

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

If someone at a park is feeding bread to ducks, chances are there are Mallards in the fray. Perhaps the most familiar of all ducks, Mallards occur throughout North America and Eurasia in ponds and parks as well as wilder wetlands and estuaries. The male's gleaming green head, gray flanks, and black tail-curl arguably make it the most easily identified duck. Mallards have long been hunted for the table, and almost all domestic ducks come from this species.

Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

Mallards are large ducks with hefty bodies, rounded heads, and wide, flat bills. Like many “dabbling ducks” the body is long and the tail rides high out of the water, giving a blunt shape. In flight their wings are broad and set back toward the rear.

Color Pattern

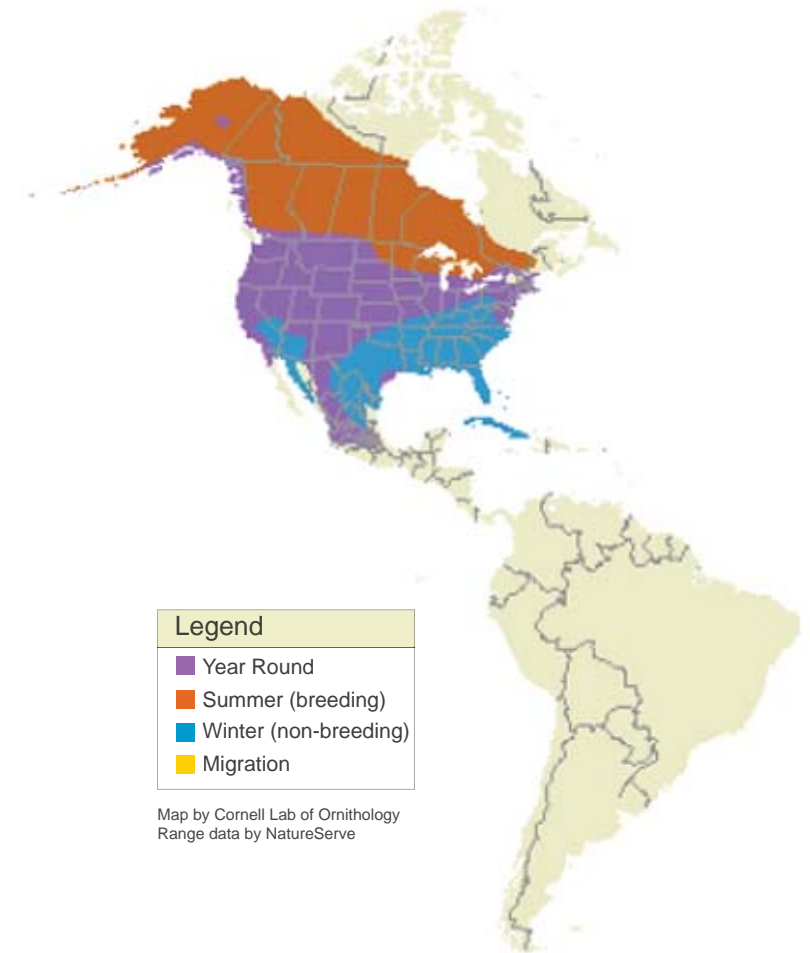
Male Mallards have a dark, iridescent-green head and bright yellow bill. The gray body is sandwiched between a brown breast and black rear. Females and juveniles are mottled brown with orange-and-brown bills. Both sexes have a white-bordered, blue “speculum” patch in the wing.

Behavior

Mallards are “dabbling ducks”—they feed in the water by tipping forward and grazing on underwater plants. They almost never dive. They can be very tame ducks especially in city ponds, and often group together with other Mallards and other species of dabbling ducks.

Cool Facts

- Ducks are strong fliers; migrating flocks of Mallards have been estimated traveling at 55 miles per hour.
- The standard duck's quack is the sound of a female Mallard. Males don't quack; they make a quieter, rasping sound.
- The oldest known Mallard lived to be at least 27 years 7 months old.



Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 19.7 - 25.6 inches
- Wingspan - 32.3 - 37.4 inches (2.7 - 3.1 feet)
- Weight - 35.3 - 45.9 ounces (2.2 - 2.9 pounds)