

RECOMMENDED READING

A Guide to Field Identification, Birds of North America,

Published by Golden Press
Author: Robbins, Bruun and Zim

Birds of Missouri, Their Distribution and Abundance

Published by University of Missouri Press
Author: Robbins and Easterla

A Colored Key to Waterfowl of the World

Published by The Wildfowl Trust, Author: Scott

Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America

Published by Stackpoll Books, Author: Bellrose

Waterfowl - Their Biology and Natural History

Published by University of Nebraska Press
Author: Johnsgard

For further information on Canada Geese in the urban environment, contact the St. Louis Metro Office of the Missouri Department of Conservation, 314-821-1571 during regular business hours.

This brochure was a cooperative effort by

Forest Park Forever
Department of Parks, Recreation & Forestry
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with special appreciation to

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WATERBIRDS

FOREST PARK



One of the pleasures of Forest Park is the opportunity to observe the natural world and its wide variety of wildlife.

The lakes and ponds of Forest Park are magnets for both people and water birds. But without a basic understanding of

PROTECTING THE FRAGILE BALANCE

Feeding ducks and geese is fun for people—but unfair to them.

- It's junk food! Popcorn, bread, and other human foods are very poor nutrition. Geese in particular, are grazers and need natural vegetation to remain healthy.
- Birds that are fed are "learning" new behavior. Their natural fear of people and dogs is removed, increasing the chance of injury to both the birds and people.
- Feeding creates a dependency. Many wild birds migrate in the fall and need all their wild instincts to survive the long flight. Also

WHERE TO LOOK

Not surprisingly—these birds congregate near the lakes and ponds of Forest Park.

- Depending on the time of year, Canada Geese can be almost anywhere in Forest Park. They are often near the larger bodies of water in the park—Pagoda Lake across from the MUNY, Round Lake, etc.
- Mallard ducks are also plentiful and have been seen at Pagoda Lake, Murphy Lake, and even around small pools created by major rains.
- Wood ducks have been seen in various locations, but are often in the lagoons.

natural ways, the combination of well-meaning people and "wildlife" can be less than ideal.

This brochure contains some facts that will help you locate, identify and appreciate water birds, without tipping the balance of nature.

migratory routes are learned by off-spring from the adults as they accompany them on their first migration to winter grounds.

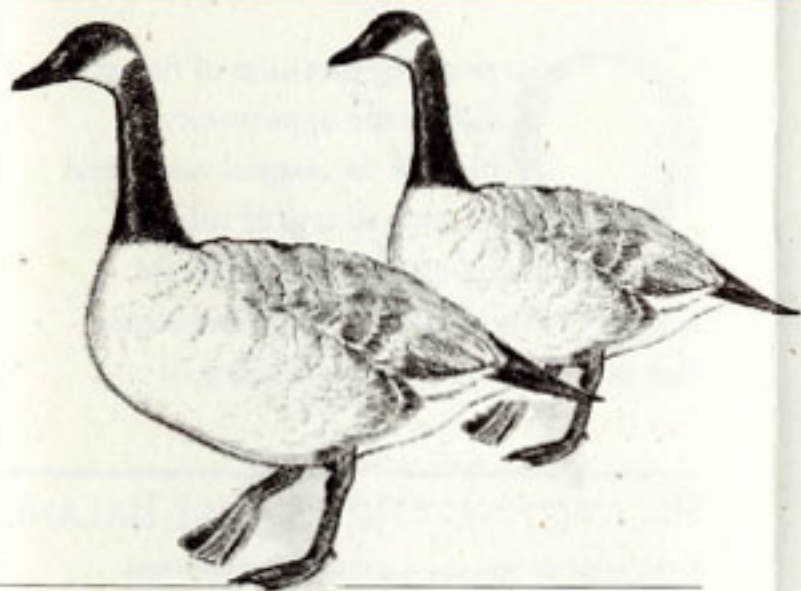
- An abundance of "provided" food may change migration patterns, making birds "prisoners" of human kindness and exposing them to harsh winter conditions.
- Feeding changes the wonderfully "wild" nature of these birds (the very reason we love them!) and leaves them unprepared to survive—even in a city park!

- At least one egret has been seen in Forest Park, frequenting the lagoons and Post-Dispatch Lake.
- Green heron have been spotted at Post-Dispatch Lake.
- Belted Kingfishers are common in Forest Park and have been seen frequently along the lagoons.
- Lesser Scaup have been seen in the Grand Basin.
- And recently, a Shoveler was spotted in the lagoons.

