
Northern Shoveler

Spatula clypeata

Class: *Aves*

Order: *Anseriformes*

Family: *Anatidae*

Characteristics:

Also known as the common shoveler, the most obvious feature, also from which they get their name, is the long scoop-like bill. Males have a black bill, bright green, iridescent head and neck, chestnut belly and sides, white breast, and white stripes down the back. The female displays the drab brown coloration of most female ducks with an orange shovel-style bill ([Ducks Unlimited](#)).

Behavior:

Northern shoveler is a dabbling duck that feeds by dabbling and sifting in shallow water. Unlike many dabblers, they don't tip their upper body into the water, but skim the top of the water with their bill to feed. The males make a short, nasally [chirping call](#) whereas the females have a more characteristic quacking call.

Reproduction:

Shovelers are monogamous and may stay together longer than other dabbling duck species, but they play no part in the incubation. The males exhibit an elaborate courtship of calls, wing flaps and swimming maneuvers. They build a simple ground nest lined with down in an area near water surrounded at least on three sides by vegetation. They lay a clutch of around 12 eggs which hatch at about 24 days. The females lead them away from the nest immediately and the ducklings begin to feed on insects and other invertebrates as well as plants and seeds ([Arkive](#)).

Diet:

Wild: Aquatic invertebrates and seeds

Zoo: Waterfowl pellets, greens, scratch grains

Conservation:

Breeding populations appear quite stable.

FYI:

If flushed off the nest, a female shoveler will often defecate on her eggs, most likely to deter predators from eating them ([Cornell](#)).



Range & Habitat:

Shallow marshes, grasslands



Lifespan: up to 15-20 years in captivity, usually average up to 5 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: The elongated, spoon-shaped bill has comb-like projections along its edges to filter food from water.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

