

## Bird Guide

Species Accounts

Video Gallery

## American Black Duck

*Anas rubripes*

Order ANSERIFORMES - Family ANATIDAE - Subfamily Anatinae

► **Summary Page**

▼ **Detailed Page**

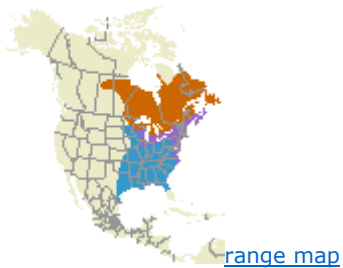
For complete Life History Information on this species, visit [Birds of North America Online](#).



[+ zoom](#)

American Black Duck male

[About the photographs](#)



**MULTIMEDIA**



[Play sound from this species](#)



[+ zoom](#)

American Black Duck female

## Menu

1. [Cool Facts](#)
2. [Description](#)
3. [Similar Species](#)
4. [Sound](#)
5. [Range](#)
6. [Habitat](#)
7. [Food](#)
8. [Behavior](#)
9. [Reproduction](#)
10. [Conservation Status](#)
11. [Other Names](#)

A duck of the Northeast, the American Black Duck shows clear affinities with the Mallard. Populations declined precipitously in the mid-20th century, but the combined conservation efforts of the United States and Canada may have the numbers on the rise.

## Cool Facts

- The American Black Duck occasionally strays from its normal range. One female banded in New Brunswick, Canada turned up in France.
- The American Black Duck has suffered somewhat from the introduction of captive-raised Mallards into its breeding range. The species hybridize (interbreed), and the Mallard may take over some breeding spots from the black duck. Still, the black duck seems to be holding its own in most of its range.

## Description

[top](#)

- Size: 54-59 cm (21-23 in)
- Wingspan: 88-95 cm (35-37 in)
- Weight: 720-1640 g (25.42-57.89 ounces)
  
- Large dabbling duck.
- Body dark blackish-brown.
- Head and neck lighter brown.
- Legs and feet red.

- White underwing linings contrast sharply with dark body in flight.
- Narrow dark cap and eyeline.
- Speculum purple with no white around the edges, or only a narrow white line on the trailing edge.
- Tail dark.

## Sex Differences

Male slightly larger, bill colors of males and females differ.

### Male

Bill olive green to yellow. Markings of chest feathers U-shaped. Eclipse plumage similar, but chest feathers without internal markings.

### Female

Slightly paler. Bill olive to greenish-gray, with dark markings. Markings of chest feathers V-shaped.

### Immature

Similar to adult. Underparts more heavily streaked.

## Similar Species

- **Female Mallard** has bold white borders to speculum, orange bill, whitish tail feathers, pale belly, and is paler overall.
- **Eclipse male Mallard** has paler appearance, rusty wash on chest, and white borders to the speculum.
- **Mottled Duck** has paler appearance, broader buffy edging and internal markings on the body feathers, a greenish-blue speculum with a narrow white trailing edge, and a black spot at the base of the bill at the gape.
- **Male hybrid of Mallard and American Black Duck** usually has some green on the head.

## Sound

A raspy "quack."

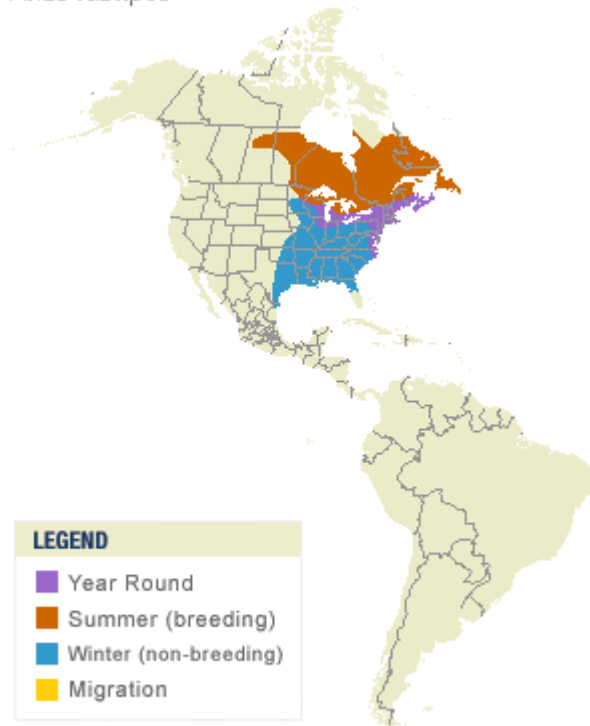
» [listen to songs of this species](#)  
[top](#)

## Range

### Range Map

## American Black Duck

*Anas rubripes*



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe

© 2003 Cornell Lab of Ornithology

[About the map](#)

### Summer Range

Eastern Canada and United States, from northeastern Manitoba through Newfoundland, southward to northern Minnesota and eastern Virginia.

### Winter Range

Winters from southern Canada to Gulf Coast and northern Florida, westward to western Iowa.

### Habitat

- Breeds in a variety of wetland habitats, from salt marshes to beaver ponds, river islands, and boreal bogs.
- Winters primarily in salt water along coasts, but in a variety of freshwater areas inland.

### Food

Seeds, roots, stems, grain, aquatic plants, aquatic insects, crustaceans, mollusks, and some fish.

### Behavior

### Foraging

Dabbles. Filter-feeds at surface of water. Tips-up in shallow water. Makes occasional dives in deeper water.

## Reproduction

### Nest Type

Built of vegetation. Lined with down. Placed in vegetation near an edge or break in cover, sometimes on brush piles, hay rolls, or duck blinds.

### Egg Description

White to greenish buff.

### Clutch Size

Usually 1-17 eggs.

### Condition at Hatching

Covered in down and able to leave the nest soon after hatching.

[top](#)

## Conservation Status

American Black Duck numbers declined significantly in mid 20th century. Hunting was restricted in 1983, and populations stabilized and then started to increase. The United States and Canada started the [Black Duck Joint Venture to try to restore the populations](#).

## Other Names

Canard noir (French)

Ánade sombrio americano (Spanish)

## Sources used to construct this page:

[top](#)

Longcore, J. R., D. G. McAuley, G. R. Hepp, and J. M. Rhymer. 2000. American Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 481 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.

[Summary species account »](#)

## Bird Guide

Species Accounts

Video Gallery

## Canada Goose

*Branta canadensis*

Order ANSERIFORMES - Family ANATIDAE - Subfamily Anserinae

► **Summary Page**

▼ **Detailed Page**

For complete Life History Information on this species, visit [Birds of North America Online](#).

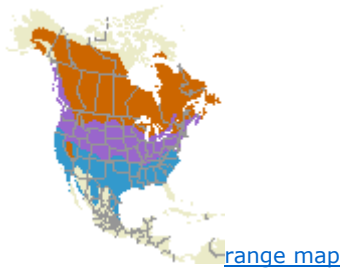


© Donna Aitkenhead/CLO

+ zoom

Canada Goose, *B. c. maxima*

[About the photographs](#)



[range map](#)

### MULTIMEDIA



[Play sound from this species](#)

### Menu

1. [Cool Facts](#)
2. [Description](#)
3. [Similar Species](#)
4. [Sound](#)
5. [Range](#)
6. [Habitat](#)
7. [Food](#)
8. [Behavior](#)
9. [Reproduction](#)

10. [Conservation Status](#)
11. [Other Names](#)

The most familiar and widespread goose in North America, the Canada Goose can be found in all kinds of water all across the continent, from the tundra to the Gulf Coast. Some populations have become resident in urban areas, and are now coming into conflict with people.

### Cool Facts

- At least 11 subspecies of Canada Goose have been recognized, although only a couple are distinctive. In general, the geese get smaller as you move northward, and darker as you go westward. The four smallest forms are now considered a different species: the Cackling Goose.
- Some migratory populations of the Canada Goose are not going as far south in the winter as they used to. This northward range shift has been attributed to changes in farm practices that makes waste grain more available in fall and winter, as well as changes in hunting pressure and changes in weather.
- Individual Canada Geese from most populations make annual northward migrations after breeding. Nonbreeding geese, or those that lost nests early in the breeding season, may move anywhere from several kilometers to more than 1500 km northward. There they take advantage of vegetation in an earlier state of growth to fuel their molt. Even members of "resident" populations, which do not migrate southward in winter, will move north in late summer to molt.
- The giant Canada goose subspecies, *B. canadensis maxima*, formerly bred from central Manitoba to Kentucky. It was nearly driven extinct in the early 1900s. Programs to reestablish the subspecies to its original range were tremendously successful, and in fact, in some places were too successful. The numerous introductions and translocations created a number of resident populations, and the geese have become a nuisance in many urban and suburban areas.

### Description

[top](#)

- Size: 76-110 cm (30-43 in)
- Wingspan: 127-170 cm (50-67 in)
- Weight: 3000-9000 g (105.9-317.7 ounces)
  
- Large waterbird.
- Black head.
- Long, black neck.
- White chinstrap.
- Light tan to cream breast feathers.
- Brownish back.
- White undertail.
  
- Rump white.
- Tail black.
- Legs black.
- Eyes black.
- Bill black.
- White cheek patches may or may not be separated by black stripe on chin.
- Black neck sometimes separated from brown chest by white collar.

### Sex Differences

Sexes look alike.

