

Waterfowl Identification

WFS 536

Order
Anseriformes



Anas acuta

Family
Anatidae

Matthew J. Gray
University of Tennessee

Subfamily *Anserinae*

Tribe *Dendrocygnini*



**Whistling or
Treeducks**

Tribe *Cygnini*



Swans

Tribe *Anserini*



True Geese

Fulvous Whistling Duck

(Dendrocygna bicolor)



Prefers
Herbaceous
Vegetation

13 in. BL

36 in. WS

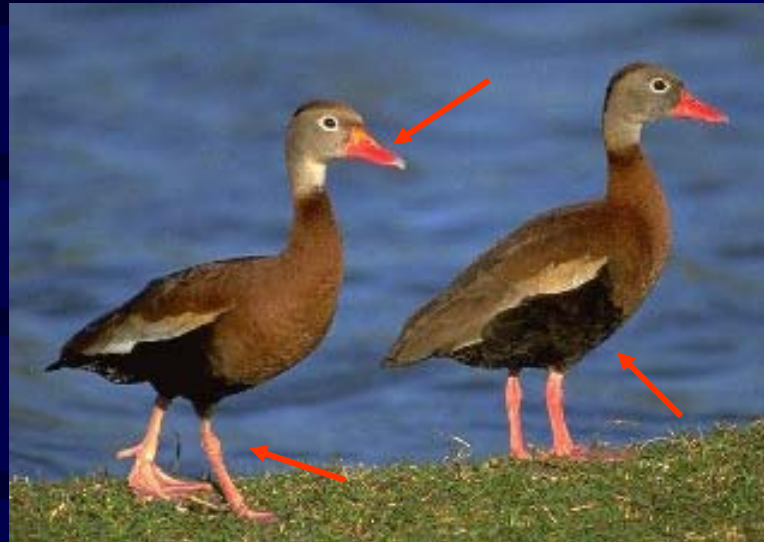
- Large, long-legged, long-necked duck
 - **Dark bill and dark Legs**
 - **Chestnut Belly**

“Mostly Tropical and Nocturnal”

Black-bellied Whistling Duck

(Dendrocygna autumnalis)

Prefers
Nesting in
Trees



13 in. BL

37 in. WS

- Large, long-legged, long-necked duck
- **Bright Orange Bill and Pink Legs**
- **Black Belly**

“Mostly Tropical and Nocturnal”

Mute Swan

(*Cygnus olor*)

“The Most
Aggressive
Swan in NA”



40 in. BL

90 in. WS

- Large, long-necked waterbird with entirely white plumage and black legs and feet
 - Neck held in distinctive "S" curve
- Orange bill with black base; knob above bill

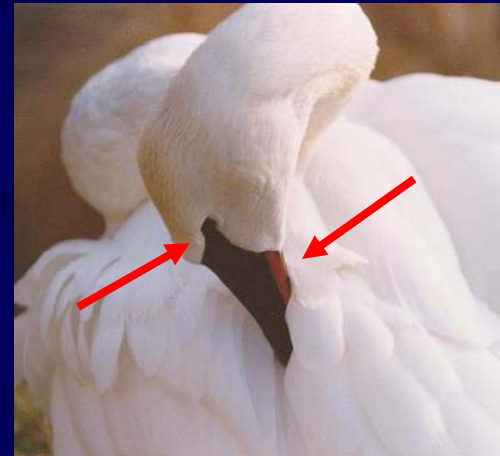
Trumpeter Swan

45 in. BL

95 in. WS

(*Cygnus buccinator*)

Largest NA
Waterfowl



- Large, long-necked waterbird with entirely white plumage and black legs and feet
 - Long neck usually held straight up
- Long, solid black bill that extends to eye but does not encircle it

36 in. BL
85 in. WS

Tundra Swan

(*Cygnus columbianus*)

Waterfowl w/ the
most feathers
(ca. 25,000)



- Large, long-necked waterbird with entirely white plumage and black legs and feet
 - Long neck usually held straight up
- Long, slightly concave black bill that extends to eye ending in a yellow “tear drop”

White-fronted Goose

(*Anser albifrons*)

