



Barnacle goose
Photo Credit: Jeremy Dwyer-Lindgren



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THE DUCK POND

Association of Zoos and Aquariums Anseriformes Taxon Advisory Group
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AROUND THE POND

Kelly Schouten
Kansas City Zoo

Sometimes I feel like I should pinch myself to make sure that I am not dreaming, but then I realize that my dreams never took me here. My name is Kelly Schouten and I am an education instructor at the Kansas City Zoo. I started in the zoo world after college, when I became a docent at the Topeka Zoo. This volunteer position led to part-time and then full-time positions in their newly formed Education Department. I was able to help establish the zoo as an educational institution and develop relationships with the community and within the school districts. After taking a break from the zoo world to raise my son, I returned to zoo education at the Kansas City Zoo a little over nine years ago.

I spend my days trying to spark a passion for animals and nature in the public. I do this by sharing stories about animals and their needs, about conservation and how our ultimate goal is to return animals to their native habitat.

One day, I asked myself, how can I accurately tell the whole story without experiencing it first-hand? That simple question started me on a journey I didn't expect. The Kansas City Zoo participates in the Trumpeter Swan SSP release program and at the time cygnets were released in my home state, Iowa. I asked if I could go to the release in 2019. I just wanted to see it and never dreamed that I would get to participate. Holding a swan just before it took its first steps as a wild bird is one of the greatest moments in my life. I was instantly hooked.

That moment brought out a desire to be more involved, but what could I do to contribute? I don't work directly with animals or spend time in the field, I had to evaluate the skills I possessed that could help with conservation. Finding ways to inspire people to get involved in conservation is a tricky task and one that I work on daily to achieve. Encouraging and enabling the general public to get on board with conservation action is critical to fixing the environmental issues we face and this is where I feel like my skills fit into the conservation picture.

As I have followed this newfound passion, I have been presented with opportunities I would not have imagined. One of the best is becoming a member of the Anseriformes TAG Education Committee. Being part of this group has the potential to expand my reach as an educator and communicate a passion for waterfowl to a broader audience. I hope this leads to more opportunities to use my skills to help the causes we are all striving for, regardless of which species we hold nearest and dearest to our hearts.





Spotted Whistling Duck
Photo Credit: Ian Shelley

SPOTTED WHISTLING DUCK

Dendrocygna guttata

Range: Philippines, Indonesia, New Guinea, northern Australia

Program Status: Yellow SSP

Program Leader: Ian Shelley
ian.shelley@marylandzoo.org

TAG Appeal: The spotted whistling duck is a beautiful, charismatic species with an engaging personality and charming vocalizations. They mix well with many species and make a pleasant addition to walk-through aviaries and mixed-species exhibits.