HELP IN IDENTIFYING WATER BIRDS

CANADA GEESE

Easily recognized by most people because of their large size and distinctive "honking" sound, they spend more time on land than ducks. Unlike many birds, male and female geese appear almost identical. The long neck and head are black with a contrasting white "chinstrap." Surprising to many, Missouri is a native nesting range for the Canada Goose, and in winter the numbers increase dramatically. Geese begin nesting in mid-to-late March and can become very aggressive. The natural diet is primarily grasses, and some aquatic plants.



DABBLING DUCKS

This group is also called "pond" ducks, "puddle" ducks or "marsh" ducks. They are surface feeders of ponds, creeks and marshes. They feed by dabbling and upending; sometimes feeding on land. This group has the ability to spring directly into flight. Most are sure-footed and can walk well on land. The males are often brightly colored but lose feathers and become drab in summer. Their natural diet is aquatic plants, seeds, grass, small aquatic animals, and insects. Types of Dabbling Ducks follow.

MALLARD DUCKS

The glossy green head and white ringed neck of the male mallard identifies this common duck. The female is predominantly mottled brown, which helps to camouflage her on the nest. When in flight both sexes show a white bar on either side of the violet blue wing patch. Orange feet.



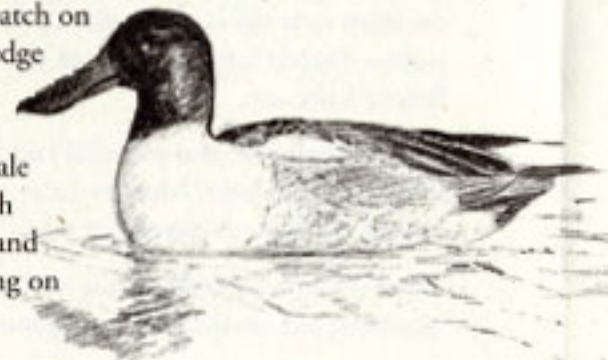
WOOD DUCKS

These highly colored ducks often perch in trees. They are short necked, with a long square dark tail. The male has an unusual face pattern, swept back crest, and rainbow iridescence. The female is dull-colored with a dark crested head and a white eye patch. In flight the white belly contrasts with the dark breast and wings.



SHOVELER

A small duck with orange feet. The bill is long and spoon-shaped. The male has a green head, much black and white, with a pale blue patch on the leading edge of the wing and green aft. The female is brown with lighter blue and green coloring on the wings.



Waterbirds



DIVING DUCKS

Are also called "sea ducks" and "bay ducks." All of this species dive, while marsh ducks rarely do. They feed by diving and can travel great distances underwater. Their legs are close to the tail and they have large paddle feet that are often visible in flight. Unlike marsh ducks, diving ducks patter along the top of the water before becoming airborne. Their natural diet is small aquatic animals and plants.

LESSER SCAUP

Both lesser and greater scaups are our only ducks with a broad white stripe on the trailing edge of the wing. On the water, the male appears black at both ends and white in the middle. The male bill is blue and the head glossed with dull purple. The female is dark brown with a clearly defined white mask near the bill.



BELTED KINGFISHERS

(Not a water bird, but included because it is generally seen near water.) A compact land bird with a short neck, large blue-gray head and heavy bill. Their small bodies and tiny feet make them look slightly top-heavy. One of the few North American birds where the female is the more colorful. Both sexes have crested heads, are mostly blue-gray with a white collar. The female also has a chestnut band across her belly and flanks. They usually nest in burrows which they dig in a riverbank. They dive from a perch or from flight into the water to catch small fish.



HERONS

Medium to large wading birds with long necks and spear-like bills. In flight the neck is folded in an "S" and the legs trail. The sexes are similar. The natural diet includes fish, frogs, crawfish, other aquatic life, mice and insects.

GREEN HERON

Relatively small (16-22") wader with comparatively short legs. The legs are greenish yellow or, when breeding, orange. The back is bluish and the neck deep chestnut. The immature has a streaked neck.



GREAT EGRET

A large (38"), slender, white heron with a yellow bill (orange when breeding). It is also called the American Egret. Legs and feet are black. Beginning in January, both sexes develop a long, flowing white cape (nuptial train) of plumes growing from the back which are lost by summer.

