

Species Fact Sheets

Order: Anseriformes
Scientific Name: Dendrocygna eytoni

Family: Anatidae
Common Name: Plumed Whistling-Duck

AZA Management: Green Yellow Red None



NATURAL HISTORY:

Geographic Range: Europe Asia North America Neotropical
 Africa Australia Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Habitat: Forest Desert Grassland Coastal
 Riverine Montane Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Circadian Cycle: Diurnal Crepuscular Nocturnal Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Cold Tolerance: To 70° F To 60° F To 50° F To 40° F
 To 30° F To 20° F Other [Can be maintained outdoors as long as they have access to moving water to keep their feet from freezing](#)

Heat Tolerance: To 30° F To 50° F To 70° F To 90° F
 To 110° F Other [Can be kept outdoors as long as water and shade are available](#)

Diet: Frugivore Carnivore Piscivore Insectivore
 Nectivore Omnivore Folivore Other (Add Below)

Captive Dietary Needs:

Captives can be fed commercial waterfowl diet, supplemented with greens, insects/worms, and vitamins and minerals.

Life Expectancy in the Wild: Males: 7-10 Years Females: 7-10 Years

Life Expectancy in Captivity: Males: 15 Years Females: 15 Years

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BREEDING INFORMATION:

Age at Sexual Maturity: Males: 2 Years Females: 2 Years

Courtship Displays: Male and female will preen each other around the head and neck; at the beginning of the breeding season, males will sometimes chase females for lengthy periods of time, both in the air and in the water.

Nest Site Description: Small scrape in the ground, lined with leaves, usually under a bush. They will sometimes utilize the nests of other species, including burrows.

Clutch Size, Egg Description: 8-14 white eggs, ovoid in shape, measuring 4.5 x 3.5 centimeters, weigh 40 grams.

Incubation Period: 28-30 Days

Fledgling Period: 8-9 Weeks

Parental Care: Both parents incubate the eggs and will protect the nest from potential predators.

Chick Development: Ducklings are born with sharp nails and stiff tails, which allow them to quickly exit the nest cavity. They grow quickly and are fully feathered at seven weeks, with adult coloration achieved by the end of their first year.

CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

Social Structure in the Wild: Small Flocks (50-200), sometimes gathering into larger flocks mixed with other species of duck

Social Structure in Captivity: Pairs, Small Flocks (Single or Mixed Species)

Minimum Group Size: Pair

Maximum Group Size: Large flocks

Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits: Yes **Comments:** Often kept in mixed-species aviaries with other waterfowl, as well as parrots, doves, and other birds. They may hybridize with other whistling-ducks in captivity.

Optimal Habitat Size: 100 Square Feet per Pair

Management Challenges: Potential for hybridization with closely related species, some (mild) aggression during breeding season to exhibit-mates. Though primarily terrestrial, their enclosures should still include a pond or other water feature to allow bathing. The species is not especially cold hardy, and should be sheltered in winter. There is low clutch fertility in captivity.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Also known as Eyton's whistling-duck or the grass whistle duck, the plumed whistling-duck is found throughout much of eastern and northern Australia. It is also found in New Guinea, with vagrants sometimes observed in New Zealand. The common name is in reference to the large, characteristic black-edged plumes that fan out from the flanks. Adults measure 42-60 centimeters with a wingspan of 75-90 centimeters and weigh approximately one kilogram (males are

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slightly larger than females). The chestnut chest is streaked with thin black bars. The underside is pale with a white rump, while the back is dark brown. The legs and bill are pink (the later mottled with black), while the irises are yellow.

Plumed whistling-ducks are predominately terrestrial and are relatively poor swimmers and divers. They feed on land, cropping grasses with their beaks, though they will sometimes dabble in shallow water. Foraging often takes place in the evening. They seldom perch in trees, and are somewhat awkward when doing so. Breeding takes place in the wet season (January through March), and breeding success is tied closely to rainfall. A single clutch of 10-14 eggs is generally laid per year in a nest of matted grasses. Unlike many other waterfowl species, male plumed whistling-ducks will assist the females with incubation and brooding. Dispersing young may travel as far as 1200 miles.

The species is shy and secretive, with the breeding season bringing out the only aggression displaced. They are often found in mixed-species flocks in the wild, associating with wandering whistling-ducks and Australian wood ducks. In captivity, hybrids have been produced with other whistling-duck species. Like other whistling-ducks, they communicate with high-pitched whistles.

Compared to some other whistling-duck species, the plumed whistling-duck is only modestly represented in North American zoo collections. It is much more common in European and Australian facilities. Plumed whistling-ducks are not considered endangered due to their large range and high population; their numbers are stable, possibly increasing in some areas due to the provision of food from agriculture. The species is categorized as being of Least Concern by the IUCN, and is not managed by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. No subspecies are currently recognized.

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Date: 2/16/2015