

Ecological Impact Assessment for Clapham Common

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Identification of Ecologically Sensitive Areas of Clapham Common, London Borough of Lambeth

1.0 Background

- 1.1.1 A number of public events involving large numbers of people are planned for selected parks and open spaces in Lambeth over the summer period including Clapham Common. In order to safeguard the ecology of these areas, the London Borough of Lambeth commissioned Salix Ecology to establish which areas of the Common are likely to be particularly ecologically sensitivity and thus adversely impacted on by such public activities.
- 1.1.2 A walkover ecological survey of Clapham Common was undertaken by Salix Ecology on 6th July 2018. The surveyor was Paul Losse MCIEEM, an experienced ecologist. The purpose of the survey was to identify areas / features of the park which might be particularly susceptible to public use and where a corresponding reduction in ecological value might be anticipated. Decisions regarding which areas might be particularly sensitive and the degree of impact expected, was arbitrary and heavily dependent on the experience of the surveyor.

2.0 Method

- 2.1.1 Ecologically sensitive areas of the common were identified using a combination of a Greenspace Information for Greater London data search, aerial photography and field study. These sensitive areas generally had attributes which support / probably support breeding birds, have potential to harbour bat roosts and / or are particularly susceptible to disturbance or trampling. In the light of this, particular features and habitat types were sifted into the following categories:
 - Low ecological sensitivity: little significant impact would be expected on these areas regarding the occasional large scale public event.
 - Moderate ecological sensitivity: casual park uses would have a limited impact on current biodiversity value. However large crowds should be discouraged from the area (particularly during the bird breeding season - March to August inclusive).
 - High ecological sensitivity: Public should not be allowed to enter these areas which should be fenced off during events (if no fencing is currently in place). Additionally, large public crowds should not be encouraged around the periphery of these areas.
- 2.1.2 Other land use categories depicted in Figure 7 are buildings, hardstanding and other areas of little or negligible ecological value.

3.0 Results

3.1 Data search

Statutory Sites and Local Nature Reserves

3.1.1 There are no statutory designated sites within the area of search.

Non- statutory designations

3.1.2 Clapham Common is a site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation. The main habitats of note listed in the citation for the site are the ponds and associated habitats. Mount Pond within the Wandsworth part of the common supports a reasonable range of wildfowl and fish. Eagle Pond, the smallest of the three ponds on the common, was recently restored and now features a number of areas with reeds and other plants at the edges. The pond provides important areas for wildlife, which balance its alternative use for coarse fishing.

3.1.3 An area of woodland to the north of Mount Pond consists mostly of exotic trees, but has developed a reasonable structure and supports common birds.

Protected species and Species of Principle Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity (in England)

3.1.4 The Greenspace Information for Greater London data search confirmed a number of records of rare species, protected species and Species of Principal Importance within 1km of the site. See appendix 1 for species status.

Reptiles and amphibia

3.1.5 There are no records of reptiles within 1km of the site.

3.1.6 There are records of common frog *Rana temporaria* and common toad *Bufo bufo* within the area of search. There is potential for these species to breed within the ponds on site and to use surrounding terrestrial habitat. These species are protected from selling and trade under the Wildlife and Countryside 1981(as amended). The common toad is also species of Principle Importance.

Birds

3.1.7 There are numerous bird records within the area of search. Note that all species of wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside act 1981(as amended). Rare, London Biodiversity Action Plan species and Species of Principal Importance are listed in table 2 below. A number of mostly common bird species are likely breed within mature trees at the site.

Table 1: Relevant bird records within 1km of the site

Species	Status/protection
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Species of Principal Importance BAP Priority London Bird – red
Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1
Lesser spotted woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	BAP Priority London Bird – red

Species	Status/protection
Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citronella</i>	Species of Principal Importance BAP Priority London Bird – red
Reed bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Species of Principal Importance BAP Priority London
Brambling <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1
Herring Gull	BAP Priority London Bird – red
Common crossbill <i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1
Red kite <i>Milvus milvus</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1
Yellow wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	BAP Priority London Bird – red
Spotted flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	BAP Priority London Species of Principal Importance
Wood warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Species of Principal Importance BAP Priority London Bird – red
Firecrest <i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1
House sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	Bird – red BAP Priority London Species of Principal Importance
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Bird – red BAP Priority London
Redwing <i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1 Bird – red
Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1 Bird – red
Dunnock <i>Prunella modularis</i>	Bird – Amber BAP Priority London
Song thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Bird – Red BAP Priority London

Mammals

- 3.1.8 Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Nathusius's pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii* and noctule *Nyctalus noctula* bats have been recorded in the area of search. All species of bat have a high level of protection under the Habitat regulations (2010) as well as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). There are some bat roosting opportunities, particularly within mature trees at the site.
- 3.1.9 Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* has also been recorded within the area of search. The species is a London BAP species and a Species of Principle Importance. There is potential for hedgehogs to use the less intensively managed areas of the site, especially woodlands, woodland edge and less intensively managed areas of grassland. They may also forage within the amenity grassland areas.

