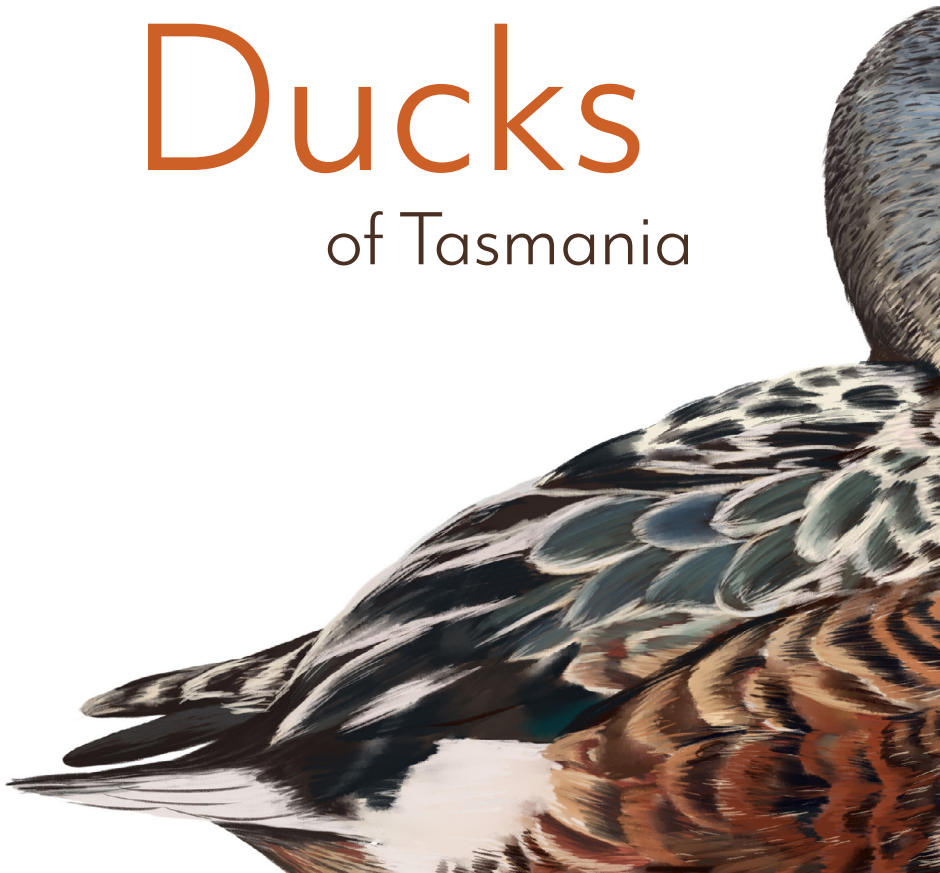


# Ducks

of Tasmania



## Project collaborators:



NATIONAL  
GRANTS  
PROGRAM



This project received grant funding from WIRES through their annual National Grants Program. For more information go to [wires.org.au/NGP](http://wires.org.au/NGP)

Illustrations by Hobart-based artist Sam Lyne: [samlyne.com.au](http://samlyne.com.au)  
Layout by Poco People

**Tasmania is home to 11 species of native ducks. They all have specialised diets and unique appearances.**

## **How to help our ducks:**

**1** Get to know them and their antics through watching and learning about them.

**2** **Do not give ducks any food or water.**



Feeding ducks any food can cause illnesses and dietary deficiencies. It also pollutes waterways, attracts rodents, encourages pet duck dumping and attracts introduced ducks that force out native ducks.

**3** **Keep dogs on leads away from ducks.**



# Australian Wood Duck

*Chenonetta jubata*



**Also known as:**  
Maned Duck, Maned Goose due to the male's dark brown mane.

**Where to see:**  
Pastures, dams, waterways.

- Size:** 45–50cm. Small.
- Appearance:** Grey body, brown head and neck.  
Speckled brown and white breast.  
Short, goose-like bill.  
Green speculum (coloured panel on wing).
- Behaviour:** Happy on land, in water or in trees.
- Females:** Two white stripes above and below the eye.  
Lighter brown head and neck than males.
- Diet:** Grasses, grains, insects.

