Where to watch wildlife in Lee Valley
Welcome to Lee Valley Regional Park

From hidden gems to urban retreats the Lee Valley, which stretches 26 miles through Hertfordshire and Essex and into London, offers a wealth of nature reserves and open spaces that present fantastic opportunities to discover the Lee Valley’s wildlife.

One visit is never enough as the amazing wildlife and nature spectacles change with the seasons. Our great facilities mean that our nature reserves and open spaces are accessible to everyone whatever time of year you visit.

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Let’s get social

Check out up to date wildlife sightings visitleevalley.org.uk

GUIDE TO SYMBOLS

- Parking
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- Hides
- Muddy Paths
- No Dogs

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Our Magnificent Seven

Bittern

Bittern, a large heron-like bird is one of our most secretive winter visitors. They were once extinct in the UK but a huge conservation effort nationally has seen them return and, encouragingly, their numbers continue to increase. Look among the reedbeds of Amwell Nature Reserve and Rye Meads Nature Reserve or River Lee Country Park’s Seventy Acres Lake and North Metropolitan Pit. Drop in to our Bittern Information Point where volunteers are on duty at weekends and Bank Holidays to help you spot one.

Dragonflies

Small in size, but nevertheless fierce predators, dragonflies and damselflies can be seen throughout the valley. Amwell Nature Reserve is Hertfordshire’s premier dragonfly site but also head across the border into Essex to Cornmill Meadows Dragonfly Sanctuary. The variety of water bodies there mean it’s an excellent place to see a range of species, from the striking metallic colours of the Banded Demoiselle to the majestic Emperor Dragonfly patrolling its territory.

Kingfisher

The myriad of waterways that wend their way through the Lee Valley provide excellent wildlife corridors linking our important wildlife sites. Listen out for the shrill call and flash of cobalt blue as a Kingfisher darts by close to the water’s surface. In summer head to Rye Meads Nature Reserve where Kingfisher regularly nest in the specially constructed bank.

Orchids

Orchids thrive in grasslands with low nutrients such as the sandy substrates left behind by the gravel industry in River Lee Country Park. The meadow at the north end of Bowyers Water has six species of orchid including Early Marsh and Pyramidal Orchid. Early Marsh Orchid, amongst others can also be found on areas of pulverised fuel ash, a by-product of coal-fired powered stations, deposited at Amwell Nature Reserve and adjacent to North Metropolitan Pit.

Water Vole

Water Vole have become one of Britain’s most endangered mammals, however the Lee Valley is still a stronghold. Although secretive, look out for signs such as their burrows, little piles of feeding remains or even their droppings! You may hear the distinctive ‘plop’ as one dives into the water. Visit sites such as Amwell Nature Reserve, Silvermeade or Walthamstow Marshes and you may be lucky enough to see one.

Waders

The wet grasslands and muddy lake margins in the valley provide rich feeding grounds for wading birds. Head to Amwell Nature Reserve, Rye Meads Nature Reserve, Hall Marsh Scrape, Cornmill Meadows and the WaterWorks Centre nature reserve for views of Snipe, Redshank, Green and Common Sandpiper and, of course, the occasional rarity dropping in on migration.

Wildfowl

The Lee Valley is an internationally important site for wintering wildfowl. Visit Amwell Nature Reserve, Rye Meads Nature Reserve, River Lee Country Park or Wathamstow Wetlands to see wintering ducks including Smew, Goldeneye, Goosander, Shoveler, Gadwall and Teal.

Where to watch wildlife
The vast mosaic of habitats across the park makes it an important resource for a wide range of wildlife; this has been recognised through a number of wildlife designations. The national importance of eight sites in the Lee Valley, including Walthamstow Marshes and Cornmill Meadows has been acknowledged through their designation as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Four of the SSSI’s, Amwell Nature Reserve, Rye Meads Nature Reserve, Turnford and Cheshunt Pits and Walthamstow Reservoirs together form the Lee Valley Special Protection Area and Ramsar site, recognising the international importance of the valley for the wintering ducks, Gadwall and Shoveler and wintering Bittern. Other sites such as Glen Faba, Tottenham Marshes and East India Dock Basin are recognised for their importance for wildlife in the local area.

