

# Wood Duck

## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Aix sponsa*

**AKA:** Carolina Wood Duck, Hwyaaden goed Carolina (Welsh)

**Native to:** Central and North America

**Habitat:** Lakes, marshes and slow rivers typically near deciduous or mixed woodland.

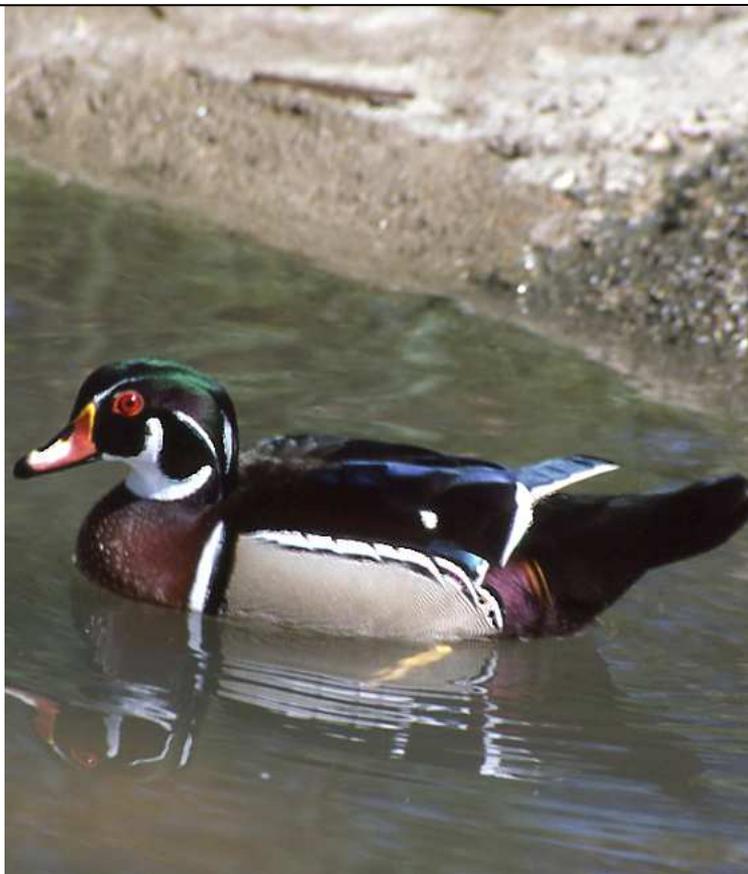
A small compact duck, with the males vividly marked and easily recognisable.

Small numbers of feral wood duck have been observed in the wild in the UK since the late 19th century. The species is commonly kept in captivity, and although individuals have escaped, wood duck has yet to establish a sustainable population.