### Immature

Juvenile similar to adult.

### Similar Species

- **Cackling Goose** nearly identical, but smaller (some as small as ducks), and with small, triangular bill.
- The blue form of the **Snow Goose** has an all-white head.
- **Brant** has a dark chest and white limited to the neck, not the cheek.
- The rare **Barnacle Goose** has an entirely white face, a black breast, and a gray and black barred back.
- **Canada Goose X domestic goose hybrids** have a wide variety of different markings, including extended white on head, red on bill, and red legs.

### Sound

Call a loud "honk."

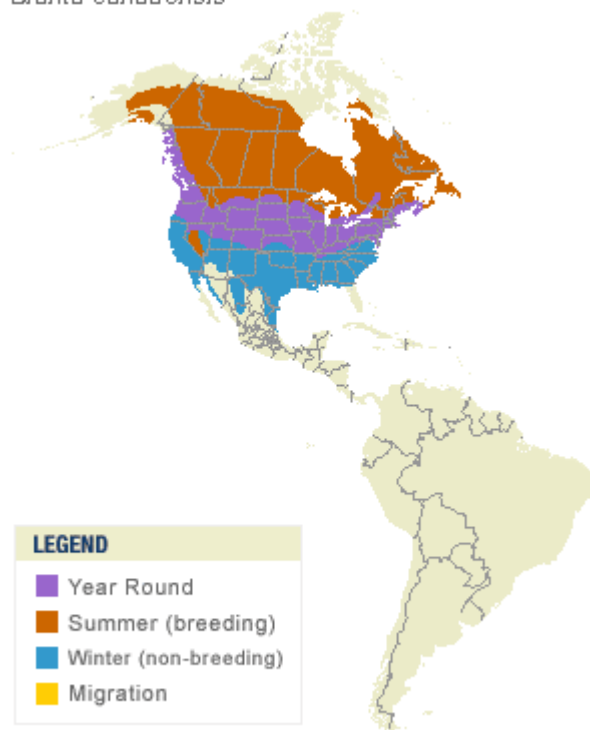
»[listen to songs of this species top](#)

### Range

#### Range Map

#### Canada Goose

*Branta canadensis*



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe (in part)

© 2003 Cornell Lab of Ornithology

[About the map](#)

### Summer Range



Breeds from central and southeastern Alaska eastward across Canada to western Greenland, and southward to the central United States. Introduced to Europe and New Zealand.

### **Winter Range**

Winters from southern Canada to northern Mexico and northern Florida.

### **Habitat**

Breeds in a broad range of habitats from low Arctic tundra to prairies and parklands, including lakes, meadows, golf courses, and city parks.

### **Food**

Entirely herbivorous. Eats variety of plant species and parts, especially grasses, sedges, grain, and berries.

### **Behavior**

#### **Foraging**

Grazes on grass, tips up to reach aquatic vegetation. Feeds in flocks in fields

### **Reproduction**

#### **Nest Type**

Nest a large open cup, made of dry grasses, lichens, and mosses, lined with down and some body feathers. Usually placed on slightly elevated sites near water, such as pond edge or muskrat mound.

#### **Egg Description**

Creamy white.  
Incubation period 25-28 days.

#### **Clutch Size**

2-8 eggs.

#### **Condition at Hatching**

Covered with down and eyes open. Leaves nest within 24 hours of hatching with the ability to swim and feed. Chicks fledge in 6-7 weeks.

[top](#)

### **Conservation Status**

Populations generally increasing over last half-century. Resident and urban populations are becoming a nuisance in some areas.

### **Other Names**

Bernache du Canada (French)  
Ganso canadiense (Spanish)

### Sources used to construct this page:

[top](#)

Mowbray, T. B., C. R. Ely, J. S. Sedinger, and R. E. Trost. 2002. Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*). In [The Birds of North America](#), No. 682 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.

[Summary species account »](#)

## Bird Guide

Species Accounts

Video Gallery

## Canvasback

*Aythya valisineria*

Order ANSERIFORMES - Family ANATIDAE - Subfamily Anatinae

▶ Summary Page

▼ Detailed Page

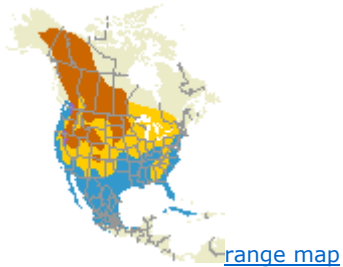
For complete Life History Information on this species, visit [Birds of North America Online](#).



+ zoom

Canvasback, male

[About the photographs](#)



### MULTIMEDIA



[Play sound from this species](#)



[+ zoom](#)

Canvasback, female

## Menu

1. [Cool Facts](#)
2. [Description](#)
3. [Similar Species](#)
4. [Sound](#)
5. [Range](#)
6. [Food](#)
7. [Reproduction](#)
8. [Conservation Status](#)
9. [Other Names](#)

A large diving duck, the Canvasback breeds in prairie potholes and winters on ocean bays. Its sloping profile distinguishes it from other ducks.

## Cool Facts

- The species name of the Canvasback, *Aythya valisineria*, comes from *Vallisneria americana*, or wild celery, whose winter buds and rhizomes are its preferred food during the nonbreeding period.

## Description

[top](#)

- Size: 48-56 cm (19-22 in)
- Wingspan: 79-89 cm (31-35 in)
- Weight: 862-1588 g (30.43-56.06 ounces)
- Large, sleek duck.
- Long sloping profile.
- Male with rusty red head, white body, and black chest and rear end.

## Sex Differences

Breeding male boldly patterned with red head and white body; female drabber and more subtly marked in brown and gray.

## Immature

Similar to adult female.

## Similar Species

- **Redhead** with gray, not white body, a rounded head, a shorter profile, a brighter red head, and a blue bill.

## Sound

Males make cooing notes in courtship. Female gives soft "krrr-krrr."

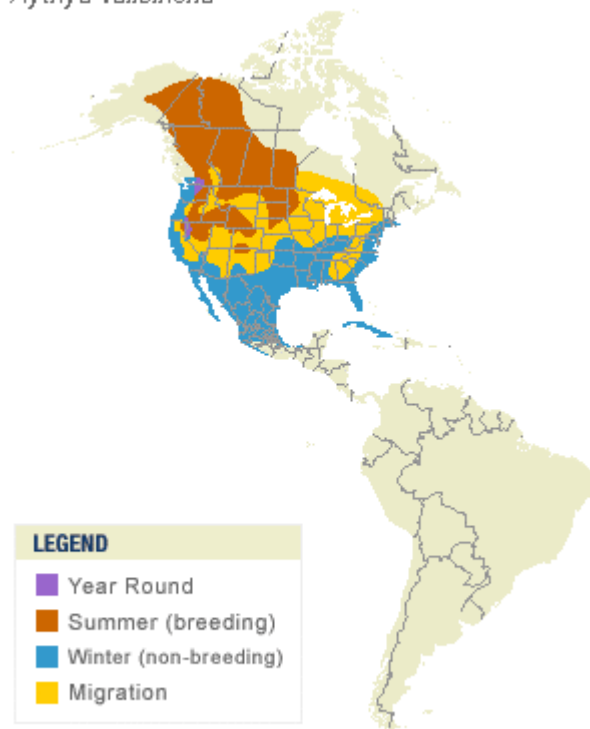
» [listen to songs of this species](#)  
[top](#)

## Range

### Range Map

Canvasback

*Aythya valisineria*



#### LEGEND

- Year Round
- Summer (breeding)
- Winter (non-breeding)
- Migration

Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe

© 2004 Cornell Lab of Ornithology

[About the map](#)

## Summer Range

Breeds from Alaska to the Northwest Territories southward to Nevada and Minnesota.

## Winter Range

Winters across much of coastal and southern United States.

## Food

Seeds, buds, leaves, tubers, roots, snails, and insect larvae.

## Reproduction

### Egg Description

Greenish drab.

### Clutch Size

5-11 eggs.

### Condition at Hatching

Covered in down and able to leave the nest soon after hatching.

[top](#)

## Conservation Status

Populations have fluctuated widely. Low levels in 1980s put the Canvasback on lists of special concern, but numbers increased greatly in the 1990s.

## Other Names

Morillon à dos blanc (French)

Pato coacoxtle (Spanish)

## Sources used to construct this page:

[top](#)

Mowbray, T. B. 2002. Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*). In [The Birds of North America](#), No. 659 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.

[Summary species account »](#)

[Bird Guide](#)

[Species Accounts](#)

[Video Gallery](#)

## Great Blue Heron

*Ardea herodias*

Order CICONIIFORMES - Family ARDEIDAE

► **Summary Page**

▼ **Detailed Page**

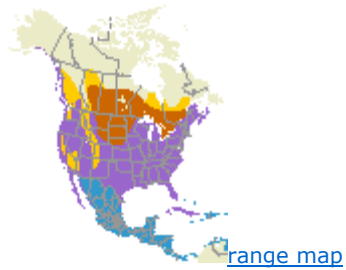
For complete Life History Information on this species, visit [Birds of North America Online](#).



[+ zoom](#)

Great Blue Heron, adult

[About the photographs](#)



MULTIMEDIA



[Play sound from this species](#)



[+ zoom](#)

Great Blue Heron, juvenile



[+ zoom](#)



Great Blue Heron, white-morph, Captiva Island, FL.

