



1. Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*)

The hooded merganser is a small duck and smallest of the three merganser species present here. Drakes have a large black/white fan-shaped hood, a black back with white stripe. Hens have a red-brown head crest and gray-brown body. They are occasionally seen here in spring, summer, and fall. .

2. Black Scoter (*Melanitta americana*)

The black scoter is a mid-sized duck and as a mostly marine species, is rare to West Point and typically only seen along the Hudson River when present. It is all black, has a short tail, round head, and broad orange and black bill. It is typically only seen during spring and fall and even then only rarely.

3. Greater Scaup & 4. Lesser Scaup

Scaup are mid-sized ducks rarely seen here in spring and fall. Greater scaup are slightly larger. Drakes of both species have grey backs, dark rumps and necks, and brown wings /w white wing patches, and dark heads (purple in lesser scaup, green in greater). Hens are brown /w white wing patches.

Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*)

AKA the butterball, the bufflehead is a small duck /w a round head. The drake has a dark green to purple head with a large white spot behind the eye and white body with black back. The hen is dark brown with a similar but small white spot.



It lives in lakes and larger rivers, eats invertebrates and often nests in tree cavities abandoned by flickers. It is seen here most often in winter. Drakes squeak and hens quack.

Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)



The common goldeneye is a mid-sized duck /w a pointed head and namesake golden eye. The drake is white with a black head and white round spot in front of the eye and black/white back/rump. The hen is gray-brown with a dark brown head.

It lives in lakes and ponds, eats invertebrates and nests in tree cavities. It is seen here most often in winter. Drakes make a two-note nasally *pee-ik* call; hens - a low quack.

NOT COVERED HERE: Other diving ducks observed at West Point but not covered here incl. ring-neck ducks, old squaws, canvasbacks, redheads, surf scoters and more.

THE GEESSE

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

The Canada goose is a large goose (2.5-3.5+ ft, 8-12+ lb, 4-5.5 ft wingspan) with a long neck and large body. Both sexes have brown bodies with black heads, necks, legs, and feet. It also has a white cheek patch and white underbelly.

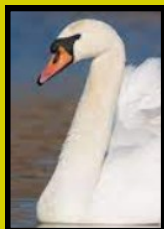


Geese live mainly in wetlands, lakes, ponds, and wet, grassy areas. They eat mostly seeds and grass, which brings them into conflict with people. They lay one clutch of 2-8 eggs a year. They are common at West Point and though they do migrate, may not if food is abundant. Large flocks appear on our lakes and parade fields, esp. during annual migration periods. Both sexes honk and hiss.

A NUISANCE SPECIES: Canada geese have become a nuisance across much of their range, incl. here. They leave massive amounts of unsightly and unsanitary droppings on our parade and athletic fields, beaches, and golf course. **NEVER FEED GEESSE OR OTHER WILDLIFE:** Feeding geese is against NYS and West Point regulations. Help prevent nuisance issues. Never feed geese, other wildlife.

THE SWANS

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)



The mute swan is our largest waterfowl (4+ ft, 20+ lbs, 6.5-8 ft wingspan) and likely the biggest bird at West Point. All white with black feet, an S-curved neck and orange bill with black knob, this territorial herbivore is more often seen on neighboring lakes and ponds, but does rarely visit us at West Point.

BASIC WILDLIFE SAFETY REVIEW

Do these things to keep people and animals safe:

- **NEVER FEED WILDLIFE** - Nuisance animal issues often begin over food. Feeding wild animals is illegal.
- **KEEP YOUR DISTANCE** - Never approach, corner or handle wildlife. Risks incl. disease, bite, & scratch.
- **REPORT ANIMAL ISSUES** - Call a wildlife responder if human or animal well-being is a concern.

