

# Who Are They?

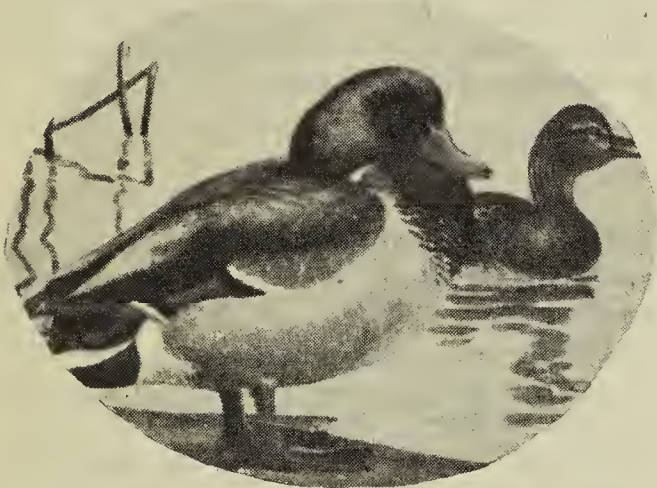
By MRS. JOHN HUBBARD, Grenfell, Sask.



*NOTE: The pictures of the Mallard, the Teal, the Baldpate and the Shoveller are from paintings by Allan Brooks.*



In 1938 when I first started to keep a migration record of birds I made a list of the birds I knew (or thought I knew). There was a bare fifty birds on that list, and I imagine that those fifty birds are the ones known by almost everybody whether they take an interest in nature or not. Early on the list is the Mallard duck and there is a good reason for his being well known. Our domestic ducks originated from the same stock many long years ago.



The male **Mallard** with his green head and white neck-ring is unmistakable but the female is a "duck of a different colour". The trouble with her is that she looks like about a dozen other female ducks. However the purple bar (speculum) on the wing bordered before and behind with white will identify her if you get that close.

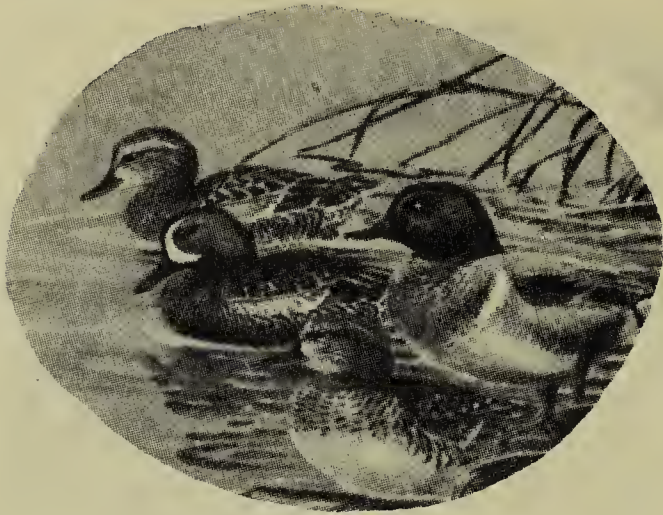
There is one duck that might be mistaken for the Mallard and as it is not very common here look twice before you say, "It's a Black duck." It's much the same size and shape as a Mallard but lacks the bright colouring, being dark brown. It also lacks the white borders to the purple wing speculum.

Ducks as a general rule are fairly easy to identify if seen reasonably close or with a good pair of glasses. But they do have a habit of flying or swimming to the other side of the lake or slough. At a distance they can be recognized best by pattern.

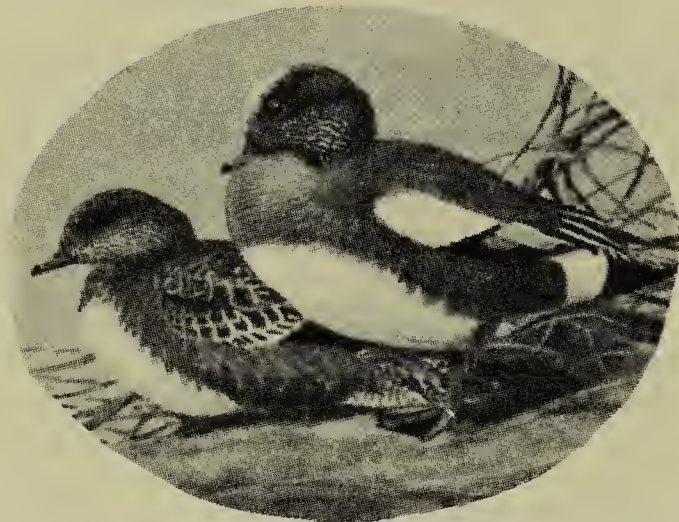


The male **Pintail** with its long neck divided into dark back and white front portion, its dark head, and long pointed tail can be recognized at a distance. The female is another indefinitely coloured duck like the female Mallard but with rusty instead of purple speculum on the wings. Its shape, once you're familiar with it, will be an easier guide than wing colour though.

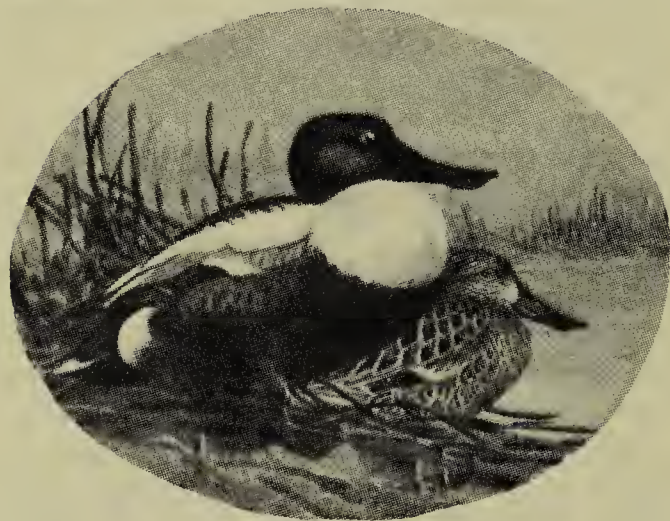




The **Blue and Green-winged Teal** are small ducks, quick flying, and can be separated from each other by the chalky blue or green on the wing as the case may be. At a distance the white crescent on the dark grey head of the male Blue-winged Teal is very distinctive. A crescent-like white stripe in front of the wing of the Green-winged is a distinguishing mark. His head is red and green. Females which are as usual indefinitely coloured can be separated from each other by their wing patches.



The **Baldpate** and the Gadwall are similar appearing ducks but three white areas mark the Baldpate. His white cap, white upper part of wings, and white patch behind wings show at a great distance. The male Gadwall is grey rather than pinky in colour, and his one small white patch is in the wing. The females though following the usual female-duck colouration have the distinctive wing patterns of the males.



The **Shoveller** bears a general resemblance to the Mallard but his bright red, green, black and white patches are scattered hit and miss over his body making him look like a patch-work quilt even in flight. His green head differs from the Mallard's in matter of bills, his is the huge "spoonbill" that gives him his name. The female is much like the female Mallard but the bill is distinctive and she lacks the white-edged purple speculum.



The **Canvas-back** and **Redhead** are similar appearing ducks having red heads, dark chests and light coloured bodies. The Canvas-back, both male and female, is lighter in colour than the Redhead. The Redhead has a round red head, while the Canvas-back has a red head and neck and is a real low-brow with a flat forehead and long sloping bill.

These are a few of the more common ducks seen in migration or as residents and once identified will be landmarks from which to identify other ducks.