

# Spring Tales Newsletter



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## Dazzling Dabblers

### Bottoms up!

What are those ducks doing? Dabbling ducks are known for their unique feeding behaviors. Tipping head first, these ducks feed on food underwater!

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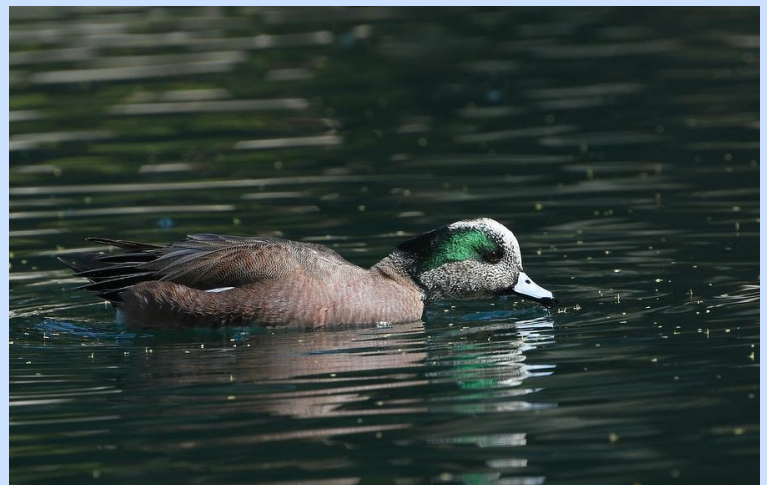
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A duck dabbles by tipping head first into the water to eat things like plants and insects under the water.

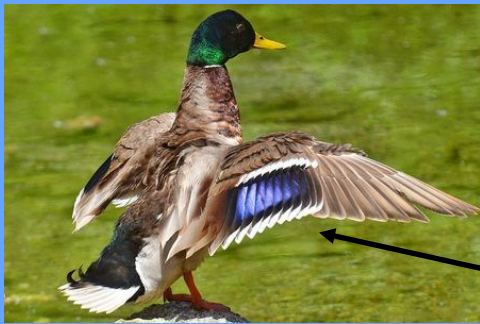


Ducks also collect food off the top of water by skimming their bills along the surface.

# What's the Deal with Dabblers?

Dabbling ducks are often called “puddle ducks” because they enjoy shallow water—like you would find in ponds, flooded fields, or marshes! The shallow water lets dabbling ducks tip over (bottom up) to reach food below the surface of the water like plants and insects. Dabbling ducks also skim their bills across the surface of the water (surface feeding) and forage for food on land.

A drake and hen mallard dabbling to get food underwater!



Look at the bright blue feathers on this drake mallard's speculum!

The feathers on the speculum of dabbling ducks are very colorful and shimmery, also known as iridescent. The speculum is a patch of secondary feathers on the wings of ducks that help them fly. Looking at the speculum is a helpful way to identify different kinds of ducks.

## Habitat

Can you circle all of the places a dabbling duck **would like to live**?

A.



B.



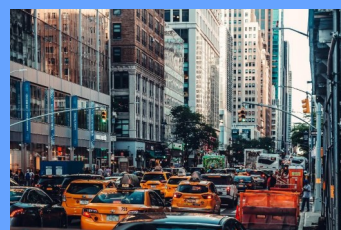
C.



D.



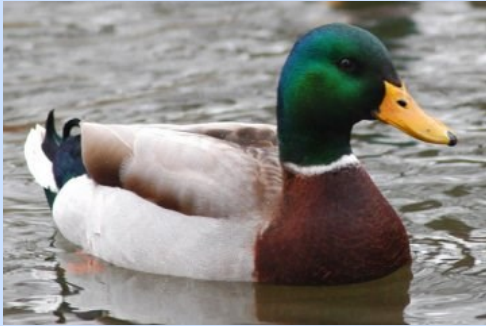
E.



ANSWERS: B, C, D



# Fun Facts about Dabblers



Mallards are the most common and recognizable wild duck of the United States. Drake mallards are sometimes referred to as “greenheads” because of the bright green feathers on their heads. You will often see mallards flying in pairs or small groups. They nest near wetlands on the ground in dense grasses and plants. Female mallards lay 9 eggs on average. The speculum on a mallard duck is iridescent blue with white borders.

Cinnamon teals enjoy small, shallow wetlands and place their nests in grassy areas. They fly in low in small flocks. Females lay about 8-10 eggs in nests on high ground in dense grassy fields. The cinnamon teal is the smallest population of dabbling ducks. Male cinnamon teals are recognized by their distinct cinnamon color and red eyes. The red color helps protect their eye from sunlight, like sunglasses!



Northern pintail drakes are nicknamed “sprig” because of their long tail feathers that look like a twig or small branch. Pintails typically nest on the ground in low vegetation near seasonal and semi-permanent wetlands laying around 8 eggs. You can see pintails flying in flocks of 5 or more in lines or a “V” formation.

American wigeon drakes are nicknamed “baldpates” because of the white patch of feathers on their heads. They fly in groups of 5-20 birds. Wigeons like shallow lakes and marshy sloughs, placing nests on the ground in tall grasses near woods. Females lay around 9 eggs on average. Wigeons can be spotted feeding on new grasses alongside flocks of geese!



# Word Scramble

Can you unscramble these letters to form words about the ducks you just learned about in this issue?

**WORD BANK:**

MALLARD TEAL SKIMMING NEST TIPPING  
PINTAIL WIGEON WETLAND DABBLE SPECULUM

1) NGEIWO \_\_\_\_\_

2) RBAEBDL \_\_\_\_\_

3) LTPAINI \_\_\_\_\_

4) LMRDAL \_\_\_\_\_

5) ALTE \_\_\_\_\_

6) GMKISMIN \_\_\_\_\_

7) SENT \_\_\_\_\_

8) UCPESUML \_\_\_\_\_

9) DWLANTE \_\_\_\_\_

10) PINGPTI \_\_\_\_\_

[ANSWER KEY : 1) wigeon, 2) dabbler, 3) pintail, 4) mallard, 5) teal, 6) skimming, 7) nest, 8) speculum, 9) wetland, 10) tipping]

For more information on our education programs or to get involved, contact Molly Maupin, Education Coordinator at (916) 648-1406 Ext. 121 or [mmaupin@calwaterfowl.org](mailto:mmaupin@calwaterfowl.org)

For more information and our calendar of events go to [www.calwaterfowl.org](http://www.calwaterfowl.org)