

# American Black Duck

*Anas rubripes*

## General Information:

-The darkest dabbling duck on the water looks almost black at a distance, with a paler head and fore-neck. In flight the white wing linings contrast boldly with its dark body and wings. The purplish blue spectrum is bordered with black, and the posterior border often has a narrow white edge. It is as large as a Mallard. Into the 1940s this was the most abundant duck in eastern and central North America and was the most heavily hunted without noticeable decline in numbers. Today it seems to be losing steadily to displacement by Mallards.

## Song:

-Typical female gives loud duck *quack*; males make lower *croak*.

## Behavior:

-Dabbler. Very alert and wary; one of the quickest ducks into the air when disturbed, thrusting upward energetically off the water or land. Feeds in the shallow water, taking mostly plant materials in winter and a variety of aquatic insects in the summer.



## Breeding:

-Monogamous. Solitary nester. Sometimes hybridizes with Mallard.

## Nesting:

-Incubation 23-33 days by female. The 1 brood per year of precocial young are fed by the female and stay in the nest for 58-63 days.

## Population:

-Fairly common.

## Conservation:

-Management warranted due to decline in numbers, which may be caused by changes to its habitat and deforestation. Both of these circumstances seem to favor Mallards, which tend to replace Black Ducks where the two species coexist.

## Shoreline Restoration Issues:

-If you would like to create an environment friendly to the Black Duck on your shoreland property you need to remember that extensive lawns are attractive to ducks, but when lawns are too prevalent, ducks leave unwanted "presents". To circumvent unwanted "presents" it is important to plant shrubs and shoreline plants directly on the shoreline to keep the ducks in the water. Some of the best things to plant to attract the Black Duck, but keep it off of your recreational area are Sandbar Willow, Ninebark, Sweet Gale, High-bush Cranberry, Wool-Grass, Sweet Flag, Blue Flag Iris, Swamp Rose, Swamp White Oak, Eastern White Pine, and Red Pine.