



NATURE OF THE THAMES - FACT SHEET

A companion fact sheet for the *Nature of the Thames* mural from artist Vickie Amiralis.

Species	Population Status	Habitat Along the Thames	Interesting Fact 1	Interesting Fact 2
Mallard	Very common	Rivers, ponds, canals	Mallards can sleep with one eye open.	Their waterproof feathers stay dry because of special oils.
Ash Leaf	Declining in UK	Woodlands, riverbanks	Ash trees are threatened by ash dieback disease.	Ash wood is strong and flexible, often used for tool handles.
Bat	Common but protected	Bridges, trees and buildings. There is a known nursery roost in Henley.	Bats use echolocation to hunt insects and use the Henley reach to forage.	A tiny bat can eat thousands of insects in one night.
Great Crested Grebe	Stable	Lakes and slow rivers	Grebes perform elaborate courtship dances.	They carry chicks on their backs when swimming.
Coot	Common	Wetlands and rivers	Coots have giant feet for swimming.	They can be surprisingly aggressive to protect territory.

House Martin	Declining	Buildings near water	They build mud nests under roofs.	House martins migrate to Africa each winter.
Song Thrush	Declining	Gardens and hedgerows	They smash snails on stones called anvils.	Each bird repeats its song phrases several times.
Swift	Declining	Towns and riversides	Swifts spend most of their life flying.	They even sleep while gliding through the air.
Red Kite	Recovering	Open countryside	Red kites were once extinct in England.	Their forked tails help them steer while soaring.
Swan	Common	Rivers and lakes	Swans can live over 20 years.	Mute swans hiss loudly when threatened.
Canada Goose	Very common	Parks and riverbanks	They fly in V-shaped formations.	Their loud honking helps the flock stay together.
Weeping Willow	Common	River edges	Willow roots help stop erosion.	The bark once inspired ingredients used in aspirin.
Swallow	Common summer visitor	Meadows and waterways	Swallows migrate thousands of miles to Africa.	They catch insects while flying at high speed.
Common Reed Bunting	Stable	Reedbeds and marshes	Males sing from tall reeds.	Their nests are hidden low in thick vegetation.
Woodpecker	Common	Woodland and parks	Woodpeckers drum on trees to communicate.	Their tongues can be longer than their beaks.

Dolphin	Rare in estuary	Thames Estuary	Dolphins are occasionally spotted near the estuary.	They use clicks and whistles to communicate.
Seahorse	Rare and protected	Seagrass beds	Male seahorses carry the babies.	Seahorses can change colour to camouflage themselves.
Oysters	Recovering	Estuary mudflats	Oysters filter and clean water.	One oyster can filter many litres each day.
Avocet	Recovering	Mudflats and marshes	Avocets sweep their beaks to catch food.	They are the symbol of the RSPB.
Cormorant	Common	Rivers and estuaries	Cormorants dive underwater for fish.	They spread their wings to dry after swimming.
Fox	Very common	Parks and riverbanks	Foxes are skilled scavengers.	A fox's tail helps it balance and keep warm.
Marsh Marigold	Common	Wet meadows	Bright yellow flowers bloom in spring.	It is sometimes called "Kingcup."
Bulrush Reed	Common	Marshes and ponds	Bulrushes shelter birds and insects.	Their brown seed heads were once used as stuffing.
Ragged Robin	Declining	Damp grasslands	Its petals look torn or ragged.	It attracts butterflies and bees.
Cuckoo Pint / Lords & Ladies	Common	Woodland edges	Its berries are poisonous.	The flower gives off heat and scent to attract insects.

Bumble Bees	Common but threatened	Meadows and gardens	Bumblebees have five eyes.	Their sense of smell is 50 times more powerful than dogs.
Acorn / Oak	Very common	Woodland and parks	Oaks support hundreds of species.	Acorns are food for squirrels and jays.
Kingfisher	Stable	Clear rivers	Females and males look similar but females have an orangey-red mouth that looks like lipstick.	Their bright blue colour is caused by light reflection, not pigment.
Banded Demoiselle	Local but common	Clean streams	Their wings shimmer metallic colours.	Males defend small territories along rivers.
Carp	Common	Slow rivers and lakes	Carp have throat teeth that can crush hard shells like mussels.	They are the ancestors of both koi and goldfish.
Hazel Leaf	Common	Hedgerows and woods	Hazel trees produce hazelnuts.	Hazel rods were once used for weaving fences.
Dover Sole	Common in estuary	Sandy seabeds	Sole are flatfish with both eyes on one side.	They bury themselves in sand to hide.
Common Snout Hoverfly	Common	Flower-rich wetlands	Hoverflies are expert mimics that look like wasps or bees to scare off predators, but they are completely	They can hover almost perfectly still in the air.

