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Western Sandpiper.



Northern Pintail.



Emperor Goose.



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Northern Pintail and Mallard.



Greater Yellowlegs.



PACIFIC FLYWAY

The Pacific Flyway stretches more than 4,000 miles from north to south and 1,000 miles west to east. In between are some of the most diverse habitats on the planet, including Arctic tundra, boreal forests, alpine meadows, vast grasslands, towering redwoods, coastal bays and estuaries, ephemeral and permanent wetlands, mighty rivers, and fiery hot deserts. It is home to 20,310-foot Denali (Mount McKinley), the highest peak in the United States, as well as Death Valley, the lowest point at 282 feet below sea level.

The Pacific Flyway begins on the tundra of Alaska, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and the Russian Far East. This vast expanse of Arctic land is covered by snow much of the year. But as the snow melts in spring, the seemingly barren landscape comes alive with sprouting dwarf willow, and the ground is carpeted with sedges, mosses, and lichens. Tundra ponds thaw, streams and rivers meander through the landscape, and the once frigid land becomes an important breeding area for waterfowl and shorebirds.

On the opposite end of the flyway, in Baja California are bays where eelgrass grows in abundance and provides an important food source for wintering waterfowl. On the west coast of Mexico, vast agricultural areas, freshwater impoundments, and coastal lagoons also provide wintering habitats for many waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds.

The Pacific Flyway's western boundary is the Pacific Ocean, although some waterfowl and shorebirds regularly migrate to the Hawaiian Islands to spend the winter. The eastern edge is delineated by the Continental Divide of the Rocky Mountains in the United States and the spine of the Sierra Madre in Mexico.

Along with the remaining natural habitats are some of the most altered landscapes in North America. Since the time of the Spanish explorers, each human action made by trappers, gold miners, pioneers of the westward movement, farmers, the construction of dams and railroads, and the development of cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and Las Vegas has modified the geography of the land. Some regions, such as the Columbia Basin in Oregon and Washington, the Fraser River Delta of British Columbia, and the Central Valley of California, have been transformed from native habitats that included extensive wetlands to areas dominated by intensive agriculture. As a result, the flyway's habitats are vastly different than they were 200 years ago. Other areas, like the Great Basin of Nevada, have more livestock than people, while the alpine areas of the Cascade Mountains and Sierra Nevada still have largely intact ecosystems.

Left: Sacramento Valley, California.



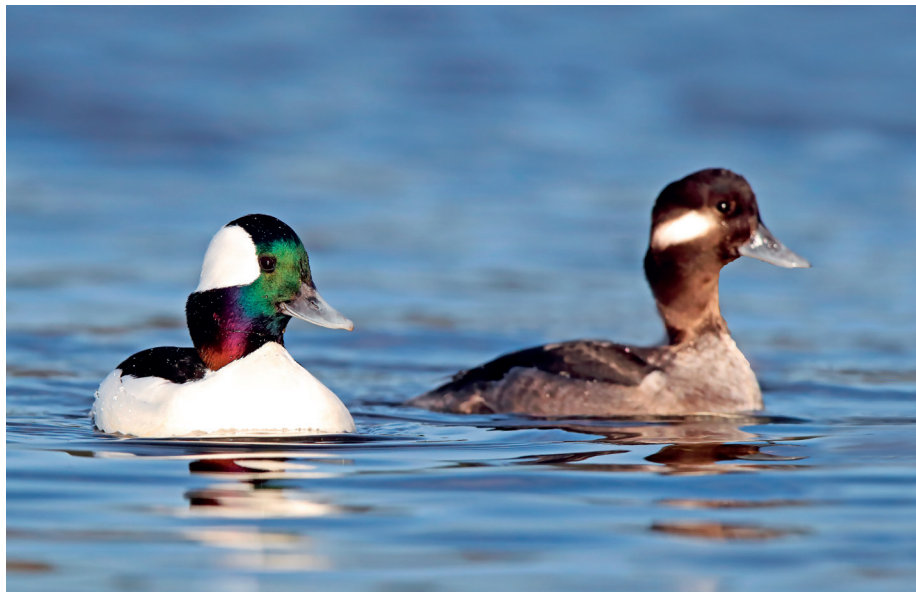
PACIFIC FLYWAY

Even with the significant loss of wetland and upland areas due to expansion of agriculture, urbanization, and climate change, the Pacific Flyway continues to provide breeding, migration, and wintering areas for an array of waterfowl and shorebirds. Some species do not inhabit any other flyway. Among these are the Steller's Eider, a threatened species that breeds in the Arctic coastal plain of Alaska and winters only as far south as Kodiak Island. Also included is the threatened Spectacled Eider. Even though their nesting areas were known for decades, their wintering grounds in the Bering Sea were not discovered until the mid-1990s.