20 in. BL
60 in. WS



- Medium-sized long-necked goose
 - **Mostly brown plumage**
- **White patch at base of pink or orange bill**
 - **Irregular black flecking on belly**
 - **Orange legs and feet**

Snow Goose

(*Chen caerulescens*)

19 in. BL



58 in. WS

- Medium-sized Goose

- Pink bill w/ black patch along mandibles

Blue Morph

- Throat white
- White-edged scapulars

White Morph

- Entirely white plumage
- Black primaries

Canada Goose

(*Branta canadensis*)

11 Races

B. c. maxima

B. c. minima



16-25 in. BL
50-68 in. WS
4-13 lbs

- Small to large long-necked goose
 - **Black bill, head, and neck**
- **White throat patch extends up to cheek**
- **Brown** back, upper wing, and flanks

Subfamily *Anatinae*

Tribe *Cairinini*



Perching Ducks

Tribe *Anatini*



Dabbling Ducks

Tribe *Aythya*



Diving Ducks

Tribe *Mergini*



Sea Ducks

Tribe *Oxyurini*



Stiff-tailed Ducks

Wood Duck

(*Aix sponsa*)

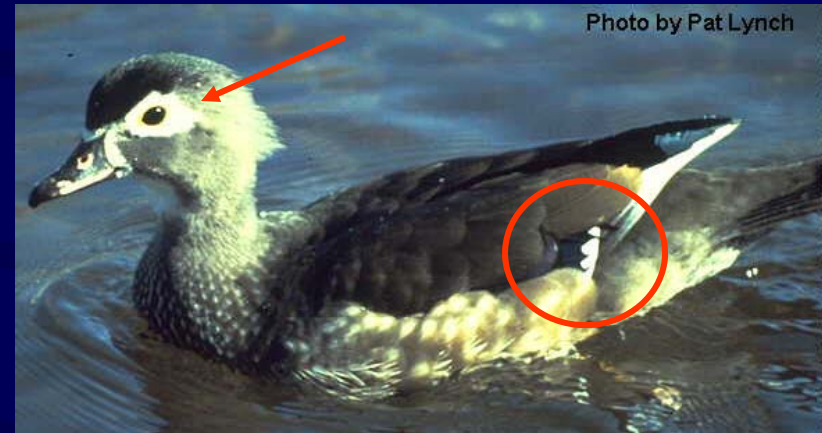
13 in. BL

28 in. WS



Drake

- **Red bill and eye**
- **Green head**
- **White throat and cheek stripe**
- **Chestnut breast**
- **Golden flanks**



Hen

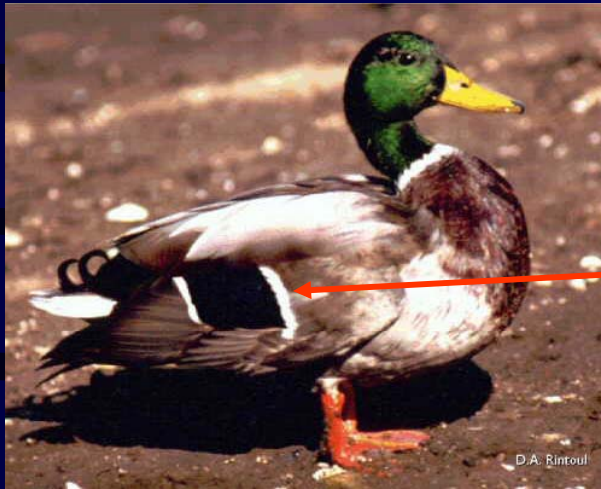
- **Gray bill**
- **White teardrop around eye and edge of secondaries**
- **White throat**
- **Gray-brown head and body**

