CIRENCESTER WILDLIFE HIGHLIGHTS

1. St Johns Churchyard

Look up! Peregrine falcons have nested on the church-tower in the past, and you might just get lucky. A magnificent bird for a magnificent church.

2. Path past Open Air swimming pool

Look carefully into the fool's water cress and among the broken stonework along the channel alongside the lido and you stand a good chance of seeing the normally elusive water vole! Because they are used to people walking past them all day (most of whom never notice), this might be the best place in the county to see this rare mammal.

3. Riverside path near Barton lane

Kingfishers are often seen here, as well other waterbirds like moorhens and mallards. Mammals also love this area, as the footprints of badgers and otters under the Gloucester Street bridge testify. Look carefully along the hedgerow of the field opposite, and if you're lucky you may spot roe deer.

4. Abbey grounds

The Abbey Grounds lake hosts breeding mute swans and after dark, Daubenton's bats and otters are known to frequent it. The lake and ponds are also good for amphibians such as frogs, toads and newts. Mature trees in the park include London plane and copper beech.

5. Hare bushes

Enjoy magnificent oak, beech and yew trees. Listen and look out for woodland birds like nuthatch, green woodpeckers and great spotted woodpeckers. In autumn you may see interesting fungi, including the startling scarlet elf cup. You might also see roe deer and muntjac deer, or their footprints at least!

6. Kingshill Wildflower meadow and pond

This meadow area has lots to see from late spring and through summer. It is a limestone grassland, with wildflowers such as black knapweed, common spotted orchid and birds foot trefoil and many others. Their associated pollinators and grasshoppers make the meadow buzz with life. The pond hosts numerous dragonflies and damselflies, as well as newts and frogs.

7. Kingshill playing fields rough grassland area

Tread carefully here, and look out for the amazing bee orchids, which have evolved to trick bees into pollinating them by imitating them! Early summer is the best time to look out for them, and also for the brighter pyramidal orchid.

8. Victoria Road Meadow

The meadow here is developing and changing year by year. From spring to mid-summer you will see oxeye daisies, poppies, wild carrot, black knapweed, yellow rattle and yarrow, among many other species.

9. City Bank Local Nature Reserve

The river here hosts trout, bullheads, minnows and sticklebacks, and these attract kingfishers, otters and little egrets to City Bank. You may also see grey wagtails and, if you're very lucky, a dipper. Pipistrelle bats hunt insects at dusk, using the hedge-lines to navigate by. Look out for oxeye daisies, meadowsweet, knapweed and yellow rattle in the meadow.

10. City Bank Old Nursery

Follow the winding path through the hawthorn scrub here, and you can imagine yourself miles from human habitation! The thick scrub is great for nesting birds. Listen out in springtime for the beautiful repeated phrases of the song thrush. Also look out for marsh orchids in the grassland areas.

11. Bingham Hall on King Street

Between May and August, house martins can be seen nesting under the eaves

12. Querns Wood and Amphitheatre

Look out for woodland birds and butterflies, such as peacock and comma, at the woodland edge. In summer listen for the high pitched squeaking of mating

13. Chesterton cemetery

Listen out for the high-pitched song of the goldcrest, as they flit through the conifers at Chesterton cemetery

14. Wild Campus at the RAU

A European Regional Development Fund funded project, established in 2020 as a partnership between the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester College and Cirencester Deer Park School.

15. Cirencester Park

The trees planted along Broad Avenue are small-leaved lime trees and fighting shrews in the long grass around the amphitheatre.

Please note there may be a charge to enter the park through the main gates.