Invertebrates

3.1.10 There are a number of invertebrate records within the area of search. Rare, London Biodiversity Action Plan species and Species of Principal Importance are listed in table 2 below.

Table 2: Relevant invertebrate records within 1km of the site

Species	Status/protection
Stag beetle <i>Lucanus cervus</i>	Species of Principal Importance Nationally notable B BAP Priority London
Hawthorn jewel beetle <i>Agrilus sinuatus</i>	Nationally notable A
<i>Sepedophilus bipunctatus</i> (a beetle)	Nationally notable B
Buff ermine <i>Spilosoma lutea</i>	Species of Principal Importance BAP Priority London
Brindled beauty <i>Lycia hirtaria</i>	Species of Principal Importance BAP Priority London
Brown ant <i>Lasius brunneus</i>	Nationally notable A

Plants

3.1.11 Records of plant records which could be found at Clapham Common include mistletoe (London BAP priority). This species will not be affected by any events at Kennington Park.

3.2 Field survey

High ecological sensitivity

H1: Eagle Pond

3.2.1 Eagle pond is located adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site. The pond has an island supporting breeding waterfowl. There were good stands of marginal vegetation including purple loosestrife, yellow iris, soft rush, lesser pond sedge, pendulous sedge, greater willowherb, yellow loosestrife and hemlock water-dropwort. Surrounding trees include crack willow.



Figure 1: Eagle Pond

H2: Small pond

3.2.2 This small pond lies immediately adjacent and to the west of Eagle Pond. The pond was almost dry at the time of survey, however it supported marginal soft rush, lesser pond sedge and emergent bulrush. The pond was surrounded by rough grassland and tall herbs. Surrounding vegetation included young willow, goat willow and buddleia. Grassland species included cock's-foot, wild carrot, rosebay willowherb, common knapweed and common ragwort.



Figure 2: Small pond and associated vegetation

H3: Area of wildflower planting/seeding

3.2.3 An area of seeded corn field annuals located immediately to the north of Windmill drive. The area is particularly sensitive to trampling.



Figure 3: Area of wildflower seeding

H4: Mount Pond

- 3.2.4 Mount pond is located toward the centre of the site just north of Windmill Drive in the Wandsworth side of the site. The lake had good marginal vegetation including lesser pond sedge, great willowherb, bulrush, reed canary grass, gypsywort, marsh woundwort and pendulous sedge. There were also stands of common reed, young alder and grey willow. There was an island with mature trees with potential to support breeding birds



Figure 4: Mount Pond

Moderate ecological sensitivity

M1: Nursery Wood

- 3.2.5 Nursery wood is located immediately to the north of the South Circular Road south of the common. This was a small block of dense woodland with London plane, mature hawthorn, English elm, horse chestnut, yew, ash, wild cherry, common lime, field maple and sweet chestnut. **Note:** some oaks were infested with oak processionary moth, a human health hazard.
- 3.2.6 Immediately adjacent to the mature woodland was an area of young plantation woodland with cherry tree, rowan and tall herbs dominated by creeping thistle with some greater willowherb, hemlock and common nettle. There was also a veteran alder with large amounts of dead wood. This tree has bat roost potential.



Figure 5: Nursery Wood

M2: Area of shrubs and trees

3.2.7 An area of shrubs and trees with breeding bird potential. Species include garden privet, elder, bramble and English elm.

M3: Parkland with scattered trees

3.2.8 An area of parkland with scattered trees towards the centre of the site. The grassland was relatively species poor improved grassland dominated by perennial rye-grass with yarrow, wall barley, mugwort, black horehound, white clover and creeping cinquefoil. However the area does have value for foraging birds and invertebrates.



