Waterfowl Identification
WFS 536

Order
Anseriformes

Family
Anatidae

Matthew J. Gray
University of Tennessee

Subfamily Anserinae

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dendrocygnini</td>
<td>Cygnini</td>
<td>Anserini</td>
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</table>

Whistling or Treeducks
Swans
True Geese

Fulvous Whistling Duck
(Dendrocygna bicolor)

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

Prefers Herbaceous Vegetation
13 in. BL
36 in. WS

"Mostly Tropical and Nocturnal"
Black-bellied Whistling Duck
* (Dendrocygna autumnalis)

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

Prefers Nesting in Trees
13 in. BL
37 in. WS

"Mostly Tropical and Nocturnal"

Mute Swan
* (Cygnus olor)

- 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"
40 in. BL
90 in. WS

Trumpeter Swan
* (Cygnus buccinator)

- 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

45 in. BL
95 in. WS

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
  - Throat white
  - White-edged scapulars

Blue Morph
- White Morph
  - Entirely white plumage
  - Black primaries
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*

- Tribe *Cairinini*
- Tribe *Anatini*
- Tribe *Aythyini*

- Tribe *Mergini*
- Tribe *Oxyurini*

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)  
16 in. BL  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**  
(Anas rubripes)  
16 in. BL  36 in. WS

- 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)  
10.5 in. BL  24 in. WS

- 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

"A Forest Duck"
Blue-winged Teal  
(*Anas discors*)

- **Drake**
  - Very small-bodied duck
  - Green speculum BUT blue in lesser and middle coverts
  - Blue-iridescent head
  - White crescent patch
  - Buff breast & flanks w/ spots

- **Hen**
  - Light brown head
  - Dark brown crown
  - Mottled gray-brown body

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<tr>
<th>Measurements</th>
<th>Drake</th>
<th>Hen</th>
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<td>BL</td>
<td>11 in.</td>
<td>24 in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WS</td>
<td>24 in.</td>
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Gadwall  
(*Anas strepera*)

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

- **Hen**
  - Gray bill with orange edges

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<td>14.5 in.</td>
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<td>WS</td>
<td>35 in.</td>
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American Wigeon  
(*Anas americana*)

- **Drake**
  - Blue bill with black nail
  - White secondary coverts (grayer in females)
  - White crown
  - Green post-ocular stripe
  - Rusty breast and flanks

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

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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

18.5 in. BL  
35 in. WS

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 territorially breeder"

14 in. BL  
31 in. WS

Canvasback  
(*Aythya valisineria*)

**Drake**
- Long sloping forehead and peaked crown
- Black bill
- 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)

15 in. BL  
34 in. WS
**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**
- Blue-gray bill w/ solid 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**
  - Redish-brown head
  - Terminus of bill light colored
  - Gray body

- Short, stubby bill
- Body rides low in water

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**Barrow’s Goldeneye**  
*(Bucephala islandica)*

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

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**Bufflehead**  
*(Bucephala albeola)*

- "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

- "The most territorial of NA ducks"
Hooded Merganser
*Lophodytes cucullatus*

- 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*

- 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*

- Drake
  - Bright blue bill
  - Rust colored body
  - White cheek & under tail coverts
- Hen
  - Dull brown bill
  - Dusky longitudinal cheek stripe
  - Gray-brown body

Can move through water waveless

Can move through water waveless

Smallest merganser

Largest merganser

Can move through water waveless
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 41 in. WS
- "Largest Duck in NA"
- 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)*

- 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)*

- 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)*

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

**Harlequin Duck**  
*(Histrionicus histrionicus)*  
12 in. BL  
- 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  
- Very long, black central retrices  
- Black bill with pink/orange ring  
- White crown and back of neck  
- Black cheek patch; light brown around eye