Mallard

16 in. BL

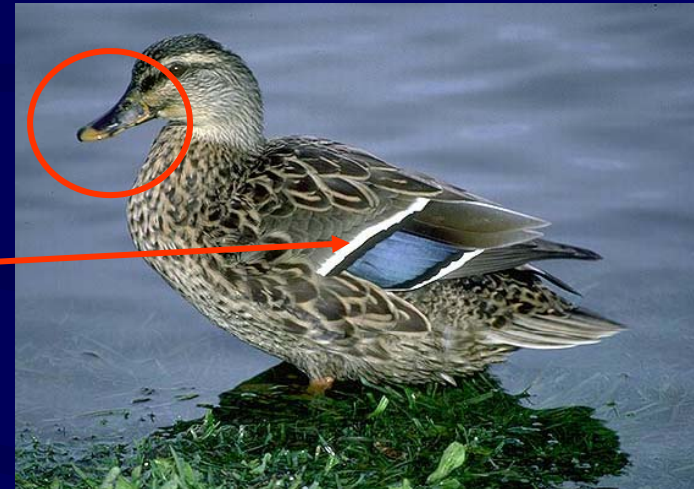
(*Anas platyrhynchos*)

36 in. WS



Drake

- **Green head**
- **Yellow or olive bill**
- **White ring around neck**
 - **Chestnut breast**
- **Gray belly and flanks**



Hen

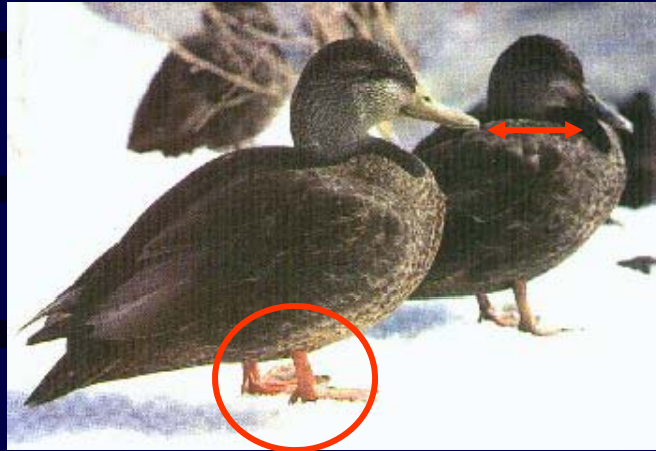
- **Orange bill with black central patch**
- **Dark cap and eye line**
- **Mottled brown/tan plumage**

American Black Duck

16 in. BL

(*Anas rubripes*)

36 in. WS



“A Forest Duck”



Drake

- Dark **brown** head & body
- Dark **blue** speculum **not** bordered by white
- **Greenish-yellow** bill
 - **Bright red** legs

Hen

- Dark **brown** head & body
- Dark **blue** speculum **not** bordered by white
- **Green** bill with **black saddle**
 - **Orange** legs

American Green-winged Teal

(*Anas crecca carolinensis*)



“The fastest duck in NA”

10.5 in. BL

- Very small-bodied duck

24 in. WS

Drake

- Rust colored head with green post-ocular patch
- Black bill

Hen

- Light brown head and body
- Dark gray bill

Blue-winged Teal

(*Anas discors*)