Figure 6: Parkland with scattered trees

M4: Semi-improved neutral grassland

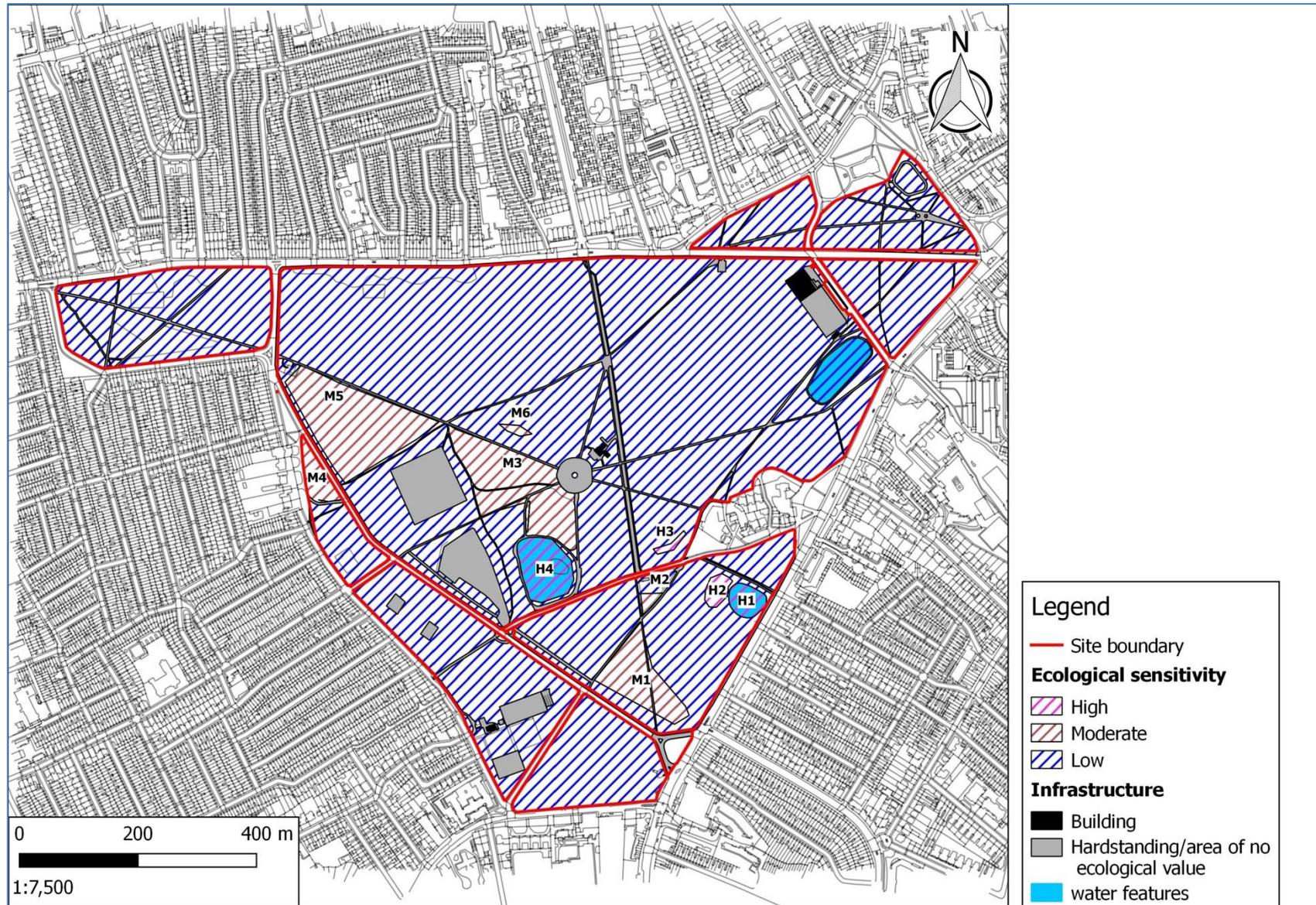
- 3.2.9 An area of semi-improved irregularly mown neutral grassland with scattered mature trees on the western boundary of the site. Species include cock's-foot, abundant perennial rye-grass, ribwort plantain and creeping bent. The grassland has value for foraging birds and invertebrates.

M5: Woodland

- 3.2.10 An area of woodland along the western boundary of the site. There was a canopy of London plane, sycamore and alder with some field maple, rowan, false-acacia, common lime and beech. The understory comprised hawthorn and hazel. The ground flora was relatively poor.

M6: Area of tall herbs

- 3.2.11 A small area of tall herbs located towards the centre of the site. Species included white campion, common knapweed, musk mallow, black medick, oxeye daisy, birds-foot-trefoil and broad-leaved dock. The plants here are likely to provide an important nectar source for invertebrates.



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Figure 7: Ecological constraints for Clapham Common events

Conclusions

Areas H1-4 are highly sensitive ecological areas which should be avoided in planning large scale public events and remain closed-off to the public or fenced off during the events.

Areas M 1- M6 are moderately sensitive ecological areas which should be avoided in planning large scale public events unless appropriate ecological management measures are in place and present before, during and after the event, so as to avoid and/or mitigate for any potential ecological impacts.

