

SGEG - Shamley Green's Special Places

2. Cucknell's Wood

Not far from the village is Cucknell's Wood, donated by the owners of Little Cucknell's to the Surrey Wildlife Trust in 1979. At over 400 years old, this ancient semi-natural woodland is a rare haven for wildlife, probably escaping development because much of it is quite boggy. But Cucknell's Wood is no wilderness. Careful management by SWT is now enabling a wide range of species to flourish, with walkways over the boggy bits to enable visitors to enjoy this lovely place.

In spring the flora is spectacular, with lime-green wood sorrel, starry white clusters of wild garlic flowers and glorious carpets of bluebells. Marsh marigolds grow near two short bridges by a wet ditch, and April also sees the flowering of early purple and common spotted orchids, followed in early summer by another orchid, the yellow-green twayblade.

You would be lucky to see a dormouse at any time of year, but you can often find evidence of one in the dead honeysuckle bark it strips to build its nest. Another elusive species is the long-billed woodcock, although if you wait until evening you may see it 'roding' or flying a regular circuit in a territorial display.

Other birds are plentiful too, including the treecreeper, green and lesser spotted woodpecker, goldcrest, nuthatch, marsh tit, willow tit, tawny owl and a resident family of buzzards. Other flyers include many different species of butterfly, moth and dragonfly, both within the wood and in the sunnier glades.

At the northern end of the wood you'll come across an open sunny glade known for centuries as Snakes Alley. Here, and especially in the summer months, many different butterfly species are attracted by the wealth of wild flowers. You might even come across the occasional snake!

The springs that run through Cucknell's Wood help to create the ideal damp conditions for alder to grow well. Around Snakes Alley, you can see how this species was grown and coppiced in the middle of the last century, and some of the alder and hazel is still coppiced today in order to produce fencing posts, and to enhance biodiversity - many woodland plants and animals have evolved to rely on gaps in the canopy allowing sunlight to reach the ground.



Cucknell's wood in bluebell time

Cucknell's Wood is a pleasant walk from the village, up Woodhill Lane, turning right on the public footpath just past Queen's Lace, and right again down the drive of Little Cucknell's. The wood is on your right with an entrance a short way further along the path. Or to find Cucknell's Wood by car, turn up Stroud Lane from the B2128 and the entrance is about 0.3 of a mile on the left, where there is parking for 3 or 4 cars.

For lots more information about the environment in Shamley Green see our website www.shamleygreenenvironment.co.uk, and to find out about opportunities for volunteering with the coppicing work in Cucknell's Wood in the winter months see the article on the Autumn 2022 News page.

Next month's special place: Blackheath

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