

This resource is based on the following source:

Kale, H. W., II, B. Pranty, B. M. Stith, and C. W. Biggs. 1992. The atlas of the breeding birds of Florida. Final Report. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida.

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## Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

The Mallard, a member of the group known as dabblers or puddle ducks, is probably the most widely known duck in the world, occurring as a wild species throughout much of the northern hemisphere. It has been domesticated and introduced into many other areas as an "ornamental" species in ponds and lakes.

**Habitat.** The Mallard is usually found on fresh water, but it may occur in saltwater canals and brackish marshes along the coast. It feeds mostly on aquatic vegetation. In urban and suburban areas, larger amounts of non-aquatic food are consumed, including human hand-outs such as bread and grain.

The Mallard builds a well-concealed nest usually in tall grasses and weeds. In towns, it may even nest in plant boxes and other human-made objects, requiring only that some concealment is available. The nest is built of reeds, grasses, or other available materials and is lined with down. The 6 to 18 greenish or buffy eggs are laid 1 day apart. Incubation takes approximately 26 days. Young birds remain with their parents until they are almost fully grown. They frequently will remain in a family group until the following breeding season. While a pair of wild Mallard Ducks usually produces only 1 brood per season introduced and semi-domesticated pairs may produce 2 or more.

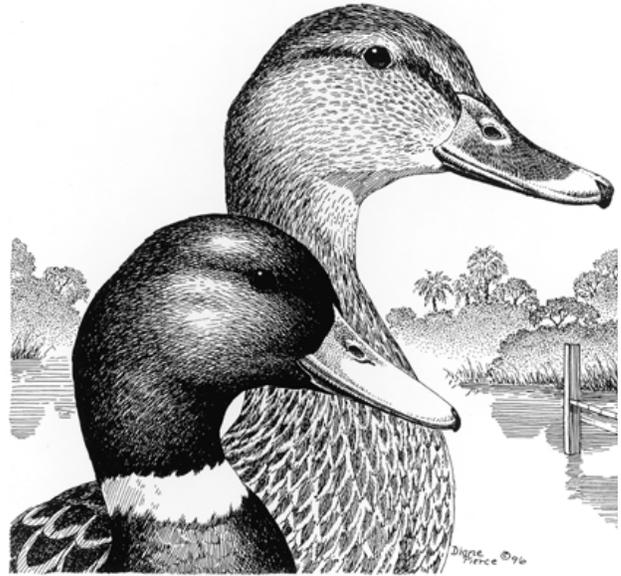


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**Seasonal Occurrence.** In Florida, the Mallard is primarily a wintering species found in moderate numbers in the northern half of the state.

**Status.** Most breeding records are of introduced birds or those that escaped from captivity, and some breeding records include semi-domesticated birds breeding on farm ponds. Neither Howell (1932) nor Sprunt (1954) list any breeding records of wild Mallards in Florida, but some wild birds apparently do remain in the state to breed for example, the hen and 3 ducklings photographed at Pace, Santa Rosa County, in April 1990. By the end of May, all the birds had departed the area (fide C. W. Milmore). Stevenson and Anderson (1994) list 3 other breeding records of "wary" birds in 1959, 1961, and 1976, all from Leon County.

Breeding records cover most of the state, except for the Everglades and the Big Cypress Swamp, and areas devoid of human settlements and, therefore, feral Mallard Ducks. Populations of Mallard Ducks center around urban and suburban lakes and ponds, where they are frequently joined by Muscovy Ducks, also released by mallard and muscovy duck hybrids occur in many areas with populations of both species. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission [editor: now Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission] biologists consider Mallard and Mottled Duck interbreeding to be a serious threat to Mottled Duck populations (Gray 1993).

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