

County: Greater London **Site Name:** Crofton Woods

District: London Borough of Bromley

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Local Planning Authority: London Borough of Bromley

National Grid Reference: TQ 437665 **Area:** 76.6 (ha) 198.8 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 177 **1: 10 000:** TQ 46 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1975 **Date of Last Revision:** -

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1989 **Date of Last Revision:** -

Other Information:

This site was formerly known as Crofton Heath. There are several large extensions including Sparrow and Roundabout Woods and Gumping Common.

Reasons for Notification:

Crofton Woods forms an extensive area of ancient woodland on London Clay and is amongst the largest woods of this kind in Greater London. The woodland supports a rich variety of ancient woodland trees, shrubs and herbs, most of which are found in the oak woodland communities, although an area of alder also occurs. The diversity of the site is increased by areas of rough neutral grassland and scrub. These are surrounded by the woodland, and provide glade conditions that benefit invertebrates and feeding birds.

A high forest canopy is found across the majority of the woodland and is comprised of an abundance of pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* with some sessile oak *Quercus petraea*. Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and downy and silver birches *Betula pubescens* and *B. pendula*, are also frequent canopy components, with the former two species being found particularly on the damper ground. Other regular tree species include aspen *Populus tremula*, field maple *Acer campestre* and crab apple *Malus sylvestris*.

A well developed shrub layer forms a good woodland structure through a large part of the wood. The most abundant species is hazel *Corylus avellana*, but hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and midland hawthorn *C. laevigata* are also abundant. In wetter areas the shrub layer also contains alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus* and guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*, both of which are uncommon in Greater London.

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Crofton Woods (cont...)

The ground flora reflects variations in light penetration through the canopy and the soil moisture conditions. Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* is abundant throughout the wood, with dense bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* carpets close to the woodland edge and in areas of lighter canopy. Wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* are most frequent on the drier ground with creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis* and wood millet *Milium effusum* where more light reaches the floor. Surface water drains slowly from the lower-lying areas, and these damper localities, together with the banks of Kid Brook, are especially rich in herb species. These include pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*, remote sedge *C. remota*, wood sedge *C. sylvatica*, giant fescue *Festuca gigantea*, yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria*, red currant *Ribes rubrum* and wood speedwell *Veronica montana*. Forster's woodrush *Luzula forsteri* and saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, both uncommon London plants, are more locally distributed in these wet situations.

A similarly diverse ground flora occurs within the coppiced alder *Alnus glutinosa* woodland on Gumping Common. Bluebell and stinging nettle *Urtica dioica* are abundant here, and an additional number of more uncommon plants for Greater London are also found: marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, large bitter-cress *Cardamine amara* and common valerian *Valeriana officinalis*.

In close juxtaposition with the ancient woodlands is a mosaic of younger woodland, scrub and neutral grassland providing valuable 'glade' features. The grasslands comprise a variety of coarse grass species with other plants such as glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, hairy sedge *C. hirta*, oval sedge *C. ovalis*, wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, common centaury *Centaureum erythraea*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and common fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*. These plants in conjunction with the scrub species form a varied habitat structure of value to invertebrates. Of particular note are the micro-moths *Microlepidoptera* of which 147 species were found in a recent survey.

Crofton Woods as a whole holds a diverse community of typical woodland bird species. Many of these are associated with mature tree habitats. These include great spotted, lesser spotted, and green woodpeckers *Dendrocopus major*, *D. minor* and *Picus viridis*, nuthatch *Sitta europaea*, tree creeper *Certhia familiaris*, chiff-chaff *Phylloscopus collybita* and blackcap *Silvia atricapilla*.