REPORTING WILDLIFE ISSUES

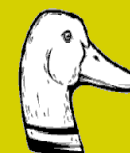
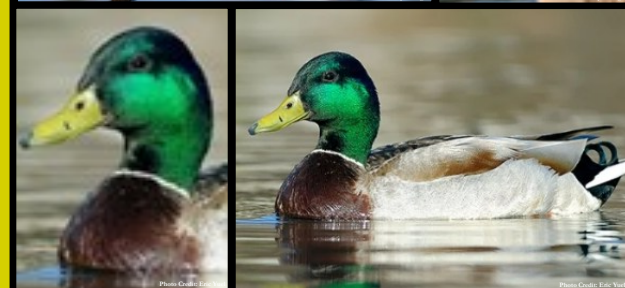
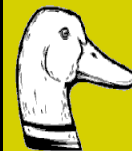
Know when and what to report and who to contact

- **WHEN:** Call right away If you see wildlife 1) being handled by people 2) being fed or baited. 3) hurt, sick or acting odd. 4) has been harvested illegally.
- **WHAT:** Be sure to say: 1) when and 2) where wildlife issue happened, 3) what the animal did 4) where animal (if known), 5) your name, phone number.
- **CALL:** For a bat indoors: Service Desk (315) 774-9240 or Balfort Beatty/ODIA. Other issues: MP Desk: (845) 938-3333 (anytime) NRS: (646) 208-9431(M-F 0745-1630)

WATERFOWL

OF THE WEST POINT

MILITARY RESERVATION



West Point Natural Resources Section (NRS)
Bldg 667A Ruger Road
USAG—West Point, NY 10996
www.westpoint.isportsman.net

THE WATERFOWL OF WEST POINT

A swan paddling along the opposite shoreline of a pond. A group of ducks sleeping on the grassy bank of a lake. A flock of honking geese high above flying south for winter. Waterfowl are a familiar presence in our lives, so familiar in fact that their annual fall departure and spring return serve as dependable time cues. Webbed-footed and thus adept swimmers, these birds number near 180 species worldwide and almost thirty different species have been historically reported on the West Point Military Reservation alone.

This brochure seeks to inform readers about some of our more common resident waterfowl. In it we include brief summaries of physical description, life history, habitat, and diet for a combined dozen of our dabbling and diving duck species. In addition to ducks, we discuss Canada geese, now a nuisance species, and also briefly touch upon mute swans. While we hope this brochure informs and prepares readers, it is by no means a comprehensive guide. For more, see NYSDEC's website: www.dec.ny.gov

Migratory Bird Treaty Act - MBTA: Passed in 1918 to protect migratory birds, this landmark federal law today prohibits the hunting, harming, catching and selling of almost 1100 bird species and their parts.

Harvesting: Aside from swans, which may not be hunted, all waterfowl are protected in New York as game species and may be hunted during in season per NYS Regulations. See more at the NYSDEC website at: www.dec.ny.gov.

THE DUCKS

Dabbling Ducks VS Diving Ducks

Dabbling Ducks are often found in small as well as large water bodies and wetlands. They sit high in the water and feed in water off surface or just below tipping upside down at the surface. Dabbling ducks can easily take off from water at rest. Wood ducks, mallards, black ducks and teals are all dabbling ducks. We discuss all of these species here.

Diving ducks are often found in large water bodies. They sit low in the water and feed by diving. Dabbling ducks walk better on land than divers but diving ducks swim better. Diving ducks usually need to run along surface to take off. Diving ducks include the mergansers, scaups, and scoters, buffleheads, and goldeneyes. All are discussed here.

We only briefly discuss twelve of the more common of the many duck species that have been observed at West Point. For more information on some of the other species we did not have space to cover, see the NYSDEC website.

Harvest Information Program (HIP) Any migratory game bird hunter age 16 and older must annually register /w the Harvest Information Program associated with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Proof of registration must be taken

Federal Duck Stamp: Any migratory game bird hunter age 16 and older must annually purchase a current federal duck stamp. The purchase of these stamps helps fund waterfowl conservation. Stamps must be carried afield.

Wood Duck boxes: People afield at West Point around our many wetlands and waterbodies may have seen one of our 20 or so wood duck boxes across the reservation. These boxes were built by NRB staff for ducks to nest in.

DABBLING DUCKS

Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*)

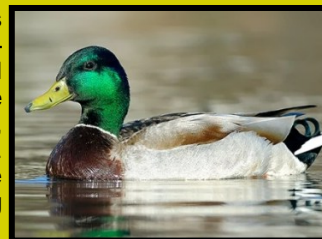


Wood ducks are small ducks (1.5 ft., 1-2 lbs, 2 ft wingspan) with head crests, short broad wings, and boxy tails. Drakes have green and purple heads, back wings, and tails and red eyes. Hens are dark brown /w tan/gray sides and white eye rings.

