

LMH Gardens

A BIO-DIVERSITY TOUR

*“If you have a garden
and a library, you have
everything you need.”*

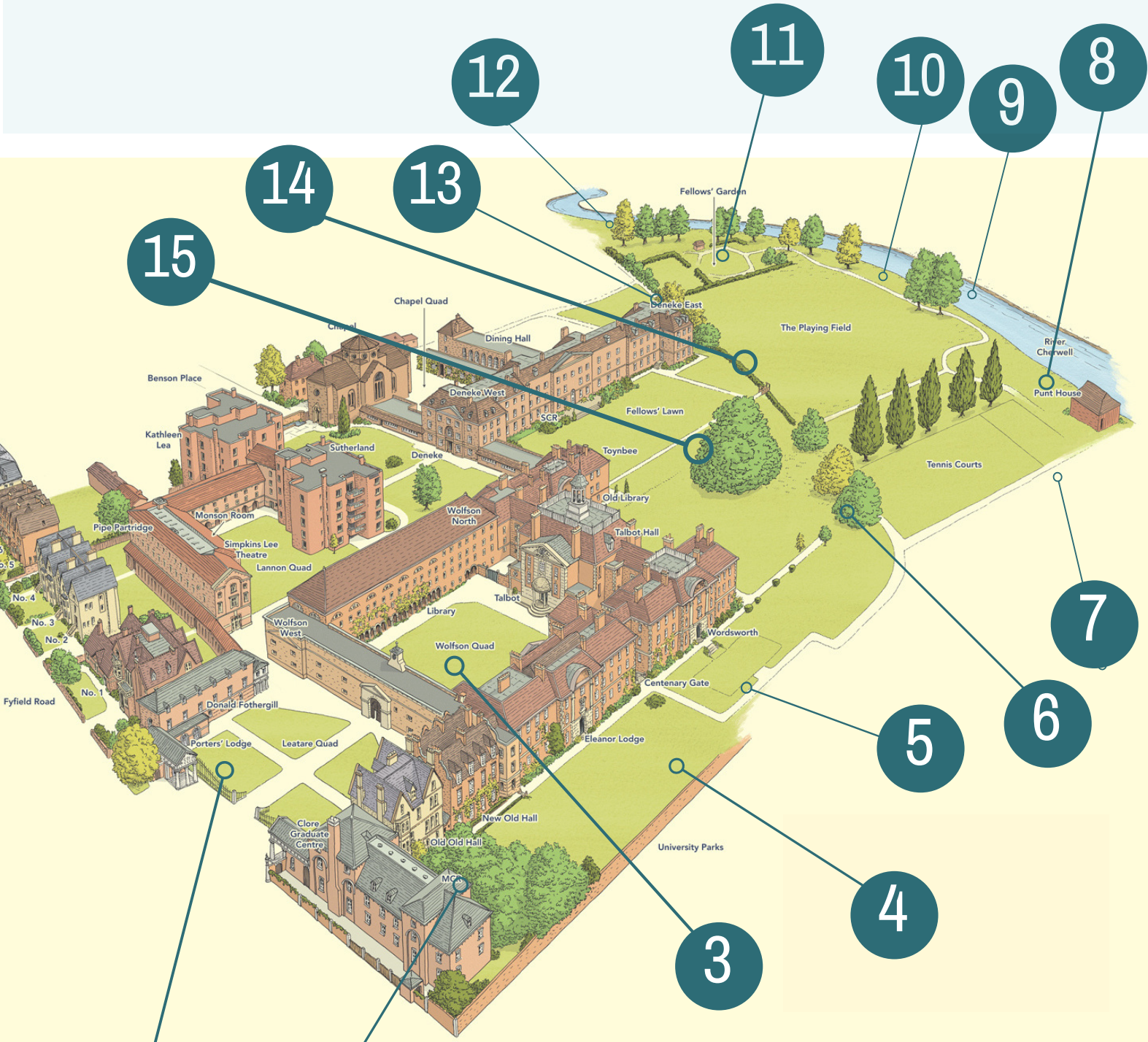
- Cicero



LMH

Lady Margaret Hall

LMH COLLEGE MAP



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Our gardens are carefully managed to promote biodiversity and provide a welcoming home to resident wildlife. Read on to learn about the plants and animals you can find at each of the numbered locations

LMH: A BIODIVERSITY TOUR

1 Leatare Quad

This is the newest part of the college, opened in May 2017. It retains original Limes, now complimented with newly-planted Tulip trees, which will balance up the space as they grow. Often, a noisy troupe of **Jackdaws** can be heard in the tops of the Lime trees.



