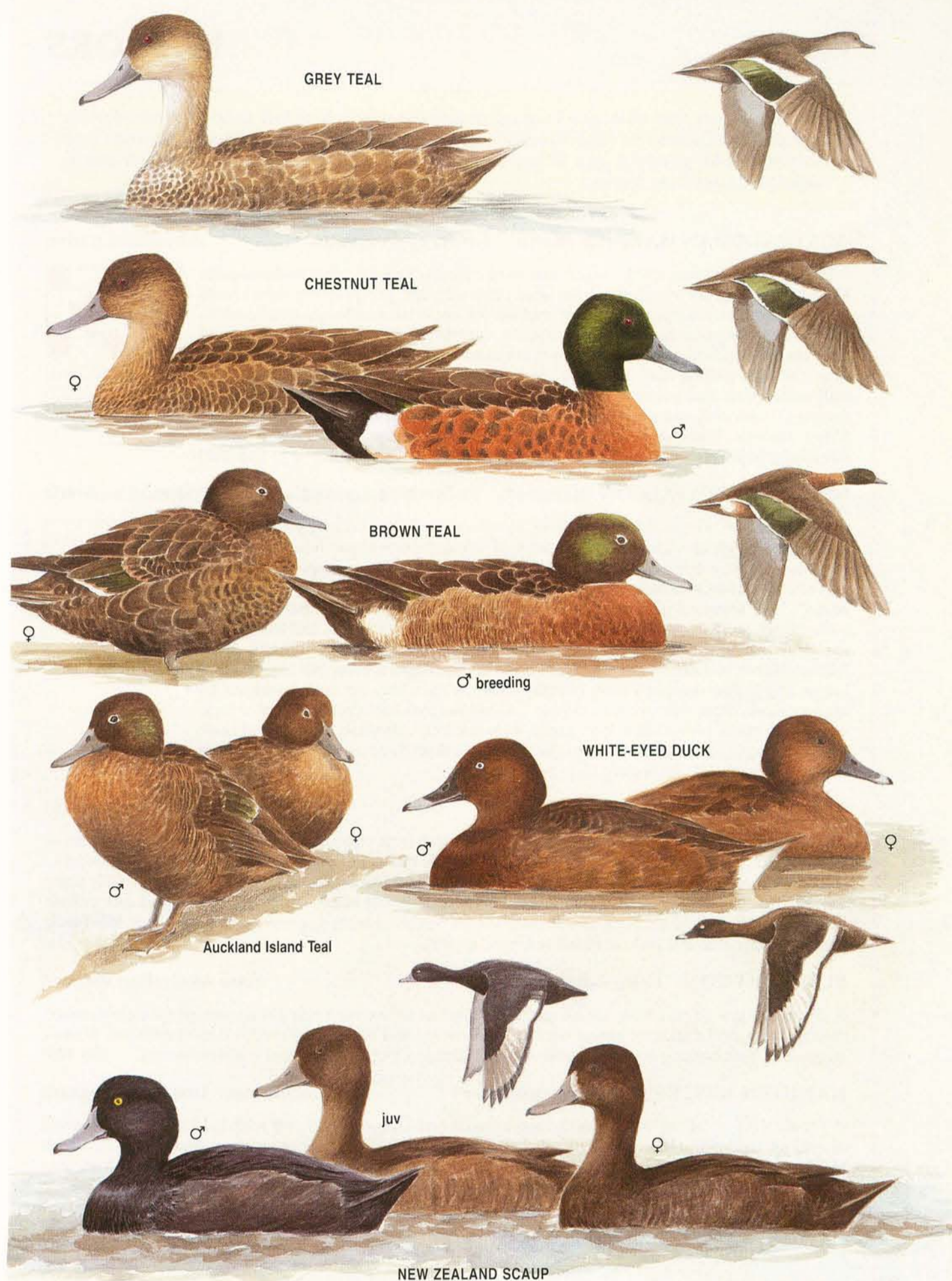


Aquatic birds with a small rounded head, short flattened bill, rounded body, short legs, webbed feet and a waddling gait on land. They fly strongly with neck outstretched. Sexes alike in swans and geese, but male ducks are usually more colourful than females. Lay large clutches. Chicks leave the nest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

WHITE-EYED DUCK *Aythya australis*

Rare Australian vagrant

48 cm, 900 g. Diving duck like NZ Scaup, but *chocolate brown with white undertail; forehead slopes gently*. Bill dark grey with whitish band near the end, tipped black. Male has *white eye*; female brown eye. Female and juvenile lighter brown than male, and white patch on bill is smaller. In flight, upperwing has a broad white trailing band *from wingtip to body*; underwing white. Feeds and roosts on water, rarely coming onto land. **Habitat:** Large deep freshwater lakes, occasionally estuaries. [Sp 138]



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.

138. WHITE-EYED DUCK *Aythya australis*

Plate 32

Other names: Karakahia, Hardhead
Size: 48 cm, 900 g

Distribution: Breed only in Australia, mainly in the south and especially in the deeper swamps of the Murray–Darling catchments, along the Great Dividing Range and in coastal Victoria. They disperse widely within Australia in response to inland rains and droughts, and vagrants reach Indonesia, New Guinea, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Norfolk Island and New Zealand. The Maori had a name for the White-eyed Duck, and the many records in New Zealand in the late 1800s suggests that they may have bred here until about 1895.

Since then, there have been only six records: Rotorua (1934), Hawke's Bay (one bird shot out of a flock of eight in 1973), Auckland (1980), Otago (1990), West Coast (two in 1994) and New Plymouth (2001).

Feeding: In Australia, White-eyed Ducks prefer large deep lakes with abundant aquatic vegetation, similar to those lakes used by Scaup in New Zealand. They dive to feed on aquatic plants and invertebrates, especially freshwater mussels and snails, although they occasionally up-end or dabble in shallow water or mud.