

Meet the Mallard Duck





Thinking back to our Quack Quack Quiz, we learnt that the Mallard duck is the most popular duck in New Zealand.

Mallards are most likely to be found on shallow bodies of fresh water such as wetlands and ponds, on lakes and even flooded fields (ephemeral wetlands).

They are a medium-to-large dabbling duck that is most recognisable by the male's glossy green head and white collar around the neck. The female is a mottled brown with a brown bill. Both sexes have orange feet and a purple-blue speculum with both sides outlined in white.



The Male is known as a Drake, and the Female is known as a Hen.

The Drake is about 10% larger than the Hen.





MALLARD DUCK LIFE CYCLE


The most distinctively colored of the mallards, its iconic green head sits atop a white neckband that sets off a chestnut-colored chest and gray body.

This is a male Mallard, otherwise known as a drake!


Females are mottled drab brown in color, but sport iridescent purple-blue wing feathers that are visible as a patch on their sides.

This is a female Mallard, otherwise known as a hen!



HATCHING / BROODING




INCUBATION




LEARNING TO SWIM


LEARNING TO EAT




LEARNING TO FLY



MAZING / BREEDING




Where can you find the Mallard Duck?



Mallards prefer cool, shallow waterways, but can be found in almost any body of freshwater across America, Asia, Europe, and North America. They're also found in saltwater and brackish water and are commonly found in wetlands.

Can you guess which egg belongs to the Mallard Duck?



Click on this link to play:

http://prezi.com/3sw6fi6mfef-/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share



Activity time

Activity 7: Mallard Duck Lifecycle



Duck sounds

We think of ducks going quack, quack – but they have a language of their own.

Sounds

- 🔊 Flock on city pond
- 🔊 Wild flock, both sexes
- 🔊 Quiet calls from both male and female
- 🔊 Alarm calls from nesting female
- 🔊 Mallard x grey duck female & small chicks feeding

Click this link: <http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/species/mallard>

What do ducks eat?

Mallards will eat from the wetland or the dry land.

They eat mostly plant material, including seeds, grains, grasses, clovers and the tips of most aquatic plants.

They will also eat any food scraps that humans give them like bread – although too much bread is not good for them because it has high levels of salt.

Mallards will also eat a wide range of insect larvae and adults, freshwater snails and worms, and estuarine invertebrates.

Lets take a look:

Amphipods



Amphipods
(Corophium)



Amphipods
(Melita)



Amphipods
(Paracalliope)



Amphipods
(Paracorophium)



Amphipods
(Paracrangonyx)



Amphipods
(Paraleptamphopus)



Amphipods
(Phreatogammarus)



Amphipods
(Talitridae)

Photos courtesy of Landcare Research.
<http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/resources/identification/animals/freshwater-invertebrates/guide/jointed-legs/crustaceans/amphipods>

Water Boatman

Corixidae: Diaprepocoris



Corixidae: Sigara



Photos courtesy of: Landcare Research.
<http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/resources/identification/animals/freshwater-invertebrates/species-list>

Snails

Lymnaeidae: Austropeplea



Lymnaeidae: Lymnaea



Lymnaeidae: Pseudosuccinea



Worms



Photo courtesy of: Zane Moss Southland Fish & Game

Where do they find all this food?

Ephemeral wetlands provide a good place for them to find worms, as they will come up out of the ground.



Plant life in the pond

Ponds will produce plant life at different times. This plant life provides homes for the insects and can provide food for the ducks.

These photos were taken at monthly intervals from October to December. Notice the difference in emergent plants.

Photos courtesy of: E Garrick & C Stewart, Southland Fish & Game.



Breeding/Nesting

We have learned:

- Mallard ducks can lay between 10 and 13 pale green eggs
- The incubation time is 27-28 days
- The nest is made of duck feathers and down

Photo courtesy of: John Dyer Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game

Breeding/Nesting

In New Zealand:

- Mallard ducks nest in late July to September and then they can nest again in October to November. This means they can produce two broods per year.

How many ducklings could that be?

- The nests are on the ground hidden in vegetation and close to water

Ducklings

- For the first 12 days of their lives they will eat animal food items - snails, amphipods etc
- After that, they will mostly eat plant foods – seeds, grains, grasses etc
- The ducklings will stay with their mother for about 7 to 9 weeks until they fledge – this means when they have all their feathers and they are able to fly.



Duckling Habitat

A recent research project by Fish and Game has shown that to increase survival rates of ducklings they need:

- Ephemeral water near their nesting site (the research showed that the survival rate almost doubled!)
- A large area of shallow water that gives the ducklings a feeding zone. The shallow water must be less than 43cm deep
- Plants that provide shelter from the weather –on the West Coast our bad weather comes from the North West and South West
- Plant cover to protect them from predators like hawks. This pond has overhanging willow on the west edge, and a mix of *carex secta*, toe toe, flax, rank grass and surrounding larger trees for shelter.
- Fencing to keep stock away from the water

Research by Fish & Game



Click here to play: <https://youtu.be/yk3NRtLdczw>