## Menu

1. [Cool Facts](#)
2. [Description](#)
3. [Similar Species](#)
4. [Sound](#)
5. [Range](#)
6. [Habitat](#)
7. [Food](#)
8. [Behavior](#)
9. [Reproduction](#)
10. [Conservation Status](#)
11. [Other Names](#)

The largest and most widespread heron in North America, the Great Blue Heron can be found along the ocean shore or the edge of a small inland pond. An all white form is found from southern Florida into the Caribbean, and used to be considered a separate species, the "Great White Heron."

## Cool Facts

- The white form of the Great Blue Heron, known as the "great white heron," is found nearly exclusively in shallow marine waters along the coast of very southern Florida, the Yucatan Peninsula, and in the Caribbean. Where the dark and white forms overlap in Florida, intermediate birds known as "Wurdeemann's herons" can be found. They have the bodies of a Great Blue Heron, but the white head and neck of the great white heron.
- Although the Great Blue Heron eats primarily fish, it is adaptable and willing to eat other animals as well. Several studies have found that voles (mice) were a very important part of the diet, making up nearly half of what was fed to nestlings in Idaho. Occasionally a heron will choke to death trying to eat a fish that is too large to swallow.
- Great Blue Herons congregate at fish hatcheries, creating potential problems for the fish farmers. A study found that herons ate mostly diseased fish that would have died shortly anyway. Sick fish spent more time near the surface of the water where they were more vulnerable to the herons.

## Description

[top](#)

- Size: 97-137 cm (38-54 in)
- Wingspan: 167-201 cm (66-79 in)
- Weight: 2100-2500 g (74.13-88.25 ounces)
  
- Large, gray bird.
- Long legs
- Long, "S"-shaped neck.
- Long, thick bill.
- White crown stripe.
- Black plume extending from behind eye to off the back of the neck.
- Shaggy feathers on neck and back.
- Bluish gray back, wings, and belly.
- Reddish or gray neck.
- White morph all white with pale legs, yellow bill.
  
- Front of neck streaked with white, black, and rusty brown.
- Bill yellowish.
- Legs brownish or greenish.

- Eyes yellow.
- Thighs rust colored.
- Black patch at bend of wing.
- Flight feathers blackish on top, contrasting with center of wings.
- Cinnamon patch at leading edge of underside of wing.

### Sex Differences

Sexes look alike.

### Immature

Juvenile similar to adult, but has gray crown, a dark upper bill, rusty brown edging to back feathers, and lacks body plumes.

### Similar Species

- **Sandhill Crane** is larger, has a prominent tuft of bushy feathers on its rump, a shorter bill, and a red cap, and is found in fields rather than ponds.
- **Little Blue Heron** is much smaller and more slender, lacks plumes on the head, is entirely uniform dark blue-gray, has a dark bill with a bluish base, and greenish legs.
- **Tricolored Heron** is more slender, has white head plumes, and a white belly contrasting sharply with the dark chest.
- **Great Egret** differs from white morph by being more slender, lacking head plumes, and having black legs.

### Sound

Call a deep, hoarse croak.

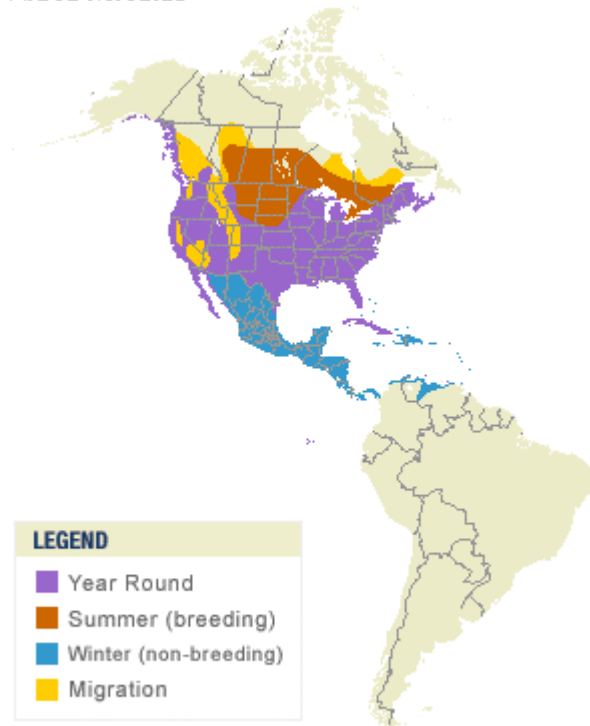
»[listen to songs of this species](#)  
[top](#)

### Range

**Range Map**

## Great Blue Heron

*Ardea herodias*



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe

© 2003 Cornell Lab of Ornithology

[About the map](#)

### Summer Range

Breeds from southern Alaska and central Canada southward to Central America and the Caribbean.

### Winter Range

Winters from southern Canada southward to northern South America, and along the coasts as far north as Alaska and Nova Scotia.

### Habitat

Found along calm freshwater and seacoasts. Usually nests in trees near water, but colonies can be found away from water. Great White Heron found almost exclusively in shallow marine habitats.

### Food

Fish, invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and small mammals.

### Behavior

### Foraging

Walks slowly, stands and stabs prey with quick lunge of the bill.

## Reproduction

### Nest Type

Nests in colonies, sometimes as lone pair. Nest a large platform of sticks, lined with pine needles, moss, reeds, dry grass, or twigs. Placed high in trees, occasionally on ground.

### Egg Description

Dull pale blue.

### Clutch Size

2-6 eggs.

### Condition at Hatching

Covered in pale gray down; eyes are open and can hold head up just after hatching.

[top](#)

## Conservation Status

The Great Blue Heron suffered less from plume hunters and pesticides than other herons, and its numbers have remained strong.

## Other Names

Grande Héron (French)  
Garza morena, Garza blanca granda, Gallinaza (Spanish)

## Sources used to construct this page:

[top](#)

1. Butler, R. W. 1992. Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*). In [The Birds of North America](#), No. 25 (A. Poole, P. Stettenheim, and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
2. Glahn, J. F., B. Dorr, J. B. Harrel, and L. Khoo. 2002. Foraging ecology and depredation management of great blue herons at Mississippi catfish farms. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 66: 194-201.

[Summary species account »](#)

## Bird Guide

Species Accounts

Video Gallery

## Hooded Merganser

*Lophodytes cucullatus*

Order ANSERIFORMES - Family ANATIDAE - Subfamily Anatinae

► Summary Page

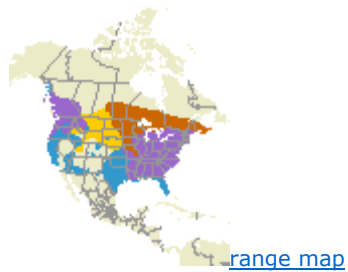
▼ Detailed Page

For complete Life History Information on this species, visit [Birds of North America Online](#).



+ zoom

Hooded Merganser, male, breeding plumage, crest raised, Iroquois NWR, NY  
[About the photographs](#)



MULTIMEDIA



[Play sound from this species](#)



+ zoom

Hooded Merganser, male, crest lowered, Iroquois NWR, NY



+ zoom

Hooded Merganser, female, Iroquois NWR , NY, May



+ zoom

Hooded Merganser, female, Iroquois NWR, NY



[+ zoom](#)

Hooded Merganser, male, non-breeding plumage

## Menu

1. [Cool Facts](#)
2. [Description](#)
3. [Similar Species](#)
4. [Sound](#)
5. [Range](#)
6. [Habitat](#)
7. [Food](#)
8. [Behavior](#)
9. [Reproduction](#)
10. [Conservation Status](#)
11. [Other Names](#)

A small fish-eating duck of wooded ponds, the Hooded Merganser nests in holes in trees. It is frequently seen on shallow waters where its only waterfowl companion is the Wood Duck.

## Cool Facts

- The Hooded Merganser is the second-smallest of the six living species of mergansers (only the Smew of Eurasia is smaller) and is the only one restricted to North America.
- Although up to 44 Common Merganser eggs have been found in one nest, one female probably does not lay more than about 13. Larger clutches result when more than one female lays eggs in a nest.
- The Hooded Merganser finds its prey underwater by sight. The merganser can actually change the refractive properties of its eyes to enhance its underwater vision. In addition, the nictating membrane (third eyelid) is very transparent and probably acts to protect the eye during swimming, just like a pair of goggles.

## Description

[top](#)

- Size: 40-49 cm (16-19 in)
- Wingspan: 60-66 cm (24-26 in)
- Weight: 453-879 g (15.99-31.03 ounces)
  
- Small to medium-sized duck.
- Long, narrow bill.
- Fluffy, fan-shaped crest.
- Male with large white patch in crest.
  
- Small white patch at base of wings visible in flight.
- Long, somewhat pointed tail.

## Sex Differences

Male boldly patterned with black and white crest, female smaller and grayish brown with shorter crest.

## Male

**Breeding (Alternate) Plumage:** Circular crest with large white patch, outlined in black. Face black. Eyes gold. Back black. Sides rusty. Chest white, bordered by black and white stripes. Bill dark with yellow base.

**Nonbreeding (Basic) Plumage:** Back, sides, and breast grayish brown. Belly white. Crest dusky, not brown

like female's. Eyes yellow. Bill black.

