

## Photographing oaks and their inhabitants

By Ann Healey

Richmond Park is one of the best places in the UK to see and photograph veteran and ancient trees, with about 1,200 to choose from. Most are English oaks, each home to an incredible number – around 500 – different species of fungi, insects, bats, birds, and lichen.

Whether using a DSLR, a compact camera, or the camera in a mobile phone, the basic choices involved in photographing trees and their inhabitants are the

same. However, I never decide before a visit what I am going to photograph and in this way can be open to the unexpected!



To help compose an interesting landscape image, like a painter, I use a viewfinder cut to the shape of the photo that I want to take. I also seek to find a pattern or shape in the randomness of the scene and to decide where the focal point will be (this is the area to which the viewer's eye is drawn, pulling them into the image). My viewfinder is also marked in thirds horizontally and vertically as photos are often more interesting when the focal point lies on the crossing of these thirds, rather than in the centre.

Dusk and the hour before dawn I find are good times to take photographs of trees in the landscape. At these times, the light is gentler and with luck you may catch a red or golden light, often diffused by mist, or spot a kestrel or an owl hiding in the branches. To take the tree image in this article, I positioned myself so that the lowering sun was behind a lone tree, creating a silhouette against a colourful sky. I often look for reflections of trees in ponds and streams and particularly love to visit Beverley Brook at dawn, where the trees overhang the water.

It's also good to visit when the sun is high, enabling me to take well-lit close-ups of different parts of the tree – such as its bark, roots, leaves and fruits – and all the wildlife that lives on it. I photograph from different angles or stand underneath the tree and photograph the canopy above or the leaves and blossoms against the sky. In the autumn, I look down at the ground underneath the tree and maybe photograph the leaves and acorns that have dropped, creating a rich mix of colour.

*Photo by Ann Healey Photography,  
www.annhealeyphotography.com  
Ann is a frequent contributor of  
photos to the newsletter*

The Visitor Centre has a new information sheet:  
'Ancient and veteran trees'.