

Spring into duck spotting!

If you're interested in finding out more about the wildlife on your doorstep, why not give duck spotting a go? It's a good way to develop a budding interest in wildlife. There is very little cost involved, a cheap pair of binoculars will do and in most cases you can manage without them. Ducks also tend to stay in one place for longer, making it easier to identify them. There are over 30 different types of waterfowl in the UK and Nottingham offers a number of great sites for duck spotting. So what are you waiting for!

I loved feeding the ducks at my local park as a child, but I lost interest in ducks as I got older. That was until I started going for regular walks around the lake at [Highfields Park](#) in Lenton. At first I only noticed the familiar Mallard duck, the most common duck in Britain. Mallards are resident throughout the year and can be found on most bodies of water. In fact, I once saw some Mallards paddling about on a large puddle in the middle of the city!

However, I soon started to notice that not all the ducks on the lake were Mallards. My first sightings were Canada Geese, Coots and Moorhens, which spend a lot of their time on land, grazing on grass. I identified them by doing a quick internet search, but as I started noticing more ducks I found I couldn't always remember what they looked like by the time I got to a computer. I did some searching and managed to find a copy of the *Collins Complete Guide to British Birds* for £5. I started taking it with me on my walks and although I felt a bit self-conscious at first about flicking through it, I soon stopped caring as I started to identify even more ducks.

So far I've also spotted Tufted Ducks, which are all black except for their white flanks and piercing yellow eyes. Their name comes from the fact that they have a mohican style tuft of black feathers on their head. I've also spotted Teals, a small grey duck with vibrant green eye patches, and Egyptian Geese, which my bird guide tells me are only found in Norfolk – you just don't know what's going to turn up! My most recent identification was a male and female Goosander. I've enjoyed many hours watching them as they elegantly glide about on the water and then suddenly dive below for impossibly long periods of time.

I'd urge anyone to give duck-spotting a go. Unlike bird watching you don't need binoculars because ducks tend to have more confined habitats, meaning they are easier to see, and they are also more likely to stay in one place for longer periods of time. Ducks are also less people shy because they have come to expect food from us – I've often found myself surrounded by ducks as I stand by the lake side.

There are plenty of great duck-spotting sights to choose from in Nottingham. As well as Highfields Park there's the [River Leen](#), which runs alongside a well-frequented walking and cycling path between Beeston and the city centre. The River Leen also runs through the restored [Springfield Corner Nature Reserve](#) and is part of a recently installed [nature trail](#). Other good sites around the city include [Wollaton Park](#), with its large lake set in the park's 500 acre grounds, [Holme Pit Pond](#) in Clifton Woods and [Colwick Country Park](#), which is an excellent site for spotting wintering waterfowl.

What's more, with spring finally on its way who can resist the sight of lots of cute, fluffy ducklings!