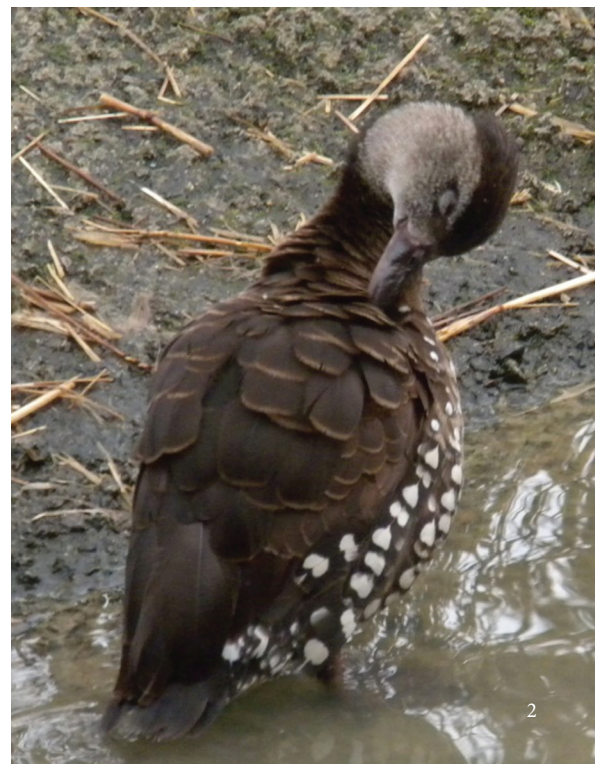
SPECIES PROFILE: SPOTTED WHISTLING DUCK

Just a decade ago, the spotted whistling duck was one of the least common waterfowl species within AZA, with barely a dozen individuals scattered across three institutions. Today, these birds are maintained at over a dozen AZA institutions and the population numbers over one hundred birds. It's hardly surprising, considering these handsome, charismatic birds make an excellent addition to a large variety of zoo exhibits. Zoos have successfully kept them in habitats with a wide variety of birds (including other waterfowl), as well as turtles, fish, and mammals ranging from kangaroos to gibbons to tapirs. Among the most arboreal of ducks, this species is equally at home in trees as it is in the water and does best in habitats where it is able to perform these behaviors. Visitors in walk-through exhibits are often greeted to the sight of the birds perched at eye level, greeting them with their characteristic whistles.

While spotted whistling ducks have become increasingly common in zoos over the last ten years, they remain fairly poorly studied in the wild. They are believed to be in no danger of extinction, and in some parts of their range are among the most common of waterfowl species. In recent years, these birds have actually expanded their range, expanding southward and colonizing northern Australia. This means, of course, that this species is suitable for inclusion in zoogeographic exhibits of both Australian and Southeast Asian wildlife, as well as general tropical forest exhibits.

Spotted whistling ducks have proven relatively easy to breed in zoos. The first breeding in human care took place in 1959 at the Wildfowl Trust in England. Sexual maturity is reached at two years of age, and pair bonds are strong and durable. Males and females engage in allopreening to strengthen their pair bonds. In the wild the reproductive season is long, beginning in the austral spring (September), with the onset of seasonal rains and ducklings have been observed as late as April in southern New Guinea. Nesting pairs select tall, hollow trees, in or near water, to lay their eggs. A clutch consists of as few as seven or as many as sixteen (with an average of ten) round, white eggs. The incubation period is 28-31 days, with the duties being shared by both parents. Both sexes are very protective of the offspring. Newly-hatched ducklings are equipped with sharp nails and stiffened tails that allow them to escape the deep nesting cavities where they hatch. The attractive offspring are strongly patterned and are fully feathered at seven weeks of age, acquiring the adult plumage or coloration in less than a year.

There's a lot to love about spotted whistling ducks – their beautiful plumage, their endearing calls, and their plucky personalities. It always amazes me that, even in the biggest of walk-through aviaries, these little guys can catch your eye and make their presence known.



(L) Spotted Whistling Duck Range Map
Photo Credit:
Wildfowl-Photography.co.uk

(R) Spotted Whistling Duck
Photo Credit:
Ian Shelley



Wild Hybrid Mallards
Photo Credit: Mindy Rabideau

DETECTING WILD HYBRID MALLARDS

Mindy Rabideau

Tracy Aviary

With five open top ponds on a relatively small campus, wild waterfowl, particularly hybrid mallards, have long been a problem at Tracy Aviary. In the worst of times, we were feeding up to four times a day in the winter to keep collection birds fed amidst the onslaught of wild hybrid mallards on the ponds. Full buckets of food would disappear almost the instant it hit the water. Through the use of three methods: exclusion feeders, wild hybrid mallard egg depredation, and incorporating size and feeding method into waterfowl collection planning, we have dramatically reduced the number of wild hybrid mallards onsite.

