

# Folkestone & Hythe birding and moths

## Site guide: Brockhill Country Park and Sandling Park

**Location:** Brockhill CP car park (Grid ref: TR 150359) is located just north west of Saltwood, heading towards Sandling Station. The turning is signposted and is adjacent to the school entrance. Or from M20 take junction 11 and follow signs for Saltwood. Arriving by train the park is c.0.5 mile walk from the station.

Car parking is pay and display, and costs £1 for the day on Sundays and Bank Holidays, and 50p at other times. The car park is open from 9:00 to 19:30, but the country park is open outside of these times (leave car in Saltwood Village and walk north).

**Facilities:** There is an excellent Café open every day between 10:30 and 17:30 from March to October and 10:30 to 16:30 in winter. There are also picnic tables and toilets on site, and a play-park for children.

**Access/route:** From the car park walk down the slope and follow the circular path around the lake. It is also worth exploring the stream that leads south towards Hythe. Disabled access is possible around the lake, although the slope down to it is fairly steep. From the Hythe end of the stream it is possible to take the footpath north to Pedlinge church, then east through Sandling Park back to the road, so creating a triangular route.

See below for a map of the country park.

**Birds:** The lake regularly holds Mallard and Moorhen, and has had Teal, Mandarin and Red-crested Pochard. Kingfisher are frequent. The trees around the lake hold Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Marsh Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Jay, Bullfinch, and in winter Siskin and Redpoll. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker has been seen occasionally. A total of 45 species have bred or held territory here - see list below.



Sandling Park in spring



Brockhill CP in winter

The stream running south has produced Black-bellied Dipper, Woodchat Shrike and Hawfinch, but Tawny Owl, Goldcrest, common warblers (in summer) and Redwing and Fieldfare (in winter) are more usual.

The walk through Sandling Park is likely to yield a similar range of species, but also offers the chance of Woodcock in winter, and Crossbills have been recorded.



Brockhill CP Lake

**Regular:** Mallard, Moorhen, Sparrowhawk, Kingfisher, Stock Dove, Tawny Owl, Green & Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Redwing and Fieldfare (in winter), common warblers (in summer), Goldcrest, Long-tailed, Marsh and Coal Tits, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Jay, Siskin and Redpoll (in winter), Bullfinch

**Possible:** Teal, Mandarin, Woodcock, Little Owl

**Rarities:** Red-crested Pochard, Buzzard, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Dipper, Woodchat Shrike, Crossbill, Hawfinch

**A total of 45 species have bred or held territory within Brockhill CP:**

- 1 Mandarin
- 2 Mallard
- 3 Sparrowhawk
- 4 Kestrel
- 5 Pheasant
- 6 Moorhen
- 7 Wood Pigeon
- 8 Collared Dove
- 9 Little Owl
- 10 Tawny Owl
- 11 Kingfisher
- 12 Green Woodpecker
- 13 Great Spotted Woodpecker
- 14 Grey Wagtail
- 15 Pied Wagtail
- 16 Wren
- 17 Dunnock
- 18 Robin
- 19 Blackbird
- 20 Song Thrush
- 21 Mistle Thrush
- 22 Lesser Whitethroat

**Further information:**

Brockhill Country Park is a SCNI (Site of Nature Conservation Interest) run by Kent County Council.

The area comprises a river valley with a deep ravine and more gentle slopes above it, cutting through the greensand ridges above Saltwood. The ravine is wooded with large unmanaged alder and ash, and mature oak along the stream and floodplain. Beach/oak high forest occurs on the drier ground of the ravine sides.

Above the ravine the slopes are semi-improved and unimproved sheep-grazed pasture with several wide marshy flushes emerging from a series of springs. Mature oak, ash, and walnut are scattered throughout the grassland areas. Small shaws and scrubby areas are present along the upper boundaries of the site.

The Country Park was formerly part of a large estate and has an ornamental lake with islands which is probably late Victorian. There are

- 23 Common Whitethroat
- 24 Garden Warbler
- 25 Blackcap
- 26 Chiffchaff
- 27 Willow Warbler
- 28 Goldcrest
- 29 Long-tailed Tit
- 30 Marsh Tit
- 31 Coal Tit
- 32 Blue Tit
- 33 Great Tit
- 34 Nuthatch
- 35 Treecreeper
- 36 Jay
- 37 Magpie
- 38 Jackdaw
- 39 Carrion Crow
- 40 Starling
- 41 Chaffinch
- 42 Greenfinch
- 43 Goldfinch
- 44 Linnet
- 45 Bullfinch

some relict exotic plantings in this area.

The ground flora along the more natural parts of the stream-sides and floodplain is dominated by native, damp-loving species. There is much golden saxifrage, moschatel, pendulous and remote sedge, with ladies smock and wavy bittercress.

A good variety of common woodland herbs occurs on the drier ground, with dog's mercury, yellow archangel, violet and primrose.

The pastures contain a variety of common grass and herb species. Anthills are present at the southern end of the site. The marshy flushes, some very wet, are dominated by hard rush, but many other damp-loving species occur.

An important feature of the site as a whole is the non-flowering plant flora which has developed in the sheltered, unpolluted valley. Ferns are common and include harts tongue fern, soft-shield fern, and polypody, which occur as an epiphyte along branches of oak in the ravine.

62 species of bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) include two of county importance. The lichen flora is particularly outstanding, with 84 species including 7 of county importance, and the site is rated as one of the best in Kent for this group. 122 species of fungi can also be found, including two bracket fungi of county importance.

Invertebrate fauna are also important, with the area being outstanding for diptera or true flies (276 species) and craneflies (67 species), and ranks second in the county for both these orders.

The shallow, fast-flowing water is highly aerated and very clean, and provides excellent habitat for freshwater invertebrates such as damselfly, mayfly, and stone fly nymphs, water shrimps and water scorpions.

Mammals found with the Country Park have included Badger, Fox, Stoat, Weasel, Mole, Wood Mouse, Field Vole, Common and Pygmy Shrews, Bank Vole, Brown Rat, Water Shrew, Grey Squirrel, and six species of bat: Daubenton's, Natterer's, Noctule, Serotine, and Common and Soprano Pipistrelles.

Map of Brockhill CP:

