

Aquatic birds with a small rounded head, short flattened bill, rounded body, short legs, webbed feet and a waddling gait on land. They fly strongly with neck outstretched. Sexes alike in swans and geese, but male ducks are usually more colourful than females. Lay large clutches. Chicks leave the nest within days but are guarded for several months until they can fly.

AUSTRALIAN WOOD DUCK *Chenonetta jubata*

Rare Australian vagrant

48 cm, 800 g. Pale grey duck with chest spotted brown, head dark brown, and short thin bill. Male has dark brown head and neck, with a short black mane on back of head; grey flanks. Female has pale lines above and below eye; flanks broadly barred brown and white. Juvenile like female but duller. In the water, sits higher than other ducks. Spends much time out of water grazing or roosting. Upright stance. Call a rising 'mew' or 'wee-ow'. **Habitat:** Grassland near wetlands. [Sp 128]



WATERFOWL

Anatidae

Swans, geese and ducks are found worldwide in freshwater and marine habitats. There are about 160 species, of which 14 (4 endemic, 4 native and 6 introduced) breed or have bred in the wild in the New Zealand region since 1920. A further endemic species (*Mergus australis*) became extinct in the early years of the 1900s, and another 6 species are vagrants to the region.

All species have webbed feet for swimming in freshwater rivers and lakes, or in coastal waters. Their bill is modified for filter-feeding; water and food is sucked in at the tip of the bill and expelled through fine comb-like lamellae at the sides, which catch minute seeds and invertebrates. Although most feed in this way, some species mainly graze on aquatic or terrestrial vegetation and pick seeds (e.g. peas or wheat) off the ground, and the mergansers have serrated bills for catching fish.

In New Zealand, most introduced and some native species of waterfowl are legally harvested during a strictly controlled shooting season. Each year, Fish and Game Councils determine the length and timing of the season and the allowable bag for each species, and monitor the licensing of hunters and annual hunting statistics. A voluntary organisation, Ducks Unlimited, works to create and protect wetland habitats suitable for waterfowl and is also involved in captive breeding programmes for some threatened and rare species.

Reading Frith, H.J. 1982. *Waterfowl in Australia*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson. Madge, S. & Burn, H. 1988. *Wildfowl: An Identification Guide to the Ducks, Geese and Swans of the World*. London: Christopher Helm. Johnsgard, P.A. 1978. *Ducks, Geese and Swans of the World*. Lincoln: Univ Nebraska Press. Williams, M. 1981. *The Duckshooter's Bag*. Wellington: Wetland Press.

128. AUSTRALIAN WOOD DUCK *Chenonetta jubata*

Plate 30

Other names: Maned Duck, Maned Goose
Size: 48 cm, 800 g
Distribution: Breed widely in Australia and Tasmania. They are highly nomadic, following rains and floods in wet years to colonise temporary wetlands, and then returning to permanent water in southwestern Australia and along the eastern seaboard. Vagrant to New Zealand, with six records of lone birds:

Central Otago (1910), Southland (1944), Marlborough (1980), The Snares (1983, 1985–86) and Southland (2002).
Feeding: In Australia, they prefer grassland with scattered trees near water, where they graze on grass, clover and other green foliage. They sometimes graze in shallow water on lagoon fringes, on grain stubble, and in city parks.