Waterfowl Identification
WFS 536

Order
Anseriformes

Family
Anatidae

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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)  
- 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  
- “The Most Aggressive Swan in NA”  

**Trumpeter Swan**  
* (Cygnus buccinator)  
- 45 in. BL  
- 95 in. WS  
- 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  
- Largest NA Waterfowl
Tundra Swan
(Cygnus columbianus)
- 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)
- 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)
- Medium-sized Goose
  - Pink bill w/ black patch along mandibles
  - Blue Morph
    - Throat white
    - White-edged scapulars
  - White Morph
    - Entirely white plumage
    - Black primaries

Waterfowl w/ the most feathers (ca. 25,000)
Canada Goose
(Branta canadensis)

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

11 Races
B. c. maxima
B. c. minima

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

Subfamily Anatinae

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Wood Duck
(Aix sponsa)

- 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

13 in. BL
28 in. WS
**Mallard**  
*Anas platyrhynchos*  
- **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**  
*Anas rubripes*  
- **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*  
- **Drake**  
  - Very small-bodied duck  
  - Green speculum  
  - Rust colored head with green post-ocular patch  
  - Black bill  
- **Hen**  
  - Light brown head and body  
  - Dark gray bill  

"The fastest duck in NA"
Blue-winged Teal
(*Anas discors*)

- Very small-bodied duck
- Green speculum BUT blue in lesser and middle coverts
- Blue-iridescent head
- White crescent patch
- Buff breast & flanks w/ spots
- Light brown head
- Dark brown crown
- Mottled gray-brown body

**Drake**
- 11 in. BL
- 24 in. WS

**Hen**
- 11 in. BL
- 24 in. WS

Gadwall
(*Anas strepera*)

- Average-sized bodied duck with steep forehead
- White speculum (only dabbler) and black rump
- Black bill
- Gray bill with orange edges

**Drake**
- 14.5 in. BL
- 35 in. WS

**Hen**
- 14.5 in. BL
- 35 in. WS

American Wigeon
(*Anas americana*)

- Blue bill with black nail
- White secondary coverts (grayer in females)
- White crown
- Green post-ocular stripe
- Rusty breast and flanks
- Mottled body w/rusty flanks contrasting w/ head & neck
- Dusky eye patch

**Drake**
- 14 in. BL
- 34 in. WS

**Hen**
- 14 in. BL
- 34 in. WS
Northern Pintail
(*Anas acuta*)

- **Drake**
  - Dull blue bill with black culmen stripe
  - Very long neck, small head and attenuated rectrices
- **Hen**
  - Dark brown head
  - White chest & neck extending into latitudinal stripe
  - Tan head lightly colored mottled body
  - Bronze speculum

Northern Shoveler
(*Anas clypeata*)

- **Drake**
  - Spatulate bill
  - Black bill
  - Green head and yellow eyes
  - White chest & chestnut sides
- **Hen**
  - Orange bill with mottling
  - Tan head and brown eyes
  - Mottled brown body
  - "A very terrestrial breeder"

Canvasback
(*Aythya valisineria*)

- **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
- One of the fastest ducks (~100 km/h)
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

- Bill with white semi-terminal ring
- White/cream-colored ring at base of bill

Drake
- Purple head & neck; yellow eye
- Gray flanks with vertical white finger near black chest

Hen
- 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
(*Bucephala clangula*)

- 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

- Short, stubby bill
- Body rides low in water

Barrow’s Goldeneye
(*Bucephala islandica*)

- Drake
  - Steeply sloped forehead
  - Purplish head and large crest
  - White teardrop shaped cheek patch
  - White neck, breast and belly
    - Dark back
- Hen
  - Reddish-brown head
  - Terminus of bill light colored
  - Gray body

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

Bufflehead
(*Bucephala albeola*)

- Drake
  - Dark iridescent head
  - Large white patch extending from back of head to eye
  - White body
- Hen
  - Dark brown head
  - White longitudinal stripe on cheek
  - Brown body

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

Transcontinental

“Most territorial of NA ducks”
Hooded Merganser  
(*Lophodytes cucullatus*)

- **13 in. BL, 26 in. WS**
- **Smallest merganser**
- 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  
(*Mergus merganser*)

- **18 in. BL, 37 in. WS**
- **Largest merganser**
- 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  
(*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

- **11 in. BL, 23 in. WS**
- Can move through water-waveless

**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*

- 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*

- 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
- Billfeathered along side almostto nostril
  - Long sloping forehead
- Pale green head with large white patch around eye
- Yellow bill; black under- & white upper-parts

King Eider
(Somateria spectabilis)
16 in. BL 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 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  33 in. WS  
“The most northern of the scoters”  
- Round head  
  - Entirely black plumage  
  - Black bill with orange knob at base

**Harlequin Duck**  
(*Histrionicus histrionicus*)  
12 in. BL  26 in. WS  
“Only duck in NA to nest near fast, running water”  
- 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  30 in. WS  
“The tenor of the Anatidae”  
- Very long, black central retrices  
- Black bill with pink/orange ring  
- White crown and back of neck  
- Black cheek patch; light brown around eye