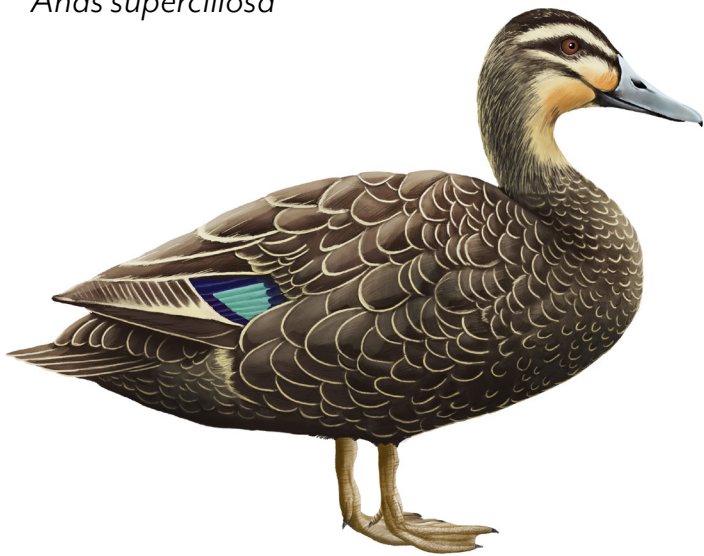
## FUN FACTS



Wood Ducks like to build nests in tree hollows, which often means ducklings have to take a big jump from a tree after hatching.

# Pacific Black Duck

*Anas superciliosa*



**Also known as:**  
Black Duck,  
pāpera (NZ).

**Similar to:**  
Pacific Black Duck  
x Mallard hybrid,  
Mallard (female).

**Where to see:**  
Most wetland  
types.

- Size:** 55cm. Medium.
- Appearance:** More dark brown than black.  
Cream coloured faces, necks and feather edges.  
Two distinctive black stripes on the face,  
one going through the eye.
- Behaviour:** Pure Pacific Black Ducks can be hard to find  
sometimes due to crossbreeding with Mallards.  
The two species can create fertile hybrids that  
replace Pacific Black Ducks in some areas.
- Diet:** Aquatic vegetation, insects, small crustaceans.

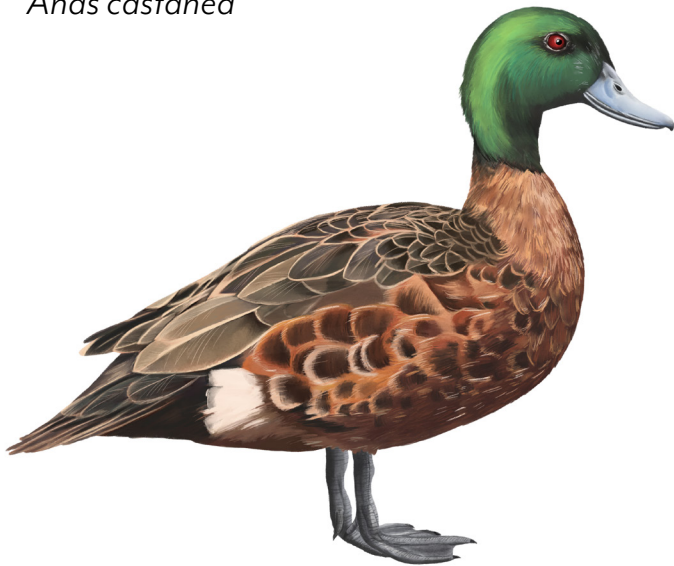
## FUN FACTS




Pacific Black Ducks are dabbling ducks that feed mainly on aquatic vegetation and insects. They sometimes do this by sticking their heads under the water to feed, while sticking their bottoms and legs up out of the water!

# Chestnut Teal

*Anas castanea*



**Similar to:**  
Domestic Mallard  
(male), Grey Teal.

 **Where to see:**  
Wetlands,  
beaches, lakes.



- Size:** 40–45cm. Small.
- Adults:** A small duck with a round head and red eyes. The iridescent green head is similar to some mallard breeds, but teals are tiny compared to introduced Mallards. Also similar to Grey Teals, but have darker throats and cheeks.
- Females:** Darker brown overall. Similar to Grey Teals but darker, with more streaks on the cheeks.
- Diet:** Aquatic vegetation, insects, crustaceans.

### FUN FACTS



Like most native ducks, Chestnut Teals don't quack. They chuckle, whistle and peep.

# Australian Shelduck

*Tadorna tadornoides*



Also known as:  
Mountain Duck.



Where to see:  
Green pastures, wetlands.

- Size:** 72cm. Large.
- Adults:** Australia's tallest native duck.
- Behaviour:** Shelducks are usually shy and are known to mate for life.
- Females:** Have white rings around the eyes and white on the base of the bill.
- Diet:** Aquatic vegetation, insects, grass.

## FUN FACTS



Perhaps their large size is where the name Mountain Duck came from. They actually prefer lowland areas and green pastures rather than living on mountains.