Areas of low ecological sensitivity are likely to be robust to the occasional large scale public event. However, tree protection measures should be in place in all areas and floodlights should be directed away from any trees, areas of shrubs or hedge lines.

The above measures will minimise the risk of impacts to species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) as well as the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010). Natural England protected species licences will therefore not be required subject to the implementation of this precautionary approach.

Appendix 1: Relevant Legislation and species status

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 - Species of Principal Importance in England

Species “of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity” covered under section 41 (England) of the NERC Act (2006) and therefore need to be taken into consideration by a public body when performing any of its functions with a view to conserving biodiversity.

National legislation afforded to species and habitats

The objective of the EU Habitats Directive is to conserve the various species of plant and animal which are considered rare across Europe. The Directive is transposed into UK law by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and is commonly referred to as the Habitats Regulations.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is a key piece of national legislation which implements the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Wild Birds Directive) in Great Britain. Since the passing of the Act, various amendments have been made, details of which can be found on www.opsi.gov.uk. Key amendments have been made through the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act (2000) and Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

Other legislative Acts affording protection to wildlife and their habitats include:

- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000
- Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996

Herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles)

Species of herpetofauna which have the potential to occur at Brockwell are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The common lizard and slow-worm are listed in respect to Section 9(1) & (5). For these species, it is prohibited to:

- Intentionally (or recklessly in Scotland) kill or injure these species
- Sell, offer or expose for sale, possess or transport for purpose of sale these species, or any part thereof.

The common toad and smooth newt are protected by law from sale and trade only.

Mammals

All species of bat are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and have the same protection as great crested newts.

Badgers are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Protection of Badgers Act (1992). It is an offence:

- To willfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger;
- To attempt to do so; or
- To intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett.

Birds

With certain exceptions, all birds, their nests and eggs are protected under Sections 1-8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Among other things, this makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally (or recklessly in Scotland) kill, injure or take any wild bird
- Intentionally (or recklessly in Scotland) take, damage or destroy (or, in Scotland, otherwise interfere with) the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.
- Intentionally take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.
- Sell, offer or expose for sale, have in his possession or transport for the purpose of sale any wild bird (dead or alive) or bird egg or part thereof.

Certain species of bird, for example the barn owl, black redstart, hobby, bittern and kingfisher receive additional special protection under Schedule 1 of the Act and Annex 1 of the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC). This affords them protection against:

- Intentional or reckless disturbance while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young.
- Intentional or reckless disturbance of dependent young of such a bird

Plants

With certain exceptions, all wild plants are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence for an 'unauthorised' person to intentionally (or recklessly in Scotland) uproot wild plants. An authorised person can be the owner of the land on which the action is taken, or anybody authorised by them.

Bird status

- **Red list** - High Conservation Concern. Red list species are those that meet any of the following criteria. A) Global Conservation Status. Species listed by BirdLife International as being Globally Threatened using IUCN criteria. B) Historical Decline. A severe decline in the UK between 1800 and 1995, without substantial recent recovery. C) Breeding Population Decline. Severe decline in the UK breeding population size, of more than 50%, over 25 years or the entire period used for assessments since the first BOCC review, starting in 1969 ("longer-term"). D) Non-breeding Population Decline. Severe decline in the UK non-breeding population size, of more than 50%, over 25 years or the longer term. E) Breeding Range Decline. Severe decline in the UK range, of more than 50%, as measured by number of 10 km squares occupied by breeding birds, over 25 years or the longer-term.
- **Amber** - Medium Conservation Concern. Species meet any of the following criteria, but none of the red list criteria, are amber listed: A) European Conservation status. Categorized as a Species of European Conservation Concern (SPEC 1, 2 or 3). B) Historical Decline – Recovery. Red listed for Historical Decline in a previous review but with substantial recent recovery (more than doubled in the last 25 years). C) Breeding Population Decline. As for red list criteria but with moderate decline (by more than 25% but less than 50%). D) Non-breeding Population Decline. As for red list criteria but with moderate decline (by more than 25% but less than 50%). E) Breeding Range Decline. As for red list criteria but with moderate decline (by more than 25% but less than 50%). F) UK breeding population of less than 300 pairs or nonbreeding population of less than 900 individuals. G) Localisation. At least 50% of the UK breeding or non-breeding population found in 10 or fewer sites. H) International Importance. At least 20% of the European breeding or non-breeding population found in the UK.

London BAP species

London Biodiversity Action Plan species are species which have been identified as a priority for conservation action in the capital. They include:

- Species that are globally threatened
- Species that are rapidly declining in the UK
- Nationally threatened species
- Species which are known to have undergone a decline in London