**PORTSUNLIGHT RIVER PARK 2023**

1. **Mute Swan**

None were recorded on the lake this year. A first-year bird was on the mudflats

close to Mersey View Walk (13.2) & 7 were seen flying south over the Mersey (13.3).

1. **Whooper Swan**

17 were observed flying north over the Mersey (27.2).

1. **Pink-footed Goose**

Birds regularly fly over the park as they move between the Lancashire Mosses and the

Dee Estuary outside their Icelandic breeding season. The last spring record was of 12

flying N.E (27.3). 42 returning birds (18.9) were the first of the autumn to be seen.

Skeins regularly flew noisily over with a peak over 2,000 within twenty minutes (5.10).

1. **Greylag Goose**

There were 3 records for the year: 1 flying low over the lake (9.5), 1 flying S.E. (10.5) &

8 flying south (12.6).

1. **Canada Goose**

A pair nested on the island and 5 goslings first appeared (22.5); however, there appeared

to be feeding problems and all the goslings eventually died (the last was seen 26.6.).

Canada Geese can regularly be seen on the mudflat/saltmarsh area as well as flying over the Mersey.

1. **Shelduck**

Up to 70 birds were to be seen feeding out on the mudflat until the spring when numbers fell

to some 20 birds. A pair with 6 ducklings were on the tideline (12.6). Numbers slowly rose in

the early autumn and by December there were over 75.

1. **Mandarin Duck**

2 females were on the Dibbin (18/19.5). A female with 10 ducklings was on the Dibbin (9.6).

These had probably swum down the Dibbin from nearby Dibbinsdale where they are known to

breed. There were two further sightings all on the Dibbin: 4 (18.6) & 1 juvenile (23.6).

1. **Wigeon**

A female was on the lake (14.10).

1. **Gadwall**

A pair were briefly present on the lake (18.6). High rainfall in the autumn filled the lake

attracting more water-fowl. From late October to December there were up to 4 males &

2 females on the lake.

1. **Teal**

Up to 90 are usually present outside the breeding season. The birds feed on the tideline

and the mussel-beds at low tide. They are invariably present on the lake where they can

sometimes be seen displaying.

1. **Mallard**

2 pairs were often present in the early part of the year. A female appeared with 4 ducklings

(7.5) which survived into maturity. Another brood of 5 ducklings was present (7.6). Over 50

adult birds were on the lake by late June as they undergo their molt. Only a pair were to

be seen in the late autumn.

1. **Pintail**

Up to 62 were recorded, usually on the tide-line though sometimes on the lake. A pair

was seen in early April though most had disappeared to their distant breeding grounds after

mid-March. The first returning bird was a female on the lake (30.9) then numbers built up

to 40+ by December.

1. **Shoveler**

Up to 5 were recorded on the lake in early spring. By late March the birds disappear until the

Autumn. A female (12.9) was the first returning bird. By late October there were up to 14

present (8 males).

1. **Tufted Duck**

A pair appeared on the lake in early March shortly to be followed by two others. As in recent

years there was no breeding. There were occasional sightings on the lake of a male in June &

the early winter months.

1. **Eider**

A male was roosting on the mudflats with a flock of Shelducks in stormy weather (9.1).

1. **Common Scoter**

A male was just off the tide-line close to the northern edge of the park in bad weather (9.1).

1. **Goldeneye**

A female was with a flock of Pintail just off the tide-line (17.11).

1. **Red-breasted Merganser**

A female flew low over the lake in misty conditions (20.11).

1. **Little Grebe**

A singing bird was heard on the lake (7.2) shortly followed by a second male. Two pairs were

present throughout the spring and early summer. A juvenile bird was seen (15.6). A single

adult was on the lake until late November.

1. **Great Crested Grebe**

An adult was on the Mersey close to the park (8.11).

1. **Cormorant**

Seen regularly from the park throughout the year. Recorded on most visits, birds can often

be seen perched on the outflow pipe marker near the park, maximum count 8 (15.6).

1. **Little Egret**

Recorded outside the breeding season usually by the salt marsh but also far out on the

mudflats at very low tide. A single is the norm but up to 4 were present in October. Birds occasionally visit the lake and sometimes the Dibbin after high tide

1. **Cattle Egret**

One was near the tide-line in cold conditions after a night of light snow (17.1).

**24. Grey Heron**

Seen regularly flying over the park but also out on the mudflats or feeding in the Dibbin.

**25. Pheasant**

A male was regularly heard calling from January usually on the land south of the Dibbin

and around the southern slope of the summit. A pair were seen on the access road (3.4)

and two males were often heard from mid-day, the second bird frequented the area by

the wood. The last record was of a female (17.6).