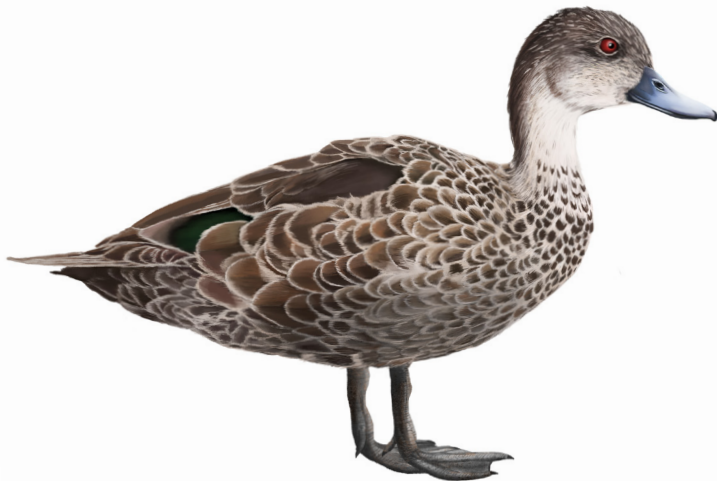


Nests can be found in tree hollows, logs and rabbit burrows.



# Grey Teal

*Anas gracilis*



**Similar to:**  
Chestnut Teal (female).



**Where to see:**  
Freshwater wetlands,  
saltmarshes.

- Size:** 40cm. Small.
- Appearance:** A small dabbling-duck with a round head and red eyes. Males and females look the same. Very similar to female and juvenile Chestnut Teals, which can make them hard to spot. Grey Teals have paler cheeks and throats than Chestnut Teals.
- Diet:** Plants, insects, crustaceans, seeds.

## FUN FACTS



Grey Teals fly great distances in search of water. Travelling from Mainland Australia to Tasmania and even to New Zealand. They can be found in coastal waterways and in the middle of the Australian desert, if that's where the water is!



# Musk Duck

*Biziura lobata*



Harder to find native ducks

Similar to:  
Blue-billed Duck.



Where to see:  
Lakes, dams.

**Size:** 60–70cm. Large.

**Appearance:** A large stiff-tailed duck. So big that most of its body is submerged under water. They live their entire lives on the water, and are barely able to walk on land due to their size and position of the legs.

**Females:** Similar to males but without the large, inflatable lobe under the chin. Similar to female Blue-billed Ducks but with shorter, stubby bills.

**Diet:** Musk Ducks dive underwater for fish, crustaceans, frogs, insects and aquatic plants.

## FUN FACTS



Musk Ducks have been known to learn other vocal noises when raised in captivity, making them the only species of duck in the world that can mimic other animals, including humans!



Males inflate the lobe under their chin like a balloon to attract a mate, while sticking their tails up, whistling and making 'plonk' noises.

# Australasian Shoveler

*Spatula rhynchotis*



Also known as:

Blue-winged Shoveler.

Similar to:

Mallard, Pacific Black Duck  
x Mallard hybrid.





Where to see:

Freshwater wetlands,  
saltmarshes.



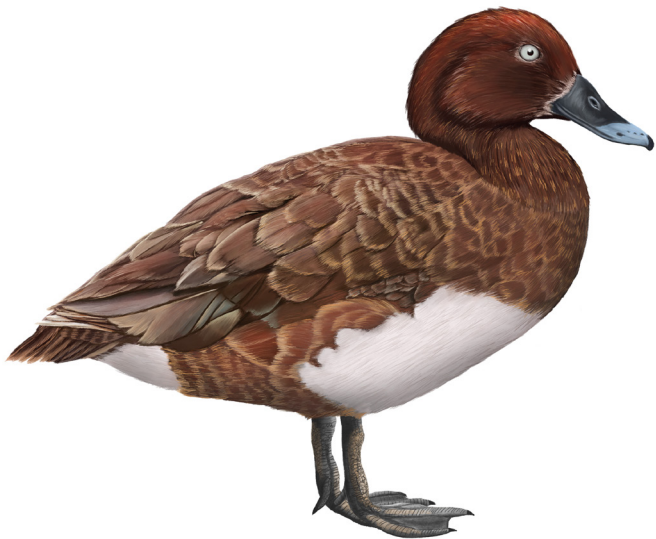
- Size:** 46–56cm. Medium sized dabbling-duck.
- Appearance:** Easily identified by the massive bill, which is like a shovel attached to its face! The bill's tip is almost twice as wide as its base and is slightly rounded like a spoon.
- Females:** Mostly brown overall. Feathers are dark brown with lighter brown edges.
- Diet:** Aquatic plants, insects, crustaceans.

