

Duck is the common name for numerous species of waterfowl in the family Anatidae. Ducks are generally smaller and shorter-necked than swans and geese, which are members of the same family. Divided among several subfamilies, they are a form taxon; they do not represent a monophyletic group (the group of all descendants of a single common ancestral species), since swans and geese are not considered ducks. Ducks are mostly aquatic birds, and may be found in both fresh water and sea water.

Ducks are sometimes confused with several types of unrelated water birds with similar forms, such as loons or divers, grebes, gallinules and coots.

Feeding

Ducks eat food sources such as grasses, aquatic plants, fish, insects, small amphibians, worms, and small molluscs.

Dabbling ducks feed on the surface of water or on land, or as deep as they can reach by up-ending without completely submerging. Along the edge of the bill, there is a comb-like structure called a pecten. This strains the water squirting from the side of the bill and traps any food. The pecten is also used to preen feathers and to hold slippery food items.

Diving ducks and sea ducks forage deep underwater. To be able to submerge more easily, the diving ducks are heavier than dabbling ducks, and therefore have more difficulty taking off to fly.