**26. Sparrowhawk**

There were sightings, usually of a single bird, throughout the year. Prey was carried off site

suggesting that they bred outside the park.

**27. Buzzard**

2 birds were often perched near the access road in January. Flying birds were often visible

from the park usually from mid-morning when birds rise with the thermals.

**28. Osprey**

A bird was observed from the eastern edge of the summit flying low in a southerly direction

over the Mersey.

**29. Kestrel**

A pair is usually present around the summit throughout the year. Breeding took place in a

nest-box on a nearby industrial site and 5 fledged birds were seen there (27.6).

**30. Peregrine**

There were 4 sightings in the year usually of birds seeking prey among the wader flocks on

the nearby mudflats.

**31. Water Rail**

Up to 4 were heard calling from the reedbed in early part of the year. Silent from late March

until mid-September when up to 3 were heard.

**32. Moorhen**

Up to 4 pairs were present around the lake. The first chicks were seen (5.6) with broods being

produced by each pair. Up to 15 adult/juvenile birds were present in late October.

**33. Coot**

Up to 6 birds were in residence in January though there were 4 breeding pairs by May. Chicks

were seen from 7.5 with several broods being raised. 20+ birds were on the lake by mid-

September but only 10 by December.

**34. Oystercatcher**

Flocks of up to 80 were on the mudflats and mussel-beds by Mersey View Walk at the start

of the year. Only 5 were present by late May/early June. Numbers rose form early September

as the over-wintering flocks became re-established.

**35. Little-Ringed Plover**

One was repeatedly engaging in display flight on the cleared industrial land by the River Dibbin

(10.5), where recent heavy showers had created large puddles. There were no subsequent sightings.

**36. Ringed Plover**

A regular passage migrant of Spring and Autumn to be seen on the nearby mudflats: 15 (3.3),

12 (6.), 2 (9.6) then regular sightings with a maximum of 65 (20.9) but none subsequently.

**37. Lapwing**

One was displaying on land by the Dibbin (7-10.5). A bird was on the muddy area of the lake

(8.6 & 23.6).

**38. Knot**

A single bird was present in a Dunlin/Redshank wader flock on the mudflats (23.11).

**39. Dunlin**

A flock of 20 was on the mudflats (16.1) then there was the occasional single bird present until

late March. 6 were by the tide-line (7.5). Up to 16 were present from mid-September to mid-

October then numbers rose steadily 80+ by late October. By the middle of November there

were 300+ though these figures fell back to 100+ by December.

**40. Snipe**

The cutting of the reeds especially on the island in the lake revealed 25+ birds roosting (17.3).

A few birds remained until early April. Heavy autumnal rains resulted in a full lake and

no exposed mud, nevertheless, up to 6 birds were present from mid-September, usually

perching on reed stalks.

**41. Woodcock**

One flew up by a path just below the summit before disappearing into the wood (21.11).

**42. Black-tailed Godwit**

Mainly a passage migrant of spring and autumn. Birds appeared on the mudflats by late

February and numbers peaked by late March- 200+. Returning birds were seen from mid-

September. Early October saw a peak of 370+ and then none were recorded until 2 were

regularly on the tide-line in December. Birds would roost on the north-east corner of the

lake at high tides.

**43. Bar-tailed Godwit**

A single bird was roosting on the lake with a flock of 65 Black-tailed Godwits (29.9).

**44. Curlew**

A maximum count of 31 was recorded on the nearby mudflats (both in January and February).

Numbers fall as birds move off to their breeding grounds in the spring and build up in

September. At very high tides birds move to nearby playing fields but especially the cleared

industrial land by the River Dibbin.

**45. Redshank**

Some 200+ were to be found out on the mudflats and mussel-beds outside their breeding season. None were recorded in April/May. Up to 4 appeared by late June and by

mid-September numbers were back to 200+.

**46. Greenshank**

One was briefly on the lake (18.6).

**47. Common Sandpiper**

Only two sightings each of single birds feeding on the muddy sides of the Dibbin (12.9,6.10).

**48. Turnstone**

These birds feed mainly on the mussel-beds and then roost on small boats at high tide. Usually

20+ birds are present from September to early March.

**49. Mediterranean Gull**

2 adults were in the gull roost on the mudflats close to the lake (15.6). 1-2 were regularly

in the gull roost from 14.9- 5.10. During very windy conditions 1 was with a flock of Common

and Black-headed Gulls over the Mersey.

