

Ducks

Active, strong-winged fliers, moving in small flocks, often high in the air. Exceedingly wary. Large numbers winter in Great Lakes and both seacoasts.

Barrow's Goldeneye, predominantly a westerner, differs mainly in the white crescent in front of the eye.

Drakes have a piercing speer-speer; hens a low quack. Both are usually quiet.

REDHEAD

Ranges coast to coast, often found with canvasback. On migration, large flocks travel in V's; in feeding areas, flocks fly in irregular formations. Movements in the air always seem to be hurried.

Usually spends the day in the large rafts in deep water; feeds

morning and evening in more shallow sections.

Drakes purr and meow; hens have a loud squawk, higher than mallard hen's.

CANVASBACK

Extremely powerful fliers, migrating in lines and irregular V's; in feeding areas, compact flocks fly in indefinite formation. Wing beat is rapid and noisy. Normally late migrants.

On the water, body size and head shape distinguish them from scaups and redheads.

Drakes croak, peep, and growl; hens quack, similar to a mallard hen.

HOODED MERGANSER

Often seen in pairs, or very small flocks.

The birds are graceful fliers, give an impression of great speed. Flushes straight up or patters along water.

Wing strokes are short, rapid; the wings appear to blur.

Seldom goes to salt water; wintering grounds are the inland waters in all coastal states.

Only call is a series of coarse grunts.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER

Flight is very similar to common mergansers, but drakes show far less conspicuous white.

Juveniles and many adult drakes resemble hens during migration, for adult males grow out of eclipse plumage late.

Winter principally along both coasts, as well as Gulf of Mexico.

Voice; croaks, seldom heard.

COMMON MERGANSER

Strong fliers; the flight is swift and direct, low over the water, often in "follow the leader" line.

A very large duck; drakes show more white than any other species.

Winters from ice-free water in the north to the coastal waters of the Southern States.

The only call seems to be a startled croak.

SPECIES WITH LIMITED RANGES

These birds: Harlequin, Oldsquaw, Fulvous Tree Duck, Surf

Scoter, Common Scoter, White-Winged Scoter, Black-bellied Tree Duck and Common Eider; except the tree ducks, are primarily of the sea.

Harlequins go a little further south than Long Island and Puget Sound and north to Alaska. Oldsquaws have essentially the same range, plus the Great Lakes.

Fulvous tree ducks are beginning to spread into the east from Louisiana west to California, while the black-bellied is still restricted to Texas.

Scoter hunting is heaviest in New England, where all three species are locally known as "coots." Some flocks migrate along the coast as far as the Carolinas on the Atlantic and lower California on the Pacific.

Common eiders are only in the North Atlantic, but related forms occur in the northwest and Alaska.

DIVING DUCKS

Diving ducks frequent the larger, deeper lakes and rivers, and coastal bays and inlets.

The colored wing patches of these birds lack the brilliance of the speculums of puddle ducks, but are still important field marks in most species. Since most of them have short tails, their huge, paddle feet may be used as rudders in flight, and are often visible on flying birds. When launching into flight, most of this group patter along the water before becoming

airborne.

They feed by diving, often to considerable depths. To escape danger, they can travel great distances underwater, emerging only enough to show their head or bill tip before submerging again.

Their diets of fish, shellfish, mollusks, and aquatic plants make them second choice, as a group, for sportsmen. Canvasbacks and redheads fattened on eel grass or wild celery are notable exceptions.

Since their wings are small in proportion to the size or weight of their bodies, they have a rapid wing beat in comparison with puddle ducks.

PUDDLE DUCKS

Puddle ducks are typically birds of fresh, shallow marshes and rivers rather than of large lakes and bays. They are good divers, but usually feed by dabbling or tipping rather than submerging.

The speculum, or colored wing patch, is generally iridescent and bright, and often a telltale field mark.

Any ducks feeding in croplands will likely be puddle ducks, for most of this group are sure-footed and can walk and run on land. Their food is mostly vegetable, and grain-fed mallards or pintails or acorn-fattened wood ducks are highly regarded.

They ride higher in the water than divers, and launch themselves directly upward when rising, whether from land or water.



Prairie Edge Museum... a trip back in time

The Prairie Edge Museum, located on the corner of East Main and N. Lake Avenue, is open from 2 to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

Prairie Edge offers many interesting items depicting the history of Eagle Lake and the surrounding area.

The Museum also offers souvenirs as well as packages of wildflower seeds at the gift shop.

Make plans to visit the museum while you are in town and take a tour of yesteryear.

For a special tour, call Bill Harrison Sr. at 409-234-2662; or Ethel McCreary, 409-234-2576.

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