

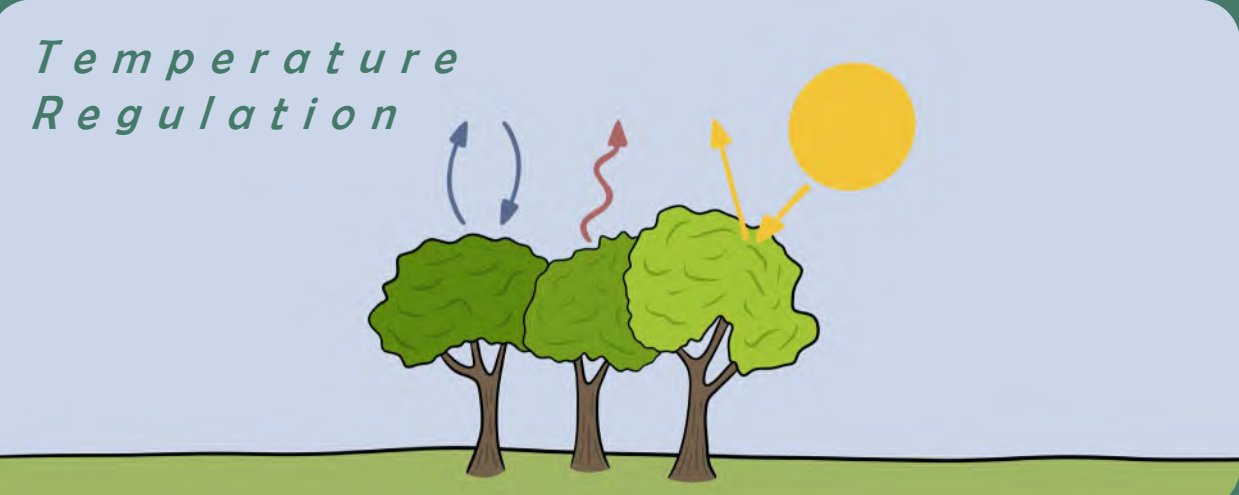
Biodiversity in Sanders Park

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.

Temperature Regulation



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

In 1952 when the Sanders Family donated the land to the council to form the park, it came with the condition that no healthy trees would be cut down, and any removed trees would be replaced. Since then, over 600 trees and shrubs have been planted, with more planned for the future. Because of this you will find a wide range of ages and species amongst the trees at Sanders Park.

Some of the oldest are the large oak trees that most likely pre-date the park. Some of the youngest have been planted in recent years along Deansway to help improve the habitat here and are growing well.



Trees of all ages are an important part of habitats, supporting greater biodiversity and providing long-term resilience. As young trees grow, their branches offer food and shelter for small animals and birds. The roots of young trees help stabilise soil, encouraging the growth of other plants around them.

Mature trees provide shade, helping to regulate the temperature and moisture levels in the area. This creates a more stable environment for other plants and for animals. Mature trees also produce an abundance of fruits, nuts, and seeds that provide an important food source. Additionally, their long roots improve the soil health and its ability to hold onto water.

When trees die they continue to provide habitats for many species, including insects and fungi, which help break down the dead wood, returning nutrients to the soil and supporting new plant growth.

Trees are very important for many of the UK's bird species. They provide food and protection from bad weather and predators. Birds build nests in their branches, where they can raise their young in safety. Sanders Park is home to many tuneless bird species which use the wooded areas, including blue tits, robins, wrens, song thrushes, chaffchaffs and blackbirds.

Supporting biodiversity at Sanders Park

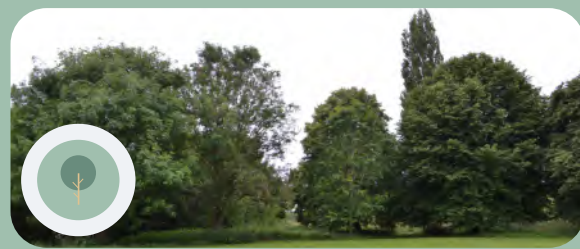
Sanders Park contains a varied range of habitats from grasslands to woodlands. Each habitat is important and provides benefits for people, plants and animals alike.

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



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.



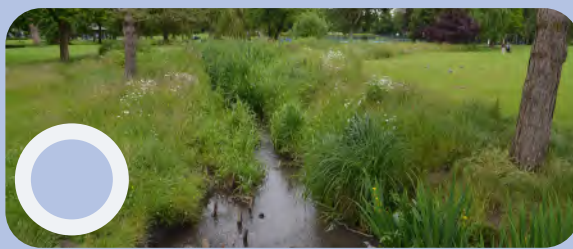
Hedges and linear woodland

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, slowing flows and helping to reduce the risk of flooding.



Grassland meadow

Areas of grassland meadow, where grass is mown less often, can be seen in pockets and toward the edges of the park, and can often be 'buzzing' with wildlife. By mowing less frequently in these areas, plants are allowed to flower and produce seed, and a larger variety of plants can establish and grow. This increases plant biodiversity which, in turn, supports many insects, birds, and small mammals by providing them with food and shelter.



Battlefield Brook

Brooks or small streams, like Battlefield Brook, are vital habitats that support a diverse range of wildlife, including fish, insects, birds, and mammals. One of these mammals is the endangered water vole. Its burrowing activities help to aerate the soil and create habitats for other species. Water voles rely on a range of waterside plants for food. The variety of aquatic plants within the brook also helps to naturally filter and clean the water. These waterways really are biodiversity hotspots!

