

THAMES PATH

NATIONAL TRAIL 

Nature Reserves to explore along the Thames Path



Your essential guide to discovering the wildlife of the natural Thames is '*Exploring the Thames Wilderness*' by Richard Mayon-White and Wendy Yorke. Richard walked the entire length of the river researching this wonderful book, which is an essential guide to enjoy before and during your Thames Path walks.

Here are a few highlights with links to the organisations that look after these precious and vital places for wildlife. All of them contribute to the mitigation of climate change, mainly through carbon stores as floodplain meadows, marshland and woodland. They help to increase biodiversity through the extensive range of restored and managed habitats for wildlife.

More nature reserves feature on the Thames Path interactive map

https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/thames-path/trail-information/

Cotswold Water Park is a vast area of 180 lakes, many of them former gravel pits, with the Thames Path winding along the banks and bridges. The Park hosts national and internationally-important flocks of wildfowl including great crested grebes. 177 lakes in the Water Park are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for their importance to birds, dragonflies and aquatic plants.

There are several wildflower meadows of which two are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Limestone rivers and streams, including the Churn, Coln and Leach, flow through the Water Park into the River Thames and support healthy fish populations as well as otters, water voles and kingfishers.

<https://waterpark.org/things-to-do/nature-reserves/>

North Meadow Cricklade is an old, traditional hay meadow on the northern edge of Cricklade. The reserve covers an area of 44 hectares. It is a National Nature Reserve, one of the finest examples of lowland hay meadow in Europe, and is protected as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI).

<https://crickladedcourtleet.org.uk/north-meadow/description/>

Chimney Meadows is a Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust reserve of 308 hectares which includes a National Nature Reserve. The Wildlife Trust created permissive paths off the Thames Path to enable walkers to enjoy the beautiful wildflower meadows. This reserve is noted for over-wintering wildfowl and the iconic curlew that nests here.
<https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-reserves/chimney-meadows>

Hartslock is one of the oldest nature reserves, identified in 1915 by Charles Rothschild and George Claridge Druce as 'worthy of preservation' when they created the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, now The Wildlife Trusts. The reserve is at the most southern point of the Chiltern Hills where the River Thames cuts through the chalk at the Goring Gap. In this idyllic site you will find lady and monkey orchids, and their unique hybrids, as well as many other chalk downland plants and butterflies.
<https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-reserves/hartslock>

Leg O'Mutton nature reserve at Barnes in West London was created from a Victorian reservoir and is now looked after by the Friends of Barnes Common. It provides an important haven for wildlife and, with its circular walks, is popular with local people.
<https://barnescommon.org.uk/about-us/our-sites/leg-o-mutton-nature-reserve/>

London Wetland Centre is on the eastern side of Barnes. The Wetland Centre, managed by Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, shows the value of bringing nature into the heart of a city and offers many view points in hides and on the boardwalks to see birds, dragonflies, grass snakes and amphibians.
<https://www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/london/>

East London Docklands restoration created several parks, community spaces, city farms and green spaces. These include Surrey Docks Farm, Lavender Pond Nature Park, Mudchute Park and Farm, Bow Creek Ecology Park, East India Dock Basin and Greenwich Peninsula Ecology Park.

Crossness Nature Reserve is a small but significant natural wild oasis of 25.5 hectares within an industrial urban environment on the Thames estuary. It is one of the last remaining grazing marshes in London and carefully looked after by the Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve.
<https://www.bexleywildlife.org/friends-of-crossness-nature-reserve/> Visit the nearby **Erith Marshes** as well to see more of the diverse wildlife of tidal mudflats and salt marsh with its populations of migrating birds in summer and winter.

'Exploring the Thames Wilderness' by Richard Mayon-White and Wendy Yorke, published by Bloomsbury is usually stocked in bookshops in Oxford, Reading and Wallingford, and can be ordered online.

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THE THAMES PATH NATIONAL TRAIL PARTNERSHIP

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