2 Behind Old Old Hall and New Old Hall

This is the oldest and most established part of the grounds, where the back gardens of the original Victorian villas would have been. Here we have some wonderful mature trees, including Beech, Lime, Birch, Ash and Norway Maple, as well as a rather venerable Mulberry that likes to grow along the ground. Next to the buildings we have some lovely

Magnolias, including an impressive evergreen

Magnolia Grandiflora. In the spring, much of

the area beneath the trees has a cheering

display - starting with snowdrops,

then wild daffodils, chionodoxa and

bluebells. Early morning or dusk is a

good time to spot a **Fox**, trotting

through the back of this area.





3 Wolfson Quad

Here we cultivate an annual 'wild flower meadow' which gives a great display from late May through to early October, if conditions are good. Not only is this a colourful and unusual use of a college quad, but also a much needed source of sustenance for any pollinating insect.



4 Japanese Big Leaved Magnolia and *Metasequoia* (Dawn Redwood)

Coming back through the Centenary Gate and down the steps we have a couple of interesting specimen trees. Firstly, on the right of the gravel path going south is the Big Leaved Magnolia. The leaves, as you might expect, are huge - but so are the impressive creamy white flowers, which are tucked



up in large, furry buds all winter. Further along is the 'Tolkienesque' *Metasequoia* tree, which looks as if it would fit in nicely outside the home of any Hobbit!



5 Grass Garden and Tolkien Pots

The Sunken Grass Garden looks its best in September and October, when the **grasses** are nearly 2m high and a vibrant golden colour. We have learned, through the discovery of their abandoned nests during our autumnal clearing, that this area is home to the Harvest Mouse, unusual in most garden settings.

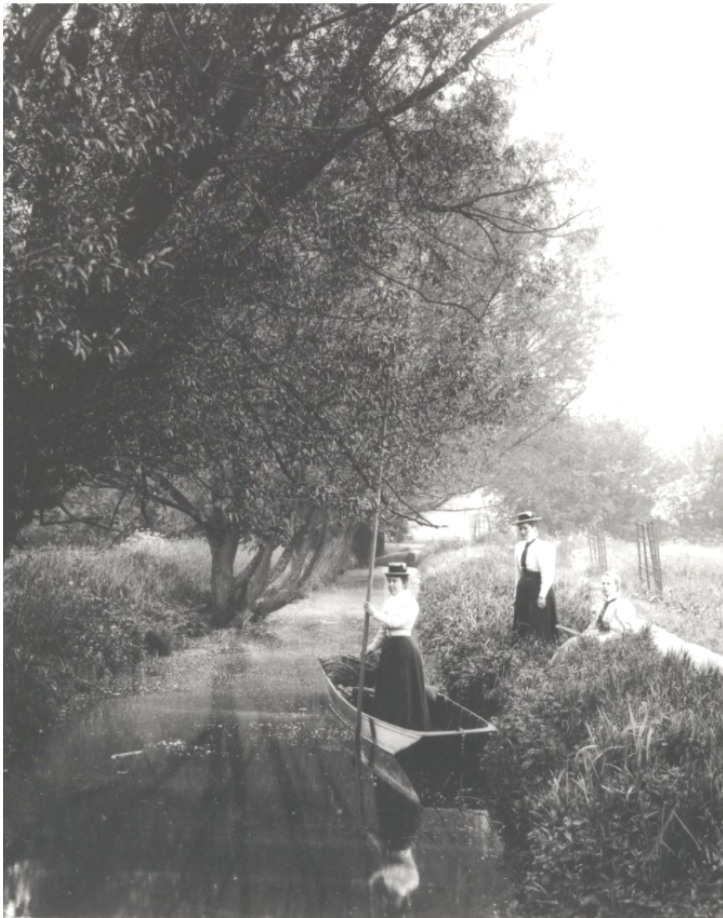
The large brown pots were donated to Lady Margaret Hall by Priscilla Tolkien, daughter of *Lord of the Rings* author J.R.R Tolkien.

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6 Blue Cedar Tree and Iris Murdoch bench

To the east of the Grass Garden we have a large Blue Cedar tree which often plays host to one of our smallest native birds, the **Goldcrest**. If you stand or sit under this tree you may first hear their high, soft, peeping calls, then spot one or two busily working their way among the branches, searching for insects. Continuing east toward the wooden bridge, there is a circular bench surrounding a Ginkgo tree. On this bench is an inscription dedicated to the writer Iris Murdoch, who loved these gardens.



7 Punting Arm and Boathouse

Crossing the bridge and turning right past the top of the tennis courts leads to the Punting Arm, a body of water that links our garden drainage ditch to the River Cherwell, and is used to moor up boats and punts. We have a picture in the College Archives of some Edwardian Ladies punting, taken just along this stretch of water. If you

are lucky here, you may catch a flash of blue, as a Kingfisher dashes away towards the river. At the corner by the Boathouse, turn left to follow the river towards our riverside woodland area.

