

Wild Things visit to East Park February 2025

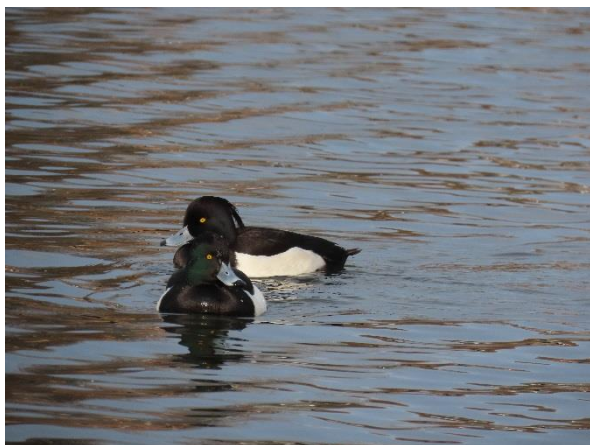
On a lovely February day, thirteen of us made it to East Park on our first outing of the year. It's certainly big enough to get lost in, and we never found Paul and Carole after their late arrival. Hull's largest park, it was built for Queen Victoria's Jubilee, and is a gem.



The lake is best visited in late spring, when the nesting chicks are easy to get close to, but there were plenty of the usual suspects to see today: Mallards, Greylag and Canada Geese, Coots and Moorhens, Tufted Ducks, a Swan and plenty of Black-headed Gulls. That's the great thing about urban parks like these: the birds get used to humans so you get a great view.

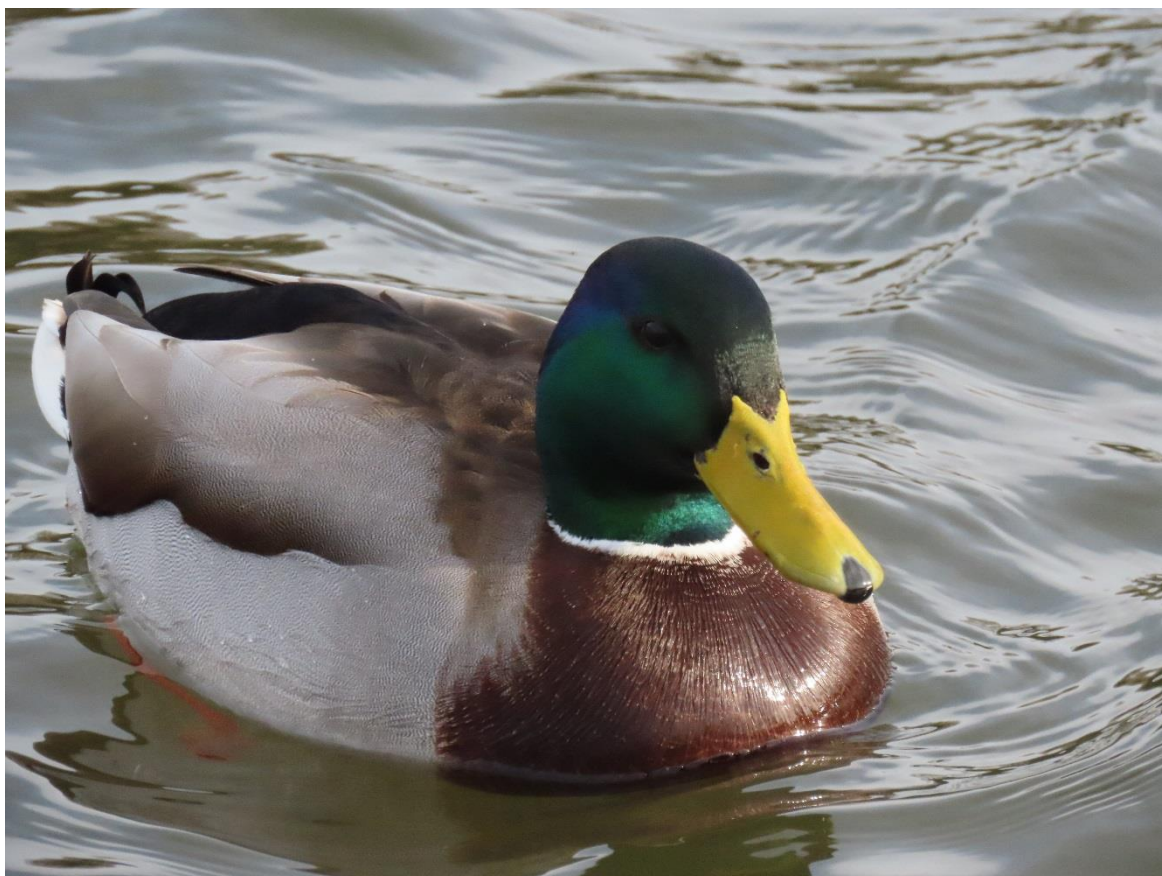


The best sighting for me were Goosanders, fisher birds with their long, downturned beaks. There was a pair lurking by one of the islands, so probably breeding here (Pictures left). They like to breed in tree cavities. You'll only see the magnificent black and white males in the breeding season as they disappear from July to October to moult into their dull eclipse plumage. It's thought they migrate to Scandinavia to do this, but the females stay around. They're one of the few ducks that prefer to eat fish, from the Sawbill family.



Above: Tufted Ducks; right: Coot. These have extraordinary scalloped web-like toes, and are members of the Rail family, like the equally strangely toed Moorhens. You don't see them too often walking on land but there were a few at East Park so we could get a good look.

Below: Feeding frenzy of Black-headed Gulls, still in winter plumage with just a few grey smudges on their heads. The Mallard below was in fine breeding plumage and they were all paired off





Above: some of the group by the lake. Below: Alder catkins about to flower. The small ones behind the large male catkins are the female flowers that will form next year's cones.



There were hordes of Grey Squirrels being fed Cashew Nuts by the locals and shamelessly hassling us.

The Animal Centre was open and free, and full of interest although the Bird House was closed, presumably due to the threat of bird flu. The highlight for me here was the Emu patrolling the boundary fence, making the most extraordinary bubbly drumming sounds, maybe calling for a mate?



We just made it to the café in time for takeaways but it was balmy enough to sit outside. A pleasant and peaceful start to the year's visits, to a clearly a much-treasured space in the heart of the city.

Helen Kitson

Photos by David Lepper and Helen Kitson

Note on 24th February: the Goosanders have now left East Park, no doubt to breed further inland on one of the upland rivers.