**Amwell Nature Reserve**
Central grid reference: TL377129
Amwell Lane, Stanstead Abbotts, Hertfordshire SG12 9SN

The reserve is situated south of Ware and is managed by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. It supports internationally important numbers of wintering wildfowl and is one of four sites in the park that combine to form the Lee Valley Special Protection Area; there are also excellent communities of breeding birds and dragonflies. The reserve is a mosaic of lakes, rivers, grasslands and woodlands. The main viewpoint provides a panorama of the site with views over the heronry where Little Egret also breed. Look overhead for views of birds of prey including Buzzard, Red Kite and Sparrowhawk.

**Spring**
Spring through to autumn is a particularly good time to see wading birds such as Redshank and Little Ringed Plover that breed here.

**Summer**
Common Tern nest on the artificial rafts on Great Hardmead Lake. The Dragonfly Trail on Hollycross Lake enables close-up views of dragonflies. This is considered the best place in Hertfordshire for dragonflies with the recent addition of the Willow Emerald Damselfly bringing the total to 20 breeding species. Look out for Hobby hunting over the reserve. There’s a small meadow of marsh orchids flowering in early June nearby.

**Autumn**
As the water levels drop look along the muddy margins for wading birds such as Common Sandpiper which are occasionally joined by rarer waders such as Dunlin.

**Winter**
The lakes support large numbers of wildfowl including Gadwall, Shoveler, Tufted Duck and Pochard. Teal can be seen feeding in the shallow margins of the lake. Smew are also regular visitors. There’s also the opportunity to see wintering Bittern with elevated views over the reedbeds from the hides.

Find out more at [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk](http://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk)

**Stanwood Innings**
Central grid reference: TL388113
Marsh Lane, Stanstead Innings, Hertfordshire SG12 8HL

This former gravel pit is now an excellent place for wildlife watching. A surfaced circular walk links wildflower meadows and the lake with its two hides, to the nearby Rye Meads Nature Reserve.

The lake has been divided into two sections; the larger is used for sailing but is still a great place for watching wildlife with its open expanses of water and fringes of reed and scrub. The other section provides a refuge area with more extensive reedbeds, marshy margins and loafing islands for wildfowl.

**Spring**
In late spring the wildflower meadows come alive with a burst of Bee Orchid and Ragged Robin among the other wildflowers. Look out for Common Tern from the neighbouring colony at Rye Meads Nature Reserve feeding on the lake, Oystercatcher have also been seen over recent years. Sand and House Martin can be seen feeding over the lakes after their long migration.

**Summer**
Summer sees the arrival of many warblers including Reed and Sedge Warbler. It’s a good site for dragonflies with up to 14 species noted including Black-tailed Skimmer and Broad-bodied Chaser. Look over the meadows for butterflies including Brown Argus, Ringlet and Holly Blue.

**Winter**
The open water is a great place to look for wintering ducks such as Shoveler, Smew, Teal and Goldeneye. Look from the Sandpiper Hide across the reedbeds which now provide excellent habitat for Bittern which can often be seen coming in to roost.

**FOCUS ON important sites for wildlife**

The vast mosaic of habitats across the park makes it an important resource for a wide range of wildlife; this has been recognised through a number of wildlife designations. The national importance of eight sites in the Lee Valley, including Walthamstow Marshes and Cornmill Meadows has been acknowledged through their designation as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Four of the SSSI’s, Amwell Nature Reserve, Rye Meads Nature Reserve, Turnford and Cheshunt Pits and Walthamstow Reservoirs together form the Lee Valley Special Protection Area and Ramsar site, recognising the international importance of the valley for the wintering ducks, Gadwall and Shoveler and wintering Bittern. Other sites such as Glen Faba, Tottenham Marshes and East India Dock Basin are recognised for their importance for wildlife in the local area.
Rye Meads Nature Reserve
Central grid reference: TL385103
Rye Road, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire SG12 8JS
(Sat nav users should use EN11 0GH)

The reserve, managed jointly by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, forms part of the Lee Valley Special Protection Area. Habitats throughout the site include ancient flood meadows, lagoons, reedbed and scrapes which in turn support a wide range of wildlife. Eight hides located around the site and easy to follow trails offer comfortable viewing opportunities.