## FUN FACTS

-  Shovelers, like most ducks, have small comb-like ridges along the edges of the bill, called *lamellae*. These ridges help filter out food from water and mud when dabbling.
-  Dabbling refers to moving the bill from side to side while feeding, similar to platypus.

# Hardhead

*Aythya australis*



Also known as:

White-eyed Duck.



Where to see:

Wetlands with plenty of vegetation for cover and deep water.

- Size:** 45cm. Small.
- Behaviour:** A small diving-duck that prefers deeper freshwater for finding food. Harder to find in Tasmania due to their lower numbers and being fussy about their habitats. Hardheads, like other rarer ducks don't cope well with human disturbances.
- Females:** Similar to males but lack the white eye.
- Diet:** Aquatic plants, insects, crustaceans.

## FUN FACTS



Rather than having a dense skull, the name Hardhead comes from early taxidermists, who had a hard time getting the head right!

# Blue-billed Duck

*Oxyura australis*





**Similar to:**  
Musk Duck.



**Where to see:**  
Prefers inland wetlands with  
little human disturbance.

- Size:** 40cm. Small.
- Behaviour:** A small, shy, stiff-tailed duck.
- Females:** Looks similar to Musk Ducks, but with a longer bill that is not blue.
- Diet:** Invertebrates, aquatic vegetation.
- Status:** One of Australia's rarest and most threatened ducks. Rare in Tasmania.

## FUN FACTS

-  When disturbed or frightened, Blue-billed Ducks swim and dive rather than fly away.
-  Good luck seeing this duck in the air – they only fly at night!

# Freckled Duck

*Stictonetta naevosa*



**Where to see:**

Occasional visitor to Tasmanian lakes and dams (Goulds Lagoon and the Country Club Casino are favourites).



**Size:** 50–60cm.

**Adults:** Freckled Ducks have a small crest at the back of the head and a shoe-shaped bill. The male's bill turns red in the mating season.

**Females:** Very similar to males but bills don't change colour.

**Diet:** Aquatic plants and insects.

## FUN FACTS

-  Freckled Ducks visit Tasmania to escape droughts in Mainland Australia, but currently don't breed here. This means there can be years where there are no Freckled Ducks in Tasmania at all.
-  Like most ducks, Freckled ducklings can swim, walk and feed themselves as soon as they hatch.



# Pink-eared Duck

*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*



Also known as:  
Zebra Duck.





Where to see:

Occasional visitor to Tasmanian lakes and dams (Goulds Lagoon and Queechy Lake are favourites).



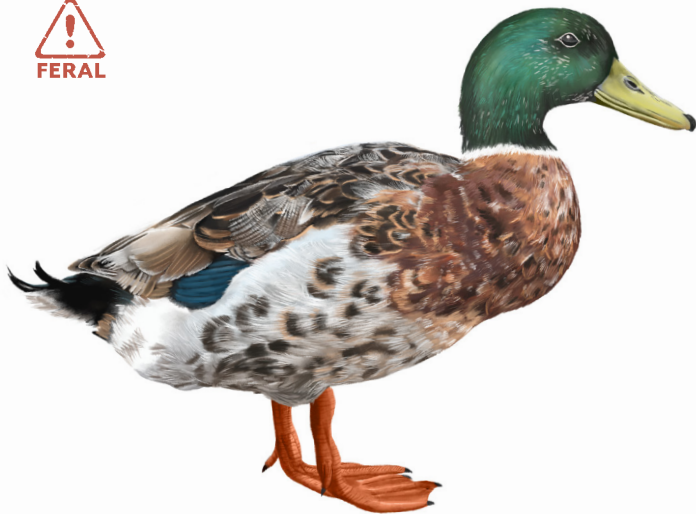
- Size:** 40cm. Small.
- Appearance:** There are usually only a few in Tasmania at one time. They have a large shovel-like bill, similar to the Australasian Shoveler. The bill is used to filter tiny organisms out of gulps of water for food. Pink-eared Ducks are common in Mainland Australia but are very rare in Tasmania.
- Diet:** Small aquatic invertebrates, plankton and plants.

## FUN FACTS

-  Their name comes from the small pink spot on the head behind the eyes that can be hard to see at a distance.
-  Pink-eared Duck, like all other ducks, don't have any external ear structures. All birds have small ear holes that are covered by protective feathers called *auriculars*. These feathers also reduce wind noise when flying.

