

Nature

From tundra to marshes, ancient dense forests and a favourite Tudor hunting ground, Enfield's landscape evolved over many thousands of years before it came to look as it does today.

Throughout its history the borough has been home to many, now lost species. Frozen lands covered in ice and snow gave way to forests and marshes before humans began having a more active role in changing the landscape of what we now know as Enfield. Some staples of the borough were formed long ago, such as the River Lea, the history of which stretches back at least half a million years ago.

During the 16th century Enfield became a favourite borough for royal hunting, with Enfield Chase providing employment to the people. In the 17th century rivers in Enfield played a key role in delivering clean water to London's swelling population. A 40-mile canal was built between Ware and Hertfordshire through Enfield and into North London; this was called the New River which ends in the Borough of Islington.

In 1947 the Green Belt was developed to balance green space with the rapid spread of urbanisation around London. Today, Enfield can boast over 900 hectares of green space, making it one of the top five London boroughs when it comes to green space. Enfield can boast a breadth of diverse ecosystems living in our farmlands, meadows, parks, rivers and lakes. A 2017 survey found 12 species of bat on the Forty Hall estate including sightings of Brandt's Bat (*Myotis Brandtii*) – a rare species in London!

Jackdaw (back left)

These are intelligent, sociable birds that can be seen throughout Enfield in parks, woodland, and around historic buildings. They are one of the few bird species known to form long-lasting pair bonds, often staying with the same mate for life. Unlike many crows, they nest in cavities such as hollow trees, church towers, or chimneys, where they build bulky nests of sticks before lining them with softer materials to protect their eggs and chicks.

Bc1278

Carrion Crow Egg (front centre)

Carrion crows nest throughout Enfield's parks, woodlands, and countryside. The female usually lays 3 to 5 pale blue-green eggs, marked with brown or olive blotches that help camouflage them. She incubates the eggs for around 18 to 20 days, while the male gathers food and guards the nest. Once the chicks hatch, both parents work together to feed and protect their young until they are ready to leave the nest.

Bc851

Razorbill Egg (front right)

Razorbills lay just one egg each year. The egg can be white, cream, or pale blue with dark spots and swirls, making every one unique! Both parents take turns keeping the egg warm on narrow seaside cliffs, where there is no nest at all. They choose safe rocky ledges to protect their egg from predators and raise their chick together.

Bc880

Red Backed Shrike (front left)

The Red-Backed Shrike was once a summer visitor to the countryside around Enfield, but it is now very rare in Britain. Sometimes called the "butcher bird," it catches insects, mice, and lizards and stores them by spiking them on thorns or sharp branches to eat later. It builds a neat nest hidden in thorny bushes, where the female lays 4 to 6 eggs and both parents help to care for the chicks.

Bc1253

Red Backed Shrike egg (back right)

Red-Backed Shrikes lay 4 to 6 eggs in a neat nest hidden deep inside thorny bushes. Their eggs are usually pale cream, pink, or greenish white with brown speckles, helping them blend into the nest. Both parents look after the chicks once they hatch, bringing them lots of insects to eat so they can grow quickly.

Bc741

Watercolour, Pymmes Brook, early 20th century

Pymmes Brook, named after 14th century landowner William Pymme, is a tributary of the River Lea. It plays an important role in nature conservation and part of it has been deemed a Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation.

2007.15.1

Watercolour, River Lea at Tottenham, 1849

This watercolour depicts a portion of the River Lea. This is one of Enfield's ancient rivers, dating back thousands of years. It runs for 46 miles from Bedfordshire through Enfield before joining the River Thames.

Bc1659