Spring
With vegetation low and Water Vole actively marking their territories this is a great time to try and see one. Look for the clues these secretive mammals leave behind such as piles of feeding remains and latrines at the sides of ditches. Otter may also leave droppings called ‘spraints’ in prominent places near water.

Summer
You can’t miss the noisy Common Tern and Black-headed Gull colonies that nest on rafts in front of the Tern Hide. Fantastic views of Kingfisher can be had as they carry food to their young in an artificial nesting bank in front of the Kingfisher Hide. Kestrel can be found nesting in boxes around the site while a variety of warblers nest amongst vegetation.

Look out for Konik ponies grazing the wet meadows. These small, hardy horses help to conserve rare plants including Meadow Rue and keep the meadows suitable for breeding wading birds such as Lapwing.

Autumn
The wet scrapes are perfect for foraging waders including Green Sandpiper, Snipe and Lapwing. Keep an eye out for more unusual birds dropping in as they pass through on migration.

Winter
The lagoons provide excellent habitat for large numbers of wildfowl including Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Shoveler and Little Grebe. Bittern and Water Rail can be found among the reedbeds.

Find out more at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk and rspb.org.uk/ryemeads

Glen Faba
Central grid reference: TL393089
Dobbs Weir Road, Nazeing,
Essex EN11 0AZ

The site consists of two lakes, Glen Faba itself and the much smaller Stort Pit. Both are fringed with reedbeds, surrounded by small pockets of woodland and wildflower meadows. To the south of Glen Faba lake the meadows are studded with a number of small ponds, shallow pools and ditches.

Spring and summer
The largest wooded island on Glen Faba houses a heronry with both Grey Heron and Little Egret plus a small Cormorant colony which is easily visible from the west bank of the lake. Reedbeds that fringe the northern section of Glen Faba and edges of Stort Pit are excellent for Reed and Sedge Warbler. On warm summer evenings large numbers of bats can be seen foraging for food along the river channels and lake edge. Lapwing can be seen displaying over the shallow pools to the south of the main lake.

The distinctive reeling call of the Grasshopper Warbler can be heard in the grassland.

Autumn and winter
The large expanses of open water are home to wildfowl including Gadwall, Tufted Duck and Wigeon as well as occasional visitors such as Teal and Black-necked Grebe. Common and Green Sandpiper can sometimes be seen along the lake edges.

More to explore:
Admirals Walk Lake
Central grid reference: TL377081

Just across the River Lee lies another small former gravel pit, Admirals Walk Lake. The lake and nearby River Lynch are one of the best sites for dragonflies in the park. Sand Martin and Swallow feed over the water, replaced as dusk falls by bats including Pipistrelle and Daubenton’s Bat.
Nazeing Meads
Central grid reference: TL386076
Dobbs Weir Road, Nazeing, Essex EN11 0AZ

Nazeing Meads comprises a complex of settlement lagoons and forms part of the River Lee flood relief system. The deep open water of the lagoons offers a plentiful supply of food for diving birds including Tufted Duck. Great Crested Grebe can be seen throughout the year in good numbers and it’s usually possible to catch their famous ‘penguin dance’ if you look for pairs bonding early in the year.

Winter
The lagoons are a very good spot for wintering duck including Goosander. Scanning the open water from the southern bridge over the flood relief channel is one of the best ways of picking up these species. The lagoons support a winter gull roost, which is typically made up of Common and Black-headed Gull but it’s worth looking for other species including the occasional Mediterranean Gull.

Great Crested Grebe
Tufted Duck
Common Gull

Silvermeade
Central grid reference: TL371062
Mill Lane, Broxbourne, Hertfordshire EN10 6LX

Silvermeade is a stronghold for the highly endangered Water Vole and is one of the best places in the region for viewing this charismatic mammal. It’s also an excellent site for dragonflies. Its wet meadows are intersected by a network of richly vegetated ditches, pools and reedbeds.