## Female

Body brownish. Head brownish with bushy rufous crest. Small white patch on chin. Breast and neck slaty. Tail brownish. Wings blackish brown. Small white patch at base of wings. Eyes brownish buff. Upper mandible blackish green with orange edge, lower mandible orange or yellowish.

## Immature

Immature resembles adult female. First-year male similar to female, but crest dull brown with a white patch, some black feathers on head and sides, bill dark, and eyes yellow.

## Similar Species

- **Bufflehead** male in breeding plumage is more white overall, lacks buffy sides, and has a larger white patch that wraps around the back of its greenish head. Female and nonbreeding male Buffleheads have distinctive oval white cheek patches.
- Female **Wood Duck** has sleek crest white inverted comma around the eye.
- Other **female mergansers** have thinner crests and red on their bills.

## Sound

Silent except in courtship when male gives a deep rolling frog-like sound. Wings produce a loud whistling in flight.

» [listen to songs of this species](#)  
[top](#)

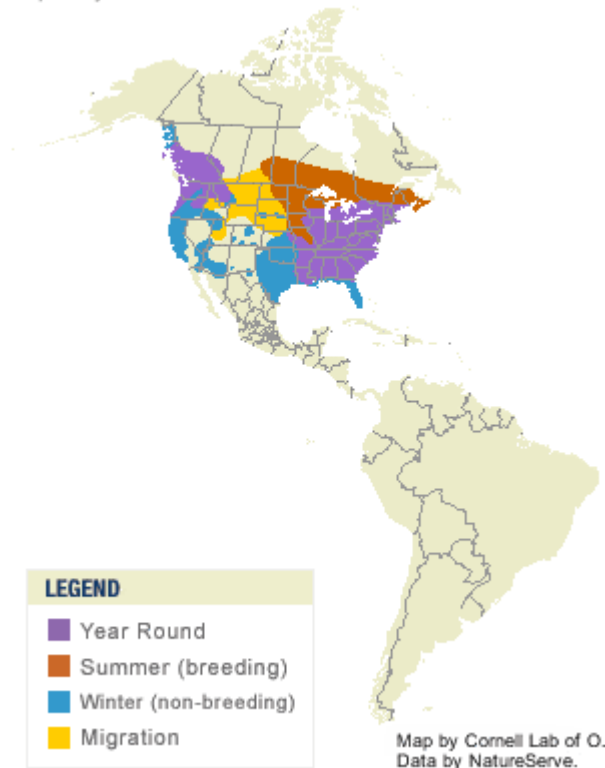
## Range

### Range Map



## Hooded Merganser

*Lophodytes cucullatus*



© 2003 Cornell Lab of Ornithology

[About the map](#)

### Summer Range

Breeds from central British Columbia southward to coastal Oregon and western Montana. Also from eastern Saskatchewan and eastern Dakotas eastward to Atlantic Coast northward to Nova Scotia, southward to Louisiana and northern Florida.

### Winter Range

Winters from southeastern Alaska to southern California, and Arizona. Also from southeastern Minnesota, southern Ontario, and central Maine southward to Gulf Coast and Florida.

### Habitat

- Breeds in forested wetlands.
- In migration and in winter found in wider range of open waters, along coasts, and in shallower waters than other mergansers.

### Food

Fish, aquatic insects, and crustaceans (especially crayfish).

### Behavior

## Foraging

Dives underwater to catch prey.

## Reproduction

### Nest Type

Nest in tree cavity or nest box, lined with downy feathers from chest of female.

### Egg Description

White

### Clutch Size

5-44 eggs.

### Condition at Hatching

Covered with down, eyes open. Leave nest within one day after hatching.

[top](#)

## Conservation Status

Populations appear stable.

## Other Names

Harle Couronné (French)

Serreta capuchona (Spanish)

## Sources used to construct this page:

[top](#)

Dugger, B. D., K. M. Dugger, and L. H. Fredrickson. 1994. Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 98 (A. Poole, and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

[Summary species account »](#)



## Bird Guide

[Species Accounts](#)

[Video Gallery](#)

## Mallard

*Anas platyrhynchos*

Order ANSERIFORMES - Family ANATIDAE - Subfamily Anatinae

[▶ Summary Page](#)

[▼ Detailed Page](#)

For complete Life History Information on this species, visit [Birds of North America Online](#).



[+ zoom](#)

Mallard, adult male, breeding plumage

[About the photographs](#)



[range map](#)

[+ zoom](#)

Mallard female

## Menu

1. [Cool Facts](#)
2. [Description](#)
3. [Similar Species](#)
4. [Sound](#)
5. [Range](#)
6. [Habitat](#)
7. [Food](#)
8. [Behavior](#)
9. [Reproduction](#)
10. [Conservation Status](#)
11. [Other Names](#)

One of the most familiar of ducks, the Mallard is found throughout North America and all across Eurasia. Where it does not occur naturally, it often has been introduced. It is found in all kinds of wetlands and is a familiar inhabitant of urban park ponds.

## Cool Facts

- The Mallard is the ancestor of nearly all domestic duck breeds (everything except the Muscovy Duck). Many of the domestic breeds look like the wild birds, but usually are larger. They are variable in plumage, often lacking the white neck ring or having white on the chest. Feral domestic ducks breed with wild Mallards and produce a variety of forms that often show up with wild ducks, especially in city parks.
- The widespread Mallard has given rise to a number of populations around the world that have changed enough that they could be considered separate species. The "Mexican Duck" of central Mexico and the extreme southwestern United States and the Hawaiian Duck both are closely related to the Mallard, and in both forms the male is dull like the female. The Mexican Duck currently is considered a subspecies of the Mallard, while the Hawaiian Duck is still given full species status.
- Mallard pairs are generally monogamous, but paired males actively pursue forced extra-pair copulations. Copulation between members of a pair usually takes place in the water after a long bout of elaborate displays. Forced copulations are not preceded by displays, and several males may chase a single female and mate with her.

- Mallard pairs form long before the spring breeding season. Pairing takes place in the fall, but courtship can be seen all winter. Only the female incubates the eggs and takes care of the ducklings.

## Description

[top](#)

- Size: 50-65 cm (20-26 in)
- Wingspan: 82-95 cm (32-37 in)
- Weight: 1000-1300 g (35.3-45.89 ounces)
  
- Large dabbling duck.
- Male with iridescent green head, rusty chest, and gray body.
- Female mottled brown.
  
- Back of wing (speculum) shiny blue, with white line in front and behind.
- Wing linings white.
- Legs bright orange.

## Sex Differences

Male with bright green head and pale body, female dull brown all over.

### Male

**Breeding (Alternate) Plumage:** Head iridescent dark green. Narrow white neck ring. Breast chestnut-brown. Back and wings brownish gray. Underparts light grayish. Rump and under tail black, with white area just in front along flanks. Tail white on outside with black middle feathers. Central tail feathers curled up toward back. Bill yellow to greenish, with black nail at tip. Eyes dark. Feet red.

**Eclipse (Basic) Plumage:** Crown dark green. Face pale brownish. Dark line through eye. Breast warm brown. Body and wings mottled brown, white, and buff. Slight upturn to central tail feathers. Bill clear yellowish olive.

### Female

Brownish all over with mottled streaking of buff, white, and dark brown. Face paler than body. Dark line through eye. Dark streak on crown. Belly pale. Tail whitish. Undertail pale. Bill orange or yellow marked with variable splotches of black. Legs red-orange.

### Immature

Juvenile similar to female.

## Similar Species

- **Red-breasted Merganser** has green head, white neck ring, reddish chest, but is built very differently, with a shaggy crest and a long thin bill, and dives.
- **Northern Shoveler** has green head, but a white chest and rusty sides.
- Female dabbling ducks look very similar. Mallard is only one with a blue speculum bordered on both sides by white.
- **American Black Duck** is darker, with no white borders to its purplish speculum and a dark tail.
- **Mottled Duck** is darker with thin white line behind speculum only, tail dark.

## Sound

Female gives loud series of quacks. Male makes softer, rasping "rab," also a grunt and whistle during display. Wings whistle in flight.

[»listen to songs of this species](#)

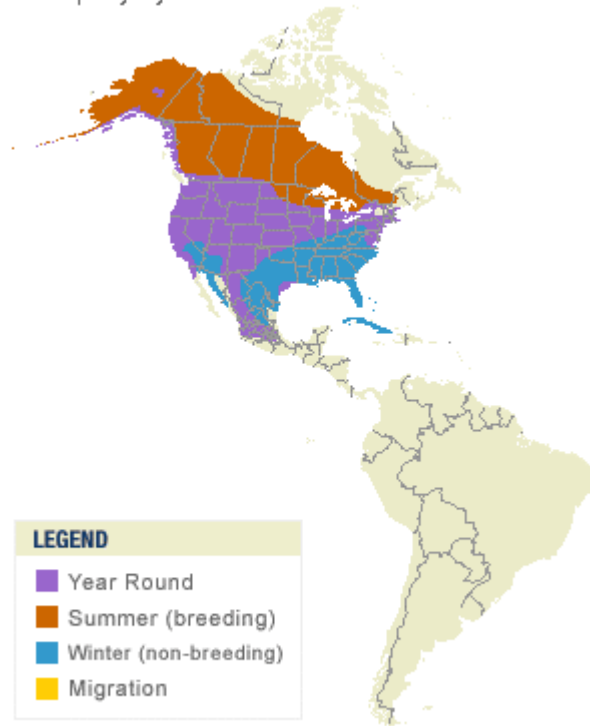
[top](#)

## Range

### Range Map

#### Mallard

*Anas platyrhynchos*



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe

© 2003 Cornell Lab of Ornithology

[About the map](#)

## Summer Range

Breeds from Alaska to Nova Scotia southward to Mexico, northern Texas, Tennessee, and northern Georgia. Also in Greenland and across Eurasia. Introduced into Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii.