			harmless with no sting.	
Heron	Common	Rivers and marshes	Hérons stand still to catch fish.	They swallow prey whole.
Sycamore Tree Leaf	Very common	Parks and riversides	Sycamore seeds spin like helicopters.	The tree grows quickly in many conditions.
Horse Chestnut / Conker	Common	Parks and avenues	Conkers are used in playground games.	They are poisonous to humans and horses.
Grey Squirrel	Very common	Parks and woods	Grey squirrels are "scatter hoarders" that can hide up to 10,000 nuts a year, using a sophisticated spatial memory to relocate them.	They can leap several metres between branches.
Purple Loosestrife	Common	Wetlands	Its bright, midsummer flowers attract bees and butterflies.	It is an invasive species that destroys native flower species.
Meadow Brown Butterfly	Common	Grasslands	Eye spots help scare predators.	Males and females have different wing patterns.
Hawthorn Tree Leaf	Very common	Hedgerows	Hawthorn blossom is called Mayflower.	Dense branches provide bird nesting sites.

Ant	Extremely common	Soil and grasslands	Ant colonies can contain thousands.	Ants communicate using scent trails.
Snake's-head Fritillary	Rare	Floodplain meadows	The petals have a chequered pattern.	It thrives in ancient wet meadows.
Mayfly	Seasonal	Clean rivers	Adult mayflies live only a few days.	Their larvae spend years underwater before emerging.
Alder Tree Leaf	Common near water	Riverbanks	Alder roots improve soil with nitrogen.	Alder wood resists rotting underwater.
Hornet	Local but common	Woodland and gardens	Hornets hunt pest insects.	Despite their size, they are usually not aggressive.
Tortoiseshell Butterfly	Common	Gardens and parks	They hibernate through winter.	Their wings have bright orange and blue markings.
Stag Beetle	Declining	Dead wood habitats	Males have antler-like jaws.	Their larvae live inside rotting wood for years.
Hedgehog	Declining	Gardens and hedgerows	Hedgehogs travel long distances at night.	They curl into a spiky ball when threatened.
Water Mint	Common	Damp river edges	Leaves smell strongly of mint.	Bees love its tiny purple flowers.
Trout	Common	Fast-flowing rivers	Trout are sensitive to pollution.	They can leap upstream over obstacles.

Helicopter Seed (Sycamore)	Very common	Parks and woods	The seed spins like a helicopter.	Spinning helps it travel further in the wind.
Water Lily	Common	Ponds and backwaters	Lily pads shelter fish and frogs.	Flowers open in sunlight and close at night.
Lime Tree Leaf	Common	Parks and streets	Lime flowers are loved by bees.	Some lime trees can live for hundreds of years.
Ladybird	Common	Gardens and meadows	Ladybirds eat aphids.	Their bright colours warn predators not to eat them.
Catkin	Common	Trees near rivers	Catkins provide early pollen for bees.	They sway in the wind to spread pollen.
Meadowsweet	Common	Damp meadows	Meadowsweet was used to flavour drinks.	Its flowers smell sweet like almonds.
Frog	Common	Ponds and wetlands	Frogs absorb water through their skin.	Frogspawn hatches into tadpoles.
Loddon Lily	Rare	Wet meadows	Also called the summer snowflake.	Its flowers look like tiny white bells.
Pike	Common	Slow rivers	Pike are ambush predators.	They can stay motionless before striking prey.
Yellow Iris	Common	Marshes and riverbanks	Roots help stabilise muddy banks.	Bright flowers attract insects in spring.
Rat	Very common	Riverbanks and cities	Rats are excellent swimmers.	They can squeeze through tiny gaps.

Perch	Common	Rivers and lakes	Perch have striped bodies.	Their sharp fins help protect them from predators.
Seal	Increasing sightings	Thames Estuary	Seals are now common in the estuary.	They can hold their breath underwater for many minutes.
Otter	Recovering	Clean rivers	Otters returned as water quality improved.	Their fur is one of the densest in the animal kingdom.
Water Vole	Declining	Grassy riverbanks	Water voles inspired "Ratty."	They dig burrows into riverbanks.
European Flounder	Common	Estuary mudflats	Flounders camouflage by changing colour.	Young flounders begin life swimming upright.
Salmon	Recovering	River migration routes	Salmon return to their birth river.	They leap waterfalls during migration.
Eel	Critically endangered	Rivers and estuaries	Eels migrate to the Sargasso Sea.	Young eels are transparent and called glass eels.
Glasswort	Common in saltmarsh	Estuary saltmarsh	Glasswort tastes naturally salty.	It can survive in salty coastal mud.
Tope Shark	Occasional visitor	Estuary waters	Tope sharks can grow over 2 metres long.	They feed mainly on fish and squid.

HOPE YOU LEARNT SOMETHING NEW.

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