

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.
Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.
Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.
Mallard: pp 109-110.



MALLARD

Family Anatidae

Species *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common name Mallard

Status Introduced

Abundance Common

Size 580 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Habitat Can be found in both fresh-water and salt-water environments. They are at home on farm drains, forest rivers, fresh-water lakes and lagoons and along many tidal estuaries and coastal beaches and in towns.

Worldwide range North America, Europe and Asia.

New Zealand range Introduced for hunting it has spread widely and is found throughout New Zealand and on offshore islands.

Description – male (above)

Head and neck Glossy green with a white ring at base of green. **Back** Brown.

Wings Grey with blue speculum which has a thin black and white edge front and back. **Uppertail** Black edged white and with two curled ornamental black

feathers. **Undertail** Black. **Breast** Chestnut. **Underparts** Pale grey. **Bill** Yellow. **Legs and feet** Orange.

Description – female

Head Brown with dark brown eye-stripe. **Upper and underparts** Streaked and spotted brown and buff. **Wings and speculum** As for male. **Bill** Orange brown.

In moult Male birds attain feather patterns similar to female birds.

Conspicuous features

- Blue speculum separates the Mallard from the Grey Duck.
- Female Mallards, and hybrids between Mallard and Grey Duck, lack the yellow and black face markings of the Grey Duck.
- Mallards appear lighter in eclipse plumage than Grey Duck.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Often found near human habitation such as on park lakes.
- Mallards usually take to the air quicker than Grey Ducks when disturbed.
- Head bobbing, neck stretching and circling of the male by the female, on the water, are noticeable behaviour as birds pair-bond after February.

Call The male makes a high-pitched “quek quek” call or just a piping whistle, and the female a raucous quack.

Nest A solitary nest on the ground made of grass and sticks and lined with down. Up to 12 green eggs are laid.

Differences between Grey Ducks and Mallards (from P. 111)

- Yellow face with bold black stripe through the eye separates the Grey Duck from the female Mallard. Always look at the head first.
- The green speculum on the wing separates the Grey Duck from the Mallard. The Mallard has a blue speculum.
- The Mallard drake when not the eclipse plumage is more colourful than the Grey Duck drake which is drab.
- Grey Ducks rise more slowly from the water than Mallards.
- Frequents more remote and higher altitude areas than Mallards.

Where to find Common everywhere.



Female Mallard.