

# Australian ducks

SOME DUCKS  
DUCK: THE NAME  
DERIVES FROM A  
VERB MEANING  
'DIVE'.

Victoria, South Australia, Northern Territory, Tasmania and some private rice fields in NSW allow seasonal hunting of certain duck species. Annually, 900,000 are killed; almost the same number are crippled or wounded, including legally protected species such as the endangered freckled duck and many non-game birds.

## LEARN MORE

*Reader's Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds*

[www.birdsinbackyards.net](http://www.birdsinbackyards.net)

[www.birdsaustralia.com.au/images/stories/conservation/BA\\_policy\\_recwaterfowlhunt.pdf](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/images/stories/conservation/BA_policy_recwaterfowlhunt.pdf)



### 1 Radjah shelduck (Burdekin duck)

*Tadorna radjah*

#### DESCRIPTION

48-60cm. White with brown back, breast band and wingtips. Pink legs, feet, bill and eyes.



#### DISTRIBUTION

Coastal central QLD to Derby, WA. Largest populations in Arnhem Land and Gulf of Carpentaria; numbers diminish at extremes of range.

#### SOME ESSENTIALS

Lives in shallow water; feeds on water weed, tiny insects and seeds filtered from mud and water. Lays up to 15 eggs in a tree hollow. EPBC Protected Australian Bird.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

White wing stripes resemble a biplane in flight; from below, the bird appears to have two sets of wings. Green bands on wings visible from above.

#### LEND A HAND

Discourage duck hunting and the destruction of coastal swamplands.



### 2 Australian shelduck (sheldrake)

*Tadorna tadornoides*

#### DESCRIPTION

55-72cm. Small black head and bill. Females have white eye-ring and chestnut breast; males have cinnamon breast. Wings black and deep chestnut with large green window.



#### DISTRIBUTION

South-western and south-eastern mainland and Tasmania; occasionally spotted in Kimberleys and central Australia.

#### SOME ESSENTIALS

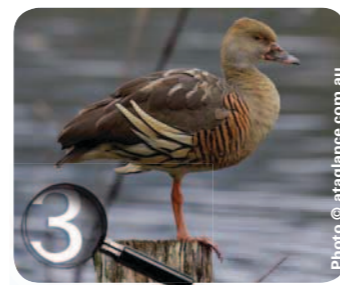
Common around wetlands and dams; feeds on grass, insects, algae and molluscs. Nests in tree hollows lined with grass and feathers; also in cliff face hollows and rabbit burrows.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Only Australian duck to fly in 'V' formation. Birds moult twice a year and are flightless for about a month following the post-breeding moult.

#### LEND A HAND

If hunting cannot be stopped, lobby to ensure use of steel rather than lead shot. Lead accumulation in wetlands makes them toxic for all life.



### 3 Plumed whistling-duck (grass whistling-duck)

*Dendrocygna eytoni*

#### DESCRIPTION

41-61cm. Long, prominent, off-white, black-edged plumes along flanks; mottled pink and grey bill; pink legs and feet.



#### DISTRIBUTION

Northern and eastern tropics southwards to NSW but does not extend far south of Kimberleys.

#### SOME ESSENTIALS

Will fly long distances at night to feed in grasslands; spends days with other waterfowl near lagoons, swamps, and waterways. Has benefited from pastoral dams and pasture.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Monogamous parents share incubation and brooding duties in ground scrape nests lightly lined with grass. Has many other names including whistling tree-duck, red-legged whistler and monkey duck.

#### LEND A HAND

Avoid pesticides and herbicides. Waterfowl are particularly susceptible to accumulating poisons.



### 4 Australian wood duck (maned duck)

*Chenonetta jubata*

#### DESCRIPTION

44-50 cm. Attractive, goose-like, with short beak, long neck, dark brown head. Females have lighter head, white eye stripes and more speckled body.



#### DISTRIBUTION

Widespread on mainland Australia and Tasmania.

#### SOME ESSENTIALS

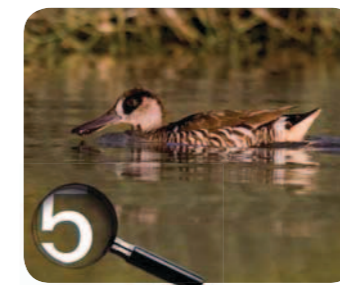
Forages mostly on land for herbs and grasses. Found around deeper lakes as well as grasslands, open woodlands, wetlands, flooded pastures, farmland dams, sewage plants, and coastal areas.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Can form flocks up to 2000 which 'chatter' while feeding. Rarely swims; travels mainly by walking. Also known as maned goose.

#### LEND A HAND

Often found in suburban parks and gardens, where it is tempting to feed them. Don't. It causes health, hygiene and population problems. Enjoy their presence – and keep your dog on a lead.



### 5 Pink-eared duck

*Malacorhynchus mebranceus*

#### DESCRIPTION

39-42cm. Zebra-barred, brown and white flanks; very large, square-tipped, grey bill; small, pink patch behind eye; prominent white crescent on rump visible in flight.



#### DISTRIBUTION

Wetlands throughout Australia and northern Tasmania.

#### SOME ESSENTIALS

Common in wetland areas; prefers shallow, temporary waters, but open wetlands support large flocks. Also found in timbered areas near water. Feeds on plankton, tiny crustaceans, algae and floating seeds filtered through grooves on its distinctive bill.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

A pair will swim head to tail in small circles to concentrate small organisms in a spinning column of water.

#### LEND A HAND

Main breeding area is Murray-Darling Basin. Encourage proper management of this region.



### 6 Musk duck (diving duck)

*Biziura lobata*

#### DESCRIPTION

47-72cm. Solid, dusky black crossed with fine white lines and mottling. Male has large pendulous lobe under its bill.



#### DISTRIBUTION

South-east Queensland to southern mainland and Tasmania.

#### SOME ESSENTIALS

Lives in deep freshwater lagoons with thick reeds; swims low in water; feeds by diving to catch freshwater crayfish, mussels, snails, frogs, insects and aquatic seeds. Females carry young on back after hatching.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Rump gland secretes an intense, musky odour. Breeding males display by inflating lobe under bill, fanning tail feathers and grunting, whistling, splashing and 'plonking' feet. Also known as diver or steamer.

#### LEND A HAND

Join a group which lobbies against recreational hunting on grounds of cruelty and disturbance, killing of non-game species, damage to wetlands and unsustainability.