## Winter Range

Winters from southern Canada southward to Gulf Coast, northern Florida, and into northern Mexico.

## Habitat

Found in all wetland habitats.

## Food

Insects and larvae, aquatic invertebrates, seeds, acorns, aquatic vegetation, grain.

## Behavior

### Foraging

Dabbles, filter-feeds at surface of water, tips-up in shallow water, and makes occasional dives in deeper water.

## Reproduction

### Nest Type

Depression scraped in ground. Lined with vegetation and down from female's breast.

### Egg Description

Creamy to greenish buff.  
Incubation period 23-30 days.

### Clutch Size

1-13 eggs.

### Condition at Hatching

Covered in down.  
Chicks leave nest at 13-16 hours after hatching, independent at 52-70 days.  
[top](#)

## Conservation Status

Most widespread and abundant duck in North America, and the most heavily hunted. Populations closely tracked by wildlife agencies.

## Other Names

Canard colvert (French)  
Pato de collar (Spanish)

## Sources used to construct this page:

[top](#)  
Drilling, N., R. Titman, and F. McKinney. 2002. Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 658 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.

[Summary species account »](#)



## [Bird Guide](#)

[Species Accounts](#)

[Video Gallery](#)

## Mute Swan

*Cygnus olor*

Order ANSERIFORMES - Family ANATIDAE - Subfamily Anserinae

▶ **Summary Page**

▼ **Detailed Page**

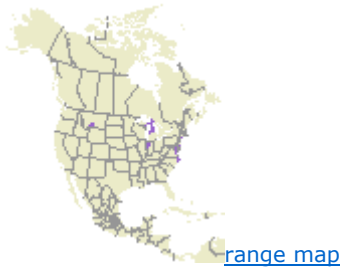
For complete Life History Information on this species, visit [Birds of North America Online](#).



[+ zoom](#)

Mute Swan, adult, displaying

[About the photographs](#)



[range map](#)

### MULTIMEDIA



[Play sound from this species](#)





[+ zoom](#)

Mute Swan, adult

## Menu

1. [Cool Facts](#)
2. [Description](#)
3. [Similar Species](#)
4. [Sound](#)
5. [Range](#)
6. [Habitat](#)
7. [Food](#)
8. [Behavior](#)
9. [Reproduction](#)
10. [Conservation Status](#)
11. [Other Names](#)

A native of northern and central Eurasia, the Mute Swan was introduced into North America to grace the ponds of parks and estates. Escaped individuals have established breeding populations in several areas, where their aggressive behavior threatens native waterfowl.

## Cool Facts

- Downy young Mute Swans (called cygnets) come in two color morphs: a gray form and a white form. The gray (or "Royal") chicks start off with gray down and grow in gray-brown and white feathers, giving them a mottled look. White (or "Polish") chicks have all white down and juvenal feathers. Adults of the white morph may have pink or gray legs and feet instead of black, but otherwise the adults look alike.
- The Mute Swan is reported to mate for life. However, changing of mates does occur infrequently, and swans will remate if their partner dies. If a male loses his mate and pairs with a young female, she joins him on his territory. If he mates with an older female, they go to hers. If a female loses her mate, she remates quickly and usually chooses a younger male.
- The black knob at the base of the male Mute Swan's bill swells during the breeding season and becomes noticeably larger than the female's. The rest of the year the difference between the sexes is not obvious.

## Description

[top](#)

- Size: 127-152 cm (50-60 in)
- Wingspan: 208-238 cm (82-94 in)

- Weight: 5500-14300 g (194.15-504.79 ounces)
- Large, all-white waterfowl.
- Long, curved neck.
- Orange bill and black face.

### Sex Differences

Sexes look alike, male slightly larger and with larger knob on bill.

### Immature

Dirty gray or white. Legs gray or pinkish. Bill gray or tan, turning pinkish. Bill knob lacking or small. Lores white and feathered, turning black.

### Similar Species

- **Tundra Swan** and **Trumpeter Swan** have all black bills without knobs and straight necks. Juveniles have pink bills, but show varying amounts of black as they age.
- **Snow Goose** smaller and with shorter neck, black wingtips, pink bill.
- **Domestic goose** smaller, with shorter neck, and pink or orange legs.
- **White Pelican** has short neck, large yellow or orange bill, orange legs, and black flight feathers.

### Sound

Not mute. Calls quiet and do not carry. A snorting "heorrh." Hisses aggressively. Wings make singing noise in flight.

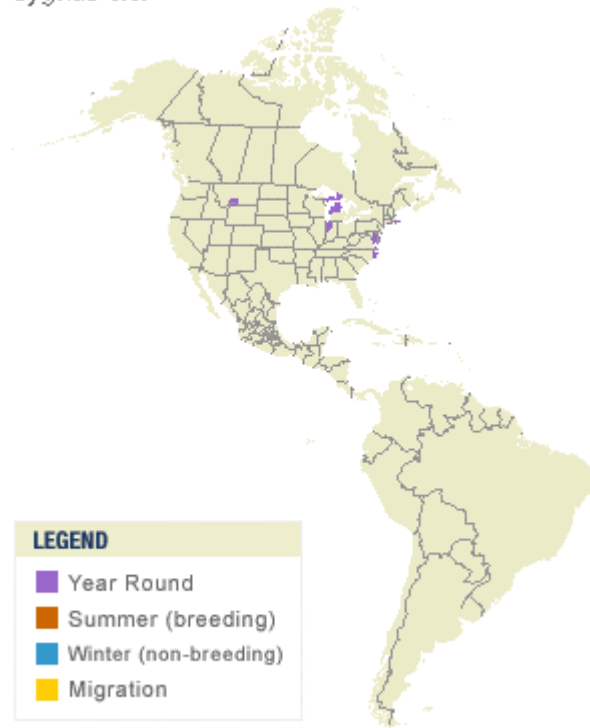
» [listen to songs of this species](#)  
[top](#)

### Range

**Range Map**

## Mute Swan

*Cygnus olor*



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe

© 2004 Cornell Lab of Ornithology

[About the map](#)

### Summer Range

Introduced. Resident along Atlantic Coast from New Hampshire southward to Virginia, around the Great Lakes, and in Pacific Northwest. Captives and escapees may be seen throughout North America. Native across Eurasia.

### Habitat

Prefers shallow coastal ponds, estuaries, ponds, bogs, and streams flowing into lakes.

### Food

Aquatic plants and some aquatic animals.

### Behavior

### Foraging

Tips-up to reach submerged aquatic vegetation.

### Reproduction

## Nest Type

Nest an open bowl in a large mound of aquatic vegetation, grasses, and rushes, lined with softer vegetation and a little down. Usually placed on mound on bank, island, or reed bed.

## Egg Description

Blue-green when laid, turn white, then brown with staining.

## Clutch Size

Usually 5-8 eggs. Range: 1-11.

## Condition at Hatching

Covered with down and eyes open. Leaves nest within 24 hours of hatching and has the ability to swim and feed.

[top](#)

## Conservation Status

As an introduced species it is of concern because of its effects on native wildlife. Its aggressive nature can disrupt the nesting of native waterfowl. It is protected in some states, but not others. Some states are attempting to control Mute Swan numbers.

## Other Names

Cygne tuberculé (French)  
Cisne vulgar (Spanish)

## Sources used to construct this page:

[top](#)

1. Ciaranca, M. A., C. C. Allin, and G. S. Jones. 1997. Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*). In [The Birds of North America](#), No. 273 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
2. Cramp, S., and K. E. L. Simmons (eds.) 1977. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Vol. I. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

[Summary species account »](#)



## Bird Guide

Species Accounts

Video Gallery

## Northern Shoveler

*Anas clypeata*

Order ANSERIFORMES - Family ANATIDAE - Subfamily Anatinae

▶ Summary Page

▼ Detailed Page

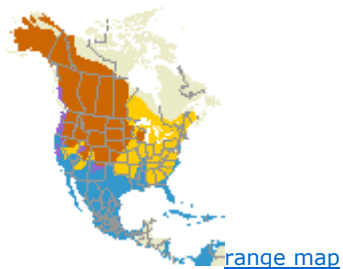
For complete Life History Information on this species, visit [Birds of North America Online](#).



+ zoom

Northern Shoveler, male, breeding plumage

[About the photographs](#)



[range map](#)

MULTIMEDIA



[Play sound from this species](#)



[+ zoom](#)

Northern Shoveler, female

## Menu

1. [Cool Facts](#)
2. [Description](#)
3. [Similar Species](#)
4. [Sound](#)
5. [Range](#)
6. [Habitat](#)
7. [Food](#)
8. [Behavior](#)
9. [Reproduction](#)
10. [Conservation Status](#)
11. [Other Names](#)

Perhaps the most outwardly distinctive of the dabbling ducks, the Northern Shoveler inhabits wetlands across much of North America. Its elongated, spoon-shaped bill has comblike projections along its edges, which filter out food from the water.

