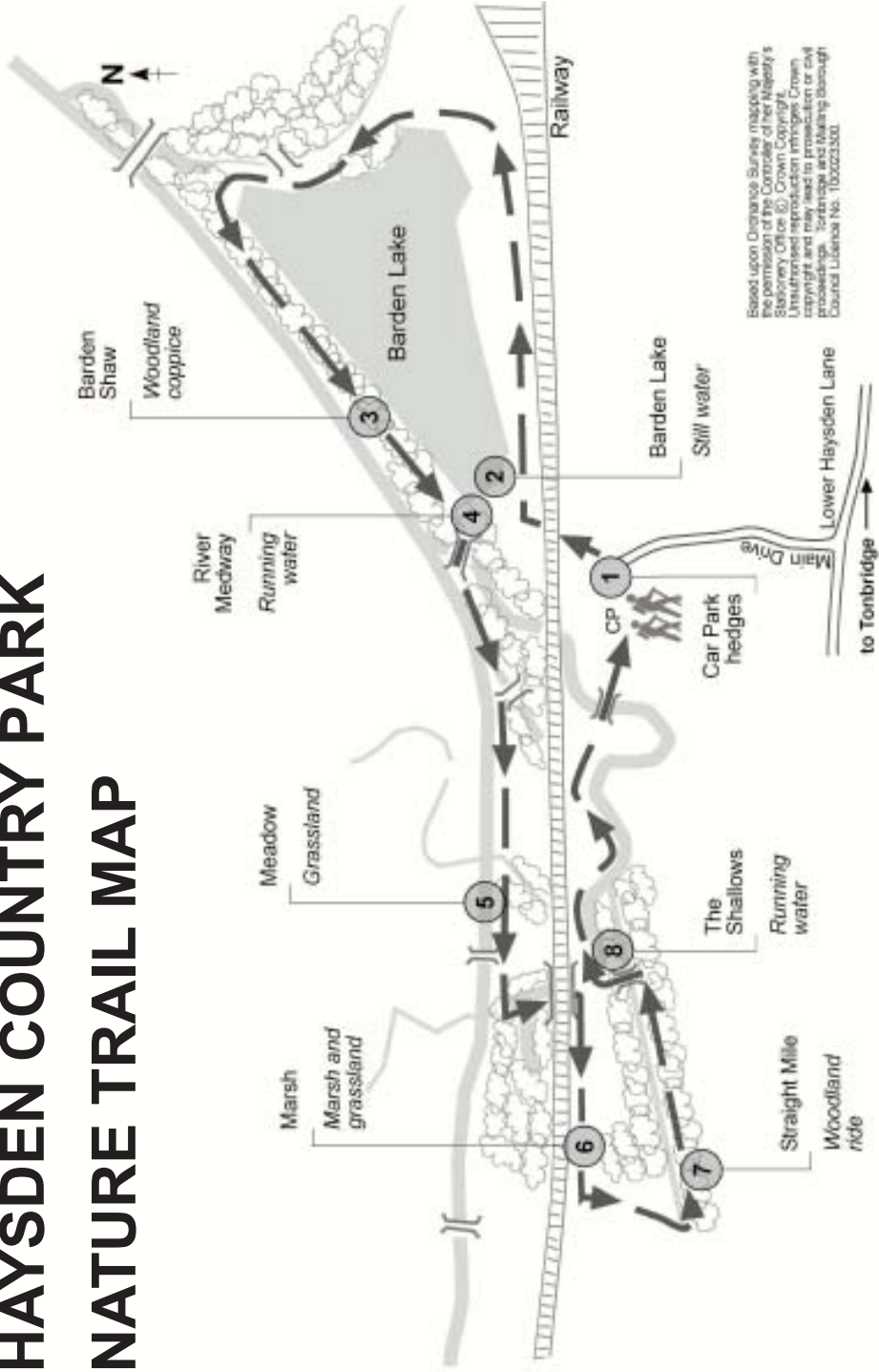


# HAYSDEN COUNTRY PARK NATURE TRAIL MAP



LeisureServices/BCP Nature Trail 2009

# Nature Trail



# Haysden Country Park





**TQ56694597**

**Point 8** – The Shallows are part of the old course of the River Medway, before it was diverted to the north into a new manmade channel and through the Leigh Flood Barrier. The Shallows now have less water, and are gradually becoming overgrown with water plants. This is a process known as ‘succession’; this is a natural process where plants compete to take over a clear space. The water plants that can be seen growing in the old river include Yellow Flag Iris (bright yellow flowers), Great Reed Mace (long brown sausage-like flowers), and Common Reed (large flowering brown seed-heads).

**Find:** Can you see a Kingfisher ?



**LOOK:**

*for the mole hills in the grass, how many can you count? Moles tunnel underground and leave small piles of soil on the surface.*

The long grasses on the riverbanks are also a good place to find more damselflies. They lay their eggs among the water plants in summer and live underwater as ‘nymphs’, which take up to 3 years to mature into the adults you can see flying in the Park. Can you tell the difference between a dragonfly and a damselfly? Damselflies can close their wings and sit still; dragonflies fly much faster and most cannot close their wings.

variety of habitats including: open water; grassland; and woodland, which attracts a variety of wildlife. The park is a Local Nature Reserve because it is a special place for wildlife where people can have contact with nature.

If you would like to see wildflowers, and wildlife, or learn the difference between a dragonfly and a damselfly, Haysden Country Park is the place to visit.

Follow the green numbered posts. Much of the route is on unmade paths which will be muddy after wet weather, unfortunately some parts of the route maybe difficult for some users due to gates and narrow paths.

**TQ57144596**

**Point 1** – From Point 1 at the Information Board by the toilet block walk down the path following the hedges then go under the Railway Bridge towards Barden Lake.

**COUNT:** Spend a few minutes, how many different plants can you count in the hedgerow?

**FIND:** Which of the plant leaves in the pictures can you find in the hedge? (in Summer)



Hawthorn



