

Kendal Park, Hullbridge, report on visit 26th August 2026, by John Attiwell MSc,
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Hullbridge's Kendal Park sits on the South bank of the River Crouch. South Woodham Ferrers lies across the river to the North. The site is well used by dog walkers and other visitors, with very heavy footfall along its Leigh cockleshell paths, with benches positioned close to the river offering views across its gentle green ripples, to the open country around South Woodham Ferrers to the North. It is a beautiful spot.

By way of a standard disclaimer; what follows is based on my experience of a single site visit, late in a hot summer, and may not be representative of the site year round. It is also not a substitute for the services of a Professional chartered Ecologist, and any advice should be taken in the spirit intended, that of friendly, informal suggestions.

Most of the area is woodland and is maintained on a minimal intervention basis by the council's own team of land managers. Trees close to footpaths are routinely inspected for tree safety, and managed in accordance with tree safety reports, deadwood removed and Ivy managed to prevent obscuring dangerous deadwood. Ivy is retained where it is does not present an issue for tree safety, and I would urge this to continue, as Ivy is a fabulously useful plant to migratory butterflies and hoverflies, and a unique solitary bee, providing these with nectar and pollen, as well as providing nesting opportunities for birds- scarce in young woodlands- and winter berries.

Where possible, council staff retain felled material on site, leaving long stumps and creating abundant habitat log piles. Where felled material cannot be retained on site, it is sometimes chipped and used locally. This is excellent practice and should encourage a range of wildlife including saproxylic longhorn beetles, which are important pollinators.

The Western end of the site, where footfall is much lower, is largely left to wildlife and as such hosts badgers and muntjac. The woodland is thick, but young, and nest boxes have been installed, the work of local residents, for both owls and hole-nesting passerines, to replicate the tree holes which would be present in older woods. This is good practice, nest hole availability can be limiting for small passerine populations.

At the heart of the site lies a meadow area which on the day of our visit was well past its seasonal splendour, but which was covered in Knapweed, some (but not an excess of) Creeping Thistle, grasses and other species, attended by Common Blue and Small White Butterflies. More thorough exploration would likely reveal more species. A barn owl box here is thought to be occasionally occupied, possibly by a breeding pair, which

is most exciting. The open grassland is hunting habitat for owls, in addition to being a vital resource for pollinators. I recommend maintaining this area as open grassland. A small seeded oak and several suckering blackthorn have developed here- I would recommend an isolated departure from minimal intervention here, as suggest these are removed to conserve the mosaic habitat. There are wide paths mown through the meadow, reassuring visitors of the intentionality of the sometimes-scruffy look a meadow always has early and late in the season, and offering excellent opportunities to look for wildlife and enjoy the butterflies.

In this area stands a lovely, green-roofed bug hotel built by local Beaver Scouts, a fabulous example of community engagement. Holes of various sized drilled into its logs provide some habitat for solitary bees, though the north-facing aspect is perhaps less than ideal for them. Perhaps more holes could be created in other log piles with a sunnier aspect? The grassy area near the site's Eastern entrance could be a suitable site for further bee hotels, subject to an assessment of the risk of antisocial behaviour and vandalism.

Ongoing work by the EA/County Council (?) is taking place at one spot close to the sea wall, to improve these sea defences, leaving a gap in the trees and a cordoned off, somewhat damaged area. Residents have reportedly asked for a viewing platform to be installed there; council employees are keen to replant with saplings. I wonder if a third option- retaining it as a further area of open grassland, perhaps leaving the seed bank present in the soil to decide what wildflower and grass species grow there, might be considered, thus effectively creating a second mini-meadow to complement the first. This of course needs to consider the views of the community and council capacity for management.

The site also hosts an attractive pond, recently renewed with fresh safety fencing and a pond-dipping platform. On the day of my visit it was attended by Ruddy Darter Dragonfly (*Sympetrum sanguineum*) and Willow Emerald Damselfly (*Chalcolestes viridis*), with Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*) and Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*) both present in the wider woodland. The pond is currently host to a large number of Goldfish (*Carassius auratus*) which is not ideal from a wildlife point of view, they feed on many of the interesting insect larvae present, and are also widely considered incompatible with Great Crested Newts. Despite this, council colleagues report Grass Snakes and newts of unidentified species are still using the pond regularly. Any efforts to remove the fish would likely need the backing of the local community, as such measures can be highly controversial, and as they are effectively in a closed system, allowing them to persist, at least until discovered by the local herons, may be the path of least resistance.

The park already shows signs of being well used and loved by the community, with a

local resident donating nest boxes, which have been installed throughout. This may provide a sound foundation for recruiting volunteers to assist with its management.

The park would provide fantastic opportunities for engagement with wildlife, it hosts its own ecosystem, it has some key local species of dragonfly and damselfly, and the river provides additional interest even when the invertebrates of the site are in dormant life stages and the leaves have fallen, with views of the wading birds on the mudflats. The site would also lend itself well to hosting some form of wildlife engagement event, such as a bioblitz, in which we welcome members of the public, enthusiasts and curious wildlife professionals to come and gather as much data as we can. This may lead to further recruitment opportunities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jane, Nicola, Brett and Jake, for showing me around the site, and to congratulate them on their excellent, and very informed efforts to retain this lovely piece of riverside green space, and secondary woodland. I appreciate I have not been able to offer much in the way of management advice, and in my view this is because you are already doing most of the things I would suggest. Discussion of an Autumn engagement event will be discussed in email separately.