



# Duck spotting

by  
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*Not everyone who supports the work of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust is a wildlife expert and even experts have to start somewhere! Here, Wildlife in the City volunteer Naomi Racz explains how she's becoming something of a dab hand at 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 and other water birds 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 Nottinghamshire 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 as I got older. That was until I started going for regular walks around the lake at Highfields Park in Lenton, Nottingham. 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!

## Waterbirds galore

However, I soon started to notice that not all the birds on the lake were mallards. My first sightings included other waterbirds such as 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, 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 species.

## "You just don't know what's going to turn up"

Since then 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 teal, 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 seemingly impossibly long periods of time.

I'd urge anyone to give duck spotting a go. Unlike bird watching you don't necessarily need binoculars. 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 a lake side.

## Not so ugly ducklings

There are plenty of great duck spotting sites to choose from in our county (see right). What's more, with spring finally here who can resist the site of lots of cute, fluffy ducklings?



## Where to be a duck detective

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 recently restored Springfield Corner Nature Reserve. 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.

Around the county, why not visit our popular Attenborough Nature Reserve on the edge of Nottingham, or Idle Valley Nature Reserve near Retford?

Happy duck spotting!

**wildlife**  
in the city

*If you'd like to give duck spotting a go, why not download our duck spotting sheet by visiting our website or scanning this QR code?*



PHOTOS: CLOCKWISE  
Duckling and mother © Tim Sexton  
Mallard chicks hatched © Tim Sexton