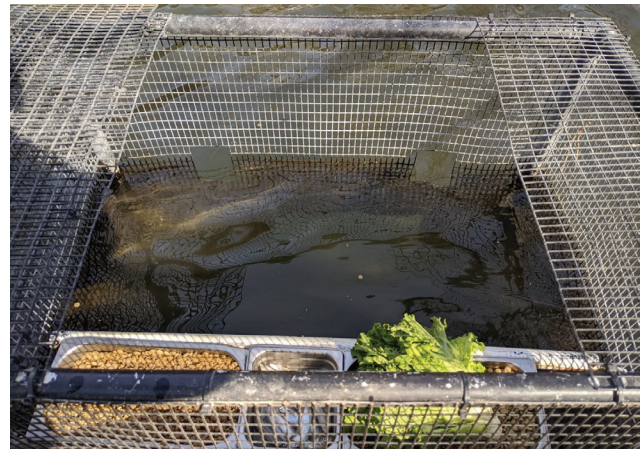
As one of the biggest draws for wild birds to visit is food availability, the first thing we worked on was exclusion feeders. There was already an operational diving duck feeder on our large pond with diving ducks, so this pond required little effort. For this pond we did a series of observations to make sure all birds were using the diving feeder before eliminating food tossed onto the pond. For our swans, elevating the feeder and placing a cover over the top of the feeder prevented wild hybrid mallards from accessing it from below or landing on top of it while still allowing enough space for the swans to fit their head and neck in to comfortably access their food. We also use bucket feeders from a design modified from chicken feeders as another option for geese and smaller swans in our collection. Dabbling ducks, however, were more of a challenge to figure out an exclusion strategy. The first thing we tried was training our collection



Exclusion Feeders
Photo Credit: Mindy Rabideau



Exclusion Feeders
Photo Credit: Mindy Rabideau



waterfowl to enter a separate place to be fed. However, this resulted in half of the collection waterfowl and half of the wild hybrid mallards entering the separate space while the other half of each stayed on the pond. This was not a viable method for us. Eventually, we landed on a swim-in feeder. After some trial and error, we found a size for the access hole that would allow in small and medium-sized ducks, but kept out nearly all of the wild hybrid mallards. Our exclusion feeders work well for us and we periodically make improvements to them when we find a certain aspect of them could be working better.

Prioritizing only feeding in exclusion feeders required a change in collection planning. Part of making a swim-in feeder work for dabbling ducks was making room for our large dabbling ducks in a covered exhibit. This drastically reduced the space available to house these species. When acquiring a new species of waterfowl, the ability to feed the species in an exclusion feeder is an important factor in deciding if the species will work in our collection.

Another important step for us in reducing the number of wild hybrid mallards onsite is egg depredation. We have received permission through our local DWR to control the wild hybrid mallard population through egg depredation. To accomplish this, the aviary grounds are patrolled weekly by our Aviculture team. We track the location of all nests we find and switch hens to dummy eggs once they start incubating. We recheck the hens in a week to make sure they didn't sneak any additional eggs in, but after that the hens are allowed to incubate their clutch of dummy eggs undisturbed for their full incubation period. Once the incubation period ends, the dummy eggs are pulled and the nest is destroyed to encourage the hens to move on. If we find a hen already incubating, the eggs are candled to check where they are in development to determine if they are acceptable to pull or are too far along and need to stay with the hen. We use the same policies for culling eggs of wild hybrid mallards that we use for our collection birds.

Through a combination of these three methods, we have seen a significant decrease in the number of wild hybrid mallards on our ponds. Using the earliest available numbers from our conservation science department's bird counts, we averaged around 250 wild hybrid mallards within the aviary in winter 2016 (with numbers likely higher in previous years). This past winter, we averaged 50 wild hybrid mallards within the aviary. Outside of winter, we average closer to 20. By taking these steps to reduce the population of wild hybrid mallards on grounds, we have improved the welfare of our collection waterfowl by drastically reducing the food competition and risk of disease that goes along with having wild birds present.