Spring
Water Vole and their field signs can be seen throughout the year but spring is a particularly good time to look for them as they’re actively reasserting their territories. Look out for piles of neatly cut grass stems, their droppings or the tracks they create as they move along the bank. You can’t miss the delicate pink-white of Cuckooflower, so called as it flowers around the same time as the first Cuckoo is heard. The striking pink flowers of Ragged Robin can also be seen amongst the grasses and sedge. Both plants thrive in the damp meadows found here.

Summer
The ditches are home to dragonflies of which the Hairy Dragonfly is one of the earliest to emerge. Look along the ditches to see them hunting for food from May onwards. The Banded Demoiselle is an impressive damselfly; the male has conspicuous dark banding on its wings. The long grass adjacent to the water is a good place to see Grass Snake which are competent swimmers and regularly take to the water to hunt for prey. Reed Bunting, Sedge and Reed Warbler all nest on site. Look out for the darting flight of the Large Skipper butterfly on the wing from early June.

River Lee Country Park

The 1,000 acre River Lee Country Park is an excellent place to spend time watching a range of wildlife. The network of surfaced paths wend their way round the mosaic of flooded gravel pits, wader scrapes, wet woodland, rivers, grassland and scrub. There’s a wealth of wildlife throughout the year with every visit offering different sightings.

Water Vole

© visitleevalley.org.uk
**Turnford and Cheshunt Pits**

Central grid reference: TL371033  
**Stubbins Hall Lane, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 2EF**  
Windmill Lane, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire EN8 9AJ

Turnford and Cheshunt Pits form the centrepiece of River Lee Country Park and are part of the Lee Valley Special Protection Area due to their importance for wintering wildfowl.

Extensive habitat improvements on Seventy Acres Lake have resulted in the establishment of large expanses of reedbed, smaller patches are also found around the fringes of other lakes. The numerous lakes provide plenty of open water habitat, excellent for wildfowl and also home to Otter which are very difficult to spot!

Areas surrounding the gravel pits are mostly a mosaic of meadow and mixed scrub. There are a number of waterways that wend their way through the country park. Look for a flash of cobalt blue as a Kingfisher darts by.

**Spring**

Scrubby woodland is ideal for Nightingale, particularly areas north of Fishers Green car park. Spring is also the perfect time to try and spot a Water Vole before the vegetation gets too high; the ditch alongside Hooks Marsh Lake is a good place to look.

May and June herald a magnificent display of orchids. Bee Orchid can be found throughout the grasslands of the country park but head to North Metropolitan or Bowyers Orchid Areas for views of Twayblade, Early Marsh, Southern Marsh, Common Spotted and Pyramidal Orchids.

**Summer**

There’s a noisy Common Tern and Black-headed Gull colony nesting on the artificial rafts on Seventy Acres Lake. CCTV cameras beam close-up live pictures of the colony to monitors at the Bittern Information Point.

In the warm weather Thistly and Cheshunt Marsh come alive with the sound of grasshoppers and crickets. Look out for the distinctive Roesel's Bush-cricket amongst the tall grasses. The warm weather also encourages insects into flight. Dragonflies dart along the waterways including Brown Hawker patrolling the ditches and streams. There’s also an array of butterflies, Speckled Wood can be seen in the dappled light along the woodland paths and look across the meadows for Ringlet and skippers. A spectacular display of water lilies can be seen on Bowyers Water, the oldest of the country park’s gravel pits.

**Winter**

This is one of the best places to see up-close views of Bittern which can be found wintering in the reedbeds of Turnford and Cheshunt Pits. For views over the reedbeds on Seventy Acres Lake visit the Bittern Information Point at Fishers Green or alternatively head over to the Pochard Hide on North Metropolitan Pit. The lakes are particularly important for wintering wildfowl, especially Gadwall and Shoveler. Smew, Teal, Goldeneye and Goosander are also annual visitors and it’s worth looking out for more uncommon visitors such as Pintail. The secluded lakes of Ashley Pit and North Metropolitan Pit are often excellent for Goosander.