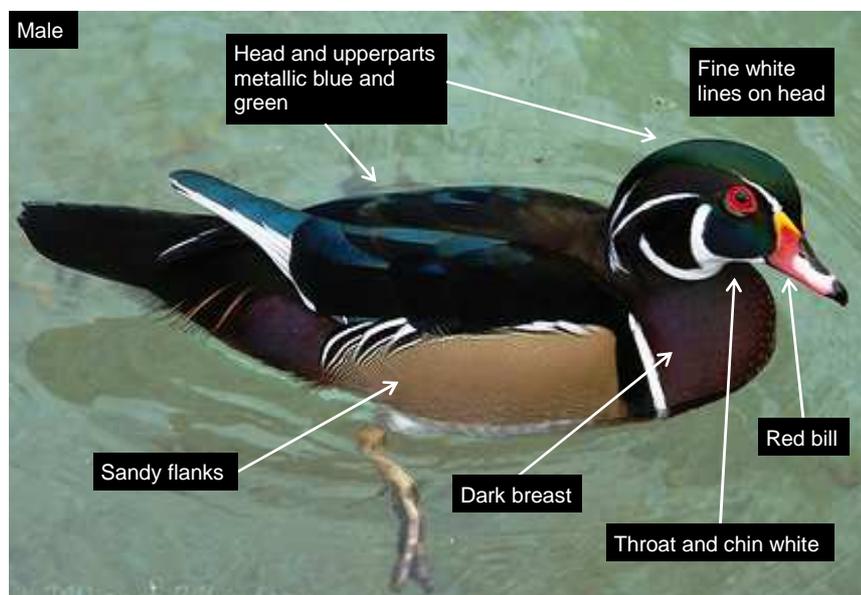
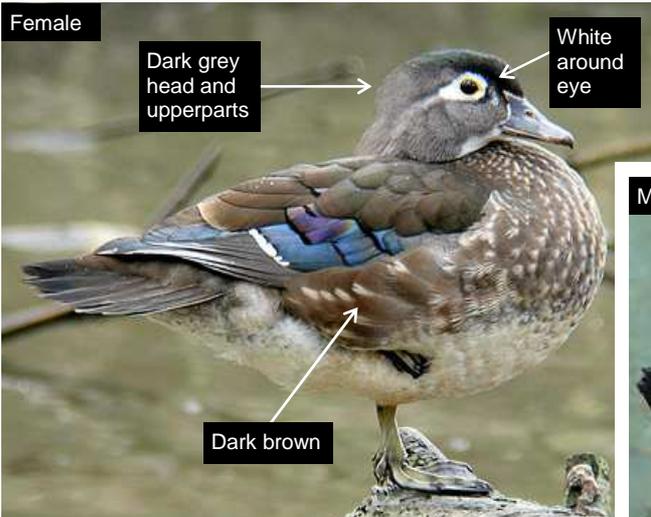
Wood duck nests in cavities or holes in trees and so have the potential to compete for nesting sites with native bird species that have similar requirements.

Wood duck is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England, Wales and Scotland. As such, it is an offence to release or allow the escape of this species into the wild.

For details of legislation go to [www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation).



## Key ID Features



## Identification throughout the year

The wood duck is present throughout the year in the UK and, apart from late summer, its appearance remains the same.

## Field Signs

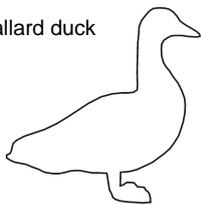
The following field signs are shared by the mandarin duck and should not be used for the purposes of specific identification as wood duck:

- Call - Generally silent.
- Breeding season - Egg laying from late April to early May.
- Nest - Cavities or holes in trees.
- Eggs - 10-14 in clutch, ivory coloured.

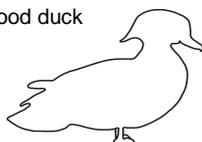
## Similar Species

Mallard ducks are much larger than wood ducks and have a more elongated neck.