QUESTION AND ANSWER — WATERFOWL TRIVIA

Many waterfowl species are named after ornithologists or explorers. Which 18th century German naturalist has not only a duck named after him, but also a jay, a sea lion, a sea eagle, and a now-extinct species of sea cow?

Answer on Page 8





SIPPING FOR SWANS

Tiffany Mayo, Christina Mlinaric
Akron Zoo

In January of 2020, Tiffany Mayo, the Trumpeter Swan SSP Coordinator, reached out to all Ohio AAZK chapters and zoos with regards to participating in an Ohio trumpeter swan movement study led by Laura Kearns with the Ohio Division of Wildlife. Several other states in the Midwest along with the province of Manitoba are also part of this study. The main goal is to provide information on migration, year-round movements, mortality risks, and use of agricultural and other landscapes of the interior population of trumpeter swans. For Ohio, funding was mainly needed to help purchase 20 GPS solar collars. Four AAZK chapters and three zoos jumped on board to help fund nine

out of the 20 collars that were placed on swans in the summers of 2020 and 2021. The Akron Zoo Chapter of AAZK generously supported the project by sending \$1,000 towards the collars. The swans were collared with the help of Zoo staff in several different marsh areas of Ohio and their movements can be tracked by visiting the website <https://trumpeterswan.netlify.app/locations.html>. The information gathered from the study will help guide conservation efforts as trumpeter swans continue to transition from a rare to a common part of the biological community in the Great Lakes region.



The Akron Zoo Chapter of AAZK was established in 2014 as AAZK's 100th Chapter. We have grown as a Chapter since then and have trialed a few different fundraisers, spearheaded by members with a creative vision. One of their most successful fundraising events each year is their wine events. Akron AAZK's wine events are made possible by a strong partnership with The Winery at Wolf Creek, planning and coordination by a few of the Chapter members, and time volunteered by Chapter members and volunteers. When there isn't a global pandemic, they host a wine event annually, working with Wolf Creek to choose two consecutive evening dates in August or September. The first wine event was hosted in 2015. Called Wine for Wolves, they raised money for the Red Wolf Coalition. Years since, they have held wine events called Wine for Wildlife, Vino for Vaquita, Waddle for Wine, and Toast for Turtles, raising money for various conservation organizations.

During the pandemic, the Akron Zoo Chapter of AAZK was not able



Photo Credits: Tiffany Mayo
and Christina Mlinaric



to host an in-person fundraiser in 2020 or 2021. In August 2022, they picked up with Sipping for Swans, an in-person fundraiser held at The Winery at Wolf Creek, and the 6th of its kind. In addition to the Trumpeter Swan Society, money raised from the event is being held in a fund set up to cover costs for hosting the National AAZK Conference in Akron next year. The Akron Zoo Chapter of AAZK is excited to host the National AAZK Conference in 2023! Not only are they looking forward to bringing keepers from across the country to discover how awesome northeast Ohio is, but they already have great speakers lined up. Educational opportunities offered at the Conference include emerging keeper culture, geriatric and end of life supportive care, and advanced waterfowl husbandry. They look forward to meeting more animal care professionals at the conference and continuing to collaborate with local groups to support wildlife conservation.



Photo Credits: Tiffany Mayo
and Christina Mlinaric



DUCK STAMP

Ashley Loper

Audubon Aquarium of the Americas

Zoos and aquariums are often one of the top tourist attractions for travelers, but what about the people who live near the facility and have already visited? How can a zoo or aquarium keep galleries and displays exciting for members and repeat guests? “Pop up” temporary displays can be a great way for facilities to draw people back for a visit by offering something new and exciting to the guest experience. Recently, Audubon Aquarium of the Americas was able to do just that by partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Louisiana to create a stunning showcase of the Louisiana Junior Duck Stamp Conservation program winners.