Alder thrives in the damp habitats around the pits and provides excellent feeding opportunities for flocks of tits, which are joined by large flocks of Siskin and Redpoll in the winter months.

The reedbed fringe in front of the Bittern Information Point is worth watching for the elusive Water Rail.

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**FOCUS ON Bittern Information Point**

The Bittern Information Point at Fishers Green overlooks Seventy Acres Lake, one of the best places in the country to see wintering Bittern. The hide is open every day and our helpful volunteers are on hand at weekends and Bank Holidays to help you get the most out of your visit. Come and find out what’s about or see up close CCTV footage of the summer Common Tern colony or a wintering Bittern roosting in the reeds.
Lee Valley Park Farms
Central grid reference: TL383039
Stubbins Hall Lane, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 2EF

Holyfield Hall Farm is a mixed dairy, beef and arable farm. The thick hedges and field margins provide habitat for birds such as Whitethroat and Yellowhammer. The long grass supports large numbers of small mammals, which in turn attract Kestrel and Barn Owl. Look across the farm to Galleyhill Wood where Buzzard and Red Kite are often seen soaring on the thermals. Fallow and Muntjac Deer can often be found along the field margins.

Spring and autumn
The farm provides an excellent viewpoint for large migrant birds moving along the ridge of Epping Forest, whilst smaller species such as Wheatear are regularly found around the edges of the tracks and fields during autumn and spring migration.

Summer
Flower rich field margins attract large numbers of butterflies. Elm growing amongst the hedgerows provides homes for White-letter Hairstreak which can be found fluttering around the tops of the trees.

FOCUS ON action for wildlife
We’re continually working to make the park the best it can be for wildlife and visitors alike. New habitats are created such as the expansion of reedbeds in River Lee Country Park and the creation of invertebrate rich meadows on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Existing important sites are enhanced including the creation of breeding wader islands on Cornmill Meadows and the restoration of ponds. Sites are linked up by improving habitats between them, such as clearing rivers banks to increase marginal plants and restoring hedgerows across fields.

Hall Marsh Scrape
Central grid reference: TL372016
Fishers Green Lane, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 2ED

Hall Marsh Scrape is a series of four shallow artificial scrapes with gravel islands designed to attract waders. Wildfowl feed in the pools while Grey Heron and Little Egret can be found fishing in the shallow waters. Look up for Peregrine Falcon which occasionally perch on the nearby pylons.

Spring and autumn
In spring the exposed shingle islands are used by Little Ringed Plover as they return from Africa to breed. Waders regularly seen on passage through the valley include Green and Common Sandpiper.

Summer
Common Tern from the nearby colony on Seventy Acres Lake can be seen overhead. Hobby are also regularly seen hunting dragonflies over the site and adjacent River Lee Flood Relief Channel.

Winter
The scrapes are well used by a variety of duck including Gadwall, Shoveler, Teal and Wigeon as well as large flocks of Lapwing. It’s worth looking out for more uncommon visitors such as Pintail and rarities which have included Spotted Crake and Spoonbill.
**Cornmill Meadows**
Central grid reference: TL379012
Crooked Mile, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 2ES

Cornmill Meadows is one of the best examples of semi-natural floodplain grassland remaining in the park. The mosaic of rivers, ditches and pools make this a fantastic place to see a variety of wildlife throughout the year. Hay meadows, woodland and a network of glades and rides can be found in the adjacent Tree Park. The meadows provide one of the best places in the region to see dragonflies with over half the UK species found here. Kingfisher can be seen fishing along the rivers that border the site.

**Spring and autumn**
The muddy scrapes provide food for waders passing through the valley, with the possibility of interesting species such as Ruff and Black-tailed Godwit, alongside more regular visitors like Redshank and Common and Green Sandpiper. Lapwing breed around the edges of the pools and can often be seen in spring fiercely defending their young from predators.