Bramble



Elder



**TQ57234609**

**Point 2 – Barden Lake**

The banks of Barden Lake are heavily grazed by Canada and Greylag Geese. Canada and Greylag Geese are both introduced species, which have escaped into the wild and have now become common in the countryside. Unfortunately they eat large amounts of vegetation and this can lead to soil erosion. Many other birds live in and around the lake including waterfowl like Greylag Geese, Mallard Ducks, Swans, Great Crested Grebe, Canada Goose, Coots, and Moorhens.

**LOOK:** Can you see any of the water birds in the pictures below?



Coot



Swan



Mallard



Canada Goose



**TQ56374581**

**Point 7 –** This is a woodland ride and stream known as the Straight Mile which is a partly built canal.

**WATCH:** Can you see any butterflies (daytime) or moths (evening)?



The partial shade of the woodland ride with the canal running alongside is an ideal habitat to see a wide variety of insects such as butterflies, and damselflies. Wild garlic (white flowers in spring) also flower along the banks of the canal. In summer Comfrey (clusters of blue, bell shaped flowers), Brambles and Red Campion can be seen along the edge of the path.

**WATCH:** Can you see any butterflies?



Along the stream you may occasionally see a Kingfisher dart past, (a blue flash of colour), or in the evening a Bat flying down the stream. If you stand quietly in the woodland you might hear a Whitethroat singing in the trees (the songs sound like â~tacc, taccâ and a scolding â~tchur-rrrâ), or Wren singing (the song sounds like loud ringing, warbling song; or a loud, rattling call).

**LISTEN:** To the bird songs in the Straight Mile



Walk over the bridge on your left and over the next bridge.

As you continue your walk you will pass by an area of new woodland - Heusenstamm Friendship Wood. If you have the time, take a short detour into the woodland around the circular path. This mixed woodland is very young as it was planted after the 1987 Great Storm but already supports a wide variety of birds and insects.

Rejoin the path and walk on past the woodland towards the railway line where you can see lichen and mosses growing on the damp brick walls. Follow the path under the railway arch alongside the railway line.