**50. Black-headed Gull**

The most numerous of the gull species. The highest count of the winter months was

270+. By mid-March there were some 80 present which disappeared by 23.3. Up to 10 were

recorded in early May but all were 1st year birds (the adults having departed to their breeding grounds). By mid-June numbers had risen to 120+ and by mid-September over 200.

**51. Common Gull**

In the first two months of the year there were usually 25-60 birds present out on the mudflats

though 90+ were recorded in bad weather (12.1). There was a noticeable spring passage in

March: 87 (20.3), 171(22.3) & 110(23.3) thereafter less than 10 were recorded until early

April. From mid-September 25+ were recorded though on a day of strong & gusty 80+ were to

be seen in the Mersey.

**52. Lesser Black-backed Gull**

A fairly common gull out on the mudflats with some 25+ usually present in the winter months.

In late May and early June 45+ were often seen. Birds do breed in nearby urban/industrial areas

on roof-tops though many are winter visitors and passage migrants. Over 60 were on the mudflats (16/18.9). At least 3 wintering birds were of the *intermedius race* indicating eastern

European origin.

**53. Herring Gull**

Another gull that is both a local breeder as well as a winter visitor, passage migrant and summer

feeding ground for non-breeding birds (up to 4 years old). Up to 150 birds can be present especially in inclement weather during the winter months. During the summer months 50-80

birds can be recorded (the majority of which are non-adults). The latter half of September saw

over 200 birds present (about 2/3 adults).

**54. Yellow-legged Gull**

There were two separate sightings of adult birds present in the gull roost (17.2 & 6.3).

**55. Great Black-backed Gull**

Present in small numbers out on the mudflats/tideline mainly outside the breeding season.

Up to 3 (usually adults) present January – March. 7 (6adults & 1 2nd.winter) were recorded (5.10). In December up to 5 birds were usually seen.

**56. Black Tern**

An immature/1st year bird was sat out on the nearby mudflats close to the gull roost (29.9).

**57. Feral Pigeon**

Present in variable numbers especially on nearby industrial/waste-land areas. Up to 20 can

sometimes be seen feeding around the summit.

**58. Stock Dove**

Several pairs breed close to the park and this species is regularly recorded throughout the

Year. 4 were seen feeding on the summit (30.9).

**59. Woodpigeon**

A common bird of the park with an estimated breeding population of around 25 pairs.

**60. Collared Dove**

There were 4 breeding pairs in or next to the park: by the centre, by the entrance on Dock

Road North, by the Water Plant and by the Dibbin close to the bridge. Birds were to be heard

Singing from January to October.

**61. Cuckoo**

1 was seen flying along the bushes close to Mersey View Walk (26.5).

**62. Swift**

2 were regularly seen over the lake (from 9.5) and the 6 from early June. Over 35 were to be seen flying over the northern edge of the summit in late June.

**63. Kingfisher**

There were 2 sightings of single bird on the Dibbin by the access road (24.3 & 13.9).

**64. Great Spotted Woodpecker**

This species is regularly recorded in the park outside the breeding season.

**65. Skylark**

First heard singing in mid-January there were 4 regularly singing by late May and 2 were

Still in song towards the end of June. The autumn brings visible migration with calling

birds flying over the park in a south-westerly direction. The main concentration was from

late September to mid-October. Over 50 flew over in some two hours (12.10).

**66. Sand Martin**

There were three records all of birds flying over the lake: 1 (22.3), 3 (31.3) & 1 (16.6).

**67. Swallow**

The first record of the year (29.3) was of a bird flying around the lake. Up to 3 adults were

regularly seen in June with a juvenile bird present on one occasion (27.6), suggesting that

they are possibly breeding in the area.

**68. House Martin**

2 were flying low over the lake (7.5) and were then regularly recorded from the middle of

the month with the highest count of 10 birds. As well as feeding over the lake the birds were

often seen collecting mud from the mudflats. The local breeding population appears to have

crashed with none nesting on Bolton Road East or Dock Road North. The last records of the

autumn were 2 (13.9) & 1 (16.9).

**69. Meadow Pipit**

A small flock of about 12 over-winters around the summit with birds present from mid-

September to early April. There is also passage movement as birds fly over as they head south and west in late September and early October – over 40 flew over in two hours (30.9).

**70. Grey Wagtail**

A few birds can be seen around the park throughout the year, either around the Dibbin or

the water-plant. 3 juvenile birds were often feeding on the Dibbin in early June. The autumn

sees passage movement as birds fly over heading usually south-west.

**71. Pied Wagtail**

Only occasionally seen in the park even they breed in nearby sub-urban areas. Most of the

records occurred in the autumn as fly-overs indicating passage movement.