**Summer**
Hairy Dragonfly are one of the first to emerge and can be seen flying from May. Banded Demoiselle with their black ‘thumbprint’ wings can be found fluttering over the rivers while Emperor Dragonfly patrol up and down their territories. Both Red-eyed and Small Red-eyed Damselfly can be seen resting on floating vegetation. On a fine evening in late summer the woodland glades of the Tree Park can attract large numbers of Migrant Hawker Dragonfly. Also keep an eye out for Hobby hunting overhead. Barn Owl and Kestrel can often be seen hunting for small mammals amongst the long grass.

**Winter**
The flooded meadows can offer magnificent views of large flocks of Wigeon and Teal, these are regularly joined by large flocks of Lapwing. Snipe feed amongst the rushes.

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**Gunpowder Park**
Central grid reference: TQ380992
Sewardstone Road, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 3GP

This former Royal Ordnance munitions testing area has been landscaped to create large areas of grassland bounded by hedgerows and farmland. At the southern end a boardwalk winds through wet woodland leading to two viewing screens over the large pools of Osier Marsh.

Travelling further south you’ll find the flooded gravel pits of Knights Pits, the rough grassland and scrub of Sewardstone Marsh and the wet grasslands of Patty Pool Mead.

**Spring and autumn**
Migrating summer visitors such as Whinchat and Wheatear can often be seen flying over the farm fields and meadows.

**Summer**
Skylark and Meadow Pipit can be found among the meadows of Gunpowder Park. Listen out for the distinctive sound of Skylark performing their song flight. Wildflowers in the grasslands provide a rich source of nectar for insects. A variety of butterflies including Common and Holly Blue, Essex, Small and Large Skipper and White-letter Hairstreak have been recorded here. In the warmer evenings look out for bats including the regionally rare Nathusius Pipistrelle flying overhead, or Daubenton’s bat flying low over the water.

**Winter**
The wet woodland of Osier marsh attracts large numbers of wintering thrushes and mixed flocks of tits and finches while secretive Woodcock remain hidden amongst the tangled vegetation. The secluded pools provide the perfect habitat for wintering ducks like Teal and Gadwall which can be seen from the viewing screens.

The wet grassland of Patty Pool Mead is excellent for Snipe which feed in the damp grassland.

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**More to explore:**

**Rammey Marsh**
Central grid reference: TQ373994

Just across the River Lee you can find the grassland of Rammey Marsh. A magnificent colony of Bee Orchid grows here while Water Vole and Grass Snake can be found along the ditch which runs through the site.
Tottenham Marshes
Central grid reference: TQ350906
Watermead Way, Tottenham, London N17 0XD

Tottenham Marshes consists of a large expanse of rough grassland, wildflower meadow and scrubland intersected by river channels including the River Lee Navigation. Look above the grasslands to see Kestrel hunting small mammals such as Bank and Field Vole. It’s worth scanning the electricity pylons where both Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon often perch.

The river channels are a good place to look for a darting Kingfisher or a Grey Wagtail.

Spring
Look amongst the wildflower meadows for Bee Orchid in flower from May to June. The Small Copper butterfly emerges in early May, with two or three generations a year, they can be seen in flight until October. It’s also worth looking out for the migratory Painted Lady.

Summer
There’s excellent habitat for warblers including both Common and Lesser Whitethroat and Cetti’s Warbler, look out for the occasional visitor such as Spotted Flycatcher and Grasshopper Warbler. Sand Martin can be seen feeding over the rivers and marshes and occasionally nest in man-made holes in the walls of Pymmes Brook. Look out for dragonflies including Broad-bodied Chaser, Black-tailed Skimmer and Banded Demoiselle.

Winter
In winter Stonechat are usually present and Linnet numbers increase, they can be seen feeding on seed heads of Teasel, dock and thistle. Wintering ducks such as Goosander and Teal can sometimes be found on the river channels.

