

Ring-necked Duck

Aythya collaris

The male Ring-necked Duck is a sharply marked bird of gleaming black, gray, and white. Females are rich brown with a delicate face pattern. At distance, look for this species' distinctive, peaked head to help you identify it. Even though this species dives for its food, you can find it in shallow wetlands such as beaver swamps, ponds, and bays. Of all the diving duck species, the Ring-necked Duck is most likely to drop into small ponds during migration.

Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

A compact diving duck with a distinctive head shape—a sloping forehead and peaked rear crown. The crown flattens when they are diving. In flight, Ring-necked Ducks appear large-headed with a thin neck and a short, round body.

Color Pattern

Males are bold black-and-gray ducks with a dark head, black back, and gray sides with a white hash mark on the chest. Females are rich brown with a contrastingly pale cheek, a white patch near the bill, and a whitish eyering. Adult males have a prominent white ring on the bill.

Behavior

Ring-necked Ducks are often in small flocks and pairs, diving to feed on mollusks, invertebrates, and submerged aquatic vegetation. Sometimes they flock with scaup; other times you may see them with dabbling ducks.

Habitat

Look for Ring-necked Ducks on smaller bodies of water than other diving ducks. In winter and on migration, this can include beaver ponds, small lakes, marshes, cattle ponds, or even flooded agricultural fields across North America. Ring-necked Ducks breed in freshwater marshes, bogs, and other shallow, often acidic wetlands.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 15.4 - 18.1 inches
- Wingspan - 24.4 - 24.8 inches
- Weight - 17.3 - 32.1 ounces

