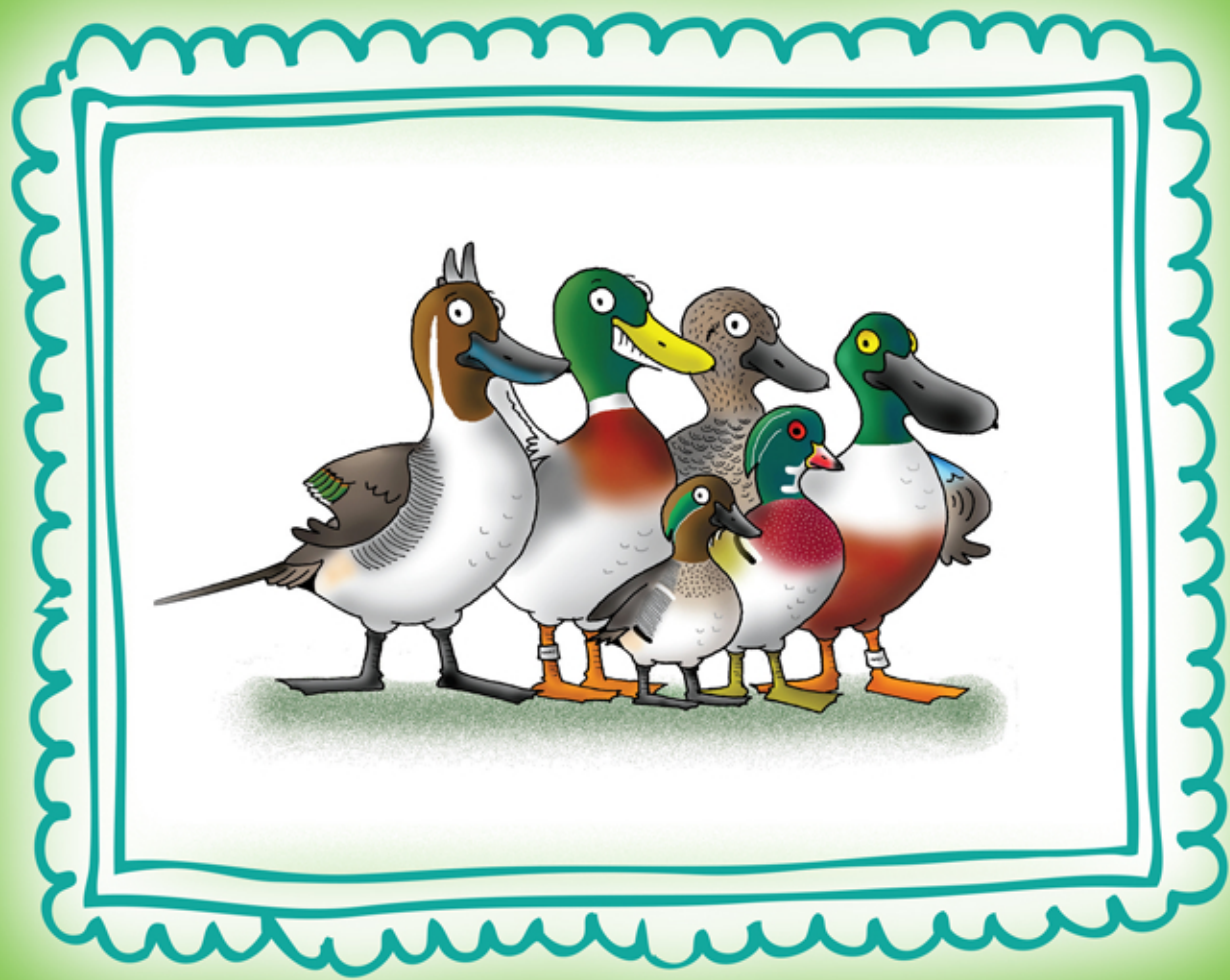


Meet the Dabbling Ducks



Let's take a closer look at this well-known group of waterfowl

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North America is home to many different kinds of ducks. In fact, you can find ducks just about anywhere there is good wetland habitat, from the Desert Southwest all the way to the High Arctic. Many of these birds belong to a group known as the dabbling ducks—or dabblers for short. Biologists group these ducks together because of the way they feed—that is, by “dabbling” with their bills in shallow water. They are also called puddle ducks—or puddlers—because of their fondness for small wetlands. Now you know how this magazine got its name!

All in the Family

There are 11 species of dabbling ducks in North America. They include the mallard, northern pintail, gadwall, American wigeon, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, cinnamon teal, northern shoveler, American black duck, mottled duck, and wood duck. The most common dabbling duck is the mallard. These well-known birds aren't picky about where they live. Depending on the season, mallards use both freshwater and saltwater wetlands. They also flock to lakes and ponds, flooded woodlands and fields, and city parks and golf courses. You might even spot a mallard in your backyard!

- The Dabblers -



mallard



northern pintail



gadwall



American wigeon



green-winged teal



cinnamon teal



blue-winged teal



northern shoveler



mottled duck



wood duck



American black duck

The Adaptable Dabbling



All dabbling ducks have the same basic body shape. They have round, plump bodies, so they sit high on the water when they swim. Their legs are positioned near the center of their body, which makes it easy for them to walk on land.

Dabblers can dive underwater, but they prefer to simply tip up while feeding. If you see a tail and two legs bobbing on the surface, they likely belong to a feeding dabbling duck. Dabblers eat plants, seeds, and grain, both in the water and on dry land. They also eat snails and other shelled animals as well as insects and worms.



Click to see
ducks feeding.

Dabbling ducks feed by tipping up and by "dabbling" in shallow water with their bills.

Catching Air

Since dabbling ducks spend most of their time feeding in shallow water and on land, this puts them in danger from land predators such as foxes, bobcats, and coyotes. Fortunately, dabbling ducks are good fliers. Their long, wide wings allow them to take off quickly, so they can make a speedy escape if danger approaches. They can also maneuver through tree branches and touch down gracefully on small patches of water surrounded by tall grass or brush. This allows dabbling ducks to use habitats that other waterfowl can't reach.



Dabbling Ducks Unlimited

To have lots of dabbling ducks, you need lots of wetlands, especially small shallow ones. Dabblers depend on these habitats to rest, find food, and raise their ducklings. That's why Ducks Unlimited works so hard to conserve wetlands across North America. The next time you visit a wetland, keep an eye out for dabbling ducks. If you see some of these birds,

there's a good chance they'll be doing what they do best—dabbling!

