

# Ruddy Duck

## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Oxyura jamaicensis*

**AKA:** Hwyaaden Goch (Welsh)

**Native to:** North America and western South America

**Habitat:** Lowland wetlands with lush emergent vegetation and areas of open water

A small, compact duck with broad, short wings and narrow, stiff tail often held erect. The males are easily recognised by their distinctive blue bill, chestnut body and white face. The females are a dull brown colour, with a cream coloured face intersected by a dark horizontal line.

Originally escaped from captivity in the 1950s from the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust's reserve at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire.

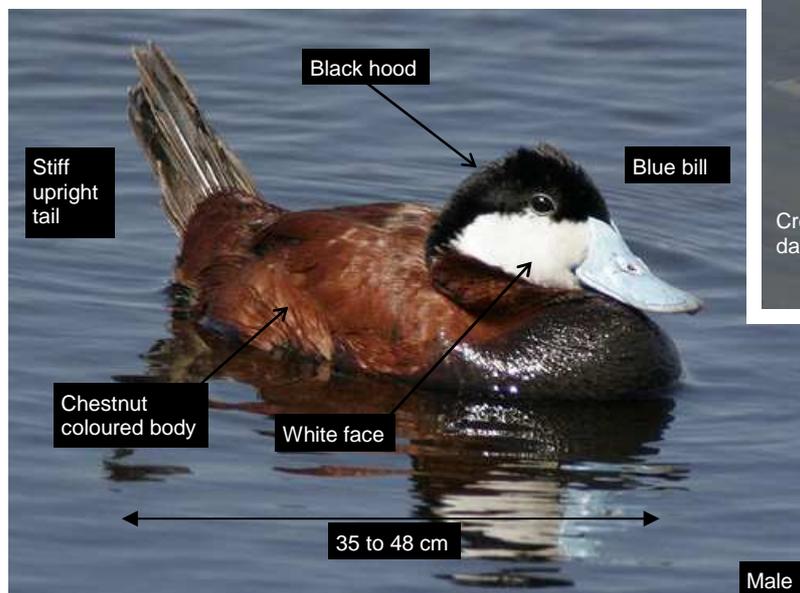
The ruddy duck is a serious threat to populations of white-headed duck (classified as Vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature) in Europe through hybridisation. Eradication is being carried out in the UK to ensure the continued survival of the white-headed duck in Europe.

Ruddy 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

Ruddy ducks are resident throughout the year in the UK. The plumage of females remains the same throughout the year. Between autumn and early spring the male's bill turns grey and its body colour becomes dull brown, however its white face remains. During the breeding season male ruddy ducks are likely to be in the vicinity of any females and can be used to help identification, however, outside the breeding season individuals can occur on their own.

# Field Signs

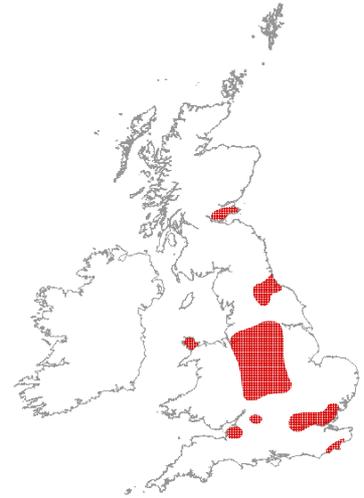
The following field signs are shared by many species of duck and should not be used for the purpose of specific identification as ruddy duck.

- Call - Generally silent.
- Nest - In thick vegetation on water, creating a platform of reed or rush stems and leaves.
- Eggs - 6-10 in clutch, dull or creamy white. Breeding period mid-April to July.

# Distribution

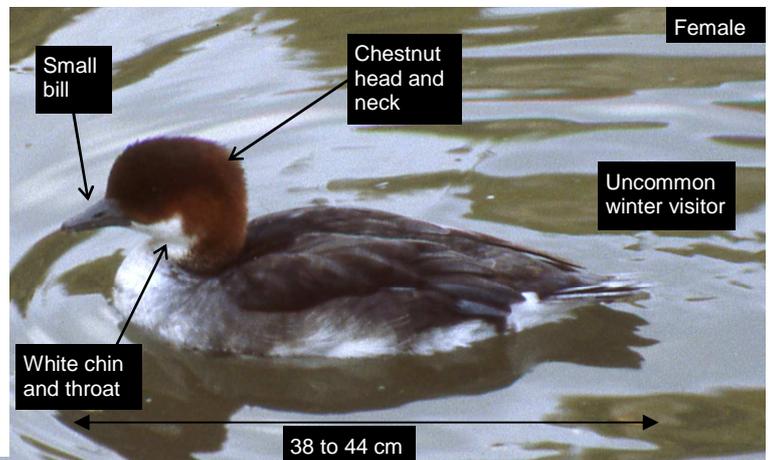
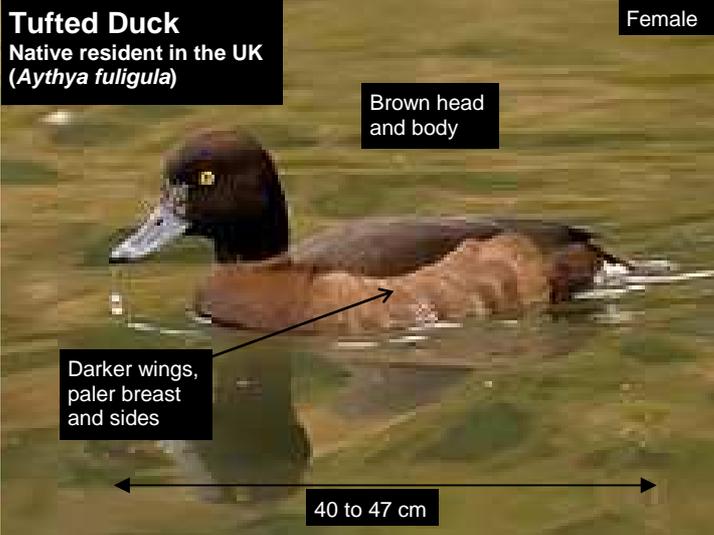
Stronghold centred around the Midlands but with major concentrations in Cheshire, Greater Manchester, the Home Counties, Yorkshire and Anglesey

Source: GB Non-native species secretariat



# Similar Species

In the UK, male ruddy ducks are unlikely to be confused with any other species. However, female ruddy ducks are similar to females of a number of other duck species. The majority of female ducks are generally brown and are distinguished by a combination of size, body shape and subtle plumage characteristics.



**Smew**  
Native winter visitor to the UK  
(*Mergellus albellus*)

### References and further reading:

Lever, C (2005) "Naturalised Birds of the World" T & A D Poyser  
 Mullarney, K, Svensson, L, Zetterstrom, D and Grant, PJ (2001) "Bird Guide" HarperCollins  
 Snow, DW and Perrins, CM (1998) "The Birds of the Western Palearctic". Oxford University Press