11 in. BL

• Very small-bodied duck

24 in. WS

- **Green** speculum BUT **blue** in lesser and middle coverts

Drake

Hen

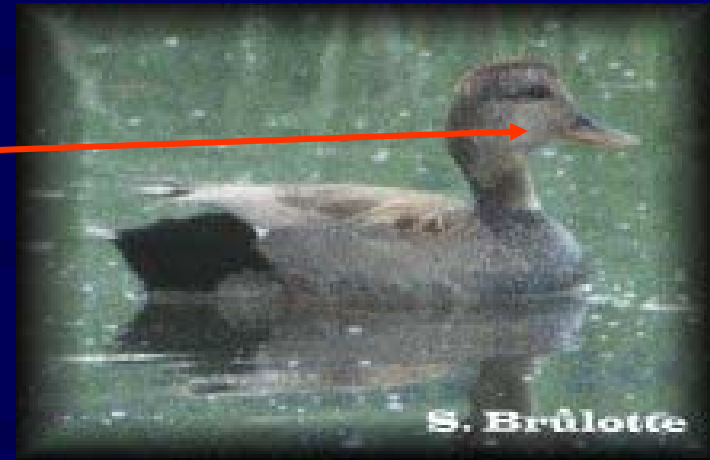
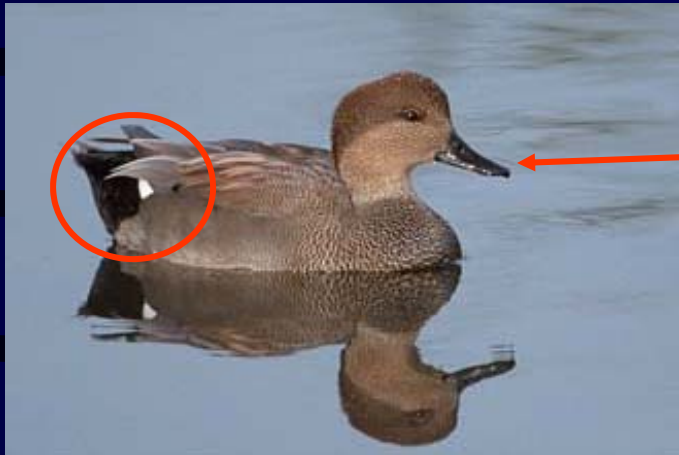
- **Blue-iridescent head**
- **White crescent patch**
- **Buff breast & flanks w/ spots**
- **Light brown head**
- **Dark brown crown**
- **Mottled gray-brown body**

Gadwall

(*Anas strepera*)

14.5 in. BL

35 in. WS



- Average-sized bodied duck with steep forehead
- White speculum (*only dabbler*) and black rump

Drake

- **Black bill**

Hen

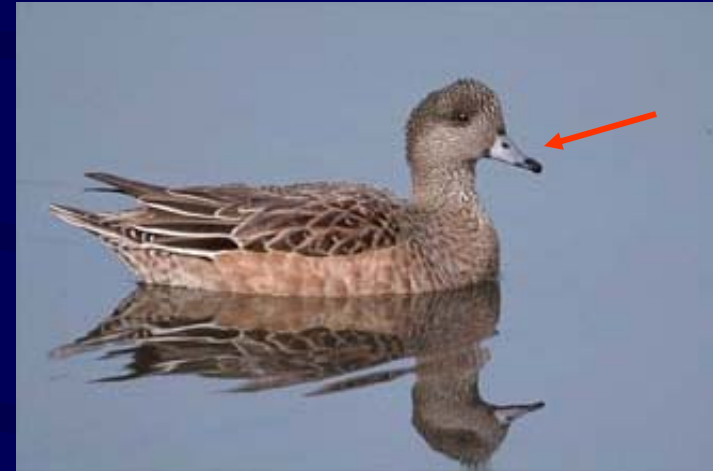
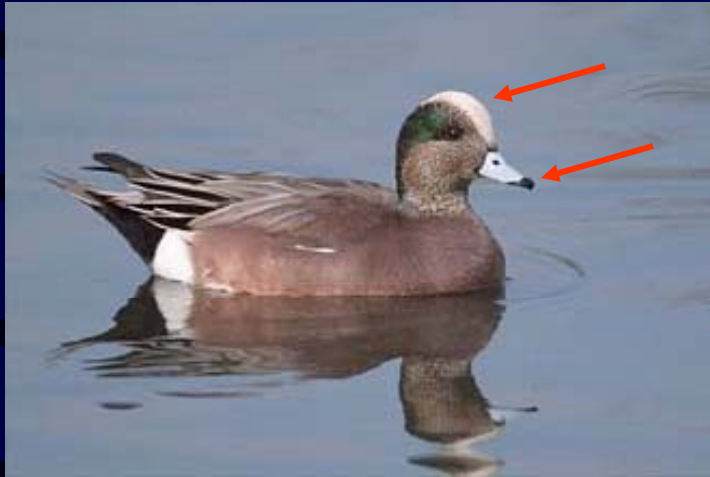
- Gray **bill with orange edges**

American Wigeon

(*Anas americana*)

14 in. BL

34 in. WS



- Blue bill with black nail

- White secondary coverts (grayer in females)

