

Species Fact Sheets

Order: Anseriformes
Scientific Name: Dendrocygna guttata

Family: Anatidae
Common Name: Spotted Whistling Duck

AZA Management: Green Yellow Red None



NATURAL HISTORY:

Geographic Range: Europe Asia North America Neotropical
 Found in Southeast Asia, the Philippines, Indonesia, New Guinea, and N. Australia
 Africa Australia Other

Habitat: Forest Desert Grassland Coastal
 Riverine Montane Other Freshwater Wetlands, Marshes

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
 Can be maintained outdoors as long as they have access to moving water to keep their feet from freezing
 To 30° F To 20° F Other

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.

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Life Expectancy in the Wild: Males: Unknown Females: Unknown

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

BREEDING INFORMATION:

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

Courtship Displays: Spotted whistling ducks form strong pairs bonds, strengthened by allopreening. Pairs communicate with repeated, low whistling sounds.

Nest Site Description: Tree cavities, often near water

Clutch Size, Egg Description: An average of 10 (but up to 16) round white eggs

Incubation Period: 28-31 Days

Fledgling Period: 8 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: Large flocks, sometimes mixed with other duck species

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

Minimum Group Size: Pair

Maximum Group Size: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits: Yes

Comments:

Often kept in mixed-species aviaries with other waterfowl, but have the potential to be aggressive towards other duck species, especially other whistling ducks.

Optimal Habitat Size: 100 Square Feet/Pair

Management Challenges: Spotted whistling ducks are sometimes aggressive towards other duck species, especially other whistling ducks, though they can be maintained together in enclosures of appropriate size. The whistling ducks are more arboreal than many other duck species and will often nest in tree cavities; they would be better suited for enclosures where they are not flight-restricted.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

The spotted whistling duck is predominately brown with a pale grey throat and a whitish belly; the upperparts are darker than the underparts, with light red-brown edging to the feathers. The common name is in reference to the small white spots on the neck, breast, and flanks. The beak, legs, and feet are dark grey with a pinkish tint. Juveniles tend to be darker than adults. A small dark crest can be partially raised when the duck

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is excited. The eyes are very large with dark brown irises. Both sexes are alike in size and appearance. Body length is 43-50cm, the wingspan is 85-95cm, and the average weight is 800 grams. There are no subspecies, nor is there seasonal variation in plumage.

The birds often make a whistling sound while in flight. This is caused by the deep notches in the primary flight feathers, which vibrate as air passes through them, producing a whirring noise.

Spotted whistling ducks are nocturnal, spending their days roosting in treetops, where they congregate in large numbers. At dusk, they break off into smaller groups to feed and forage. They feed on a variety of grasses, aquatic plants, aquatic invertebrates, seeds, and small fish.

Poorly studied in the wild, the spotted whistling duck is also one of the least common whistling ducks in captive collections. The first captive breeding took place at the Wildfowl Trust in England in 1959, and the species was not imported into American zoo collections until the 1980s. The wild population is largely secure over its large range, and in some parts of its range it is one of the most commonly encountered waterfowl species. In other areas, though, it is declining due to habitat loss as wetlands are converted into agricultural lands. The species is listed as "Least Concern" by the IUCN, and is not listed in CITES.

Note: Some data in this fact sheet (i.e.: fledgling period, enclosure size, life span) is not available for the spotted whistling duck, and was extrapolated from data available on more commonly kept *Dendrocygna* species.

REFERENCES:

Lovett, Keith. 2010 Oct 14. AZA Regional Studbook – Spotted Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna guttata*)

Todd, Frank S. 1979. Waterfowl: Ducks, Geese, and Swans of the World. Sea World Press: San Diego.

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