# Domestic Mallard

*Anas platyrhynchos domesticus*



**Also known as:**  
Feral Duck,  
Farmyard Duck.



**Where to see:**  
Commonly dumped in urban  
waterways. Free-ranging on dams.

- Size:** 50–70 cm. Large.
- Appearance:** Domestic Mallards can look very different from each other due to a range of different domestic breeds. Some Mallards look similar to their wild ancestors (like the one pictured), and others vary greatly in appearance due to cross-breeding.
- Females:** Depends on the breed, but generally more brown overall.
- Diet:** Aquatic plants and invertebrates.

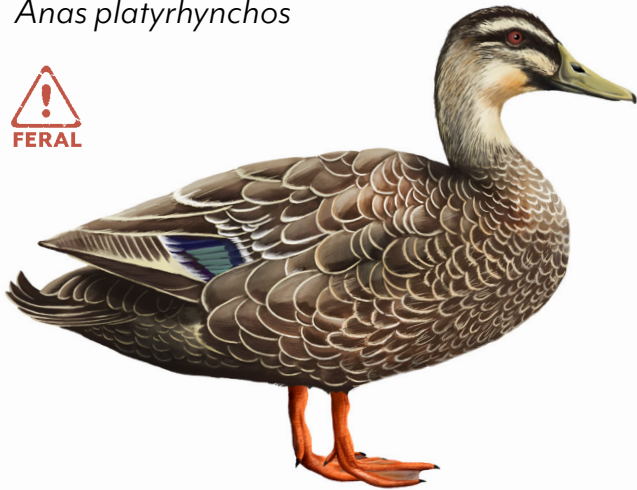
## ORIGIN



The majority of Mallards found in the wild in Tasmania are due to people dumping unwanted pets. Mallards are a threat to Pacific Black Ducks due to hybridisation (cross-breeding), with the two species able to create fertile young.

# Pacific Black Duck x Mallard hybrid

*Anas superciliosa* x  
*Anas platyrhynchos*



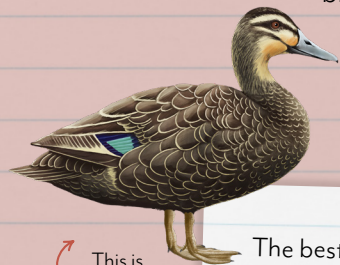
**Where to see:**

Very common in urban areas, especially where Pacific Black Ducks and Domestic Mallards co-exist.

**Size:** 50–70cm. Medium to large.

**Diet:** Aquatic plants, invertebrates.

**Appearance:** These hybrids are the result of Domestic Mallards breeding with Pacific Black Ducks. Because they are a mix of the two species, individuals can look very different. A hybrid can look completely different to its sibling!



This is  
a Pacific  
Black Duck

The best way to identify hybrids is to look for Mallard traits in a Pacific Black-looking duck:

- Bright orange legs
- Orange, yellow or patchy bills
- Pale face stripes and/or very dark faces
- White borders to the speculum (green wing panel)
- Curled tail feathers
- Brown streaks through the crown (top of the head)
- Lighter brown feathers and/or broad/fluffy feather edges.

# Domestic Muscovy Duck

*Cairina moschata domestica*



**Where to see:**

Commonly dumped in urban waterways  
or free-ranging on dams.

- Size:** 65–85cm. Large.
- Appearance:** Domestic Muscovy Ducks are a different species of domestic duck, not a breed of Mallard. They can cross-breed with Mallards to create infertile hybrids, but not with native ducks. They are much bigger than their wild South American ancestors and can weigh up to 11kg!
- Females:** Similar to males but smaller with much smaller caruncles on the face (red fleshy growths).
- Diet:** Plants, small mammals, fish, insects, frogs, lizards.

## FUN FACTS



Muscovy Ducks make a great pet alternative to domestic Mallards. They are friendly and are much quieter than Mallards. They are much better for the environment as they don't cross-breed with any native species when free-ranging.

## Find out more:

For more information about native ducks:

- [nre.tas.gov.au/wildlife-management/living-with-wildlife/living-with-ducks](http://nre.tas.gov.au/wildlife-management/living-with-wildlife/living-with-ducks)
- [derwentestuary.org.au/ducks](http://derwentestuary.org.au/ducks)

To get involved:

- The Pacific Black Duck Conservation Group is a Landcare Tasmania volunteer group dedicated to conserving Pacific Black Ducks through raising awareness and community action:  
[facebook.com/groups/pacificblackduckconservationgroup](https://facebook.com/groups/pacificblackduckconservationgroup)
- Birdlife Australia: [birdlife.org.au](http://birdlife.org.au)



For more booklets: [pacificblackduck@gmail.com](mailto:pacificblackduck@gmail.com)

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