Drake

- White crown
- Green post-ocular stripe
- Rusty breast and flanks

Hen

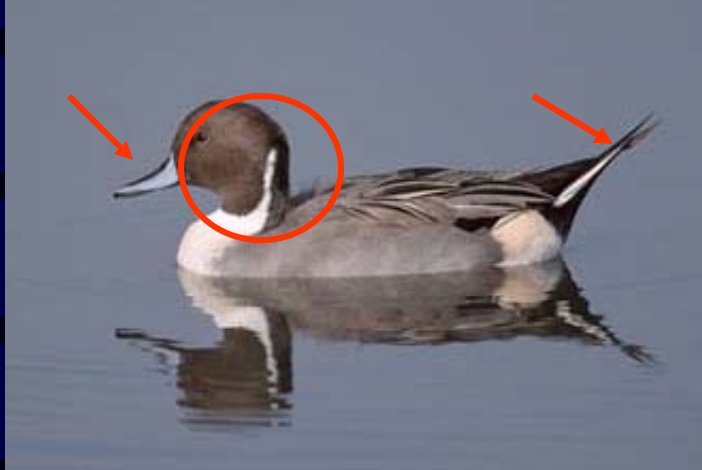
- Mottled body w/rusty flanks contrasting w/ head & neck
- Dusky eye patch

Northern Pintail

18.5 in. BL

(*Anas acuta*)

35 in. WS



- Dull blue bill with black culmen stripe
- Very long neck, small head and attenuated retrices

Drake

- Dark brown head
- White chest & neck extending into latitudinal stripe

Hen

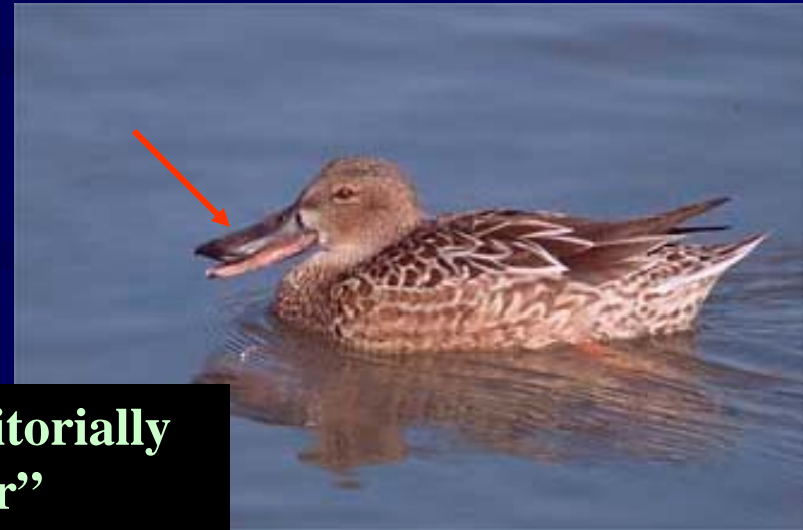
- Tan head lightly colored mottled body
- Bronze speculum

Northern Shoveler

(*Anas clypeata*)

14 in. BL

31 in. WS



“A very territorially breeder”

- Spatulate bill

Drake

- **Black bill**
- **Green head and yellow eyes**
- **White chest & chestnut sides**

Hen

- **Orange bill with mottling**
- **Tan head and brown eyes**
- **Mottled brown body**

Canvasback

(*Aythya valisineria*)

15 in. BL

34 in. WS



One of the fastest ducks
(>100 km/h)

- Long sloping forehead and peaked crown

- Black bill

Drake

- Red eye, head, and neck
- Black chest and breast
- Pale gray back & flanks

Hen

- Brown eye, head, and neck
- Brown chest and breast
- Pale gray back and flanks

Redhead

(*Aythya americana*)



14.5 in. BL
33 in. WS

- Smoothly rounded head
- Dark wing with grayish secondaries

Drake

- **Red** head & neck; yellow eye!
- **Blue** bill w/ white ring before black tip

Hen

- **Brown** eye, head, and neck
- **Blue-gray** bill w/ faint white ring before black tip

