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Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Grey duck: pp 110-111.



GREY DUCK

Family Anatidae

Species *Anas superciliosa*

Common names Grey Duck, Black Duck (Australia and Pacific islands)

Status Native

Abundance Common

Size 580 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Mallard 580 mm)

Habitat Generally found in secluded waterways in remote areas on lakes and rivers but some can be found in the headwaters of estuaries. Seldom seen in lowland wetlands where Mallards are common possibly because Mallards can take a wider range of food types. Sometimes comes into parks and mixes with Mallards.

Worldwide range Widely spread species found in a belt from Indonesia through Australia and New Zealand to the Pacific Islands as far east as Tahiti. Originally this species was New Zealand's most common duck. Today though, its numbers have lessened. The introduction of the Mallard, which has competed for Grey Duck habitat, and which has interbred with it, may be a reason for the decline, and also duck shooting.

New Zealand range Found throughout the North, South and Stewart Islands.

Also on the Chatham Islands and many offshore islands.

Description

Crown Black. **Face and throat** Pale yellow with a dark eye-stripe running through the eye from bill to back of head. A similar but lesser dark stripe crosses the lower cheek. **Upperparts and underparts** Brown, feathers being edged with a pale buff colouring. **Wings** Brown with green speculum edged front and back with black. **Bill** grey with dark tip. **Legs and feet** Greenish-brown.

Conspicuous features

- Yellow face with black eye-stripe.
- Mallard size.
- In flight looks black.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Usually found in pairs.
- Tends to skulk in rushes at the edge of lakes and ponds.
- Uncommon in parks and gardens unlike the Mallard.
- Rises slowly into the air when disturbed.
- Lonely pairs in remote places are usually always Grey Ducks.

Call Male bird has a high-pitched “quek quek quek” call, and often a piping whistle, while the female makes a raucous “quack 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

- 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 – North Island

North Auckland – Waiwera at Strakas Refuge. P. 291.

North Auckland – Weiti (Wade) River around the wharf. P. 291.

Auckland – Tahuna Torea. P. 298.

South Auckland – Miranda at Pukorokoro River-mouth. P. 302.

Waikato – Huntly at Lake Hakanoa. P. 310.

Bay of Plenty – Matata Lagoon. P. 320.

Rotorua – Lake Okareka. P. 325.

Rotorua – Lake Rotorua behind the Centennial Gardens. 324.

Central Plateau – Lake Kario, Ohakune. P. 318.

Where to find – South Island

Fiordland – Mirror Lakes on the Eglinton Valley road. P. 370.

Lake Te Anau Always some near the shoreline not far from the town and further up the Eglinton Valley. P. 369.

Westland – Lake Kaniere. P. 374.