**White Wagtail**

The continental race of Pied Wagtail also occurs as an autumnal passage migrant. There

were 3 records of fly-overs: 1 (26.9), 1(27.9) & 2(5.10).

**72. Wren**

The most numerous resident breeding bird with an estimated 40 pairs. The first juvenile

to be recorded was 6.6.

**73. Dunnock**

Not always an obvious bird there were nevertheless an estimated 16 breeding territories.

They started singing in late January but generally became more secretive in the latter half

of the year.

**74. Robin**

A common resident with an estimated breeding population of 15 pairs. In the autumn numbers

are augmented by over-wintering continental visitors- 32 birds present (12.10). Young birds

were recorded from 24.5.

**75. Stonechat**

Recorded in the spring and autumn as birds move to and from their breeding grounds. A male

And 2 females were around the summit in mid-March (10/20.3) & 1 female (17.10).

**76. Wheatear**

There were only 2 records of this passage migrant: a pair on the summit (22.3) and a female (17.10).

**77. Blackbird**

A fairly common resident with up to 9 pairs. Additional birds also appear in the autumn when the hips and haws are rapidly eaten.

**78. Fieldfare**

A flock of some 40 birds flew low and over the wood (18.10).

**79. Song Thrush**

9 were singing in early February and up to 7 were still in song by mid-June. Birds were more

secretive in the autumn with few records.

**80. Redwing**

A winter visitor with only small numbers recorded this year usually 1or 2 birds calling

from the trees near the lake, a total of 9 sightings.

**81. Mistle Thrush**

An irregular visitor to the park even though they breed in neighbouring areas. Only two

records: 1 feeding on berries close to the lake (5.10) & 6 flying low over the summit heading

north (21.11).

**82. Cetti’s Warbler**

A resident with probably 3 pairs: 2 around the lake and 1 near Mersey View Walk.

**83. Reed Warbler**

6 were singing in the reeds around the lake from early May to late June.

**84. Whitethroat**

Another summer visitor with up to 6 territories held in the bushy areas circling the summit.

The birds were present from early May and the first young bird was seen 17.6.

**85. Blackcap**

A fairly common summer visitor with at least 8 breeding pairs. First heard singing (7.5) their

Warbling could be heard from the trees throughout the summer months. Up to 3 were calling near the lake (15.9).

**86. Chiffchaff**

There were two records of calling birds near the lake (9.2/28.2), either over-wintering birds or

very early arrivals. The first singing bird was heard 2.3 and regularly thereafter. By early April

9 were singing in established territories. In mid-September there were 8 calling around the lake.

A single bird was heard calling 9.11.

**87. Willow Warbler**

One was singing by the lake (2.4) and by early May 7 were in song. There were 4 well-defined territories but none were singing by the end of June.

**88. Goldcrest**

Largely this species is present outside the breeding season. A lack of suitable breeding habitat

explains its absence after early April until September. 3 pairs over-wintered.

**89. Long-tailed Tit**

A common resident usually encountered in flocks outside the breeding season. There were at

least 3 pairs which successfully raised broods.

**90. Coal Tit**

There were 3 records all of single birds: (21.9), (17.10) & (6.11).

**91. Blue Tit**

A common resident with some 5 pairs breeding. The first fledged birds were seen 7.6. and two

days later there were 3 mobile family parties moving through the trees and bushes.

**92. Great Tit**

A fairly common resident seen or heard on most visits to the park. There were at least 3 breeding pairs.

**93. Jay**

A secretive bird with a least one resident pair around the wood. Seen throughout the year but

Especially in September when up to 4 birds were seen collecting acorns for storing.

**94. Magpie**

A noisy and obvious resident with 5 breeding pairs. Non-breeders can often be seen in loose

parties on the summit.

**95. Jackdaw**

Small numbers can often be seen from the park. The species is a common breeder in nearby

Port Sunlight. They visit the summit in late spring to find food for their young. They are also

a passage migrant especially in the autumn when high flying flocks heading west pass over

the park- 425 recorded in 20 minutes (16.10) & 65 (17.10). These are probably continental

birds which over-winter in Ireland.

**96. Carrion Crow**

A resident with probably 4 breeding pairs. Small flocks sometimes gather on the summit

to feed on the Sea-buckthorn berries- 20 (30.10). Birds can also be seen scattered over the

mudflats and mussel beds at low tide where they feed. The highest count was 55(5.10).