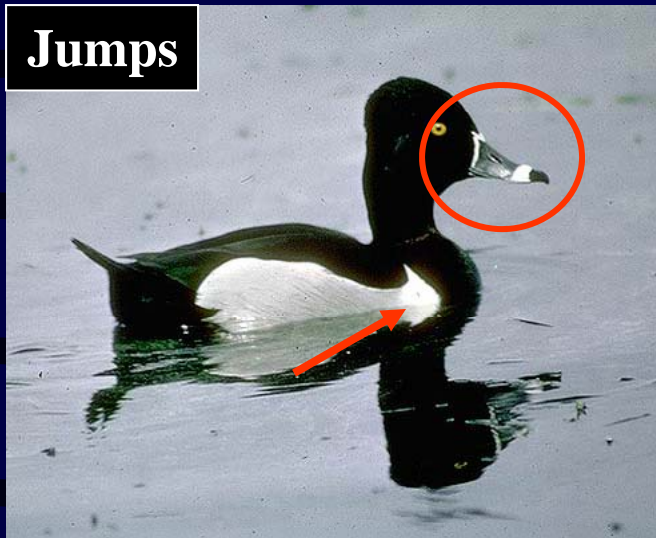
Ring-necked Duck

(*Aythya collaris*)

12 in. BL

28 in. WS

Jumps



- Bill with white semi-terminal ring

- White/cream-colored ring at base of bill

Drake

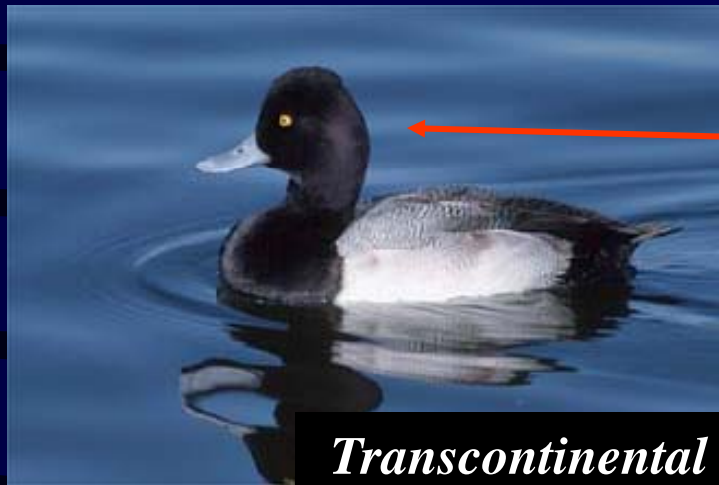
Hen

- Purple head & neck; yellow eye
- Gray flanks with vertical white finger near black chest
- Brown eye, head, and neck
- Faint white eye ring and solid white ring before tip

Lesser Scaup

(*Aythya affinis*)

12 in. BL 29 in. WS



- **Purplish head**
- **White on wing restricted to speculum**
 - **Body size**

Greater Scaup

(*Aythya marila*)

13 in. BL 31 in. WS



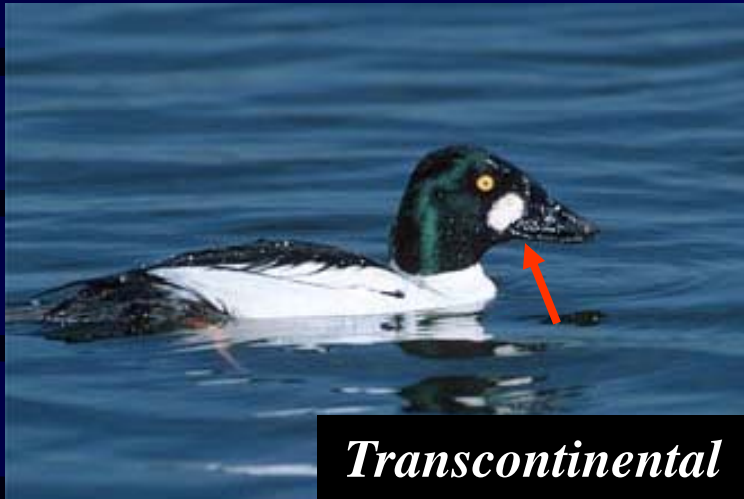
- **Greenish head**
- **White on speculum extends to primaries**
 - **Body size**

