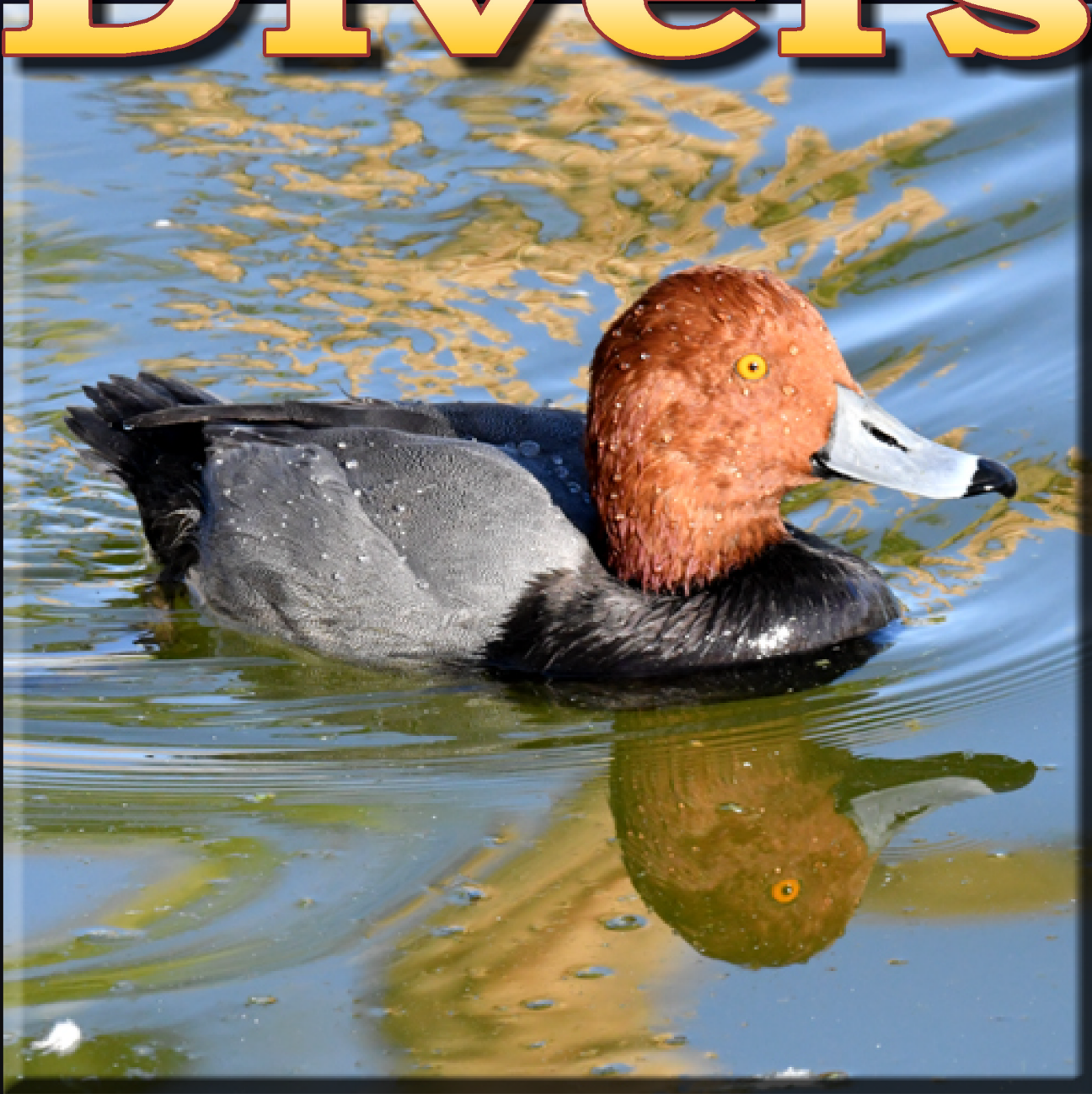


ANSERIFORMES

(Waterfowl)

Divers



Family ANATIDAE (Diving Ducks) Ring-Necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*)



LV Municipal GC; LV, NV



Floyd Lamb SP; LV, NV



Clark Co. Wetlands Pk; NV



Overton WMA; NV

Measurements:

Length: 17" Wing Span: 25"

Average Weight: 1.5 lbs

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

medium size; gray-blue bill with bold white ring separating black tip; (m) black head and back, white flanks; orange to yellow eyes; (f) brownish overall, brown cap, gray face; dark eyes with white eyering

