

20. Westfields



Pond at Westfields

Located on the northern bank of the River Shannon in Limerick City at the Shannon Bridge, just a ten-minute walk from the Tourist Information Office at Arthur's Quay. There is a wide variety of wildlife to be found at this inner city site. Wintering ducks have become accustomed to city dwellers passing by and do not fly away, which allows for close views of them. It is not unusual to see up to fifty species of birds on a visit.

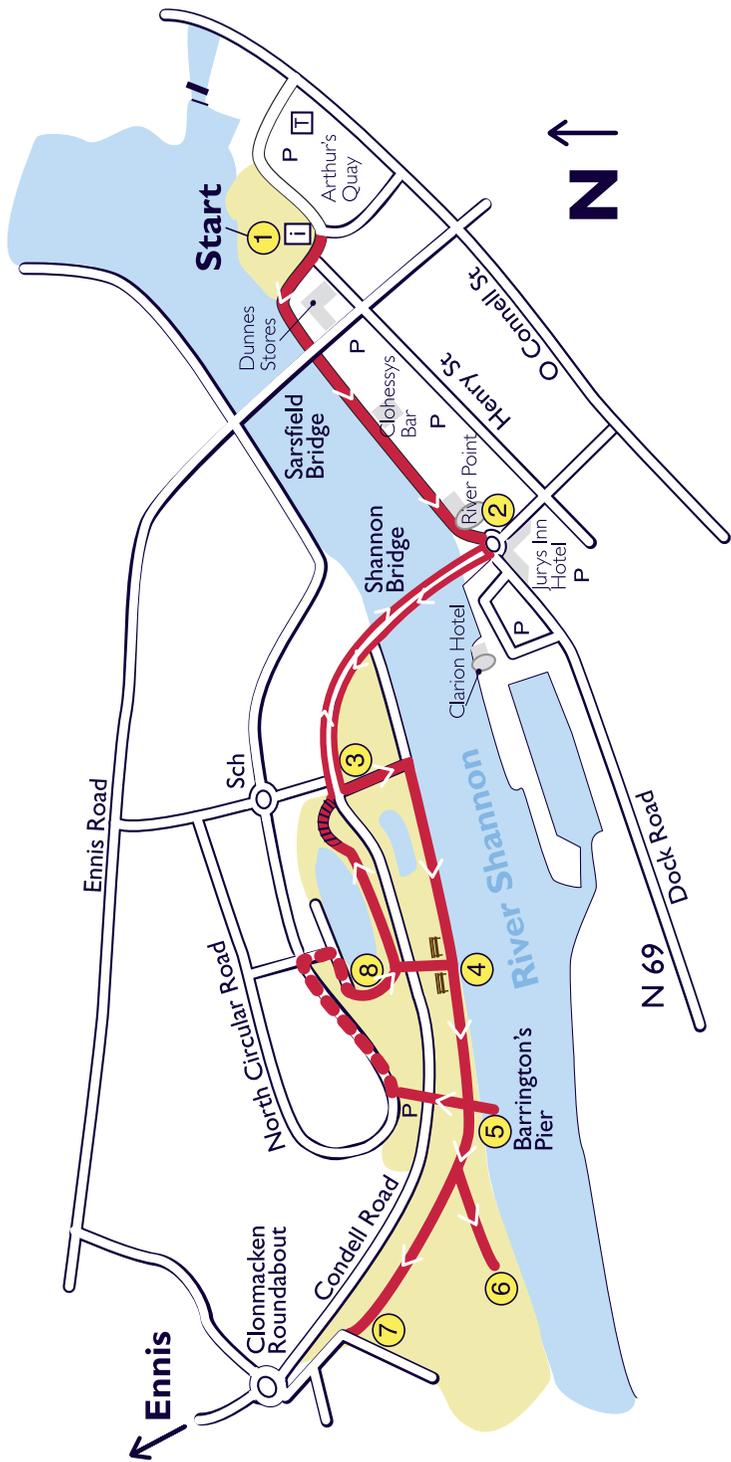
Walking distance 4km, Time 1hr. Terrain easy. O.S.Map 65: Start grid ref R576572