Common Goldeneye

13 in. BL

(Bucephala clangula)

31 in. WS



- Short, stubby bill
- Body rides low in water

Drake

- **Green** head & neck; **yellow** eye
- White circular cheek patch
- **All white** chest, breast, flanks

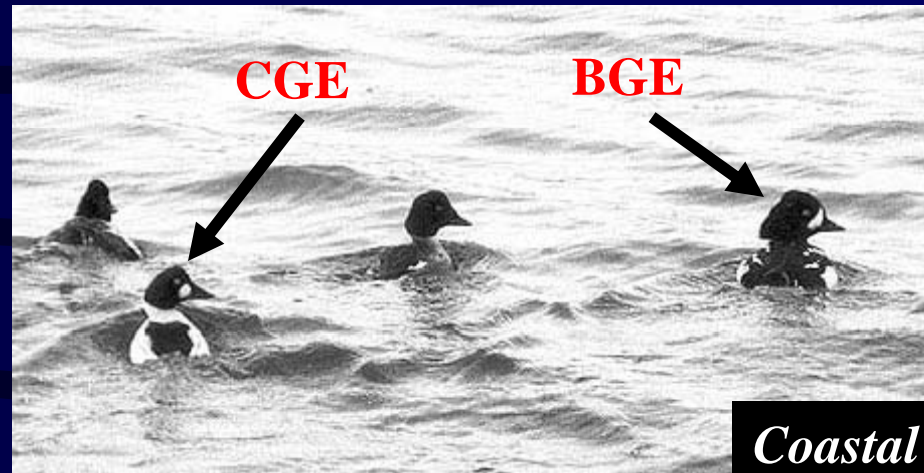
Hen

- **Reddish-brown** head
- **Terminus** of bill light colored
- **Gray** body

Barrow's Goldeneye

(*Bucephala islandica*)

13 in. BL
31 in. WS



“The most territorial of NA ducks”



- Steeply sloped forehead
- Purplish head and large crest
- White tear-drop shaped cheek patch
 - White neck, breast and belly
 - Dark back

Bufflehead

10 in. BL

(*Bucephala albeola*)

24 in. WS



- “Smallest duck in North America”
 - Very small dark gray bill

Drake

- Dark iridescent head
- Large white patch extending from back of head to eye
 - White body

Hen

- Dull brown head
- White longitudinal stripe on cheek
 - Brown body

Hooded Merganser

13 in. BL

(*Lophodytes cucullatus*)

26 in. WS



- Long, pointed serrated bill

- Fan-like crest, small body, **yellow** eye

Drake

- **Black** forehead, cheek, & crest
- **White** cheek/crest patch not extending to eye

Hen

- **Brown** head, neck, flanks, back, and wings w/ paler breast
- **Faint reddish** tinge to crest

Common Merganser

18 in. BL

(*Mergus merganser*)

37 in. WS



- Long, pointed serrated bill that is thick at base
- Brown eye

Drake

- Dark green head with no crest
- White body and black back

Hen

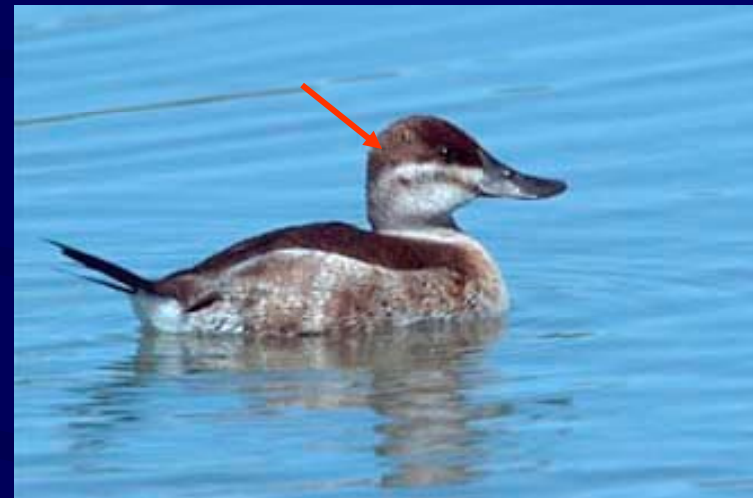
- Copper-colored head with crisp chest separation
- Distinct white chin patch