Notes:

though somewhat uncommon, usually found on freshwater ponds throughout NA, except Arctic regions; named for faint cinnamon ring around neck; feeds on seeds and aquatic plants

Mojave presence: winter range

Comments:

Ring-necks are rather common winter visitors in wetlands, parks, golf course ponds, etc., in the Mojave. And though their name is derived from the narrow dark collar around the neck, this feature is difficult to discern in the field. The duck is more readily identified by the sharp crest on the rear of the crown when displayed, and the bluish bill with a white ring separating the black tip (males have an additional white ring at base of bill). While some of their pondmates, such as Canada Geese, are particularly raucous, ring-necks are peacefully quiet birds!

Some of the best places to see ring necks in the desert region are the Clark County Wetlands Park, the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, the Overton Wildlife Management Area, and Floyd Lamb State Park, all in Southern Nevada.



Coyote Springs GC; NV



Clark Co. Wetlands Pk; NV



Bear's Best GC; LV, NV



Hend. Bird Viewing Preserve

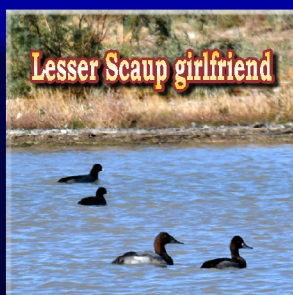
Family ANATIDAE (Diving Ducks)

Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*)



male

Overton WMA; Overton, NV



Lesser Scaup girlfriend

Overton WMA; Overton, NV

Measurements:

Length: 21" Wing Span: 29"

Average Weight: (m) 2.7 lbs (f) 2.5 lbs

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

large size (similar to mallard); black bill; red eyes; **sloped facial profile**; blue-gray legs, feet; **(m) chestnut red** head, neck; black breast, rump; gray back; white sides, belly **(f)** light brown head, neck; darker chest, foreback; gray-brown sides, back

Notes:

common locally; native to NA from Alaska to Mexico, and through all of the US; feeds on snails, mussels, insect larvae, seeds, and submerged aquatic plants (e.g. pondweed tubers); Chesapeake Bay once hosted half of the North American winter population

Mojave presence: winter range



female



characteristic sloped profile

red eyes

Overton WMA; Overton, NV

Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*)

Measurements:

Length: 17" Wing Span: 25"

Average Weight: (m) 1.8 lbs (f) 1.6 lbs

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

medium size; **yellow eyes**; pale **gray-blue bill** with black tip; **(m) black head**, breast, and tail; white body, gray back; **(f)** brown body, paler sides and belly; gray-blue bill with white patch at base

Notes:

common; found on ponds, lakes, bays throughout NA (except far n Canada); feeds mainly on molluscs, crustaceans, also insects, seeds, aquatic plants; distinguished from **Greater Scaup** by less rounded head held higher while swimming, otherwise identical; **often hybridizes with other duck species!**

Mojave presence: winter range



male



plays well others

Overton WMA; Overton, NV



female



white at base of bill

flat back of head

possibly a hybrid

Overton WMA; Overton, NV

Family ANATIDAE (Diving Ducks)

Redhead (*Aythya americana*)

male



tri-colored body

Cornerstone Pk; Hend., NV

Measurements:

Length: 21" Wing Span: 33"

Average Weight: 2.2 lbs

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

large size; **grayish-blue bill with black tip**; rounded head; **yellow eyes**; **(m) rufous head**, gray body, black breast and tail; **(f)** overall brown body; grayer bill, dark crown

Notes:

common on ponds, lakes, wetlands, etc., throughout most of NA from Alaska and central latitudes of CAN (breeding range) south through MEX (year-round); often mixes with other ducks; feeds mainly on plants, algae, seeds, also insects, snails, fish eggs, etc.

Mojave presence: winter range

female



brown body

Cornerstone Pk; Hend., NV

male



rufous head

Lorenzi Park; LV, NV

gray-blue bills



with black tips

Lorenzi Park; LV, NV

Comments:

There are several members of the duck group (e.g. **Canvasback**, **Cinnamon Teal**, and the female **Common Merganser**) that present reddish-colored heads, so it is quite useful for birding enthusiasts to recognize the differences in the field. Study the appropriate sections presented in this gallery to familiarize yourself with the various traits that distinguish these birds one from another.

