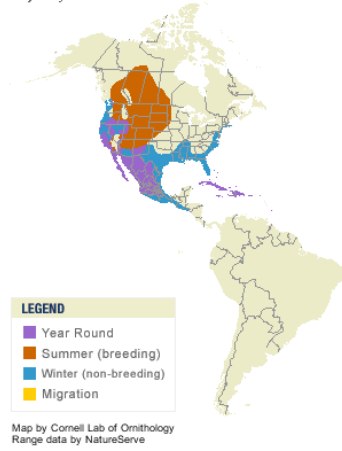


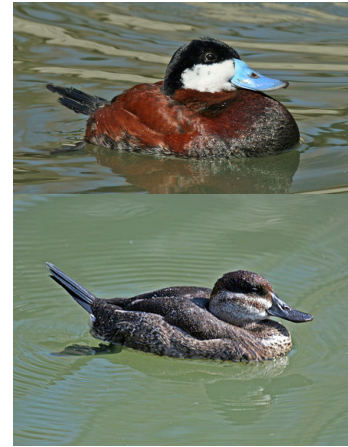
Ruddy Duck  
*Oxyura jamaicensis*



# RUDDY DUCK

## ANSERIFORMES

Family: Anatidae  
Genus: *Oxyura*  
Species: *jamaicensis*



**Range:** North America and winters in wetlands throughout the U.S. and Mexico.

**Habitat:** temperate, freshwater environments including marshy lakes and ponds

**Niche:** Aquatic, nocturnal, omnivorous

**Wild diet:** seeds and roots of aquatic plants, aquatic insects and crustaceans

**Zoo diet:**

**Life Span:** (Wild)  
(Captivity)

**Sexual dimorphism:** (see photo above - male on top)

**Location in SF Zoo:** South American Tropical Rainforest and Aviary

---

## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

---

The ruddy duck is a small diving duck of North America with a short, thick neck, chunky body and stubby wings. They are a stiff-tailed ducks with a fan-shaped tail composed of stiff feathers, which they often hold upright; the tail can act as a rudder when diving. Their short legs are set far back on their bodies, so movement on land is limited. They have a flattened, scoop-shaped bill, with a nail at the tip of the maxilla. Lamellae line the edges of the maxilla and mandible. They have webbing on three toes, and their elevated hind toe is a simple nail without a lobe or flap. Males have a 'penis' they are adapted for copulation on the water only.

**Weight:** 19.68 oz

**Length:** 13.5 - 17 inches

**Wingspan:** 18.5 inches

Ruddy ducks have a white cheek with a dark cap. In summer, males are rusty red with bright blue bills. In winter, they are dull gray-brown with dull gray bills. Females are brownish, somewhat like winter males but with a blurry stripe across the pale cheek patch. Adult males have a rust-red body, a blue bill, and a white face with a black cap. In flight, Ruddy Ducks show solidly dark tops of the wings.

---

## STATUS & CONSERVATION

---

Listed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List. North America populations are stable according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. Ruddy Ducks are susceptible to poor water quality, pollution, and oil spills. Ruddy Ducks depend heavily on wetlands in the prairie pothole region of North America, where grazing, burning, and wetland drainage have degraded portions of their habitat. Their future success will depend in large part on the protection and restoration of that region.

---

## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

---

Although relatively silent, the male will give a "chuck-uck-uck-uck-ur-r-r" when displaying, while females are relatively silent.

Males court females by beating their bill against their neck hard enough to create a swirl of bubbles in the water.

Ruddy Ducks dive and swim underwater. They feed on aquatic invertebrates, especially midge larvae. They feed most actively at night, so you'll often see Ruddy Ducks sleeping during the day, head tucked under a wing and tail cocked up. They often dive or swim away from danger rather than flying. When flying, their small wings stroke so fast they resemble bumblebees.

They are partially migratory and winter in coastal bays and unfrozen lakes and ponds. Males are not territorial but will defend the immediate area around their female. Ruddy ducks are social in the winter and are often found in large flocks.

---

## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

---

Ruddy ducks are one of few duck species that form pair bonds after arriving on the breeding grounds. Ruddy ducks nest in marshes adjacent to lakes and ponds, primarily in the Prairie Potholes region. They construct nests in dense marsh vegetation such as cattail and bulrush near water. The female builds the nest out of grass, locating it in tall vegetation to hide it from predators. Pairs form each year.

Within a day after hatching, the young leave the nest and can swim and dive well. They are tended by the female, but feed themselves.

Incubation: 25 – 27 days # of eggs: 5 – 15 (ave 8)	Sexual Maturity: 1 - 2 years Fledging: 42 – 49 days
---	--

---

## MISCELLANEOUS

---

Ruddy ducks lay large, white eggs, the largest of all duck eggs relative to their body size.

### Sources:

Handbook of the Birds of the World Vol I © 1992, Lynx Edicions

<http://www.birdlife.org/>

[http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Ruddy\\_Duck/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Ruddy_Duck/id)

<http://www.ducks.org/hunting/waterfowl-id/ruddy-duck#ad-image-0>

[http://www.birdweb.org/birdweb/bird/ruddy\\_duck](http://www.birdweb.org/birdweb/bird/ruddy_duck)

<http://www.dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/species/waterfowl/divingducks/ruddyduck.html>

Created 7/15