## Cool Facts

- The bill of the Northern Shoveler is about 6.5 cm (2.5 inches) long. The bill has about 110 fine projections (called lamellae) along the edges, for straining food from water.
- Northern Shoveler pairs are monogamous, and remain together longer than pairs of other dabbling duck species.
- When flushed off the nest, a female Northern Shoveler often defecates on its eggs, apparently to deter predators.

## Description

[top](#)

- Size: 44-51 cm (17-20 in)
- Weight: 400-820 g (14.12-28.95 ounces)
- Medium-sized duck.
- Very long bill, wider at tip than at base.
- Male with iridescent green head, white chest, and rusty sides.
- Top of wing with a large light blue patch near the front and a line of green feathers along the rear.

- White under the wings.
- Legs orange.

## Sex Differences

Breeding male is gaudy, with a dark green head, black bill, white chest, and chestnut flanks. Female is subtly colored and patterned overall, in gray, brown, and black.

## Male

**Breeding (Alternate) Plumage:** Head dark glossy green. Bill black. Back black. Chest white. Flanks and belly chestnut-brown. Eyes yellow.

**Eclipse (Basic) Plumage:** Duller. Head and breast brownish black speckled with whitish or tan. Back black with tan feather edges. Flanks light brown. May show indistinct white crescent on face behind bill. Eyes yellow.

## Female

Grayish-brown overall; some feathers have light edging with darker centers. Bill olive-green with yellowish base and edges. Eyes brown.

## Immature

Similar to adult female.

## Similar Species

- **Mallard** has chestnut chest and pale flanks, as well as a smaller greenish yellow bill.
- **Blue-winged Teal** and **Cinnamon Teal** have similar wing pattern in all plumages, but are smaller with much smaller bills.
- Adult female and immature Northern Shoveler distantly resemble females and immatures of other duck species, but are easily distinguished by their very long bills.

## Sound

Male gives a nasal bray in fall courtship. Female makes various quacks. Also makes a rattling noise, unique among dabbling ducks, upon taking flight.

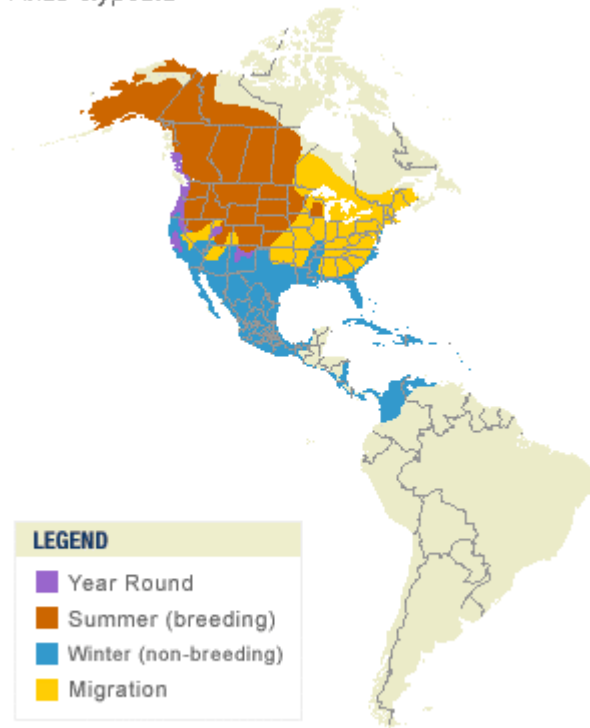
»[listen to songs of this species](#)  
[top](#)

## Range

### Range Map

## Northern Shoveler

*Anas clypeata*



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe

© 2004 Cornell Lab of Ornithology

[About the map](#)

### Summer Range

Breeds from northern Alaska eastward to Manitoba and Minnesota and southward to the Central Valley of California and northern New Mexico. Also locally across eastern Canada and along Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway. Also in northern Eurasia from Britain to Siberia.

### Winter Range

Winters throughout much of the southern and southwestern United States, Mexico, western Central America, and the Caribbean. Also in southern Europe, Africa, and southern Asia.

### Habitat

Breeds in open, shallow wetlands. In winter, inhabits both freshwater and saline marshes.

### Food

Small swimming invertebrates and some seeds.

### Behavior

### Foraging



Forages by swimming along with bill lowered into the water, straining out small crustaceans and other invertebrates. It does not commonly tip its head and upper body forward into the water.

### **Courtship**

Males exhibit elaborate courtship behavior, including various calls, turns, dips, and wing flaps.

### **Reproduction**

#### **Nest Type**

A simple scrape lined with down and usually surrounded on at least three sides by vegetation. Placed in short vegetation near water.

#### **Egg Description**

Pale greenish gray or olive-buff.

#### **Clutch Size**

8-12 eggs.

#### **Condition at Hatching**

Covered in down and able to walk and swim.

[top](#)

### **Conservation Status**

Breeding populations appear to be relatively stable.

### **Other Names**

Canard souchet (French)

Pato chucharrón norteño (Spanish)

Shoveler (English)

### **Sources used to construct this page:**

[top](#)

Dubowy, P. J. 1996. Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*). In [The Birds of North America](#), No. 217 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and the American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

[Summary species account »](#)

## Bird Guide

Species Accounts

Video Gallery

## Snow Goose

*Chen caerulescens*

Order ANSERIFORMES - Family ANATIDAE - Subfamily Anserinae

► Summary Page

▼ Detailed Page

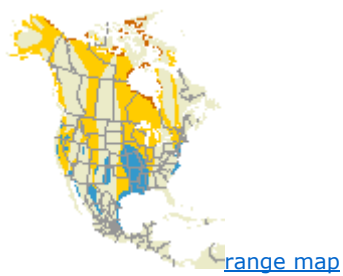
For complete Life History Information on this species, visit [Birds of North America Online](#).



[+ zoom](#)

Snow Goose, adult, white-morph

[About the photographs](#)



[range map](#)

## MULTIMEDIA

 [Play sound from this species](#)



[+ zoom](#)

Snow Goose, juvenile (left) and adult; white-morph; NM; Dec.



[+ zoom](#)

Snow Goose, adult, blue-morph



[+ zoom](#)

Snow Goose, juvenile, blue-morph

## Menu

1. [Cool Facts](#)
2. [Description](#)
3. [Similar Species](#)

4. [Sound](#)
5. [Range](#)
6. [Habitat](#)
7. [Food](#)
8. [Behavior](#)
9. [Reproduction](#)
10. [Conservation Status](#)
11. [Other Names](#)

A medium-sized goose that breeds on the arctic tundra, the Snow Goose travels south in very large, high-flying, noisy flocks. The swirling white of a descending flock suggests snow, but among the white birds are darker individuals. Until recently, the Blue Geese, as the dark birds were called, were considered a separate species. They are now recognized as merely a dark form (or "morph") of the Snow Goose.

### Cool Facts

- Snow Goose hunting in the eastern United States was stopped in 1916 because of low population levels. Hunting was allowed again in 1975 after populations had increased. Populations have been growing so large that the geese are destroying nesting habitat. Hunting has not slowed the dramatic increases in population size.
- One nest was found to be attended by two female Snow Geese, but no male. Each female had been inseminated by a different male and both incubated the eggs.
- The dark color of the blue morph Snow Goose is controlled by a single gene, with dark being partially dominant over white. If a pure dark goose mates with a white goose, the offspring will all be dark (possibly with white bellies). If two white geese mate, they have only white offspring. If two dark geese mate, they will have mostly dark offspring, but might have a few white ones too.
- Parents stay with their young through the first winter. Families travel together on both the southbound and northbound migrations, separating only after they return to the arctic breeding grounds. Family groups can easily be seen in migrating and wintering flocks.

### Description

[top](#)

- Size: 69-83 cm (27-33 in)
- Wingspan: 138 cm (54 in)
- Weight: 1600-3300 g (56.48-116.49 ounces)
  
- Medium-sized goose.
- Black patch on bill edges, the "grinning patch" or "smile."
- Two color forms.
- White morph: White all over, except for black primaries.
- Blue morph: White head and front of neck, body dark gray-brown.
  
- Bill pink.
- Legs dark pink.
- Eyes dark.
- White morph may have rusty-orange staining on head and neck.
- Blue morph has wing coverts gray, rump pale gray, tail dark gray. Belly may be white.

### Sex Differences

Sexes look alike, male larger.

### Immature

White morph: Gray above, darker on head and neck. White below. Legs, feet, and bill gray, turning pink. Blue morph: Entirely dark gray-brown. Belly paler to white. White under tail. Wing linings pale gray, contrast with dark body and black primaries in flight.

### Similar Species

- **Ross's Goose** smaller, has much smaller triangular bill without grin patch, has warty green base to bill, and a straight, not curved base of bill on side of face.

### Sound

Noisy. Call a loud nasal "whouk." Calls at any hour, in any season, from any location.