Starting at the Tourist Information Office [Point 1] walk towards Dunnes Stores, keeping beside the railings of the park. Follow the riverbank downstream, passing under the Sarsfield Bridge and along the quays to the Shannon Bridge. At the roundabout **[Point 2]**, cross over the road and then turn right over the Shannon Bridge. On the Shannon River you will see flocks of Mute Swans. These are all bachelors or juveniles that have not yet paired. Cormorants are constantly diving for fish and eels. It can be comical to watch them try to eat a flatfish; they are persistent but eventually give up. After the road bends to the left, turn left along a footpath **[Point 3]** that leads to the embankment. Turn right at the T-junction with a small pond on the right and the Shannon to the left. In amongst the shopping trolleys and plastic bottles on the shoreline you may find the Summer Snowflake that flowers in June; a rare and beautiful flower that is similar to but larger and taller than the Snowdrop. These are difficult to find at first under the dense foliage. When the tide is in, the Redshank rest on the branches waiting for the tide to go out. These trees along the edge of the Shannon include White Willow, Crack Willow, Oiser, Ash and Alder. Follow the path to **Point 4** where there are some green benches.

Option: Turn right here for **Point 8** for a shorter walk.

The walk continues along the path straight ahead until you reach Barrington's Pier **[Point 5]**. There are benches here to rest and watch the river downstream. Continue along the path where after a short distance on the left there is a grass footpath. Follow this path along the embankment and pass through a stile. Walk up the field boundary where there are good views of the River Shannon **[Point 6]**. Return to original path and turn left along the gravel path. This section of the path is screened off from the main road and is surprisingly pleasant, although the noise from the traffic is constant. There are wet meadows to the left and further on an area of rough ground that has a variety of wild plants including Bee Orchid, Common Spotted-orchid, Bird's-foot Trefoil and Ox-eye Daisy. These plants attract numerous butterflies including the brightly coloured Common Blue. Day-flying moths are also to be found that include the Silver Y and the bright red Cinnabar. Eventually you will reach a road, which is the end of our walk **[Point 7]**.

Option: for a loop walk, return to **Point 5** and turn left. Cross the busy Condell road and walk through Ted Russell park. Turn right along the North Circular Road and turn right again at the crossroads into Westfields Park. Rejoin the walk at **Point 8**.



20. Westfields



Guelder Rose



The Viewing Platform

We return back along the path to **Point 4**, where there is a path leading across the road to the lake. Take care crossing this road, as it is very busy. Take the path to the left where you will find the viewing platform **[Point 8]**. From here you can see Moorhen, Coot and Little Grebe in amongst the reeds and bulrushes. There is an information board showing the various birds of the area. Along this path you will find Guelder Rose, Elderberry, Alder, Hawthorn, Sycamore and Birch. There is also a Buddleia bush, which attracts many varieties of butterfly including Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Large White and Small White. Carder and Buff-tailed Bumble Bees also patrol along the path, where Winter Heliotrope is common. A flat greenish insect known as a Hawthorn Shield Bug may also be seen perching on the leaves.

A little further on there is a second board showing butterflies and dragonflies. Walk back towards the main road and turn left along the path, which overlooks the main lake. On the posts at the far side of the lake Gulls roost; these are mainly Common and Black-headed. These are sometimes joined by the North American Ring-billed Gull,

which has become a regular winter visitor. A good variety of duck occur here; Tufted and Mallard are resident while Pochard, Gadwall, Teal, Wigeon and Shoveler are winter visitors. There was great excitement when a Red-crested Pochard joined the flock a few years back. The row of Alder trees along the Condell Road attracts Siskin, Redpoll, Great Tit and Blue Tit. Reed Buntings are usually seen around the water's edge and in the reeds. Sand Martin, House Martin, Swift and Swallow can all be seen during the summer. At this time of year bats can be seen flying over the water on warm summer evenings. The Amber-winged Hawker dragonfly may be seen chasing insects, while Spring Redtail, Azure Bluet and Common Bluetip damselfly perch on the vegetation. Around the edge of the lake there are large stands of Common Reed, Common Bulrush and the rare Lesser Bulrush. In late summer you can see the yellow flower heads of Nodding Bur Marigold, whilst Rigid Hornwort is abundant in the lake water. If you see a Ladybird check the number of spots, as the 2,7 and 14 spot have all been seen here. Continue along the path and walk up a few steps at the end. Turn left and follow the main road, which crosses the Shelbourne Road. Staying on this side of the Condell Road, retrace your way back to the start.