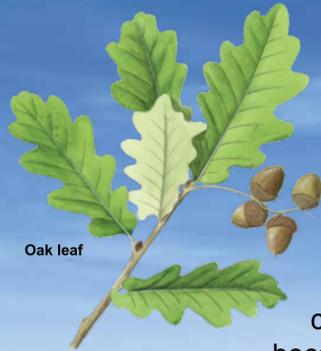


The Woodland Habitat



Oak leaf

Woodland around Leicester

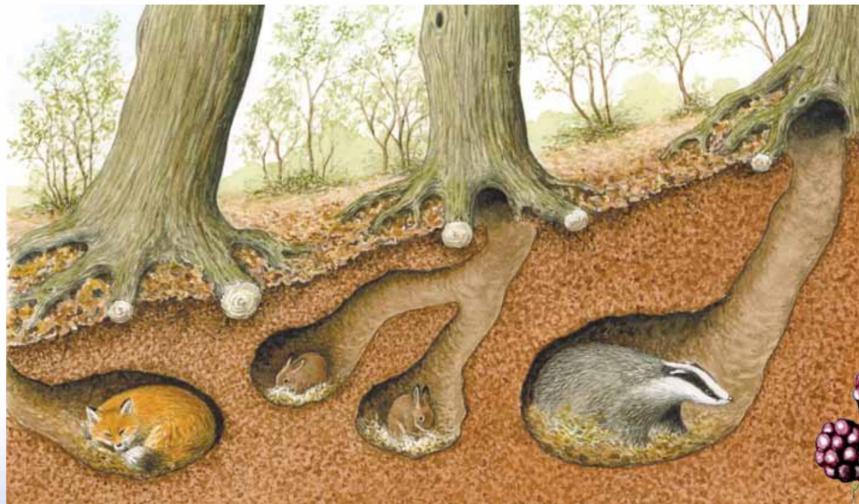
Woodlands and smaller plantation areas called Spinneys are quite rare in Leicester because many woodlands were cut down to make way for housing and industry when Leicester expanded in the nineteenth century.

Great spotted woodpecker



The woodlands vary in size and age structure. Many spinneys were planted in the last 25 years and have developed in and around our parks and contain young native trees of a similar age. Older woodlands have developed slowly over a period of up to 400 years. These woods were managed for timber and have a mix of trees from veterans to young saplings.

The larger woodlands are more important for wildlife because they have a mix of mature trees, open glades, ponds and plants. Highway Spinney, Meynells Gorse and Knighton Park Spinney are good examples of such areas.



Woodland Wildlife

Woodlands are rich in biodiversity and provide a habitat for a whole range of wildlife from birds and bats to spiders, aphids and worms as well as safe areas for our larger wildlife such as badgers and foxes to lie-up in or rear their young.

Ink caps



Woodlands provide a dark, damp and sheltered environment compared with open countryside. Within a woodland are a vast range of microhabitats, each offering slightly different mini-environments and living conditions and each one more suitable for some species than others.

Up in the top of the leafy canopy, conditions in summer are relatively exposed to the wind, sun and rain compared with the woodland floor - and that will be reflected in the different species of animals that live there. Even on something like a tree trunk, one side will tend to be darker and damper than the other and the invertebrates, mosses and lichens living there may change according to conditions.

Woodland habitat does not stop at ground level - underground is a whole different world where the wildlife battle it out to survive.



Ash

Woodlands have daily and annual cycles. They also change over longer timescales as trees die or are blown over or felled and replaced by natural regeneration or planting.

Windblown plots or new planting offer open habitats to wildlife, but as the saplings grow upwards and outwards, the tree branches interlock to cut out the light and the ground flora then diminishes. Later on they are thinned out and the best trees are left to grow on into the maturing stands and the plants on the forest floor reappear as more sunlight filters through. When the mature trees are felled or topple, the forest cycle starts all over again.



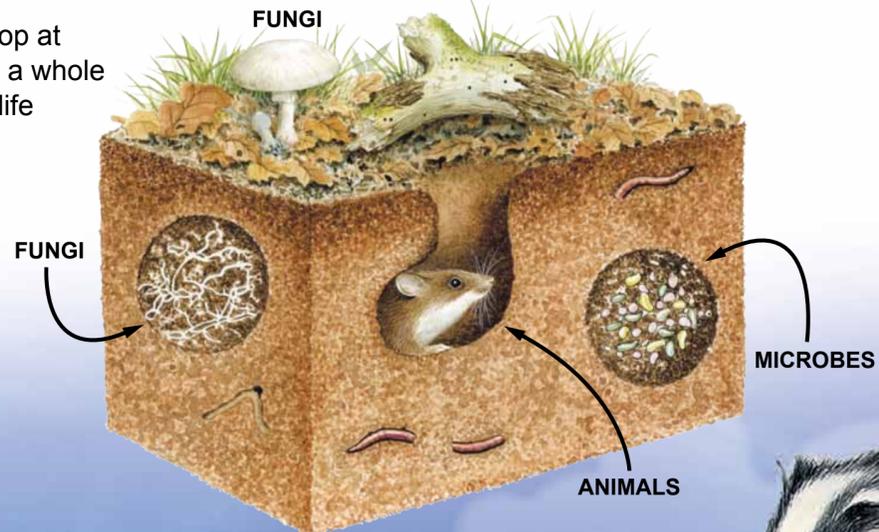
Chaffinch



Grey squirrel



Bluebells



Blackberry



Speckled wood

Badger