

What to see on Elmbridge's countryside throughout the year

Spring

Spring is the time when the finest displays of woodland wildflowers can be seen, as they make use of the spring sunshine before the woodland canopy closes over.

The Bluebell is a beautiful member of the Lily family; its dense flowering carpets are characteristic of English ancient woodlands in the spring. An impressive array of Bluebells can be found on Telegraph Hill and at Littleheath Common.

Summer

The countryside also provides a home for a host of bird species. Notably, Reed Warblers can be heard but rarely seen in the thick reed beds and willow scrub of Black Pond, on Esher Common.

Ponds provide a home to a great variety of wildlife. Some of the more spectacular species to be seen in the countryside are adult Dragonflies and Damselflies. Look out for the Brilliant Emerald and the Broad Bodied Chaser.

Many butterflies take advantage of the various habitats around Elmbridge's countryside. Species such as Peacocks, Commas, Speckled Woods, Skippers, Meadow Brown and White Admirals can be seen on Fairmile Common in open, sunny woodland glades and rides.



Autumn

Mushrooms and toadstools can be found in every habitat, in a variety of shapes, sizes and colours.

The next time you take an autumnal stroll across the heath or through the woods, take a look in those damp, shady nooks, amongst the leaf litter, around the piles of rotting logs and you will be sure to find a sample of the range of weird and wonderful fungi found on Esher Commons.



The conspicuous Fly Agaric is a common 'toadstool' closely associated with Birch and Pine trees. This fungus is steeped in folklore and superstition due to its poisonous nature. In fact the common name is derived from the practice of using the fungus, steeped in milk, to bait and kill houseflies.

Winter

Winter in the Elmbridge countryside is often perceived as a cold, barren time of year when few plants flourish, animals hibernate and many bird species migrate south as food supplies dwindle. However, as many of Britain's birds fly south they are replaced by other species from Northern Europe. After all, compared with the arctic conditions of Scandinavia, the British winter is relatively mild. Look out for Redwings, Fieldfares and the less common Waxwing.

As winter begins to give way to spring, keep an eye out for the first signs of leaf burst and displays of early flowers on trees and in the undergrowth. In February the first male flowers of the Hazel can be seen as bright green, pollen laden catkins, or Lamb's Tails, dangling from leaf-bare twigs. If one peers a little closer the tiny scarlet inflorescence of the female flower may be seen amongst the stout green buds.

Countryside Code

The countryside provides a superb area for walking, horse riding, bird watching, jogging, dog walking and other outdoor recreational activities.

There are a number of car parks providing easy access to way marked signposted footpaths, bridleways and permissive horse rides. Statutory footpaths are marked with a yellow arrow; these are open to walkers only. The extensive network of permissive horse rides (mainly found on Esher Commons) is ideal for horse riders of all abilities; these rides are open to both walkers and riders.

Please follow the Elmbridge Countryside Code so everyone can enjoy this valuable green space.



Horse riders

Always keep to the way marked rides and be mindful of people walking in the countryside.

Cycling

Please keep to the way marked trail at all times. Most of this trail is shared with permissive horse rides. Please give way to walkers and horse riders on these tracks.

Ride slowly and with caution, this is a cross-country trail with sharp corners and uneven ground.

Dog owners

By law, you are required to keep your dog under close control at all times and prevent it from disturbing wildlife and sensitive habitats such as ponds and nesting areas.

Everyone knows how unpleasant dog mess is and it can cause serious illness, so always clean up after your dog and dispose of the mess responsibly.

Litter

Litter and leftover food doesn't just spoil the beauty of the countryside, it can be dangerous to wildlife and can spread disease. So take your litter home with you, remember dropping litter, dumping rubbish and fly tipping are criminal offences.

Fire

Fires can be as devastating to wildlife and habitats as they are to people and property – so be careful not to drop a match or a smouldering cigarette at any time of the year.

Plants, animals and fungi

Discover the beauty of the natural environment and take special care not to damage, destroy or remove anything from the Elmbridge countryside.

Remember it is an offence to pick flowers or disturb wildlife. Please protect the environment and leave it for others to enjoy.



Other projects and contacts

Elmbridge Countryside Volunteers

Local volunteers meet for practical conservation tasks on the last Wednesday of every month.

Link Up with Nature

Curriculum based environmental education lessons, led by a member of the Countryside Team on a countryside site.

Walking in Elmbridge

Elmbridge is lucky to have a wide range of open spaces for walkers to enjoy. If you want to enjoy walks around the Borough but would prefer to join in a sociable atmosphere, Leisure and Cultural Services provide three great schemes that are free, open to everyone, and give you a chance to see some of the best countryside Elmbridge has to offer!

- Guided Walks
- Healthy Walks
- Family Walks (Elmbridge Explorers)

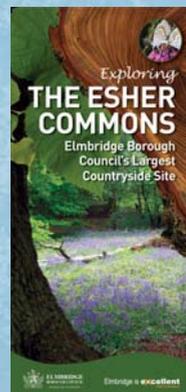
To contact the Countryside Team about any of these projects please call 01372 474582 or email countryside@elmbridge.gov.uk or visit www.elmbridge.gov.uk/countryside



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Esher Commons – Elmbridge Borough Council's largest countryside site

The Esher Commons is the largest area within the Elmbridge countryside. It covers 360 hectares and is valued so highly that, in 1954, the Government designated it as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on account of its wildlife value. It also provides a valuable green space for the local community.