In addition, Emperor Geese, three subspecies of Cackling Geese (Aleutian, Minima, and Taverner's), the Dusky and Vancouver subspecies of the Canada Goose, Black Brant, the Tule subspecies of the Greater White-fronted Goose, and the Pacific race of the Common Eider can only be found in the Pacific Flyway. Species that reach their peak abundance, or have larger populations compared to other flyways include Tundra Swans, Ross's Geese, Greater White-fronted Geese, Northern Pintails, American Wigeon, Northern Shovelers, Cinnamon Teal, Harlequin Ducks, Barrow's Goldeneyes, and Ruddy Ducks. While more abundant in other flyways, Lesser Snow Geese, Canada Geese, Mallards, Green-winged Teal, Canvasbacks, Greater and Lesser Scaup, and Buffleheads are well represented here. 



Boreal forest, Alaska.



Bufflehead.



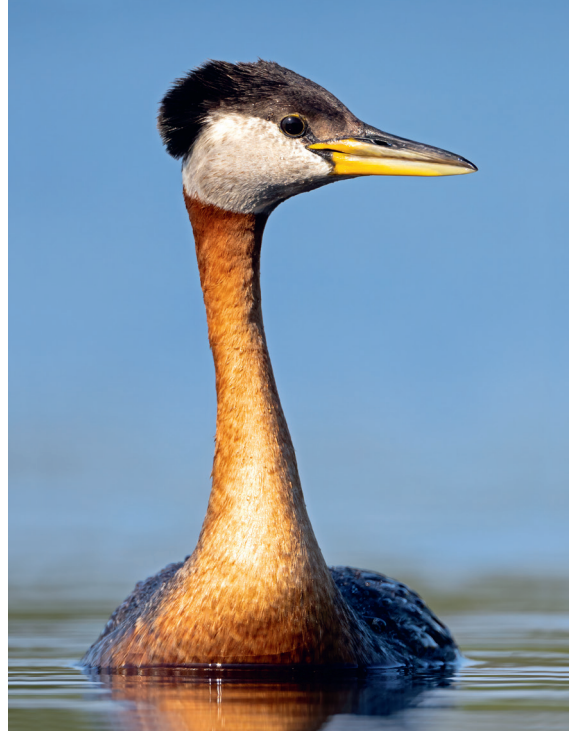
Common Goldeneye.



Common Goldeneye are a boreal forest breeder wintering across much of North America, Europe, and Asia.



A North American species, Buffleheads are common in the boreal forest, where they nest in cavities.



Above: American Wigeon are among the species that nest in the boreal forest with wintering grounds across much of North America.

Top left: Red-necked Grebes nest in boreal forest lakes and wetlands and winter mostly along the Pacific and Atlantic seaboard.

Top right: The Common Merganser is a widespread breeding species in the western boreal forests, with about 50 percent of the species' North American population found in this region.



Above: It is estimated that more than 60 percent of the Wilson's Snipe population nests in the boreal forest.

Top right: River Otters are largely aquatic, searching for fish in boreal forest wetlands and rivers.

Bottom right: Mink are a common mustelid of the boreal forest that are generally associated with wetlands.





Hartney Bay, Copper River Delta, Alaska.



Western Sandpiper.



Semipalmated Plover.



Dunlin.



The Copper River Delta is a crucial staging area for millions of shorebirds along the Pacific Flyway during the spring migration from South America to their Arctic breeding grounds.



Above: The peak migration period for shorebirds is from mid-April to mid-May. The town of Cordova hosts the annual Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival to celebrate this event.

Right: More than five million shorebirds, including almost the entire Pacific Flyway population of Western Sandpipers and Dunlins, use the Copper River Delta during the spring migration.



Above: The Dusky Canada Goose nests primarily on the Copper River Delta, Alaska, and winters in the Pacific Northwest, significantly in Oregon.

Top right: There are more Bald Eagles in Alaska than in all other 49 states combined.

Middle right: The Black Oystercatcher's range extends from the western Aleutian Islands in Alaska to the Baja California peninsula in Mexico, where they frequent rocky shorelines.

Bottom right: The area in and around Cordova, Alaska, is known for having the highest density of Sea Otters in the world.





Butte Sink, Sacramento Valley, California.



Northern Pintail.