Turn right after the railway arch following the path in the meadow towards the Leigh Flood Barrier grass embankment and the A21 flyover. In summer look for the flowers of Stichwort (tiny white flowers), Clover (tightly bunched pink/purple flowers), Buttercup (bright yellow flowers) and many grasses.

**LOOK:** For insects feeding on the flowers



### TQ55444596

**Point 6** – Go through the kissing gate at the end of the meadow. Marsh - this low lying ground has become waterlogged and now contains some typical marshland plants such as Rushes and Sedges.

From here you can take a short walk to the top of the grass flood barrier, from here you can see Haysden Water and the boundary of the park. Walk back down to the marsh and follow the base of the flood barrier to Point 7.

Land birds like Green Woodpecker, Swallows, and Grey Wagtail can also be seen in this area.

Hint: After Point 2, to shorten your walk, go left down the path and straight on to Point 3.

Walk around the lake to your right following the railway line. The two islands in the lake are nesting sites for waterfowl. Look for the wildflowers in spring such as Lords and Ladies (under the trees), and in summer Birds-foot Trefoil (tiny yellow flowers in the grass) and Sedges that occur all year round.

**LOOK:** For empty Freshwater Mussel Shells along the lake shore.  
(You don't need to get wet to do this.)



### TQ57284617

**Point 3** – Barden Shaw is the name of the woodland behind Point 3. This woodland is a broad-leaved deciduous wood. In springtime look closely at the buds on Ash and Oak just before the leaves unfurl and you will see tiny flowers. In the wood you can find trees like Oak, Field Maple, and Ash and Holly. You might see birds like Blue Tits, Wren, and mammals like Grey Squirrels. This is mature woodland that in the past has been managed in a traditional manner called 'coppicing'.

**LOOK:** For trees that have been coppiced in the past



Coppiced stool



Re-growth



In this wood some trees have become overgrown and very little light can reach the ground, so the ground flora and shrubs have not survived.

Coppicing means that groups of trees are cut back in rotation almost to the ground every few years. Cutting down the trees in this way lets light into the woodland floor and the shrubs and ground flora can then grow. Coppiced trees re-grow from the base with several new shoots. Coppice woodland is good for wildlife as it attracts many insects like butterflies and nesting birds. The woodland is being restored by coppicing, and the large mature oak trees have been left standing because they are of particular value for wildlife, with hundreds of insects and other wildlife living on them.

**WATCH:** Stand in the woodland for a few minutes, look for birds and animals visiting the woodland.



Return on the path along the lake, to the bridge at Point 4.

### **TQ57174610**

**Point 4** – The River Medway.

The bridge over the River Medway is a good place to look for feeding insects such as Damselflies, and water birds. Stop and take a few minutes to look up and down the river, look for birds like Kingfishers and water plants such as Yellow Water Lily.

**WATCH:** Can you see any of the insects in the picture below?



**Hint:** To shorten your walk, walk on from this point until you reach the Stone Lock Bridge, go across this and then under the railway line and turn left crossing over the river on the next bridge in a few minutes you will be back in the car park. This path is surfaced and the best option in the wet winter months.

### **TQ56714607**

**Point 5** – Meadows - as you walk between Points 4 and 5, you pass by the river channel on your right and grassland meadows to your left. Open grassland is a valuable habitat for wildlife. As summer approaches, insect activity builds up in the long grass. In summer the meadows contain many butterflies, beetles and flowering plants such as Knapweed, (purple flowers), Stitchwort (tiny white flowers), Teasel and Thistles (purple flowers). A number of butterfly species can be found in the meadow over the summer such as Meadow Brown, Red Admiral and Common Blue – watch them feeding on the flowering plants. In Autumn Teasels and Thistles provide winter food for Gold Finches.

**COUNT:** Spend a few minutes looking at the meadow, count how many different wildflowers you can see flowering in the meadow?

**LOOK:** For insects feeding on the flowers



**FIND:** Can you see any Teasels?

