

American Widgeon

Anas (Mareca) americana

Class: *Aves*

Order: *Anseriformes*

Family: *Anatidae*

Characteristics:

Both sexes have a bluish bill with a black tip. Males have a white patch on the forehead, darker circular area around the eye and an iridescent green band that runs from behind the eye to the back of the neck. Females have the same dark area around the eye but have the characteristic drab brown body coloring of most female ducks. The males make a raspy, whistling sound whereas females make more of a low quack.

Behavior:

American widgeons are a dabbling duck that actually prefers to do most of their grazing on land. Interestingly, when in water they spend most of their time on deep water and have been frequently seen stealing food from coots and diving ducks (Audubon).

Reproduction:

American widgeon nest farther north, in Canada and Alaska, than almost all other ducks except the pintail (Ducks Unlimited). Females lay an average of nine eggs. Incubation of the eggs is done only by the females and the young hatch at around 24 days. Mom will stay with her brood usually until they can fly on their own.

Diet:

Wild: Mostly aquatic and land-growing plants such as pondweeds, sedges, algae and on land young shoots, seeds and grains. Newly hatched ducklings will eat insects.

Zoo: Scratch grains, flock raiser pellets, Seabird, greens, and will graze on the grass

Conservation:

Stable populations, and in fact, their breeding range continues to expand northward.

FYI:

American widgeons are also known as “baldpates” because of the white patch on the males’ head.



Range & Habitat:

Marshes, lakes, bays and wetland fields



Lifespan: up to 20 years in captivity, average is 2 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: Tend to be very wary, cautious birds and will take flight at least disturbance.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