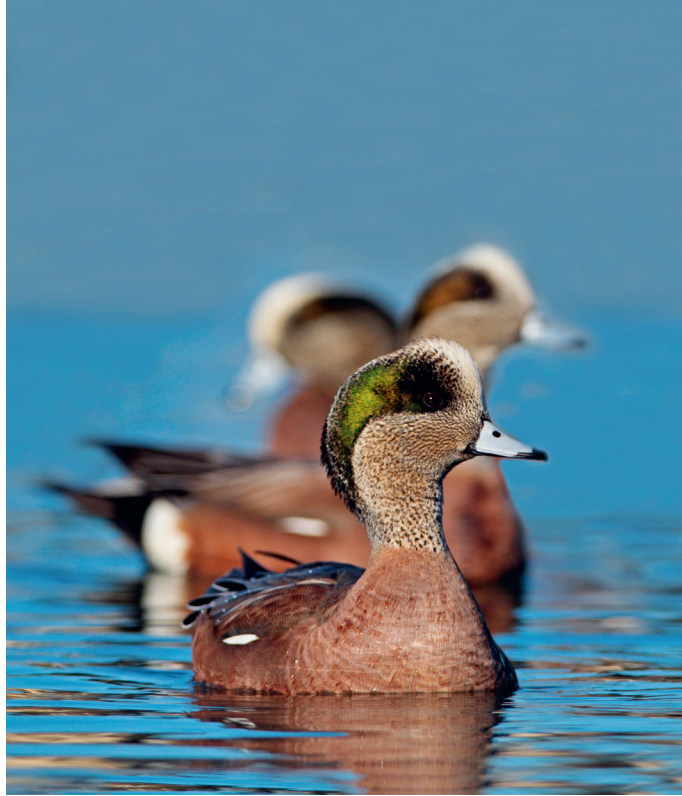


Greater White-fronted Goose.

Right: More than half of the North American Northern Pintail population migrates through California, with the majority wintering in the Central Valley.

Bottom: Northern Pintails form pair bonds and engage in courtship displays, including acrobatic pursuit flights, on their wintering grounds.





Above: Mallards are most abundant in the Sacramento Valley, especially in areas like the Butte Sink.

Top left and right: The Central Valley hosts a significant portion of the Pacific Flyway's American Wigeon population throughout the winter.

Top left: Blue-phase Ross's Geese are a rare color morph of the species, occurring at a rate of 1 in 10,000 to 1 in 100,000 individuals. The current understanding is that most of the blue phase Ross's Geese are the result of Lesser Snow x Ross's hybridization and back crosses.

Top middle: The Tule White-fronted Goose is a distinct, large, and dark subspecies of the Greater White-fronted Goose. They are one of the smallest goose populations in North America, with numbers estimated at less than 10,000 birds.

Top right: Greater White-fronted Geese are common winter visitors to the Central Valley and are the earliest migrating goose, often arriving in mid-to late September.

Right: Thousands of geese, including Lesser Snow, Ross's, and Greater White-fronted Geese, overwinter in the Central Valley, feeding on rice and other grains and roosting in shallow wetlands.





Victoria Island, Nunavut, Canada.



Greater White-fronted Goose.



Lesser Snow Goose.



This page: Lesser Snow Geese breed in large colonies across Arctic and subarctic regions of North America and northeastern Siberia. The Midcontinent and western Arctic populations contribute birds to the Central Flyway.





Right: The Long-tailed Ducks that breed on Victoria Island, Nunavut, winter along the north coasts of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the Great Lakes.

Middle and bottom left and right: On Victoria Island, Nunavut, the Pacific Common Eider subspecies may mix with the Northern Common Eider subspecies, which is the more prevalent type in that area while the King Eider is the most abundant eider on the island.



Top left: Approximately 25 percent of the Lesser Snow Geese in the Central Flyway are dark-phase birds.

Top right: Richardson's Cackling Geese breed in the Arctic, primarily in central and eastern Canada, from the Mackenzie River Delta east to southern Baffin Island.

Left: The breeding grounds of the Greater White-fronted Goose span from western Alaska to eastern Nunavut, Canada, an enormous range from which they depart in early September to their wintering locations in the Central and Mississippi Flyways.



King Eider.



King Eider.



Pacific Common Eider.



Above: Red-necked Phalaropes are found in Arctic and subarctic tundra regions worldwide, nesting in freshwater marshes, bogs, and lakes. In northern North America during the breeding season, they are found from Alaska to Labrador and Newfoundland.

Top right: Sandhill Cranes within the Midcontinent population breed across a vast Arctic and subarctic range from Alaska to east-central Canada with a major segment using the Central Flyway.

Middle right: Red-throated Loons are a circumpolar species that breed in the Arctic and subarctic, in tundra regions and forested wetlands.

Bottom right: The Semipalmated Sandpiper is an Arctic breeding shorebird with nesting grounds in the tundra of Alaska and Canada. Following the breeding season, they begin their long journey south to Central and South America.



Top left: Arctic Hares are the largest hares in North America and are known for their thick, seasonal fur that changes from gray-brown in summer to white in winter.

Top right: Arctic Foxes are opportunistic feeders that consume birds, eggs, and chicks when available, particularly during the summer season when many migratory bird species are present.

Right: Musk Ox are found across the vast tundra of Canada where many Central Flyway waterfowl and shorebirds nest, inhabiting both the Arctic islands and mainland river valleys.





Playa lakes and agriculture, Texas.



Mallard.



Sandhill Crane.

This page: Sandhill Cranes are a common winter visitor to the Texas Panhandle, with birds present from mid-October to February. The birds feed in agricultural fields, such as winter wheat and corn stubble, and roost in the playa lakes.





This page: The Texas Panhandle is a major wintering area for several goose species, including Lesser Snow, Richardson's Cackling, and Greater White-fronted Geese, where the prairies and agricultural lands provide ideal foraging locations and the playa lakes provide roosting areas.



Top left: Green-winged Teal wintering in the Texas Panhandle favor freshwater wetlands, flooded fields, and especially the region's numerous playa lakes.

Top right: Texas, including the Panhandle's playa lakes region, is a critical wintering area for Northern Pintails in the Central Flyway.

Right: Mallards use the playa wetlands for loafing and resting and rely heavily on nearby agricultural fields, consuming waste grain like corn and sorghum.





MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY

The Mississippi River runs like a gigantic artery through the Mississippi Flyway. Traveling 2,300 miles from its source in the upper reaches of Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico, the river is a vital highway for ducks, geese, and swans moving to their breeding grounds in the spring and returning to their wintering grounds with new members of the flock in the fall. Within the boundaries of the Mississippi Flyway lie five of the largest freshwater lakes on the planet—Lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario, as well as more wetlands than any other flyway.

Mississippi Flyway breeding habitat encompasses Arctic tundra, boreal forest, parklands, and the central portion of the prairie potholes. The flyway also includes vast agricultural lands from the prairies of Saskatchewan to the bayous of Louisiana, where a significant percentage of the corn, wheat, soybeans, and rice in North America are grown. Also within its boundaries are the floodplains of the mighty Mississippi River, the coastal marshes of Louisiana, the flooded timber of Arkansas, and the cities of Minneapolis–St. Paul, Chicago, St. Louis, and New Orleans.

The Mississippi Flyway has no endemic species—none that remain exclusively within the flyway. But when it comes to the total number of wintering waterfowl, this flyway ranks above all the others. The undisputed king is the Mallard. The ubiquitous greenhead has achieved celebrity status, and it's no wonder that the Mississippi Flyway is the winter home to nearly half of North America's Mallards.

The flyway also winters more Lesser Snow Geese, Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, Canvasbacks, Lesser Scaup, and Mottled Ducks than any other flyway. Significant populations of four subspecies of Canada Geese, Richardson's Cackling Geese, Greater White-fronted Geese, Ross's Geese, Northern Pintails, and Northern Shovelers occur here, along with Blue-winged Teal, Black-bellied and Fulvous Whistling Ducks, and Common Goldeneyes. 🦆

Left: Grand Prairie, Arkansas.



MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY



Mallard.



Prairie potholes, North Dakota.



Ruddy Duck.



Mallard.



This page: The Prairie Pothole Region is crucial for Central and Mississippi Flyway Mallards, producing over half of North America's annual population, primarily in South Dakota, North Dakota, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.





Top left: The Prairie Pothole Region is a primary breeding area for Central and Mississippi Flyway Blue-winged Teal.

Middle left: The primary breeding area for Northern Shovelers is in the Prairie Pothole Region, including the Dakotas and the southern portions of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Bottom: The majority of North America's Gadwall population breeds in the Prairie Pothole Region, which is characterized by a high density of small ponds and wetlands.



Top right: More than 80 percent of the North American Ruddy Duck breeding population is concentrated in the Prairie Pothole Region.

Middle right: Redheads breed in the Prairie Pothole Region, but most of them do not spend the winter in the Mississippi Flyway. The majority migrate to the Central Flyway and winter on the Texas and Mexico Gulf Coast.

Bottom: The Canvasbacks that breed in the Prairie Pothole Region migrate down the Mississippi Flyway to wintering grounds, particularly in the Lower Mississippi Valley, as well as Atlantic Flyway locations.

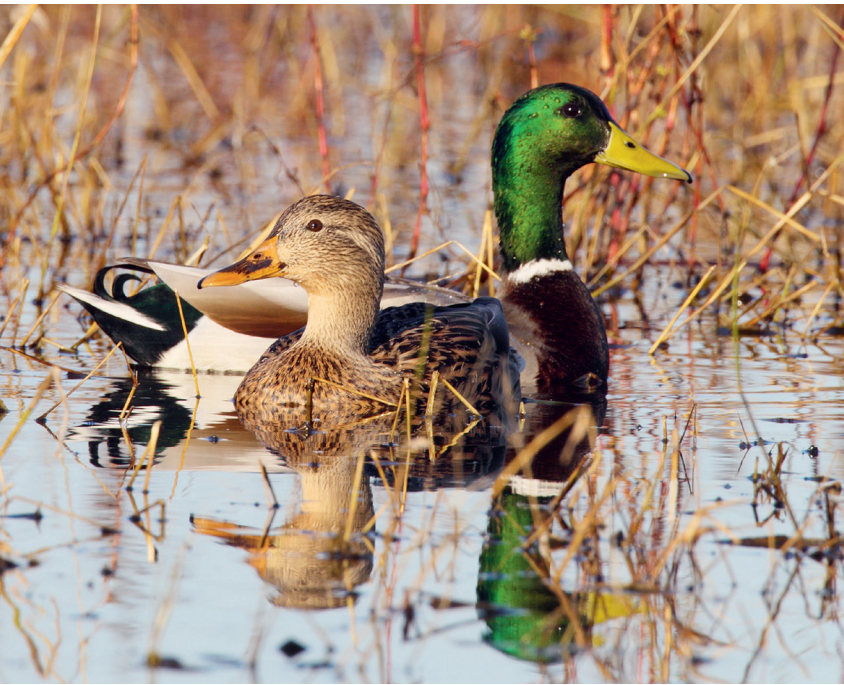




Flooded timber wetlands, Arkansas.



This page: Mallards feed on a variety of food found in the flooded timber, including acorns from pin and cherrybark oak, seeds from moist-soil plants, and invertebrates.



Mallard.



Mallard.





This page: Arkansas's flooded timber is one of North America's premier wintering grounds for Mallards, supporting up to 40 percent of the Midcontinent population.

This page: Wood Ducks are common year-round residents in Arkansas and frequent the flooded timber of the state's bottomland hardwood forests.





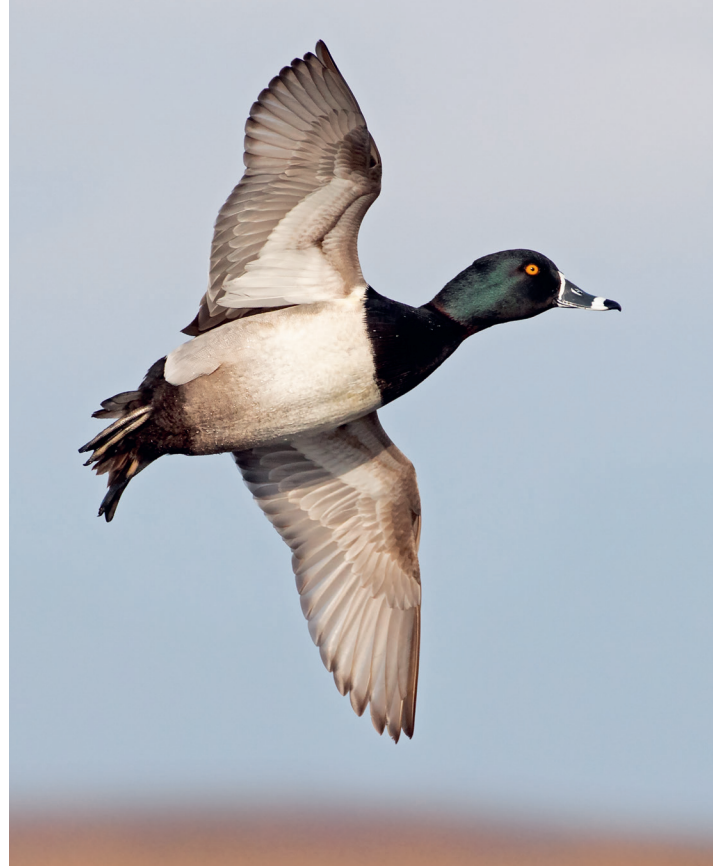
Lake St. Clair wetlands, Michigan.



Redhead.



Lesser Scaup.



Above: Lesser Scaup use the Great Lakes as a major staging area for both spring and fall migration.

Top left: Ring-necked Ducks migrate through the Great Lakes en route to the Atlantic Flyway for both their northern and southern movements.

Top right: Redheads travel through the Mississippi Flyway and across the Great Lakes region, using corridors that extend eastward to the Atlantic Flyway.



Left and bottom left: Mallards migrating from breeding grounds in and around the Great Lakes follow flyways that lead toward the Atlantic Coast, often engaging in courtship behavior along the way.

Bottom right: Gadwall migrate primarily through the Central and Mississippi Flyways; however, a secondary migratory route for Gadwall connects the prairies with the Atlantic Coast. They often form pairs and perform courtship displays during the fall migration.



Top left: Ospreys are common in the Great Lakes during the spring and summer breeding season and migrate south for the winter.

Top right: Northern Harriers migrate through the Great Lakes region during spring and fall between their breeding grounds in Canada and the northern United States and wintering areas in the southern United States and Central America.

Right: Peregrine Falcons migrate along the shores of the Great Lakes in the fall and spring, often feeding along the way, with Green-winged Teal a favorite prey.





Islands and coastline, Maine.



Red-breasted Merganser.



Long-tailed Duck.

This page: All three North American Scoter species—the Black, Surf, and White-winged—spend the winter diving for shellfish and crustaceans in the coastal waters of the northeastern United States.



Black Scoter.



Surf Scoter.



White-winged Scoter.



This page: American Black Ducks are common along the northeastern United States coast in winter, congregating in salt marshes and estuaries from Maine to the Carolinas.



This page: American Common Eiders are a familiar sight along the rocky coasts of the northeast United States, especially the coasts of Maine and Massachusetts, where they gather in large flocks.



This page: Long-tailed Ducks are common winter residents along the coast of the northeast United States, often gathering in large flocks in coastal marine habitats.



Top left: During winter, Red-breasted Mergansers are common along the coastal waters of the northeastern United States, preferring saltwater habitats over freshwater habitats.

Top right: Greater Scaup are common winter residents along the northeast United States coast, where they congregate in coastal bays, estuaries, and offshore waters.

Right: In winter, Harlequin Ducks congregate along the rocky shores of the northeast United States, with the largest populations in Maine and smaller groups regularly seen in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Jersey.





HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

Nestled in the heart of the Pacific Ocean, the Hawaiian Islands are renowned for their breathtaking landscapes, lush vegetation, and deep blue seas. While the islands are synonymous with golden beaches and swaying palm trees, one might not immediately associate waterfowl with this tropical paradise.

The Hawaiian Islands archipelago has always been an enigma when it comes to waterfowl. While administratively not part of the Pacific Flyway, the islands do have biological connections when it comes to migratory birds. The archipelago has several endemic and endangered waterfowl and waterbirds. There are also self-sustaining populations of introduced ducks, as well as migratory ducks and shorebirds that make the long Pacific crossing twice a year.

Mallards were first introduced to Hawaii from North America in the late 1800s. Additionally, thousands more were introduced in the 1950s and 1960s. They quickly became feral and are now found throughout the Hawaiian Islands.

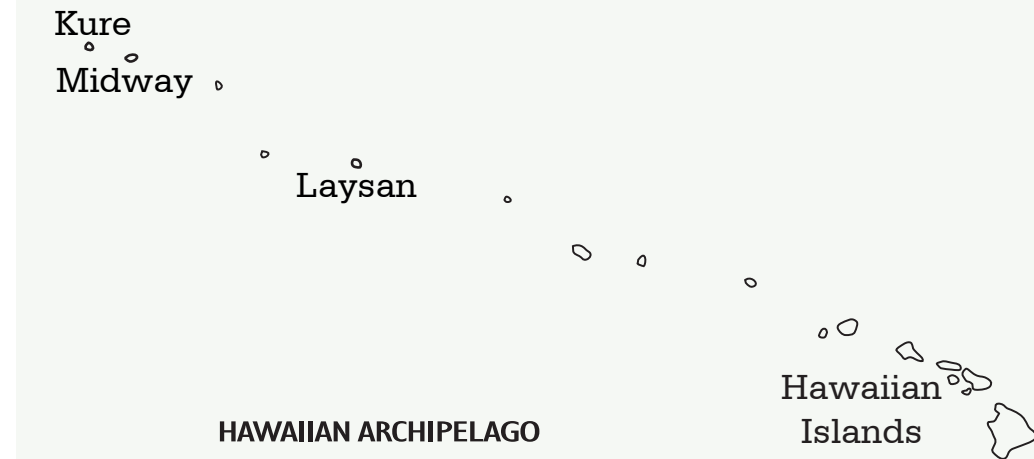
Fulvous Whistling Ducks were first observed in Hawaii in the 1980s on Oahu. Initially, it was thought they had arrived through natural colonization, but later research found they came from an aviculturist on Kauai. Records since the 1990s have been sparse.

Nearly 20 species of ducks and geese and more than 30 species of shorebirds have been recorded in the Hawaiian Islands. The most common waterfowl migrants include Northern Pintails, Northern Shovelers, Lesser Scaup, American Wigeon, and Eurasian Wigeon. The Northern Pintail is the most numerous, with winter populations averaging in the hundreds, which is significantly lower than the thousands they once numbered. The other ducks are present in winter but in lower totals that fluctuate annually.

Shorebirds that frequently visit the islands in winter include Pacific Golden Plovers and Bristle-thighed Curlews from Alaska, Wandering Tattlers from the Yukon, and Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings, and Dunlins from the High Arctic of Canada. The islands also are important for a variety of seabirds, with several species nesting there. Breeding species include the Laysan Albatross, Red-footed Booby, Great Frigatebird, Fairy Tern, and Brown Noddy.

The archipelago is home to three endemic waterfowl species. The Hawaiian Duck, or Koloa Maoli (or simply Koloa), was once widespread and found on most islands. Population declines have taken place due to wetland destruction; predation by introduced mongoose, feral cats, and rats; and hybridization with feral Mallards. At present, hybridization is the single most important threat facing their continued

Left: Hanalei Valley, Kauai.



existence. By 2000, populations of genetically pure Hawaiian Ducks existed only on Kauai and in the upper elevations of Hawaii. Current estimates place the population at around 2,200 pure birds (2,000 in Kauai and 200 in Hawaii).

Populations of the Hawaiian Goose (or Nene) rapidly declined after European settlement in the early 1800s. By the early 1900s they were rare. In 1952, the entire population was reduced to 30 individuals on the Big Island of Hawaii. Habitat destruction, hunting by the early settlers, and introduced predators including mongoose, feral pigs, cats, and rats were the causes of the decline. Since 1960, captive breeding and translocation programs have resulted in self-sustaining populations on Hawaii, Maui, Kauai, and Molokai, with a few birds observed on Oahu.

Their recovery can be attributed to the breeding programs initiated by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in England and by State of Hawaii biologists. Between 1960 and 1997, 2,325 Nene were released on Hawaii and Maui. A new population was started on Kauai with releases in 1985 and supplemented between 1991 and 1996. From as few as 30 birds, the population has increased to nearly 4,000 Nene, with the majority counted on Kauai, Hawaii, and Maui.

The Laysan Duck, also known as the Laysan Teal, once inhabited the entire archipelago. By the mid-1800s they only survived on Laysan Island, likely due to predation by introduced rats. The birds found refuge on rat-free Laysan Island, surviving within the smallest geographic range (1,025 acres) of any duck species worldwide. With the establishment of the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Laysan Island gained federal protection in 1909. However, the introduction of European rabbits by guano miners at the end of the 19th century, and the resulting eventual devastation of the island's vegetation, brought the Laysan Duck to the brink of extinction. By 1912, the entire population was reduced to 12 birds—seven adults and five juveniles. After the rabbits were eradicated



Hawaiian Goose (Nene) and Hawaiian Duck (Koloa).



Hawaiian Goose (Nene) typically have two to five goslings in a clutch.

in 1923, the species began to recover, fluctuating over the next century from 100 to the current estimated total population of about 1,400 birds.

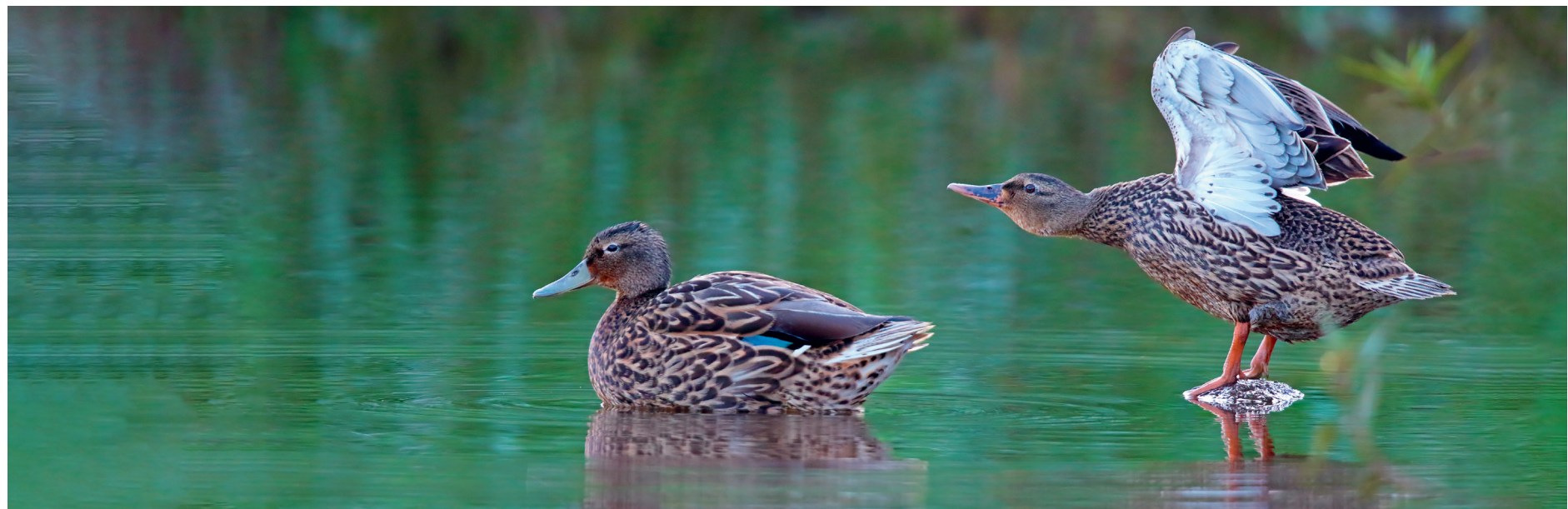
In 2004 and 2005, in order to establish a second wild population, Laysan Ducks were translocated to Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. There are now an estimated 600 to 700 birds on Midway's Sand and Eastern Islands. A third group was introduced to Kure Atoll in 2014, where the estimated population is 150 to 200 birds.

The Hawaiian Islands are also home to three endemic and endangered waterbirds. The Hawaiian Coot inhabits coastal plain wetlands, taro fields, and aquaculture ponds on all the main Hawaiian Islands, usually below 1,300 feet. The censuses conducted in the 1960s detected fewer than 1,000 birds statewide. Hawaiian Coots are threatened by habitat loss, altered hydrology, non-native invasive plants, and introduced predators, especially the mongoose. About 80 percent of the population occurs on Kauai, Oahu, and Maui. The remaining 20 percent are found on Molokai, Lanai, and the island of Hawaii. The estimated population is about 2,000 birds.

Historically, the Hawaiian Gallinule occurred on all the main Hawaiian Islands

except Lanai. They inhabit freshwater wetlands, taro fields, and aquaculture ponds below 400 feet on Kauai and Oahu, although there have been reports from Maui and the island of Hawaii as well. The population was reduced to as few as 57 birds based on surveys conducted in the 1960s. Causes of the decline included agricultural, residential, and recreational development that led to the loss, fragmentation, and modification of wetlands along with predation from bullfrogs, rats, cats, dogs, and mongooses. The current population estimate is about 1,000 birds.

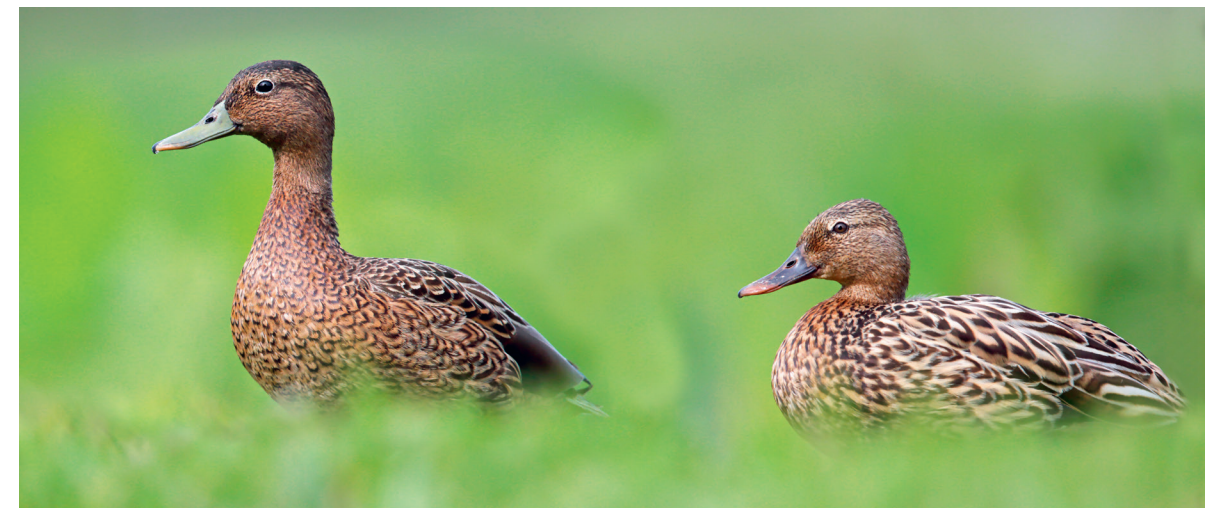
The third endemic and endangered waterbird is the Hawaiian Stilt. They are found on all the main Hawaiian Islands in wetlands, taro fields, aquaculture ponds, inshore reefs, and tidal flats, below 660 feet. The largest populations occur on Oahu, with smaller numbers using wetland habitats on Kauai, Maui, Molokai, Lanai, and the island of Hawaii. Hawaiian Stilts declined to as few as 200 birds in the early 1940s. The decline was largely due to habitat loss and the introduction of predators. However, conservation efforts, including predator control, have led to a recovery. The Hawaiian Stilt population is currently estimated to be between 1,500 and 1,800 individuals and has generally been stable since the mid-1980s. 🌊



Top: The social hierarchy within flocks of Hawaiian Geese (Nene) is based on family size, with larger families dominant over smaller ones, and mated pairs dominant over individuals.

Middle: The greatest threat to the Hawaiian Duck (Koloa) is hybridization with introduced feral Mallards.

Right: While Hawaiian Ducks (Koloa) were formerly widespread and found on most islands, currently genetically pure birds are found only on Kauai and Hawaii.





This page: The Laysan Duck, once widespread in Hawaii, was driven to near extinction by introduced predators reducing the population to only 12 birds on Laysan Island by 1912. While Laysan Ducks remain critically endangered, conservation efforts and establishing new populations on Midway and Kure Atolls has increased the population to 1,400 birds.



Above: The Hawaiian Stilt is one of Hawaii's three endemic and endangered waterbirds, with the largest populations on Oahu.

Top right: The Hawaiian Gallinule was formerly widespread but now is found principally on Oahu and Kauai.

Bottom right: The Hawaiian Coot is found on all the major islands, with about 80 percent of the population on Kauai, Oahu, and Maui.

