

# Know Ducks

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distinguish from the lesser scaup in the air.

Frequents the largest bodies of water, where it rafts up during the day.

Drakes utter a discordant scaup, scaup; hens are usually silent.

## COMMON GOLDENEYE

Distinctive wing-whistling sound in flight has earned the name of Whistlers.

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, Old-squaw, 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. Old-squaws 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, (See Ducks, Page 16)

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