

Where to see wildlife in Stroud.

Much of Stroud's wildlife can be seen from our network of public footpaths (green dashed lines) and public roads shown on this map. The parish boundary is shown in red. Try the following suggestions.

1. East from the school. Follow the footpath from the school eastwards and behind New Buildings Farm and on towards the A3 Petersfield bypass from where it is safest to turn north alongside the A3 up to the A272/A3 roundabout. Given luck you can see our birds of prey: red kite, buzzard and kestrel. Look out also for roe deer or at least their footprints and brown hare. Red kites seem to be commonest at the Petersfield end.

2. Stroud village green. From the kissing gate by the bus stop on the Winchester Road (opposite Finchmead Lane), enter the triangular shaped Stroud village green. The village green is the last open access part of the original Stroud Common and is rich in wildlife. Kestrels often hover in search of voles and barn owls can sometimes be seen at dusk. Parts are rich in wildflowers during the summer supporting a wide range of butterflies (look out for small copper and marbled white butterflies). The village green is privately owned but we have the legal right for quiet recreation. As this is a public open space, please pick up if you have a dog. Continue west along the footpath and then south down Rothercombe Lane and you reach the Seven Stars public house for some refreshment (unless closed during the Coronavirus restrictions).

3. Furzefield Copse. From just north of Stroudbridge Farm on Ramsdean Road, take the path east to Furzefield Copse. The path takes you through ancient woodland and many spring flowering woodland plants can be seen alongside the path. The woodland is privately owned and so please stick to the path. At the time of writing (November 2020) there are extensive forestry works removing diseased ash trees, so take special care on the footpath. The path leads on northwest towards New Buildings Farm where you can return to Ramsdean Road at the School.

If you wish to travel further and visit different wildlife habitats, try taking the paths northwards up onto the wooded slopes of the North Downs chalk escarpment. You could take the paths south towards Butser Hill and South Downs to find flowery chalk grasslands, or west through Mustercombe Copse to the Hampshire Downs. If you pass east through Petersfield you can reach Petersfield Heath rich in heathland plants (look especially for the large wasp spider on rushes) and also the adjacent Heath Pond that supports many waterbirds. The Fat Duck here serves light snacks, coffee/tea and cakes and you can even hire a boat to take out onto the water.

Ron Allen 26 November 2020.