8 'The Eye of The Lord'

Here the raised gravel path curves around what used to be a pond, and is known as 'The Eye of The Lord'. Canada geese and Mallard ducks love to rest up on the bank here as the riverbank is shallow, making access to the water easy. Looking back towards the tennis courts,



there is an interesting hole in the bank which may have been made by a fox or a badger.



9 River Wildlife

The Cherwell provides ample opportunities to spot riverside wildlife. Herons can often be seen along

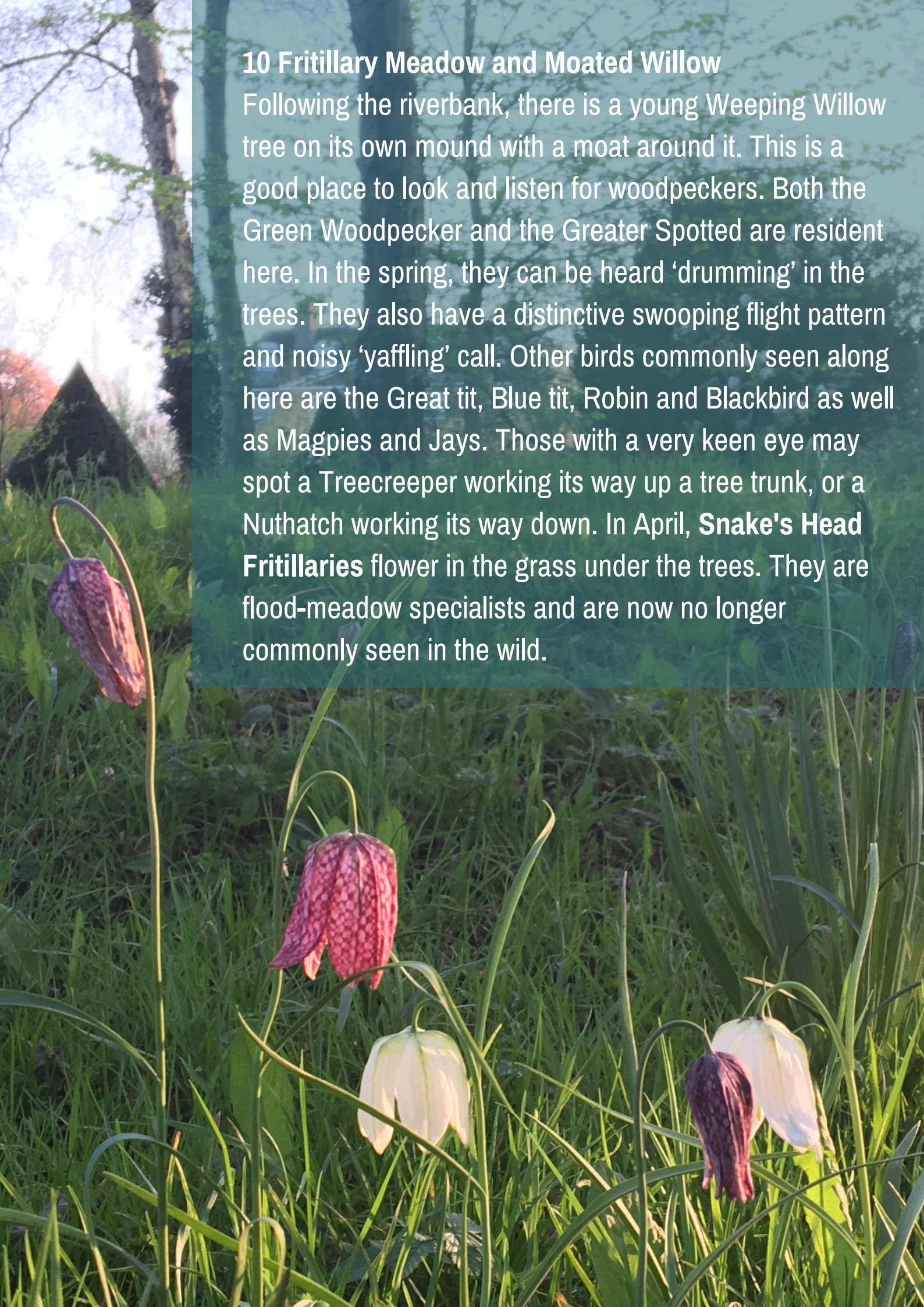
this stretch as well as Mute Swans, Canada Geese and Mallard Ducks. In winter, they are joined by the **Goosander**, a very handsome, shy duck that dives to catch fish. We know that our banks are visited by the **Otter**, as we see the spraint that it leaves to mark territory and sometimes the remains of its meals of fish and crayfish. Thirty years ago the Otter was extinct in Oxfordshire and much of South East England, so it is great news to see it back again. Interestingly, we have also spotted the occasional Mink around, previously not thought to occur where Otter are present.

