

Duck identification chart

Six regional examples | Eastern United States, with a Mid-Atlantic focus | Online Field Guide

Use head, bill and body together. Male breeding colors do not describe females or every season.

1. Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

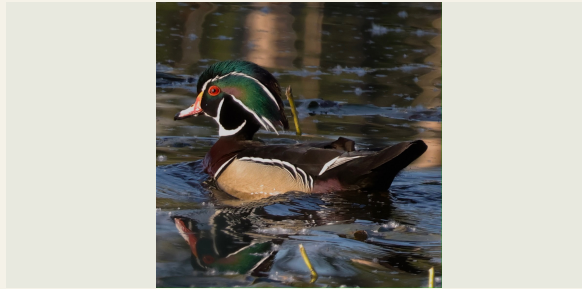


Male: green head, white neck ring, chestnut breast

Adult male at left; female at right

2. Wood Duck

Aix sponsa



Male: swept-back crest and bold white face lines

Adult male; breeding plumage

3. American Black Duck

Anas rubripes



Dark brown body; paler head and throat

Adult; sexes look similar

4. Northern Pintail

Anas acuta

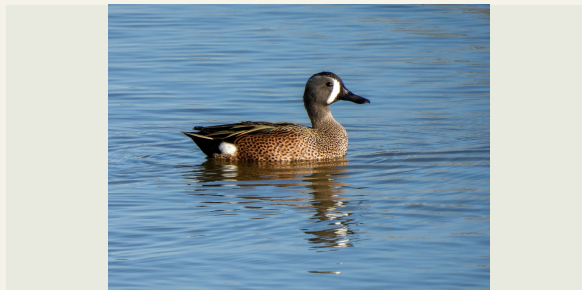


Male: brown head, white neck stripe, pointed tail

Adult male; breeding plumage

5. Blue-winged Teal

Spatula discors



Male: white facial crescent and finely spotted sides

Adult male; breeding plumage

6. Hooded Merganser

Lophodytes cucullatus



Male: white crest panel framed in black

Adult male; crest raised

1. Adrienne van den Beemt; CC BY 4.0.

2. Ben

3. Dale Knox

4. Matt Felperin; CC BY 4.0.

5. Vicki Miller

6. Millie Basden; CC BY 4.0.

Comparison notes and photo credits

Duck chart companion | Original layout and wording by Online Field Guide

Duck	Habitat clue	Identification level	Seasonal occurrence
Mallard	Ponds, marshes and urban waterways	Species candidate	Year-round where water stays open
Wood Duck	Wooded ponds, swamps and sheltered streams	Species candidate	Spring through fall; some winter locally
American Black Duck	Coastal marshes and inland wetlands	Species candidate	Year-round; often more noticeable in winter
Northern Pintail	Shallow marshes, flooded fields and estuaries	Species candidate	Mainly migration and winter
Blue-winged Teal	Shallow ponds, marshes and flooded fields	Species candidate	Especially spring and fall migration
Hooded Merganser	Wooded ponds, small lakes and sheltered creeks	Species candidate	Fall through spring; some breed locally

Seasonal occurrence is a broad Mid-Atlantic guide. Migration dates and winter numbers vary with weather, latitude and the amount of open water.

Photo credits and original file links

1. **Mallard:** *Anas platyrhynchos* - iNaturalist photo 621861400, by Adrienne van den Beemt. CC BY 4.0.
2. **Wood Duck:** *Aix sponsa* - iNaturalist photo 661919361, by Ben.
3. **American Black Duck:** *Anas rubripes* - iNaturalist photo 104795742, by Dale Knox.
4. **Northern Pintail:** *Anas acuta* - iNaturalist photo 353707135, by Matt Felperin. CC BY 4.0.
5. **Blue-winged Teal:** *Spatula discors* - iNaturalist photo 255182582, by Vicki Miller.
6. **Hooded Merganser:** *Lophodytes cucullatus* - iNaturalist photo 605188781, by Millie Basden. CC BY 4.0.

Identification references: Mallard; Wood Duck; American Black Duck; Northern Pintail; Blue-winged Teal; Hooded Merganser.

This chart compares regional examples; it is not a complete species key.