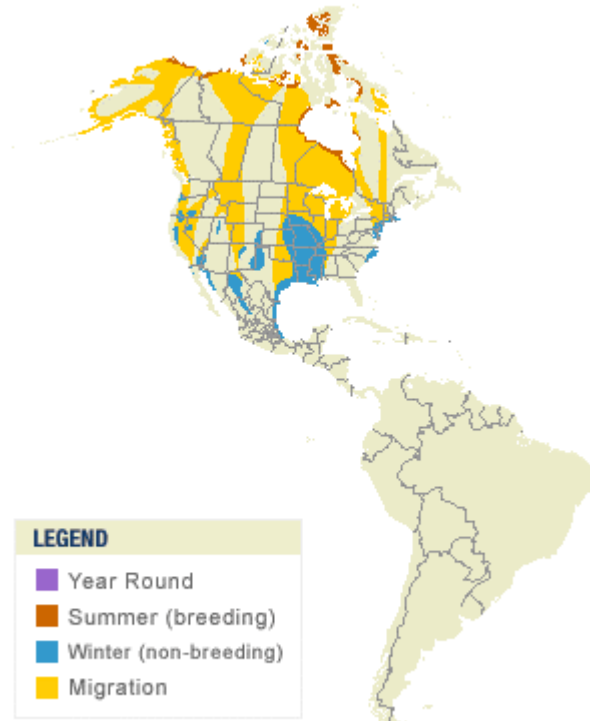
»[listen to songs of this species](#)  
[top](#)

### Range

#### Range Map

#### Snow Goose

*Chen caerulescens*



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe

© 2003 Cornell Lab of Ornithology

[About the map](#)

### Summer Range

Breeds in scattered colonies north of the tree line from northern Alaska across arctic Canada to Greenland. Also in northeastern Siberia.

## Winter Range

Winters primarily in central California, western Gulf Coast, and the middle Atlantic coast. Also in lesser numbers in Pacific Northwest, in the central states, and the Southwest and central Mexico.

## Habitat

- Breeds on subarctic and arctic tundra, near ponds or streams.
- Winters in coastal marshes and bays, wet grasslands, freshwater marshes, and cultivated fields.

## Food

Entirely vegetarian. Eats variety of plant species and parts, from aquatic plants to grasses and grain.

## Behavior

### Foraging

Feeds in water-logged soil or shallow water.

### Courtship

Courtship displays and pairing take place in spring, during a goose's second spring migration. Pairs remain together for life.

## Reproduction

### Nest Type

Nest a scrape in the ground lined with plant material and down feathers.

### Egg Description

Creamy white to dirty gray.

### Clutch Size

Usually 2-6 eggs.

### Condition at Hatching

Covered with down and eyes open. Leaves nest within 24 hours of hatching with the ability to swim and feed. [top](#)

## Conservation Status

Populations have been growing exponentially in most parts of thier ranges. some colonies are becoming so large that the geese are destroying nesting habitat, and hunting is proposed to decrease the populations.

## Other Names

Oie blanche, Oie bleue, Oie des neiges (French)

Ganso blanco (Spanish)

**Sources used to construct this page:**

[top](#)

Mowbray, T. B., F. Cooke, and B. Ganter. 2000. Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 514 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.

[Summary species account »](#)

## [Bird Guide](#)

[Species Accounts](#)

[Video Gallery](#)

## Trumpeter Swan

*Cygnus buccinator*

Order ANSERIFORMES - Family ANATIDAE

▼ **Summary Page**

► **Detailed Page**

For complete Life History Information on this species, visit [Birds of North America Online](#).



[+ zoom](#)

Trumpeter Swan, adult  
[About the photographs](#)



[About the map](#)

MULTIMEDIA



[Play sound from this species](#)





[+ zoom](#)

Trumpeter Swan, juvenile

## Menu

1. [Description](#)
2. [Sound](#)
3. [Conservation Status](#)
4. [Other Names](#)
5. [Cool Facts](#)
6. [Full detailed species account](#)

The largest of North American waterfowl, the Trumpeter Swan is resident throughout much of its range, but migratory in other parts. Its was reduced to near extinction by the early 20th century, but it is relatively common today.

## Description

[top](#)

- Large, all-white waterfowl.
- Long, straight neck.
- Black bill and face.
  
- Size: 138-158 cm (54-62 in)
- Wingspan: 203 cm (80 in)
- Weight: 7700-12700 g (271.81-448.31 ounces)

## Sex Differences

Sexes look alike; male slightly larger.

## Sound

Call a hollow, nasal honking. Wings make raspy noise in flight.

»[listen to songs of this species](#)

[top](#)

## Conservation Status

Original declines were the result of commercial trade in swan skins and excessive hunting. Populations generally increasing. Several states and provinces have programs to reintroduce Trumpeter Swans.

## Other Names

Cygne trompette (French)

Cisne (Spanish)

## Cool Facts

- The Trumpeter Swan was hunted for its feathers throughout the 1600s - 1800s, causing a tremendous decline in its numbers. Its largest flight feathers made what were considered to be the best quality quill pens.
- Swans can live a long time. Wild Trumpeter Swans have been known to live longer than 24 years, and one captive individual lived to be 32.
- Trumpeter Swans form pair bonds when they are three or four years old. The pair stays together throughout the year, moving together in migratory populations. Trumpeters are assumed to mate for life, but some individuals do switch mates over their lifetimes. Some males that lost their mates did not mate again.

## Sources used to construct this page:

[top](#)

Mitchell, Carl D. 1994. Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*). In [The Birds of North America](#), No. 105 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

[Full detailed species account »](#)



## Bird Guide

[Species Accounts](#)

[Video Gallery](#)

## Tundra Swan

*Cygnus columbianus*

Order ANSERIFORMES - Family ANATIDAE

► [Summary Page](#)

▼ [Detailed Page](#)

For complete Life History Information on this species, visit [Birds of North America Online](#).



© William L. Newton/CLO

[+ zoom](#)

Tundra Swan, adult

[About the photographs](#)



[range map](#)

MULTIMEDIA



[Play sound from this species](#)



[+ zoom](#)

Tundra Swan, adult, July

## Menu

1. [Cool Facts](#)
2. [Description](#)
3. [Similar Species](#)
4. [Sound](#)
5. [Range](#)
6. [Habitat](#)
7. [Food](#)
8. [Behavior](#)
9. [Reproduction](#)
10. [Conservation Status](#)
11. [Other Names](#)

True to its name, the Tundra Swan breeds on the high tundra across the top of North America. It winters in large flocks along both coasts, and is frequently encountered during its migration across the continent.

## Cool Facts

- The whistling swan, the American race of the Tundra Swan, currently is considered the same species as the Eurasian race, the Bewick's swan. They were considered separate species in the past, distinguished by the large yellow patches on the face of the Bewick's swan.
- During the breeding season the Tundra Swan sleeps almost entirely on land, but in the winter it sleeps more often on water.
- Swan nests on the tundra are vulnerable to a host of predators, such as foxes, weasels, jaegers, and gulls. If the parents are present, they are able to defend the nest and nestlings from these threats. Wolves, people, and bears, however, are too big to fight, and most incubating swans leave their nests while these large predators are far away. By leaving quickly when large predators approach, the parents may make the nest harder to find.
- The Tundra Swan stays in flocks except when on a breeding territory. Although most swans spread out to breed, a large proportion of the population on the breeding grounds still can be found in flocks. These swans are not breeding, and may be young birds that have not yet bred, adult pairs whose breeding attempts failed, or adults that bred in the past but for some reason do not in that year.

## Description

[top](#)

- Size: 120-147 cm (47-58 in)

- Wingspan: 168 cm (66 in)
- Weight: 3800-10500 g (134.14-370.65 ounces)
- Large, all-white waterfowl.
- Long, straight neck.
- Black bill and face.
- Wings pure white.
- Legs black.
- Yellow spot of variable size in front of eye; may be absent.
- Eyes black.
- Black of face constricts in front of eyes.
- U-shaped indentation of white forehead into bill.
- Head rounded.
- Bill slightly concave on top edge.

### Sex Differences

Sexes look alike, male slightly larger.

### Immature

Dirty white all over. Legs gray-pink, turning dull black. Bill pinkish gray, turning black at base and towards tip; turns completely black.

### Similar Species

- **Trumpeter Swan** without yellow spot in front of eyes. Bill profile flat. Eye more connected to black facial skin, without constriction in front of eye. Border of bill and forehead in deep V-shape from above. Voice deeper.
- **Mute Swan** with curved neck, orange bill.
- **Snow Goose** smaller and with shorter neck, black wingtips, pink bill.
- **Domestic goose** smaller, with shorter neck, and pink or orange bill and legs.
- **White Pelican** has short neck, large yellow or orange bill, orange legs, and black flight feathers.

### Sound

Call a goose-like honking.