They tend to keep a low profile, as the Otter is bigger and stronger, and does not take kindly to finding Mink on its patch!



10 Fritillary Meadow and Moated Willow

Following the riverbank, there is a young Weeping Willow tree on its own mound with a moat around it. This is a good place to look and listen for woodpeckers. Both the Green Woodpecker and the Greater Spotted are resident here. In the spring, they can be heard 'drumming' in the trees. They also have a distinctive swooping flight pattern and noisy 'yaffling' call. Other birds commonly seen along here are the Great tit, Blue tit, Robin and Blackbird as well as Magpies and Jays. Those with a very keen eye may spot a Treecreeper working its way up a tree trunk, or a Nuthatch working its way down. In April, **Snake's Head Fritillaries** flower in the grass under the trees. They are flood-meadow specialists and are now no longer commonly seen in the wild.



11 Fellows' Garden and Summerhouse

Here we have a more formal area enclosed with hedges of clipped **Beech** and **Yew**, giving the place a hidden, 'Alice in Wonderland' feel. The clean lines of the evergreens and the white stems of the Himalayan Silver Birch look particularly good in winter, but in spring the ornamental Japanese **Cherry** trees burst into spectacular blossom.



Early in the morning, or as dusk draws in, a Muntjac or Roe Deer may be spotted wandering through. The Summerhouse is a quirky place, decorated with various objects all found around the LMH grounds over many years. Behind this we have woodland, which has a carpet of Snowdrops in spring, followed by Narcissi and a few blue and white Wood Anemones, plus a scattering of the Snake's Head Fritillaries. By May, the Cow Parsley is waist high, transforming the area with its frothy white flowers.

12 Heaps, Log piles, Wildlife Hut and Greenhouse

As you make your way towards the greenhouse, you will notice various heaps of vegetation. One of these is our main compost heap, where we create usable compost in a one-year cycle. The others are long-term permanent heaps, where we put material that is too woody to break down in one year. We allow this to decompose slowly, creating a great wildlife habitat for small mammals, such as Wood Mice and Bank Voles. Toads, frogs, grass-snakes, fungi and insects benefit from the piles of logs here, which provide a great food source for the larvae of the **Stag Beetle**, which can take 3 years to mature. Adjacent to the greenhouse is the Wildlife Hut, which is open during working hours. Here we have a note-book that anyone may contribute to, where we log interesting wildlife sightings. On the notice board are lists of the various fauna we have seen, including our bird list of over 50 different species. We also have a collection of 'Nature Treasures,' such as old snake's egg cases, bird and mouse nests and samples of Otter spraint to look at.



13 Potager for the Garden Club

Following the wide gravel path back towards the Hockey Pitch, to the left is an area of raised beds that has been restored for the benefit of the Garden Club, run by the students, where they can grow edibles such as herbs and salads. These crops sometimes have to be protected from wildlife!

14 Drainage Ditch and Hockey Field

Continuing along the gravel road, the Drainage Ditch is on the right, separating our more formal gardens from the more naturalistic areas. The Ditch is managed to remain wet all year round, by leaving logs to act as dams and allowing planting to grow into it. This then means it can provide the benefits of a pond habitat, which encourages **frogs** and makes a good place for dragonflies to breed.



Beyond the Ditch is the Hockey Field, which provides a great place for students to enjoy an informal 'kick-about', although it is still very much a flood meadow, which Canada and Greylag Geese enjoy grazing on. The Mistle Thrush and Green Woodpecker can often be seen on the field, searching for grubs and worms, and they are joined in the winter by Redwings and Fieldfare. Around the edge of the field, we have reduced the mowing, so we now have large areas of rough grass. This is great for insects such as the Meadow Brown butterfly, and small mammals, in particular the Vole, which is an important food source for Kestrels and Owls.

15 Specimen Trees, Lawns, Borders and a 'Secret Path'

Cross another wooden bridge over the Ditch, and you are back in the more formal area of the garden. Neat gravel paths go past lawns with a number of specimen trees such as the Handkerchief Tree outside Deneke East, the large Copper Beech, and its more unusual cousin, the **Cut Leaf Beech**. The trees and the area underneath them are a great wildlife habitat. The mature Beeches are a haven for squirrels and many birds, including the Long Tailed Tit, which travels around in family groups of around a dozen or so. On more than one occasion, the local honey bees have used The Copper Beech to rest in whilst swarming, before buzzing off to pastures new. In the borders we grow flowers that are both pollinator friendly and stand well into winter, providing seed for birds. There is an area of rough grass and old fruit trees known as 'The Orchard' between the Beeches and the Iris Murdoch bench, and we mow a 'secret pathway' through here, a favourite haunt of Blackbird, Songthrush, Robin and Great Tit. However, if these tuneful birds go suddenly quiet, it could mean that a Sparrowhawk is about ...



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