**97. Raven**

4 out of the 5 records were in February & March with 1 in December: 2(10.2), 2(13.2),3(15.2)

1(3.3) & 1(5.12). Ravens are known to breed in the nearby locality.

**98. Starling**

None were seen in or from the park until mid-March despite being a fairly common breeder

in nearby urban areas. From early May to late June small flocks visit the summit to feed.

In the autumn small numbers can be seen roosting on a nearby communication mast.

**99. House Sparrow**

These are still quite numerous in the surrounding area. A small colony breed by the Shorefield

Steps and birds visit the bushes surrounding the lake.

**100. Chaffinch**

Small numbers can be found in the bushes around the lake and Mersey View Walk outside

the breeding-season. Late September and October sees passage movement as birds move

south and west.

**101. Brambling**

A bird was calling from a Willow bush near the lake (24.3).

**102. Greenfinch**

Small numbers can be found in the park throughout the year but the spring sees an increase

as breeding territories are established, some 20 by late March. The first young were seen

(19/05).

**103. Goldfinch**

This species can be seen throughout the year. The number of breeding pairs was estimated

at 18. Birds were still in song at the end of June. A flock of 200+ was present (27.9). Smaller

flocks were scattered around the park for the rest of the year.

**104. Siskin**

There was single spring record (6.3). Small numbers were present from late September to

early December. Birds can usually be seen feeding in tops of Birch and Alder trees.

**105. Linnet**

There were a few records in early spring then a flock of 20 briefly frequented the summit

(13.3).

There were 5 pairs (12.5). The species largely disappeared in the latter half of the year.

**106. Lesser Redpoll**

A flock of 7 was briefly in the Pussy Willow bushes by the Access Road (15.2). There were

2 records of single birds flying over later in the year (3.11 & 11.11).

**107. Bullfinch**

A resident species with 5 pairs present in May.

**108. Reed Bunting**

Usually present in the park with an estimated breeding population of 3 pairs: 1 summit, 2 lake.

Early October saw some passage movement as birds flew over.

Estimation of the number of breeding pairs of species in the park:(\* failure)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| 1. Canada Goose |  |  | 1 |  |  | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1. Mute Swan |  |  |  |  |  | 1 | 1 |  |  |
| 1. Mallard | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |  | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 1. Tufted Duck | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Little Grebe | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |  |  |  | 2\* | 1 |
| 1. Water Rail |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 | 1? |
| 1. Moorhen | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| 1. Coot | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. Woodpigeon | 18 | 18 | 18 | 22 | 20 | 20 | 30 | 25 | 25 |
| 1. Collared Dove | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| 1. Magpie | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| 1. Jay | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1. Carrion Crow | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. Blue Tit | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 5 |
| 1. Great Tit | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| 1. Skylark | 5 | 5 | 5 | 11 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. Swallow | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |  | 1? | 2 \* | 1? |
| 1. Cetti’s Warbler |  | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |  | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| 1. Long-tailed Tit | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| 1. Chiffchaff | 2 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 9 |
| 1. Willow Warbler | 1 | 1 | 1 |  | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| 1. Blackcap | 4 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| 1. Lesser Whitethroat |  |  | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |  |  |  |
| 1. Whitethroat | 13 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 12 | 15 | 13 | 13 | 6 |
| 1. Sedge Warbler |  | 2 | 1 | 1 |  | 2 | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Reed Warbler | 8 | 8 | 6 | 10 | 6 | 10 | 7 | 9 | 6 |
| 1. Grasshopper Warbler |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 |  |  |
| 1. Wren | 18 | 20 | 23 | 41 | 25 | 26 | 40 | 40 | 40 |
| 1. Starling | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Blackbird | 14 | 7 | 4 | 20 | 7 | 12 | 9 | 20 | 9 |
| 1. Song Thrush | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 12 | 7 |
| 1. Robin | 16 | 9 | 15 | 13 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 12 | 15 |
| 1. Dunnock | 18 | 12 | 22 | 12 | 14 | 10 | 23 | 15 | 16 |
| 1. House Sparrow |  |  | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2? |
| 1. Grey Wagtail | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |  | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 1. Meadow Pipit | 1? | 1? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Chaffinch | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 |  |  | 1? |  |  |
| 1. Bullfinch | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 1. Greenfinch | 8 | 4 | 4 | 12 | 11 | 21 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| 1. Linnet | 9 | 7 | 6 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. Goldfinch | 7 | 4 | 6 | 20 | 12 | 20 | 12 | 24 | 18 |
| 1. Reed Bunting | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 |

The above data was made from 127 visits made between 9.1 – 4.4, 8.5 – 28.6 & 12.9 – 9.12