

Ruddy Duck

Oxyura jamaicensis

Class: *Aves*

Order: *Anseriformes*

Family: *Anatidae*

Characteristics: Male and female ruddy ducks differ in appearance and the males change their look depending on the time of year. Males have a rich chestnut color on their necks and bodies. The crown, nape, and tail are very dark brown or black. The male's face is white and the male has a brilliant blue bill. The female has a barred appearance and does not have the chestnut color at all. The females have a dark line across the face and a dull blue bill. In winter, males look just like females except for the white face. ([Biokids](#)) Males are also slightly larger than females. The bill of the ruddy duck is wide and flat and the legs are positioned toward the rear of the body. ([Animal Diversity](#))

Behavior: Ruddy ducks will spend most of their time on the water. Because of the positioning of their legs, they are not graceful walkers. They are fast fliers, but have a hard time maneuvering in the air. Ruddy ducks are excellent divers. They forage for aquatic plants under the water. They live alone, in breeding pairs, and rarely in small groups. They are known to be aggressive toward other ruddy ducks and especially toward other species. ([Cornell](#)) Male ruddy ducks will hold their tail straight up in the air. Ruddy ducks migrate in both spring and fall, but southern populations may be permanent. ([Audubon](#))

Reproduction: The male ruddy duck attracts the female with an interesting [courtship display](#). The female constructs the nest and cares for the young. Females lay 6-10 large white eggs. The eggs are incubated for 23-26 days. The young leave the nest after only one day. Young ruddy ducks are capable of diving and aggressive behavior toward other species at just one day old. The parents will abandon the ducklings after just 20-30 days. ([Encyclopedia of Life](#))

Diet: Wild: Aquatic plants and insects
Zoo: Duck pellet, grains, seabird pellet, and greens

Conservation: According to the [IUCN Redlist](#) of endangered species, the ruddy duck is of least concern. The population is declining, but the ruddy duck has an extremely large range and population size currently. The only known threats to the population are habitat loss and hunting, especially in Europe where they are considered and invasive species.

FYI: The ruddy duck's eggs are the largest waterfowl eggs in relation to body size.



Range & Habitat:

Native to North and Central America, introduced in many European countries. Freshwater swamps, lakes, pools, marshes, open water, large lakes, brackish lagoons, and estuaries are their preferred habitats.



Lifespan: up to 8 years in captivity,
2 years average in the wild.

Special Adaptations: The ruddy duck has large webbed feet and legs positioned to the rear of the body for excellent diving abilities.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

