



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/mallards-anas-platyrhynchos/

By colliek2

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Mallard ducks tolerate humans... maybe a little too well.

Mallard ducks are the most abundant and widespread waterfowl in the Northern Hemisphere. They are found from Arctic tundra to subtropical regions on every continent.

In Oregon, Mallards are found near coastal and inland marshes, fresh or salt water wetlands and estuaries; lakes, ponds, and rivers; and golf courses and agriculture fields. They are particularly attracted to shallow water with aquatic vegetation.



Mallard female and male (green head). Photo ODFW.

Flexible Omnivore

Mallards are flexible omnivorous eaters and will vary their diet based on breeding cycle, availability, and migration. As a general rule they primarily eat, or dabble, plant materials. They will also dabble gastropods (slugs, snails, etc.), invertebrates (flies, beetles), crustaceans (crab, shrimp, barnacles, etc.), worms, and frogs. They have also been observed hunting as a flock other small birds and larger animals.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife urge people to not feed geese and ducks. Feeding can create a concentration problem and invites disease outbreaks.

One Eye Open

Not only will they eat many different animals, but many different animals will eat them. Predators could include raptors (like eagles, falcons, harriers, owls, etc.), mammals (such as snakes, raccoons, skunks, cats, dogs, etc.) and others who target eggs and nestlings.

The ability to sleep with one eye open was first demonstrated in mallards, but is not believed to be widespread among birds. This ability allows one brain hemisphere to sleep, while the other is aware.

And Humans...

Ducks were domesticated at least 4,000 years ago in many areas for their meat and eggs. Pure bred Mallards are sometimes domesticated today for their meat and eggs.

Almost all domestic duck breeds can be traced back to Mallards. Domestic ducks and Mallards are the same species, with some of the same genes. Mallards have the ability to cross breed with 63 other duck species and create fertile hybrid offspring. This ability can dilute a duck breed population and cause severe 'genetic pollution' leading to the extinction of wild, indigenous waterfowl. They are considered an invasive species in some areas.

Mallards are the most common variety of ducks hunted for sport due to high population volumes. They are also considered to be quite tasty. Be sure to check with local regulations before hunting or taking any bird.

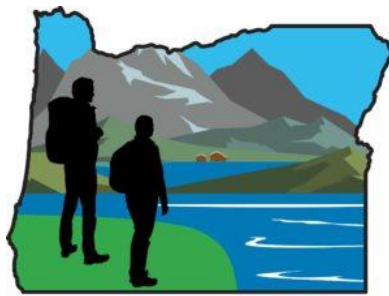
Caution

Mallards can become aggressive during the breeding season as they compete and work out territorial disputes. Aggressive behavior can include charging and chases, ripping out feathers and skin, and noise making. Males are generally more aggressive and will repeatedly attack each other. Domestic ducks are significantly less aggressive than mallards.

STATS: *Color:* breeding males have a solid, dark green head, reddish-brown breast, and pale body; males and females have bright blue patch on trailing edge of wings. *Size* will vary: overall length, 147 cm (23 inches); wingspan, 89 cm (35 inches). May migrate. *Feathers:* Special oils let feathers easily shed water. Mallards are adapted for swimming and floating, and some are even talented divers.

REFERENCES

–Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife pages: Swans, Ducks, and Geese (<https://myodfw.com/wildlife-viewing/species/swans-ducks-and-geese>) and Game Birds, Mallard (<https://myodfw.com/game-bird-hunting/species/mallard>, and pamphlet Living with Birds (https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/living_with/birds.asp)
–Wikipedia, Mallard (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mallard>)



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