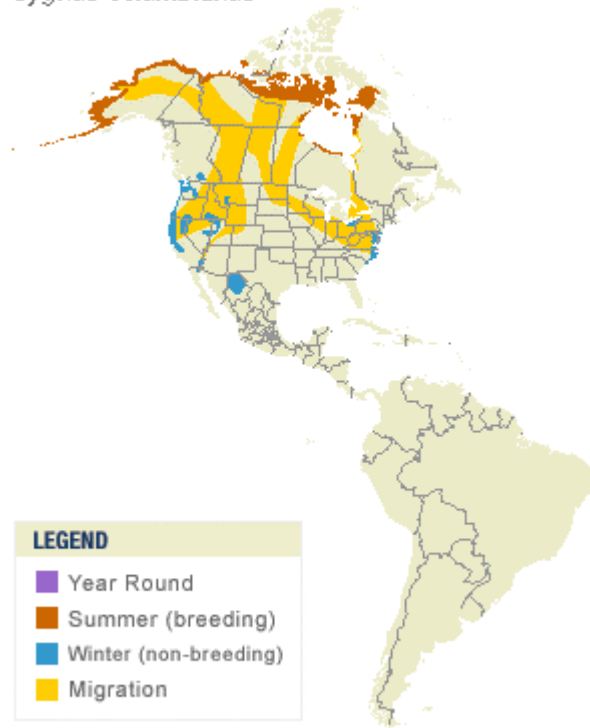
» [listen to songs of this species](#)  
[top](#)

### Range

**Range Map**

## Tundra Swan

*Cygnus columbianus*



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe

© 2004 Cornell Lab of Ornithology

[About the map](#)

### Summer Range

Breeds along northern coastline from western Alaska to northern Quebec and Nunavut. Also in eastern Siberia.

### Winter Range

Winters primarily on Pacific Coast from southern British Columbia to southern California, and along Atlantic Coast from New Jersey southward to South Carolina. Also in interior West and the Great Lakes where open water is available.

### Habitat

Breeds on tundra lakes, ponds, and pools along coast. Winters in shallow estuaries, lakes, ponds, and rivers; feeds in agricultural fields.

### Food

Aquatic plants, seeds, tubers, grains, some mollusks and arthropods.

### Behavior

### Foraging

Tips up to reach aquatic vegetation, grazes on grass. Feeds in flocks.

## Reproduction

### Nest Type

Nest a large open bowl, made of grasses, sedges, lichens, and moss, lined with only a little down. Usually placed on mound or ridge in tundra.

### Egg Description

Creamy white.

### Clutch Size

3-5 eggs.

### Condition at Hatching

Covered with down and eyes open. Leaves nest within 24 hours of hatching and has the ability to swim and feed.

[top](#)

## Conservation Status

Common and may be increasing. As a game species, populations managed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Canadian Wildlife Service.

## Other Names

Cygne siffleur (French)  
Cisne chiflador (Spanish)  
Whistling Swan (English)

## Sources used to construct this page:

[top](#)

1. Bellrose, F. C. 1976. *Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America*. Stackpole Books, Harrisburg, PA.
2. Limpert, R. J., and S. L. Earnst. 1994. Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*). In [The Birds of North America](#), No. 89 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

[Summary species account »](#)



## Bird Guide

Species Accounts

Video Gallery

## Wood Duck

*Aix sponsa*

Order ANSERIFORMES - Family ANATIDAE - Subfamily Anatinae

► Summary Page

▼ Detailed Page

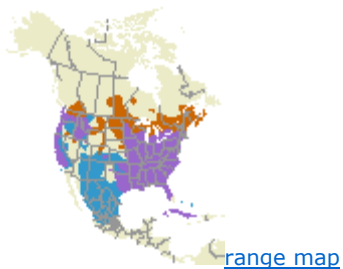
For complete Life History Information on this species, visit [Birds of North America Online](#).



+ zoom

Wood Duck, male, breeding plumage

[About the photographs](#)



[range map](#)

### MULTIMEDIA



[Play sound from this species](#)





[+ zoom](#)

Wood Duck, female, Iroquois NWR NY



[+ zoom](#)

Wood Duck, male, non-breeding plumage

## Menu

1. [Cool Facts](#)
2. [Description](#)
3. [Similar Species](#)
4. [Sound](#)
5. [Range](#)
6. [Habitat](#)
7. [Food](#)
8. [Behavior](#)
9. [Reproduction](#)
10. [Conservation Status](#)
11. [Other Names](#)

A colorful duck of wooded swamps and streamsides, the Wood Duck is one of only a few North American ducks that nest in trees. Many people consider it to be the most beautiful of all waterfowl.

## Cool Facts

- Natural cavities for nesting are scarce, and the Wood Duck readily uses nest boxes provided for it. If nest boxes are placed too close together, many females lay eggs in the nests of other females. These "dump" nests can have up to 40 eggs.
- The Wood Duck nests in trees near water, sometimes directly over water, but other times up to 2 km (1.2 mi) away. After hatching, the ducklings jump down from the nest tree and make their way to water. The mother calls them to her, but does not help them in any way. The ducklings may jump from heights of up to 89 m (290 ft) without injury.

- The Wood Duck is a popular game bird, and is second only to the Mallard in numbers shot each year in the United States.
- Wood Ducks pair up in January, and most birds arriving at the breeding grounds in the spring are already paired. The Wood Duck is the only North American duck that regularly produces two broods in one year.

## Description

[top](#)

- Size: 47-54 cm (19-21 in)
  - Wingspan: 66-73 cm (26-29 in)
  - Weight: 454-862 g (16.03-30.43 ounces)
- 
- Medium-sized duck.
  - Crest on head.
  - Long tail.
  - White patches in face.
- 
- Long, broad wings.
  - Small triangular bill.
  - Iridescent blue-green patch (speculum) on rear of wing, with white trailing edge.
  - Male colorful and distinctive.

## Sex Differences

Male brightly patterned, female dull gray brown.

### Male

**Breeding (Alternate) Plumage:** Head iridescent green and purple. Long crest green, purple. Thin white line extending from bill, over the eye, to the back of the crest. Throat white with two finger-like projections onto face and neck. Bill red, with thin yellow at base and dark tip. Eyes red. Chest deep reddish. White stripe extending up side of chest; black bar behind it. Sides yellowish gold, bordered in black and surrounded by white line. Back black with metallic sheen. Undertail reddish violet. Tail black with bronzy sheen. Belly white.

**Nonbreeding (Basic) Plumage:** Head and body gray. Head without long crest, but bushy. Throat white with extension up face and neck. Crown dark. Thin white line extending behind eye. Wings iridescent bluish. Bill dull red.

### Female

Bushy crest on head. Head and cheek gray with bronze and purple sheen. White area around eye, tapers to rear. Chin and throat white. Upperparts olive or gray with metallic sheen. Breast gray-brown with tan streaks. Belly and under tail white. Sides brown. Tail dark. Bill dark with thin white line at base.

### Immature

Similar to adult female. Upperparts brownish gray. Cheek light gray. White circle around eye. Throat white, with projections onto face and neck in males. Crown dark. Dark stripe extending back from eye.

## Similar Species

- Breeding male unmistakable.
- Female **Hooded Merganser** similarly shaped and in same habitats, but lacks white around eye, lacks

any streaking on body, and has white, not green, in the speculum.

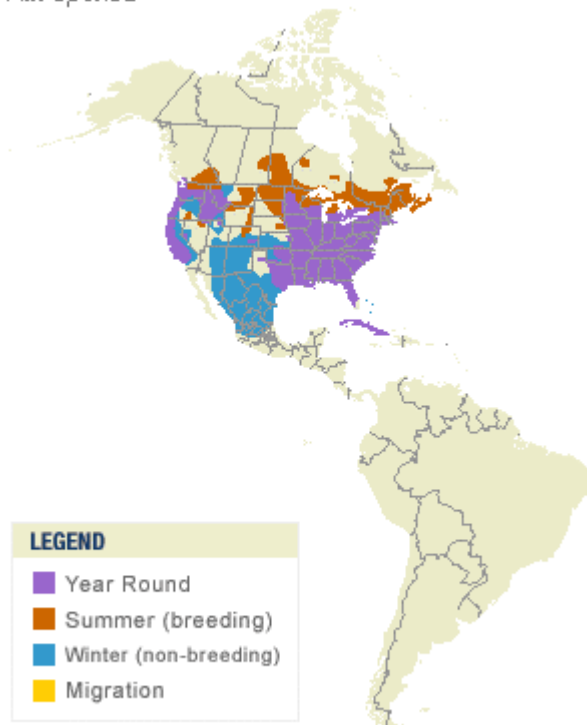
## Sound

Female makes loud "oo-eek, oo-eek" when disturbed and taking flight. Male has thin, rising and falling zeeting whistle.

»[listen to songs of this species](#)  
[top](#)

## Range

### Range Map Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe

© 2003 Cornell Lab of Ornithology

[About the map](#)

## Summer Range

Breeds from southern Canada, throughout the eastern half of the United States, southward to Cuba. In the West, breeds from British Columbia southward along Pacific Coast to southern California, and at scattered locations inland.

## Winter Range

Winters in southern three-quarters of breeding range, and in Southwest.

## Habitat

Found in forested wetlands, including along rivers, swamps, marshes, ponds, and lakes.

## Food

Seeds, acorns, fruits, aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates.

## Behavior

### Foraging

Moves rapidly and pecks and dabbles on water surface. May tip-up or dive for submerged food items.

## Reproduction

### Nest Type

Nest in preformed cavities in trees or nest boxes. Lined with down from female's breast.

### Egg Description

Glossy creamy white to tan.

### Clutch Size

Usually 6-15 eggs. Range: 6-40.

### Condition at Hatching

Hatch covered in down and able to leave the nest soon after.

[top](#)

## Conservation Status

Declined dramatically in late 19th century, but recovered in 20th. Current populations stable or increasing.

## Other Names

Canard branchu (French)

Pato de charreteras (Spanish)

## Sources used to construct this page:

[top](#)

Hepp, G. R., and F. C. Bellrose. 1995. Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 169 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

[Summary species account »](#)