They live predominantly in lakes and ponds, eat seeds, fruits, insects and snails. Their name comes from their habit of nesting in tree cavities where they lay 1-2 clutches of 6-16 eggs each year. They migrate south for winter, but from early spring to late fall, they are abundant at West Point and are often seen or heard when startled, fleeing. Drakes make a "whoo-whet" call while hens squeal "crrek".

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Mallards are large ducks (1.5-2 ft, 3-4 lbs, 3 ft wing-span) with heavy bodies and round heads. Drakes have green heads, brown necks, yellow bills and gray bodies. Both hens and drakes have white-bounded blue wing patches. Hens are brown.



Mallards are the ancestors of most domestic duck breeds and may be the most recognizable duck species. Found in lakes and ponds, in rural and urban areas alike, they are abundant at West Point. These omnivores lay 1-2 clutches of up to a dozen eggs each year. Mallards do migrate but may not if food is available. Hens make a familiar loud quack whereas drakes emit a low "kwek".

Black Duck (*Anas rupibes*)

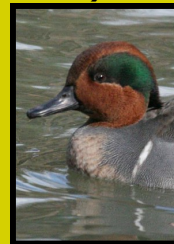


Black ducks are about the same size as mallards. Both black duck hens and drakes have dark brown mottled bodies with black bounded blue wing patches. The fact that the two sexes look so similar is an unusual trait in waterfowl in our area.

They look a lot like mallards but have darker bodies and olive-yellow bills. They live mostly in wetlands and shallow ponds and lakes. They eat mostly plants but sometimes also feed on insects and small animals. Black ducks lay 1 clutch of up to a dozen or more eggs a year. They are abundant at West Point and are often year-round residents. Their calls closely resemble those of mallards.

Green-Winged Teal (*Anas crecca*)

Green-winged teals are not just small ducks (1+ ft, 0.5-1.5 lbs, 1.5 ft wingspans) but the smallest dabbling duck in North America. Drakes have red-brown heads with green eye-markings and gray-brown bodies. Hens are mottled brown. Both drakes and hens have namesake green wing patches. These winter migrants live in wetlands, eat seeds, weeds, insects,



and small animals. They are somewhat rare at West Point and more commonly seen in spring and fall. Drakes have a short, clear+ whistle while hens have a high-pitched quack.

Blue-Winged Teal (*Spatula discors*)



Blue-winged teals are small ducks (1+ ft, 1-1.5 lbs., ~2 ft wingspan) with a round head and large bill. Drakes and hens both have brown bodies, namesake blue wings and green wing patches. Drakes also have white face patches. They live mainly in wetlands, eat seeds, weeds, insects and small animals. Uncommon at West Point, they are only seen in spring and fall.

They not only migrate but are one of first species to head south in fall and last to return north in spring. Drakes have a whistling peep call whereas hens have a soft quack.

NOT COVERED HERE: Other dabbling duck species that have been observed at West Point but could not be discussed in this brochure include northern pintails.

THE DIVING DUCKS

Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*)

Common Mergansers are large ducks (2+ ft, 2.5-6 lbs, 3 ft wingspan) /w a long body and long orange bill. Drakes have dark green heads and are white with black backs. Hens have brown crested heads and are gray with white bellies.



They live in lakes and ponds, but nest in tree cavities so prefer to be close to forested habitats. They eat mostly fish but will also feed on other aquatic animals. Common mergansers lay one clutch of 6-16 eggs a year. They are common at West Point in fall, winter and spring. Large flocks appear on Popolopen, Stilwell, and Long Lakes in winter. Mergansers are often quiet, but occasionally croak.

West Point Waterfowl Hunting: HIP registration proof and the federal duck stamp are required to hunt waterfowl in NYS. West Point hunters must also have a West Point hunting permit, available on the iSportsman website.

Mandatory Harvest Report: All hunting harvests at West Point must be reported at the time of check out. All hunting and harvest reporting is coordinated through the iSportsman website at : www.westpoint.isportsman.net