The Federal Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design program began in 1993 as a way to introduce school-age children (K-12) to wetlands and waterfowl through science and art. Participants go through a wetland-themed curriculum that encourages activities like visiting local wildlife refuges and nature journaling, before culminating in a final project- creating a waterfowl work of art. Artworks must depict native United States waterfowl in their natural habitat and can be made from a variety of media- crayons, colored pencils, pastels and paints are all popular choices. Depicting their duck in the appropriate habitat requires students to research their chosen species and understand its habitat preferences and life history. By doing this, the program inspires a connection and a sense of responsibility to waterfowl and the wetland ecosystems that they depend upon. For the viewer of the artwork, each piece shows what the different waterfowl look like through the eyes of the child that created them. It's particularly fun to view the art through this lens considering that when most children (and adults) picture a duck, their mind likely goes directly to mallards and muscovy ducks, which are commonly found in parks. Stopping to admire the artwork gives the viewer a glimpse into the tremendous diversity of North American waterfowl. In 2021, approximately 9,000 youth participated in their state and territory Junior Duck Stamp art contests, and all revenue generated from the program went directly back towards environmental education activities for future program participants. The display at the Aquarium showcased copies of some of the winners from the 2020 and 2021 Louisiana Junior Duck Stamp artists. This was especially exciting since, due to the pandemic, this was the first time that the students were able to have their artwork displayed publicly.

While this display seemed to suddenly “pop up” from the guest perspective without the need for construction and closures, it was the result of many conversations and visits between the staff of Audubon Aquarium and members of the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. Each visit was an opportunity for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife staff to become familiar with the Aquarium's set-up and mission. After brainstorming a few prospective locations for the display, staff found a perfect space- a previously empty construction wall was transformed into a miniature art gallery, making the bland transitional space both more visually interesting and educational. The reception of the display has been overwhelmingly positive. On any given day, multiple guests can be seen taking time to stop and admire the artwork during their visit. Displaying art from the Louisiana Junior Duck Stamp program has been a unique way to highlight the work of local Louisiana children while showcasing native waterfowl species that guests may not encounter during their visit to the Aquarium. Discussion of the project and planning with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also has allowed staff to brainstorm future projects together. Collaborative projects like

these can open the doors to lasting partnerships among like-minded organizations and bring us together for a common goal- educating our guests about wetlands and waterfowl.

Louisiana Federal Junior
Duck Stamp Program
2020/2021 Winners



ANSERIFORMES TAG MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the AZA Anseriformes Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) is to provide leadership in the captive management of ducks, geese, swans, and screamers in North America. The TAG is committed to maintaining sustainable captive populations, improving the welfare of waterfowl within AZA, and raising awareness for conservation of waterfowl worldwide.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE!

ANSERIFORMES TAG GRANTS

Would you like to expand your knowledge of waterfowl care and husbandry? Do you have a vision for how to make a difference towards the conservation of ducks, geese, swans, or screamers in the wild? Do you wish you could do more for waterfowl, but don't know where to begin?

Here is your chance!

The AZA Anseriformes TAG is pleased to be offering not one, but two grants in the amount of up to \$500 US each. One grant is designated for Conservation and Research, the other one is for Professional Development.

For application materials, or to request more information, please contact TAG Steering Committee members Joanna Klass (Joanna.Klass@Zoo.org) and/or Ian Shelley (ian.shelley@marylandzoo.org).

Applications are accepted on a rolling annual basis.

Trivia Anser: Georg Wilhem Steller

The International Wild Waterfowl Association is excited to announce the dates of the upcoming Waterfowl Conservation Workshop hosted in Seattle, Washington, USA!

The main conference will be from Oct 26-27, with a pre-conference option on Oct 25 and a post-conference option Oct 28-29.

Keep an eye on our Facebook page (Waterfowl Taxon Advisory Group) for further details regarding registration, conference schedule and pre and post activities!



2023
waterfowl
conservation
workshop

Dates:
Oct 25-29, 2023

Location:
Seattle, Washington,
USA

international
wild waterfowl
association