Ruddy Duck

11 in. BL

(*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

23 in. WS



Can move through
water waveless

- Small, chunky diving duck with flat, wide bill
- Long stiff retrices that are often held vertically

Drake

- Bright blue bill
- Rust colored body
- White cheek & under tail coverts

Hen

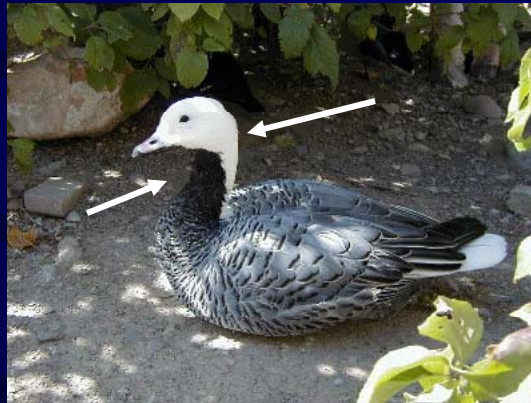
- Dull brown bill
- Dusky longitudinal cheek stripe
- Gray-brown body

**North American
Waterfowl NOT
Required for WFS 536**

Emperor Goose

(Chen canagicus)

18 in. BL



43 in. WS

- Small Coastal Goose
- **Mostly gray plumage with black and white feather edging**
 - **White head and neck**
 - **Black throat and foreneck**
 - **Pink bill**

Common Eider

(*Somateria mollissima*)

17 in. BL



“Largest Duck in NA”



41 in. WS



- Bill feathered along side almost to nostril
 - Long sloping forehead
 - **Black crown; light green back of head**
- **All white chest & breast; black belly & sides**

Spectacled Eider

(*Somateria fischeri*)

15 in. BL



36 in. WS

Endangered

- Bill feathered along side almost to nostril
 - Long sloping forehead
- Pale green head w/ large white patch around eye
- Yellow bill; black under- & white upper-parts

King Eider

(*Somateria spectabilis*)

16 in. BL

“The most northern
of the eiders”



37 in. WS



- Bill feathered partly along side
 - Steep forehead
- Pale blue crown & back of head; green cheek
- Yellow forehead outlined in black; orange bill

White-winged Scoter

(*Melanitta fusca*)

16 in. BL

“The largest of the scoters”



38 in. WS



- Base of bill feathered; white speculum
 - Sloping forehead
- Entirely black plumage; small white eye patch
 - Black bill with a red tip

Black Scoter

(*Melanitta nigra*)

14 in. BL

“The most northern
of the scoters”



33 in. WS

- Round head
- Entirely black plumage
- Black bill with orange knob at base

Harlequin Duck

(*Histrionicus histrionicus*)

12 in. BL

“Only duck in NA
to nest near fast,
running water”



26 in. WS

- Small diving duck with short gray bill
- Two circular white patches on side of head
- **Blue-gray head & body; white ocular crescent**
 - **White stripes on neck and breast**

Oldsquaw

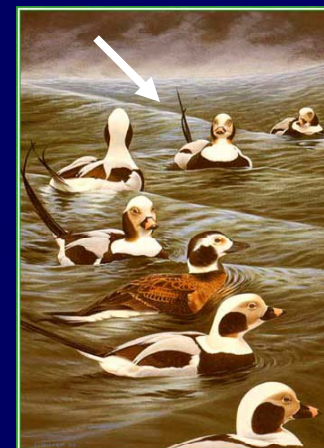
(*Clangula hyemalis*)

15 in. BL

“The tenor of the
Anatidae”



30 in. WS



- Very long, black central retrices
- Black bill with pink/orange ring
- White **crown and back of neck**
- **Black cheek patch; light brown around eye**