

Native Range Map



Australian Shelduck

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Aves
Order: Anseriformes
Family: Anatidae
Genus: *Tadorna*
Species: *tadornoides*



Photo courtesy of Jane Patrick

Habitat

- The Australian shelduck is found in 2 distinct populations in Australia. The larger eastern population is centered in the province of Victoria, extending north into New South Wales and south onto the island of Tasmania. They generally inhabit grasslands, open woodlands, and pastures and will feed in agricultural fields.
- **Exhibit Location:** Check for current location

Characteristics

- Weight: 2.9-3.3 pounds; Height: 21.7-28.7 inches
- Males are visibly larger, allowing them to protect the nest from predators or act as a distraction, while the female lays disguised on the nest. The head, back, belly and tail of the shelduck is blackish with green metallic highlights. A narrow, white neckband separates the head from the duck's brown breast. The female's breast is a chestnut color while the male's is a cinnamon color. Females have rings of white feathers around the eye and at the base of the bill.
- Juvenile birds are duller overall in coloration with some white or gray tips on their body feathers.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 10-15 years; **In Captivity** 15 – 20 years

Behaviors

- Shelducks are not known to be diving birds. Young ducklings dive readily, but adults do so only when wounded or frightened.
- The Australian shelduck is a very vocal bird, especially while in flight. They communicate using goose-like honks, grunts, and whistles. Females have a higher pitch than the males.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** insects

Reproduction

- Sexual maturity is reached at 2-3 years of age.
- Freshwater swamps, brackish swamps, and inland lakes are often utilized as breeding grounds.
- Hollow trees are the preferred nesting sites. When suitable tree cavities are scarce, shelducks will nest in rock crevices, shallow caves, holes in banks, or rabbit burrows.
- The female incubates 5-14 cream-colored eggs for 30-33 days while her mate defends the surrounding territory.
- Within days of hatching, the young are led to "nursery waters" by both parents. Sometimes these nurseries are a mile or more away for the young's nesting sites. Here young are taken care of by other parents and adults without young. Nursery sizes usually vary from 20-40 individuals, but can be as high as 100. Once the young fledge, they are completely independent.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** insects, seeds, short grasses
- **At the Zoo:** waterfowl mix

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** LC (Least Concern); **CITES:** not listed

AustralianShelduckFBKLM

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- Never popular as a bird to eat, the Australian shelduck has not been victimized by over-hunting.
- Any hunting that occurs stems from their habit of grazing in agricultural fields, causing damage to cereal and vegetable crops.
- Populations may have actually grown in recent years due to the increased agriculture irrigation and the construction of new water storage facilities which both provide more food and more habitat for this species.
- Predators: humans

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- The Australian shelduck is the largest Australian duck.
- The Australian shelduck is also known as the Mountain Duck.

Sources:

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<http://www.seaworld.org/animal%2Dinfo/animal%2Dbytes/animalia/eumetazoa/coelomates/deuterostomes/chordates/craniata/aves/anseriformes/australian%2Dshelduck%2D1.htm>
- Department of Sustainability and Environment, (2004, June 5). Recreation and tourism: mountain duck (australian shelduck). Retrieved November 23, 2005, from Department of Sustainability and Environment Web site:
<http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/dse/nrenrt.nsf/LinkView/583E66B9A857BC204A2567C3000D464B4E899088F680A8BE4A256DEA00243694>
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