FOCUS ON urban wildlife watching
Our wildlife has an amazing ability to find its way into even the busiest of places and memorable wildlife experiences can often be found in the most unexpected places. Many former industrial areas such as East India Dock Basin, Middlesex Filter Beds and the WaterWorks Centre nature reserve offer some great wildlife watching opportunities as well as a little peace amongst the everyday bustle of busy urban life. Sites such as Walthamstow Marshes give a glimpse back in time to the valley before development. So whether it’s your lunchtime spot, your commute to work or a leisurely weekend stroll, take time to stop and appreciate what city wildlife has to offer.

Walthamstow Wetlands
Central grid reference: TQ353896
2 Forest Road, Tottenham, London N17 9NH

Walthamstow Wetlands is owned by Thames Water and forms part of the Lee Valley Special Protection Area due to its importance for the wintering ducks Gadwall and Shoveler. It consists of 10 waterbodies, several of which feature wooded islands and reed covered fringes. London Wildlife Trust is delivering the Walthamstow Wetlands project and is responsible for conserving and enhancing the site’s wildlife and heritage.

Spring and autumn
Regular visitors to the reservoirs include Green and Common Sandpiper, Dunlin, Redshank and Lapwing, while less common species include Ringed and Little Ringed Plover, Curlew, Oystercatcher, Wood Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Golden Plover and Little Stint.

Summer
There’s a nationally important heronry with over 100 pairs of Grey Heron breeding most years; these have been joined in recent years by breeding Little Egret. Reed and Sedge Warbler breed in the reeds around the edge of the lakes and Common Tern nest on the artificial rafts.

Winter
Significant numbers of Tufted Duck, Shoveler, Gadwall and Pochard have relied on the reservoirs for generations and continue to thrive here. In addition, Teal congregate in their hundreds, Wigeon graze the grassy slopes, and Goosander and Goldeneye can also be seen. Scarcer species including Red-crested Pochard, Garganey, Scap and Red-breasted Merganser are all possible along with the chance of species normally found at sea such as divers and Common Scoter.

More to explore:
Chingford Reservoirs
Central grid reference: TQ369953
The King George V and William Girling reservoirs, also owned and operated by Thames Water dominate much of the Lower Lee landscape. There’s an impressive gull roost with over 50,000 individuals and it’s an excellent site for wintering wildfowl and migrants on passage in spring and autumn. Access to these sites is currently under review, find out more at thameswater.co.uk
WaterWorks Centre nature reserve
Central grid reference: TQ360867
Lammas Road, Off Lea Bridge Road, Leyton, London E10 7NU

Formerly known as the Essex Filter Beds, the WaterWorks site supplied clean water to the surrounding boroughs. It has since been reclaimed by nature and is home to one of the largest bird hides in London. The hide looks across a series of filter beds, each carefully managed to have its own unique character ranging from open water to wet woodland and allowing close-up views of the wide range of wildlife which now makes its home here.

Spring and autumn
Waders on passage through the valley often drop into the site. Common and Green Sandpiper are regular visitors, whilst Wood Sandpiper and Black-tailed Godwit have also been seen.

Summer
The secluded beds are a fantastic place to get up-close to birds like Pochard and Little Grebe who breed here. Sand Martin are regular summer visitors, see them feeding on insects overhead. Certain beds have been allowed to form dense scrub and are home to species such as Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff, whilst Sedge and Reed Warbler nest amongst the reeds.

Winter
In winter look across the marshes for Stonechat, Snipe and Jack Snipe. Flocks of Fieldfare and Redwing can be seen feeding on the adjacent paddocks at Lee Valley Riding Centre.

More to explore:
Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park
Central grid reference: TQ376848

It's just a short walk to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park where newly created habitats surround the iconic sporting centres attracting a wide variety of wildlife; the invertebrates on site are of particular note.

Walthamstow Marshes
Central grid reference: TQ354873
Lea Bridge Road, Leyton, London E10 7QL

This Site of Special Scientific Interest is a remnant of the original grassland habitat that would once have covered much of the Lee Valley. It would have traditionally been managed as Lammas Land, where a hay cut would have been followed by grazing with livestock. Today this management is replicated through cattle grazing across the site.

A very rare plant, Creeping Marshwort is found on site. It has tiny white flowers and is restricted to the edges of grazed ditches. Within the UK it's only known at two other sites in Oxfordshire.