If you would like to find out more about the Esher Commons SSSI, the best places to visit and how to access them, then get your copy of 'Exploring The Esher Commons'. Either log onto www.elmbridge.gov.uk/countryside or call the Countryside Team on 01372 474582 to be sent one in the post. The leaflet will explain the history of the Commons, giving you a fascinating insight into why the

Commons look the way they do today, what they were used for during the war and the types of animals and plant life that make the Esher Commons their home.

Countryside Newsletter

The Countryside Newsletter is produced three times a year and will keep you informed of all matters relating to the Elmbridge countryside.

If you would like to receive the newsletter direct to your home, either by email or by post, log on to the website and complete the on-line form or contact the Countryside Team.



We can also provide this document in large print, on tape, in Braille and in the languages shown below. Please contact us on 01372 474582 or email countryside@elmbridge.gov.uk for more information.

For people whose first language is not English, we will endeavour to provide this leaflet in a way which you can understand.

আপনি যদি নিজের ভাষায়, বড় হরফে, টেপ বা ব্রেইলে আরও তথ্য জানতে চান তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করবেন। এই কাগজে আমাদের ঠিকানা ও টেলিফোন নম্বর দেওয়া আছে।

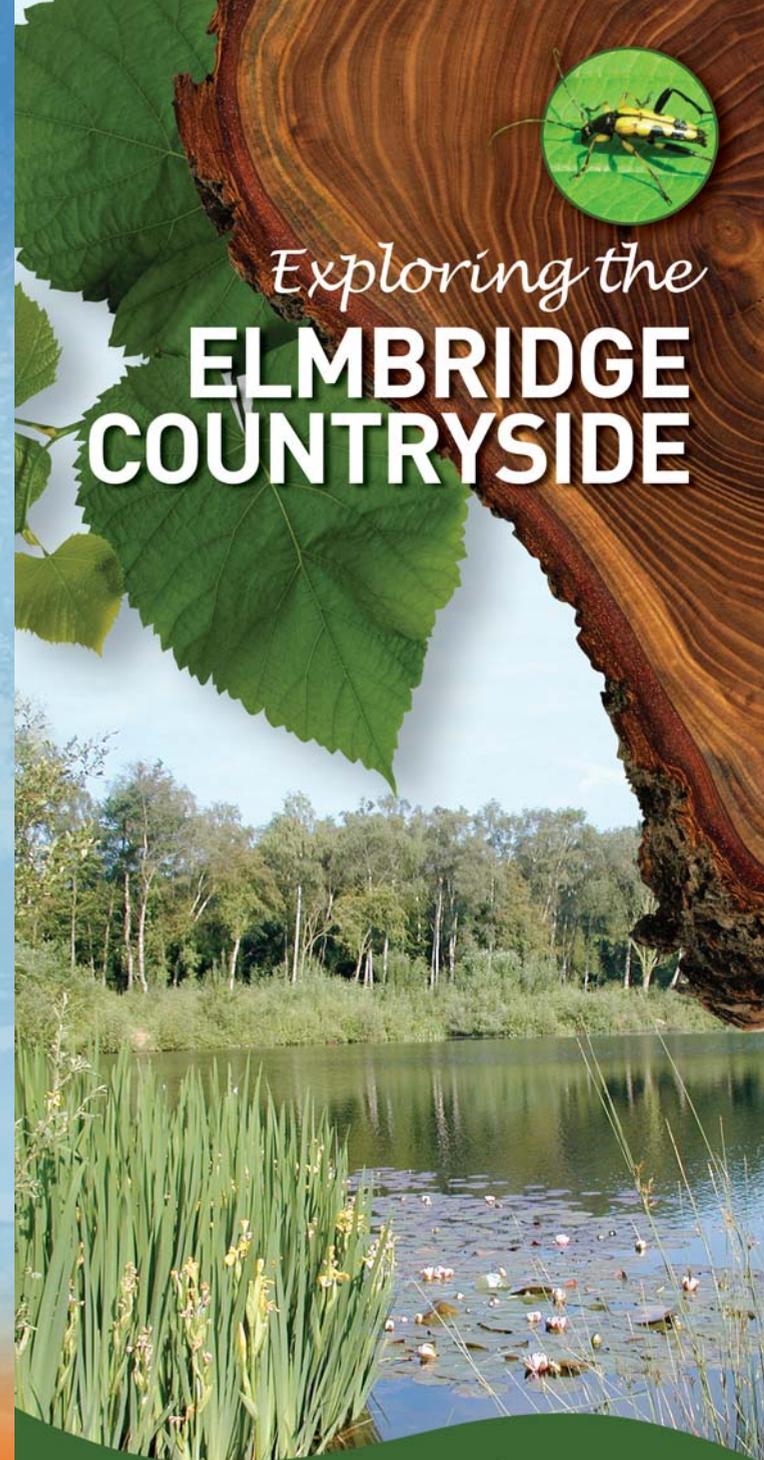
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Se desiderate ulteriori informazioni nella vostra lingua, a caratteri grandi, su cassetta, o in Braille, siete pregati di contattarci all'indirizzo o al numero di telefono indicati sul presente documento.

اگر آپ کو مزید معلومات اپنی زبان میں، بڑے حروفوں میں، یا آواز کی صورت میں ٹیپ پر یا بریل میں درکار ہیں تو اس دستاویز میں دئیے گئے پتے یا ٹیلی فون نمبر پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

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nationalgrid National Grid owns the high-voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales, which includes some 7,200 miles of overhead lines and 340 substations, and also operates the system across Great Britain. It has supported a number of nature conservation initiatives, including working with Elmbridge Borough Council's Leisure and Cultural Services Countryside Team to protect and extend the heathland habitat that exists beneath the transmission line that crosses the Elmbridge Commons.



Exploring the ELMBRIDGE COUNTRYSIDE