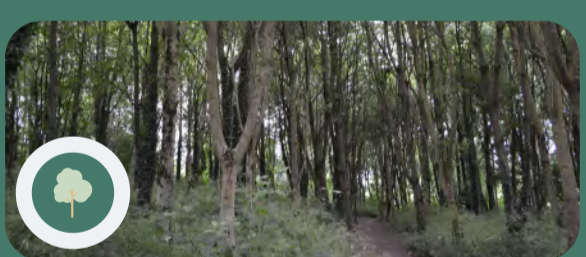
Public green spaces like Sanders Park are very important havens for people and wildlife, and we are continually reviewing the management of different areas with the aim of improving and diversifying habitats.

The map above shows the range of habitats found in the park. Here is some further information on each:



Grassland meadow

Grassland meadows, like the one near Watt Close, offer important environmental benefits. They provide a safe place for a range of insects, which help maintain healthy ecosystems. The meadow also supplies food and cover for birds and small mammals, as well as improving soil health and carbon storage, and helping to reduce flooding.



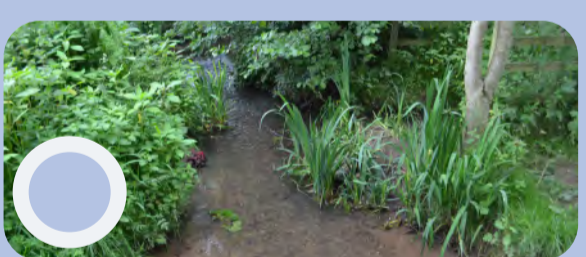
Woodland

The pockets of woodland in Sanders Park have many ecological benefits which enhance the park's biodiversity. They offer shelter and breeding grounds for woodland species and the diverse plant life supports many different animals. They are very important for birds, providing nesting sites, food sources - such as berries and insects, and protection from predators and bad weather.



Hedges and linear woodland

The hedges and linear woodland in the park are very useful to local wildlife. They offer shelter and nesting sites for birds, and their flowers, berries, and nuts are vital food sources for a range of species. They can also help to clean the air, reduce noise pollution and like all vegetation cover they intercept rainfall, helping to reduce the risk of flooding.



Battlefield Brook

Brooks or small streams provide important habitats for many plants and animals, including fish, insects, birds, and mammals like water voles, making them biodiversity hotspots. They also help to filter and clean water, reducing pollution and improving water quality. The path of Battlefield Brook, which runs through Sanders Park, has been changed by human activity over the years, but now much of its course through the park has been re-naturalised and it offers valuable habitat (find out more in our 'Biodiversity success story').



Bromsgrove District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk