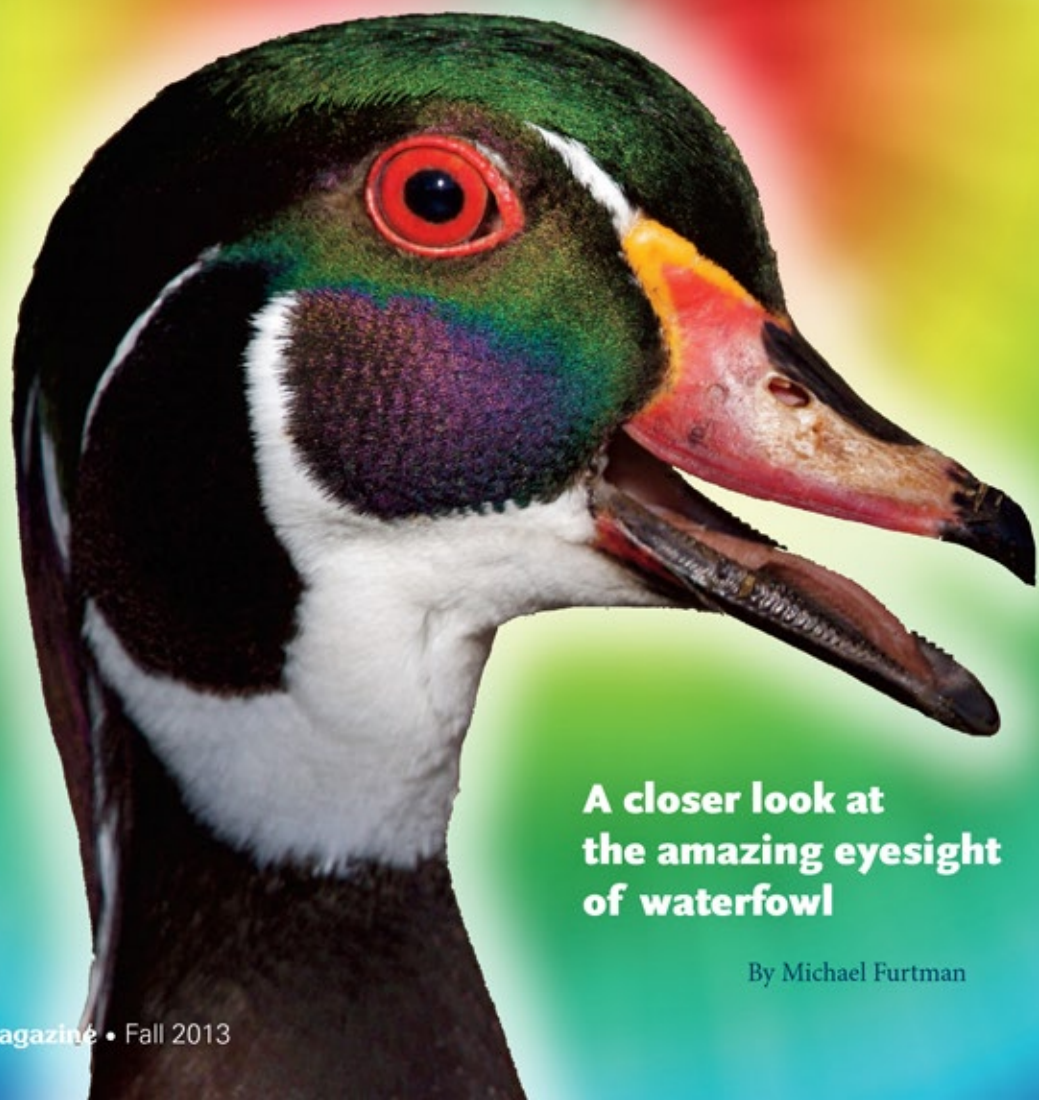




THE EYES



HAVE IT



**A closer look at
the amazing eyesight
of waterfowl**

By Michael Furtman

Sam and I were in a duck blind when a big splash made us both jump. Then something swooped over us so low that it almost knocked off our hats! What caused all the commotion? A peregrine falcon. This lightning-fast bird of prey hunts other birds, including ducks, and can even catch them in flight.

We looked in front of the blind where we saw the big splash. Like the periscope of a submarine, the top of a wood duck's head was sticking up from the water! Now we knew what had happened. The falcon had been chasing the duck, and the duck dived into the water to get away. How did the wood duck give the peregrine the slip? Waterfowl have very good eyesight, and the wood duck saw



the peregrine coming in time to make its escape.

All birds have good eyesight, and they need it! Can you imagine flying through a forest if you couldn't see very well? Bonk! You'd run into a tree. And what if you had to fly with a bunch of other birds in a flock, like ducks do? If you didn't have sharp eyesight, you could run into another bird.





With eyes on the sides of their head, ducks can see almost everything around them at the same time.



Geese and other waterfowl can see in color, which helps them find food and spot danger.

In many ways, birds have better eyesight than we do. Our eyes are located on the front of our head. This helps us focus on objects in front of us, but we can't see anything behind us unless we turn around. Birds have eyes on the sides of their head. This allows them to see a much larger area at once. In fact, except for a small zone directly behind their head, ducks can see everything around them in all directions.

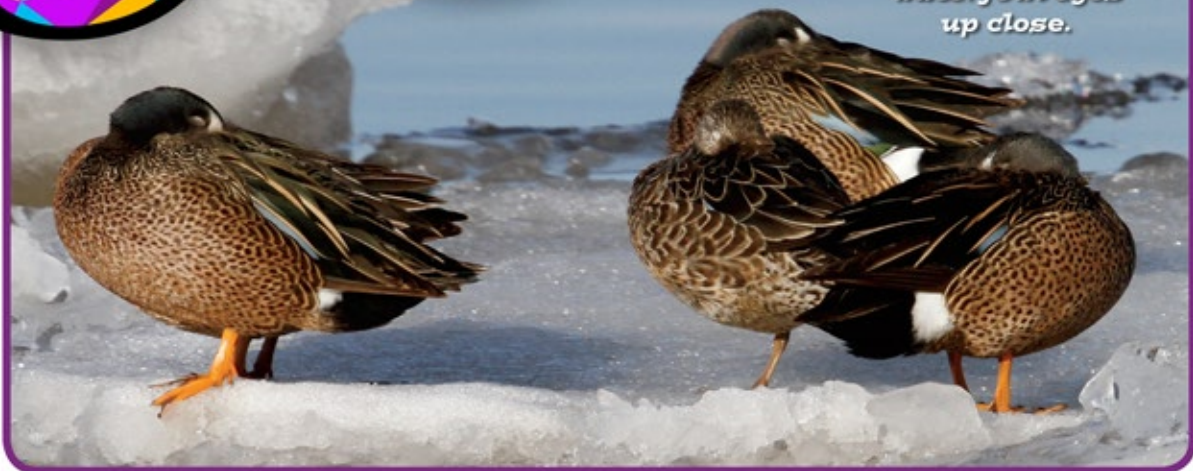
There is another way that birds have better eyesight than ours. Let's say you have three ducks in a row—one 10 feet in front of you, another at 20 feet, and the last one 30 feet away. When you look at the duck in the middle, you can still see the other two, but they are blurry. Each duck comes into focus only when you look right at it. But birds see things differently. With eyes on the sides of their head, they can see all three ducks at the same time in perfect focus.





*Click here to see
waterfowl eyes
up close.*

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Ducks close their eyes when they take a nap just like we do.

People and birds do have a few things in common when it comes to our eyes and how we see. First, we both have eyelids, so we can close our eyes when we sleep. Second, people and birds both see color. This helps birds find food and spot danger from the air. Color vision also helps female

ducks choose their mates. Male ducks have colorful feathers to help them attract the attention of female ducks during courtship. There would be no reason for males to dress up for the ladies if females couldn't see their bright colors!

With eyes that can see color and almost everything around them in sharp focus, it's no wonder that the wood duck got away from the falcon. Now you also know why it's so important to wear camouflage clothing and to keep still when ducks are circling over your blind!

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