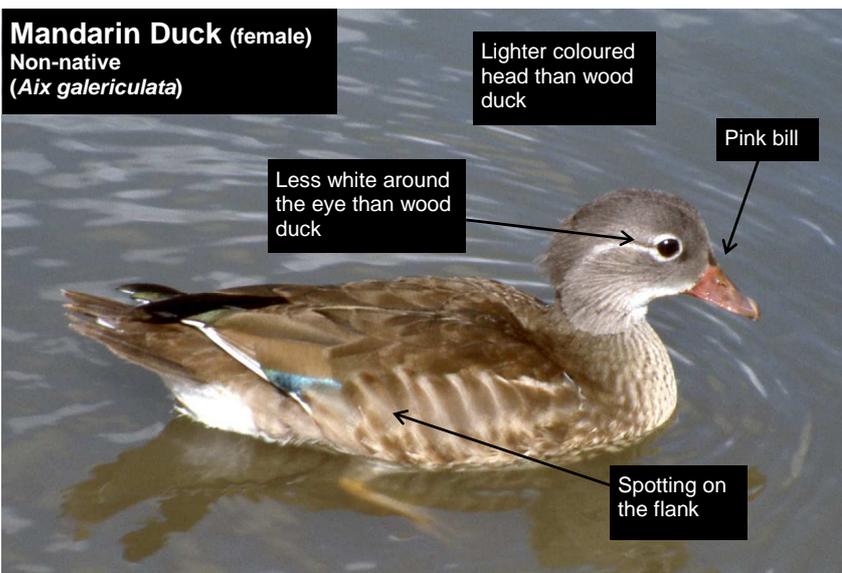
Mallard duck



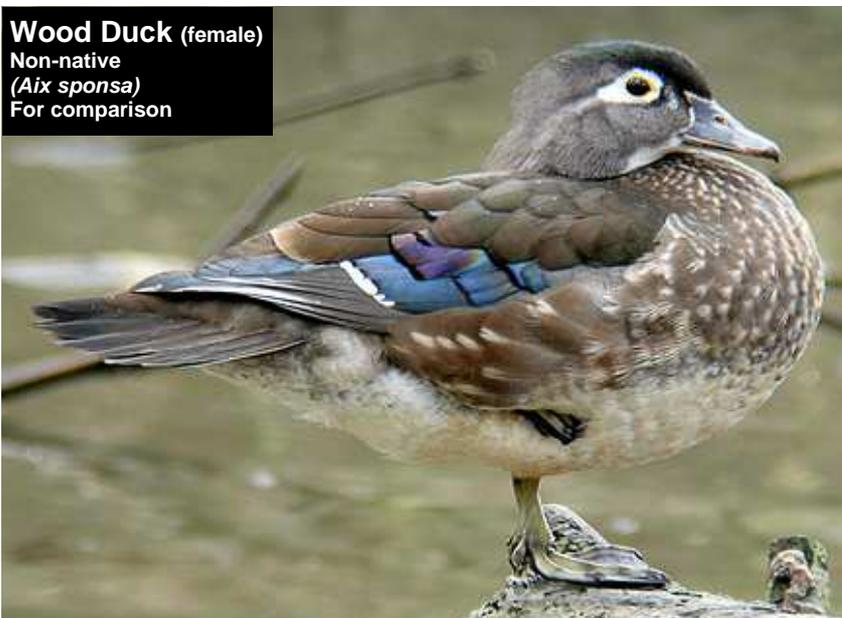
Wood duck



**Mandarin Duck (female)**  
Non-native  
(*Aix galericulata*)



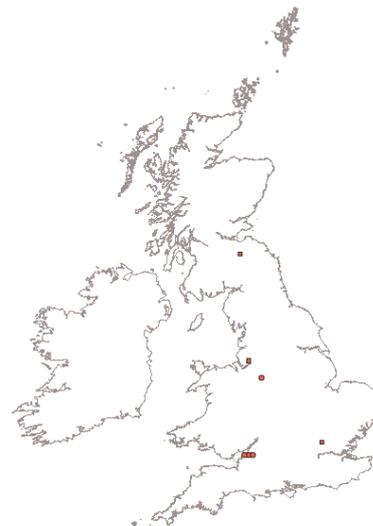
**Wood Duck (female)**  
Non-native  
(*Aix sponsa*)  
For comparison



## Distribution

Pairs and individuals have been recorded in isolated locations throughout the UK.

Source: NBN Gateway. Check website for current distribution



Male wood ducks are very distinctive due to their vividly marked plumage, however females may be confused with female mandarin ducks.



Mandarin duck by Tambako the Jaguar, Creative Common BY-ND  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tambako/853400195/sizes/o/>

### References and further reading:

- Lever, C (1979) "*The Naturalised Animals of the British Isles*". Paladin
- Lever, C (2005) "*Naturalised Birds of the World*". T & A D Poyser
- Madge, S and Burn, H (1992) "*Wildfowl: An Identification Guide to the Ducks, Geese and Swans of the World*". Christopher Helm
- Mullarney, K, Svensson, L, Zetterstrom, D and Grant, P.J. (2001) "*Bird Guide*". HarperCollins
- Snow, D.W and Perrins, C.M. (1998) "*The Birds of the Western Palearctic. Concise Edition*". Oxford University Press