

# DUCKS

Sure we know Donald and Daffy, but there's much more to ducks than what we've seen in cartoons. In reality, ducks, members of the Anatidae family, are extraordinarily complex creatures — the product of millions of years of evolutionary adaptation. Here are some facts and stats about ducks.

Kingdom **Animalia**  
 Phylum **Chordata**  
 Class **Aves**  
 Order **Anseriformes**  
 Family **Anatidae**

Bills are made of soft keratin and are generally flat.

Very few ducks actually quack. The female mallard makes the famous quacking sound often associated with ducks.

Ducks can store extra food in their esophagi. Mallards have been known to store nearly a quarter of a pound of grain in their esophagi.

Hormone levels can change feet color. During courtship, increased hormones can cause feet to turn orange or bright red.

Male ducks are called drakes. Female ducks are called hens. Baby ducks are called ducklings.

Diving ducks are able to see well under water thanks to two powerful eye muscles that control the curvature of the cornea and lens.

Ducks do not have teeth. Many species have bills lined with lamellae, small, comb-like structures that look like teeth and strain insects and other food from the water.

While female ducks tend to have non-descript, brown feathers, male ducks have far more colorful plumage. It's one of the ways males attract mates. The iridescent hues come from tiny crystals embedded in their feathers.

Duck wings are short and pointed and supported by strong muscles. In order to stay airborne, ducks must flap their wings in rapid succession.

Ducks waterproof their feathers by coating them with a waxy ointment that's secreted from a gland at the base of the tail.

Ducks open the webbing on their feet to create extra drag while in flight. To fly faster, ducks close the webbing to limit air resistance.

When paddling, ducks achieve a considerable amount of force by pushing their webbed-feet not only backwards but downwards in the water.



● DUCKS ● NO DUCKS  
 Ducks are found almost all over the world, with the exception of Antarctica.



A group of ducks is referred to as a raft, team, or paddling.



When most birds molt, they replace flight feathers one at a time. Ducks, however, drop all their flight feathers at once, leaving them temporarily grounded.



Ducks are precocial—ducklings are able to feed themselves shortly after hatching. Ducks are also omnivores. They typically feed on aquatic vegetation as well as small insects, crustaceans and some fish.



Ducks fly in v-shaped patterns to reduce headwind for birds flying behind the leader. Migrating ducks follow the same flight plan they've used for centuries.



Dabblers feed by skimming the water or up-ending themselves to reach food just below the surface.

Dabblers have legs that are more centrally located, which allows them greater mobility while feeding on land.

Dabblers sit high in the water.

THERE ARE

2

MAIN TYPES OF DUCKS



Divers go deeper under water.

Diving ducks have legs that are set far to the back of the body, which causes them to waddle on land, but helps them swim faster and with more control.

Diving ducks sit much lower in the water than dabblers. Divers are able to submerge easily to go after under-water prey.



Most ducks are monogamous during the breeding season.



A close relative of modern ducks lived alongside dinosaurs more than 65 million years ago.

