
SEND NATURE TRAILS

INVASIVE SPECIES

None of these really belongs in the area, but they have fulfilled the criteria to qualify as invasive species: they arrived, they survived then they thrived!

PARAKEETS

Parakeets can be found in the area. They are native to Africa and southern Asia but have escaped into the wild and bred very successfully. Listen for their screeching then look for their bright green plumage. Apparently a colony of about 7000 thousand roosts at Esher rugby ground.

GREY SQUIRREL

Grey squirrel, a native of North America but introduced to Great Britain in the mid-19th century, began to increase dramatically at the beginning of this century, mainly spreading from Woburn Park, Bedfordshire. This species is blamed, perhaps not completely accurately, for the fall in red squirrel numbers in the UK. The grey squirrel loves deciduous woodland and eats hazelnuts, acorns, beech mast, tree bark, fungi, buds, leaves, shoots and flowers. It will also raid birds' nests for eggs and young. If you put out food for the birds, squirrels will often find a way to steal it first. They mostly live between 3 and 4 years, although 10 years in the wild is not impossible.

AMERICAN SIGNAL CRAYFISH

This species, which resembles lobster, brings with it a plague which destroys native crayfish. The new variety thrives in the Wey navigation. They are scavengers so although they are meant to be edible, eating them is not recommended.

POND WEED

Pond weed is a particular problem at the Heath Field. In common with lots of Guildford Borough's waterways, it has been invaded by the New Zealand Pigmyweed: *Crassula helmsii*. The pond area has been scraped out twice now in an attempt to control it, and the whole area was sprayed with weed killer. It only takes the smallest piece of plant life to re-establish and colonize the damp areas.

HIMALAYAN BALSAM

With its large pink flowers and seed pods that explode and scatter seeds far and wide, these plants are fascinating for children. If you don't have it invading your own garden, you can see it along the banks of the Wey together with the American variety which has smaller orange flowers.