Redheads are very social birds, and are quite comfortable mingling with a large variety of waterfowl, as witnessed at the **Bird Viewing Preserve** in Henderson, Nevada, in March of 2021. Here they have an opportunity to socialize with **Ruddy Ducks** and **Northern Shovelers** (left) among many others, including **Mallards**, **Cinnamon** and **Green-Winged Teals**, **Buffleheads**, etc. Two others just flew in (right) to join the party.

Reds are a relatively common sight--though not nearly as common as other species--in the winter months at a great variety of wetland habitats and refuges throughout the Mojave region.



Family ANATIDAE (Diving Ducks)

Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

Measurements:

Length: 15" Wing Span: 18.5"

Average Weight: 1.2 lbs

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

small size; low swimming profile; **short tail**, usually **held high**; dark eyes; (m) pale **blue bill**, bright **white cheeks**, black cap and nape; (f) gray-blue bill, brown head, pale cheeks with dark lateral band

Notes:

seasonally common on ponds and lakes throughout NA except Arctic regions, with year-round residents in the west; often mix with other diving ducks, as on golf course waters; feeds mainly on plants, seeds, insect larvae, molluscs, crustaceans, etc

Mojave presence: year-round

Comments:

"Ruddies" have rather dull gray-blue bills outside of the breeding season, but in the spring these become bluer. Nevertheless, from a distance the bill color may not be so apparent, and their pale cheeks in the non-breeding season can be reminiscent of female **Black Scoters** or **Lesser Scaups**! However, these small ducks often raise their long spikey tails high while swimming. This can be a helpful identifying characteristic.

Caretakers at the **Overton Wildlife Management Area** inundate several dry pond units every fall for waterfowl to use during their winter migration. For summer, however, the ponds are drained to conserve water and used to grow forage crops (alfalfa, barley, etc.) for the following winter migration.

In March, 2021, when the ponds were almost completed dry, this resident couple discovered a small rain-filled depression and claimed it all to themselves.

male



Cornerstone Pk; Hend., NV

female



Bear's Best GC; LV, NV

blue bill

gray bill

white face

Bird Viewing Preserve; NV

female



Bird Viewing Preserve; NV

**dark stripe through cheek;
pale undersides**

getting a running start



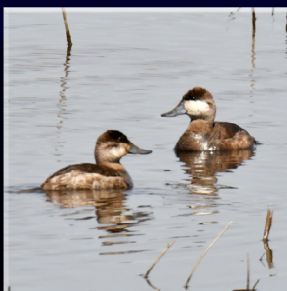
Overton WMA; Overton, NV

female



Overton WMA; Overton, NV

often holds tail high



Family ANATIDAE (Diving Ducks)

Common Merganser (*Mergus serrator*)



Desert Pines GC; LV, NV

Measurements:

Length: 25" Wing Span: 34"

Average Weight: 3.5 lbs

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

large size; long, slender **red bill** with hooked black tip; **(m)** white body with **black head** and back; **(f)** gray body, bright white chest and neck, red head with ragged crest, white chin

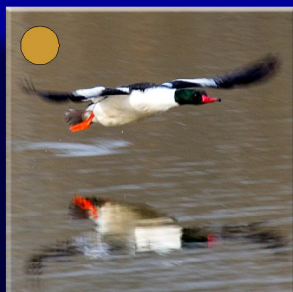
Notes:

common on ponds, lakes, and rivers throughout NA, though rare in the southern US; feeds mainly on fish; bill straight and slender unlike the usual wide flat bills of typical ducks

Mojave presence: winter range



Desert Pines GC; LV, NV



Copper Harbor; UP; MI

Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*)

Measurements:

Length: 18" Wing Span: 24"

Average Weight: 1.5 lbs

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

small size; **hammerhead-shaped crest**; **(m)** black head and back, reddish flanks; **white patches** on head (conspicuous when crest raised, otherwise just a white stripe); bright **yellow eyes**; **(f)** brown overall; brown, shaggy crest; bill dark above, yellow below; paler eyes than male

Notes:

uncommon; found across NA from southern Canada to northern US, wintering in southern US, rare in southwest; sometimes found mixed with other duck species; feeds mainly on fish, crustaceans, insects; slender bill like **Common Merganser**, but black

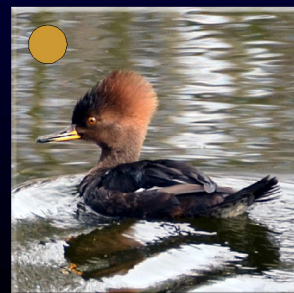
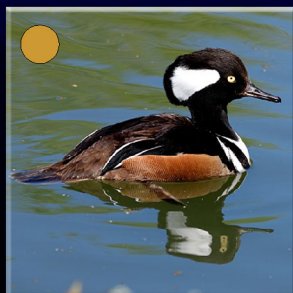
Mojave presence: rare



