

Self-Guided Wild Fowl Walk



Winter is an excellent time of year to see overwintering Wildfowl, as many species of birds migrate from harsher conditions in colder climes, to the relatively mild winter conditions we have here in the UK.

What to look out for on your walk...



Great Crested Grebes can be identified by an impressive plume on top of their head. In the spring they have an orange collar around the face like a Tudor king's ruff. A dark cap on the head, white neck and dark body. Grebes are diving water birds and they nest on floating platforms constructed from water weed. In the Victorian period the birds almost became extinct as they were hunted for their head plumes which were used to decorate ladies hats.

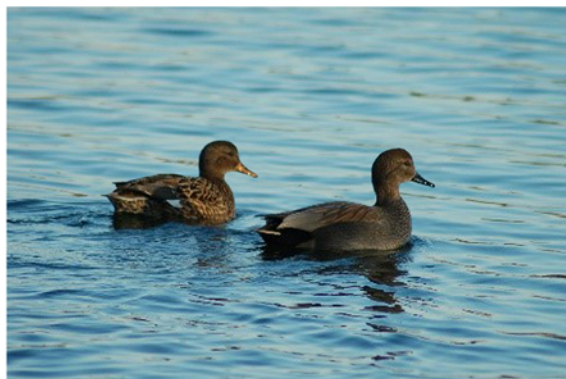
Greylag Goose.

They are large, pale grey in colour with pink legs and orange bill. As with many geese these can be very territorial especially in the spring/summer when nesting. They can live for around 8 years.



Tufted Ducks really stand out especially the male who is black with white sides and a long tuft at the back of his head. The female is a lovely chocolate with no other markings. These diving ducks are very common on old gravel pit sites that are now lakes like here in the Lee Valley.

Gadwall ducks are grey in colour, which on closer inspection is made up of small brown and grey feathers with a black bottom. These are dabbling ducks meaning they typically feed on the surface by tipping forward and up ending underwater plants. They rarely dive like some of the birds mentioned above.



This is a self-guided figure of eight walk just under 6 miles (9.65km) long with good views across wetland and lakes in the Lee Valley Park. Starting at Epping Forest District Museum, 39-41 Sun St, Waltham Abbey EN9 1EL. Most of the walk is on hard paths but can be uneven in places. Mostly flat with a couple slight inclines to bridges. With a few road crossings, care needs to be taken when crossing these roads at the start and end of the walk. Depending on your walking speed and what you stop to look at, expect this walk to take an average of 2 to 3 hours.

1. With your back to Epping Forest District Museum, turn left (down Sun St) towards the Market Square, continue straight on through the Market Square and on your right, head through the arch way (Lychgate Passage) next to the Welsh Harp Public House, turn left straight away, keeping Waltham Abbey Church on your right.
2. Carry on past the church and head down Highbridge Street until you reach the large roundabout. (take care). You will see ahead of you a junction with traffic lights, head towards this. Just before McDonald's and the main junction, you want to use the first crossing, which is a zebra crossing, to get to the right-hand side of the road (the opposite side of the road to McDonald's).
3. You have another road crossing so take care, continue along the road and walk over both the river and the canal.
4. Immediately after walking over the canal you will see a path to your right. Take this path, leading down to the canal tow path.
5. You continue along the towpath with the canal on your right. Go past the lock and continue on for some time. You will see a large foot bridge in front of you - just before this you take the path off to your left.

6. You will see a black metal fence in front of you, bear to the right, keeping the fence on your left. Follow the tarmac path.
7. Continue straight on over a small bridge until you come to a path junction. Turn right and continue on to the next junction.
8. You need to turn left, keeping the lake on your right. Continue on and follow the path round to the right. This path runs between the railway on your left and the lake on your right.
9. Keep the lake on your right and as you get to the far end of the lake, follow the tarmac path around to the right.
10. You will come to a split in the path. Take the left hand path and follow the path past the giant chair on your right.
11. At the next path junction, take the right hand path and follow this over a wooden bridge.
12. You then come to a wider path/road. Turn right and continue straight on along this wide winding path/road for some time.
13. You will pass through a small car park. Ahead of you will be a canal. Head towards this.
14. On reaching the canal, a lock is directly in front of you. Turn left and follow the towpath (keeping the canal on your right). Continue straight on for some time.
15. Eventually you will see a bridge across the canal (with the number 46 on it). As you go under this, immediately turn left, leaving the towpath.
16. You need to follow the path up to the left to take you onto the bridge and over the path you have just passed along.
17. Once you are over the bridge you will come to a triangular path junction. You want to continue taking the path to the right.
18. Follow this path, ignoring the path on your right. Ahead you will see a bridge. Head towards this. As you go over the concrete bridge be careful as the surface has uneven slabs.
19. You will come into a car park and see a stone sculpture. Head towards this and exit the car park via the large grey metal gate to your right.
20. You are now walking along a wide tarmac path with the river on your left.
21. After some time you will see a path off to your right by a dragonfly sculpture. You need to take this path and continue on with the electric pylons on your left.
22. At the next junction, turn left and continue along this path ignoring all side paths. Eventually you re-join the wide main path and need to turn right, keeping the river on your left.
23. You now keep on this path all the way back to the main road you left at point 3 and 4.
24. You can now retrace your steps back to Epping Forest District Museum.



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