Whilst walking past the ditches and river listen out for the shrill call of the Kingfisher. Look overhead to see Kestrel hovering whilst searching for its prey of small mammals. Reed Bunting and Linnet are found on site throughout the year as are Meadow Pipit. Amongst the boundary trees native Black Poplar can be found.

Spring
A population of Water Vole live in the ditches that run across the marshes. Look out for the distinctive piles of small sausage-shaped droppings that mark their territories, often most noticeable in spring before the vegetation grows too tall. Sedge and Reed Warbler arrive to breed amongst the wetland habitats on the marshes. Look out for the return of Sand Martin from their wintering sites in Africa to breed on the Lee Navigation banks, feeding on insects over the marshes.

Summer
The marshes come alive with a variety of butterflies, including the Essex Skipper, which has a restricted distribution within London. Warm sunny days are good for dragonfly spotting. Look out for Broad-bodied Chaser hunting across the water and the delicate flight of the Banded Demoiselle. Grass Snake are also found on site - excellent swimmers, they can be seen hunting in the ditches as well as on land. Adders Tongue Fern has been seen on the marshes.

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More to explore:
Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park
Central grid reference: TQ376848

It's just a short walk to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park where newly created habitats surround the iconic sporting centres attracting a wide variety of wildlife; the invertebrates on site are of particular note.
Middlesex Filter Beds
Central grid reference: TQ358864
Lea Bridge Road, Leyton, London E5 9RB

These filter beds are a short walk from the neighbouring WaterWorks Centre nature reserve. Built by the East London WaterWorks Company in the mid 1800s they demonstrate how previously industrial areas can become valuable habitats for wildlife.

Today the site contains a variety of habitats providing homes for a range of interesting wildlife throughout the year. The wooded areas are excellent for flocks of tits and finches. Look out for Great Spotted and Green Woodpecker. Kestrel and Sparrowhawk are found on the reserve and will also hunt on the adjacent open grassland of Hackney Marshes. More than 200 plant species have been recorded including Cuckooflower and Purple Loosestrife and there’s also an interesting community of mosses and liverworts thriving on the old walls of the beds.

Spring and summer
The brickwork of the old bed walls provides shelter for amphibians and in spring the wetlands are home to frogs, toads and newts. The weir is a good spot for Grey Wagtail and Kingfisher, which nest along the banks.

East India Dock Basin
Central grid reference: TQ390808
Orchard Place, Canning Town, London E14 9QS

Whilst only relatively small this reserve is an excellent location for watching wildlife. The basin contains tidal brackish water with mudflats and a band of reed to the north. Look along the edge of the reedbed for the chance to spot Water Rail, or low across the water for a flash of a Kingfisher. There’s also a small copse of mature trees, and a flower-rich grassland where a couple of the sites’ more unusual exotics, Warty Cabbage and Salsify can be found in addition to native flowers such as Ladies Bedstraw.

There are excellent views over the O2 Arena on the opposite bank of the Thames, look overhead for the chance to see Peregrine Falcon. A variety of gulls including Black-headed, Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gull frequently use the site but it’s worth scanning amongst them for the more unusual species. Keep an eye over the River Thames too where the occasional Grey or Common Seal can be seen.

Winter
In winter the basin can support large numbers of Teal. You can get excellent up-close views of them alongside Shelduck as they feed on the exposed mudflats.

More to explore:
Bow Creek Ecology Park
Central grid reference: TQ391811

It’s just a short walk to the nearby Bow Creek Ecology Park, a restored site with areas of open water and wildflower meadows. The site offers excellent views over the River Lee’s tidal mudflats where feeding Redshank can often be seen.

FOCUS ON Volunteering
The work of our dedicated volunteers is vital to the continued management of our wildlife sites. Practical conservation projects make real changes to wildlife habitats, survey work provides important information on the species using our sites, and information roles help visitors appreciate the amazing wildlife around them. Volunteering is also a great way to spend a day, keep active and meet new people.

For details of current volunteering opportunities go to visitleevalley.org.uk – it’s your chance to make a difference.