Desert Pines GC; LV, NV



Desert Pines GC; LV, NV



Family ANATIDAE (Diving Ducks)

Bufflehead (Bucephala albeola)



Bird Viewing Preserve; NV



Overton WMA; Overton, NV



Bird Viewing Preserve; NV



Overton WMA; Overton, NV

Measurements:

Length: 14" Wing Span: 21"

Average Weight: 13 oz

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

small size; black bill; (m) black back, white body; iridescent face and neck, **large white patch** on back of head; (f) gray-brown back, paler gray body; **small white patch** on cheeks; smaller than male

Notes:

common; ranges throughout NA, though rare in AZ and Mexico, wintering on coastal and inland waters; feeds mainly on molluscs, crustaceans, and insect larvae; usually found in small numbers mixed with other ducks; small duck, rivaling **Green-Winged Teal**

Mojave presence: winter range

Comments:

"Buffies" are common winter migrants at the **Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve** in Henderson, Nevada. March is a fun time to watch these attractive birds as males have a rather comical courting technique to woo the girls. First a running start (1), followed by a short flight (2), then a slide landing with chest puffed out and head back (3). If his intended is duly impressed, then the real fun begins (4). It's a hoot to watch!



Family ANATIDAE (Diving Ducks)

Black Scoter (*Melanitta americana*)



Desert Pines GC; LV, NV



Desert Pines GC; LV, NV



Measurements:

Length: 19" Wing Span: 28"

Average Weight: 2 lbs

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

medium size; rounded head; small bill; (m) all black body and head; conspicuous yellow bulbous knob on base of dark bill; (f) brownish body; grayish face and throat; lacks male's yellow knob

Notes:

common locally; large sea duck; breeds in Alaska, across Bering Straits in Siberia, and eastern Canada; winters along NA Pacific and Atlantic coastlines, rare elsewhere; feeds on crustaceans and molluscs in saltwater habitats (insects, eggs, some vegetation in freshwater); status is considered as **Near Threatened**

Mojave presence: very rare

Comments:

It is quite a rare sight to see these ducks in the Mojave Desert. The two shown above at the **Desert Pines Golf Course** in Las Vegas, Nevada, in February of 2018 must have been on their way to another location and stopped briefly to check out my swing. They didn't seem particularly impressed.

Family **ANATIDAE** (Diving Ducks)

Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)



Willow Beach; LM NRA



Measurements:

Length: 18.5" Wing Span: 26"

Average Weight: 2 lbs

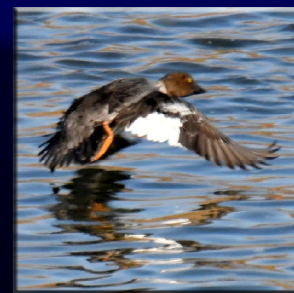
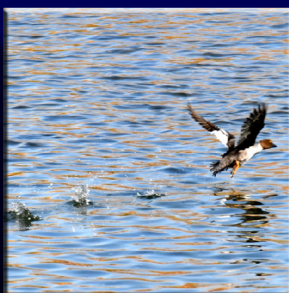
Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

medium size; bulbous head shape; **yellow eyes**; orangish legs and feet; **white wing patches**; (m) **pied dorsal pattern**; **black head** with iridescent cast, white neck and belly; circular **white cheek patch**; (f) **brown head**, white collar, grayish body; no cheek patch; dark bill usually with yellow tip

Notes:

common; breeds in taiga (boreal forest) wetlands (lakes, rivers, bays, etc.) across northern NA from Alaska to Labrador; northern Europe and Russia; winters throughout most of US (Eurasian populations winter mainly in southeast Asia; aggressive and territorial; feeds mainly on crustaceans, aquatic insects, molluscs, but also fish eggs and aquatic plant material

Mojave presence: winter range



Comments:

Like all diving ducks, this female at the [Clark County Wetlands Park](#) in Las Vegas, NV, in February of 2021 had to get a running start to take flight. This provided an opportunity to observe and compare the coloration and patterning of the bird's upper and under sides. Note the stark contrast between the brown head and pale neck and breast, and the bold white patches on the dark wings that characterize the species.