

Redhead *Aythya americana*



Folk Name: Pochard, Raft Duck

Status: Winter Resident/Visitor

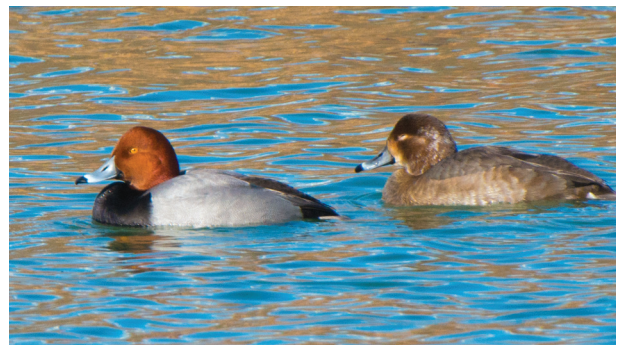
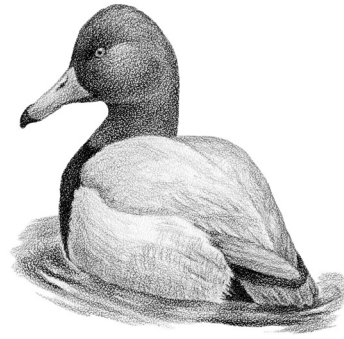
Abundance: Rare to Uncommon

Habitat: Lakes, ponds

Redhead and Canvasback ducks have many similarities. From a distance, the Redhead and Canvasback can look very similar. Both are large diving ducks with reddish heads and necks and light-colored bodies. However, the Redhead is about 2 inches smaller (19 inches), and it has a rounded forehead and a short, two-toned, blue-gray bill with a black tip, while the forehead of the drake Canvasback is sloping and its bill is all dark. Both have a black breast, but the male Redhead has a gray body, while the body of the male Canvasback is mostly white.

Both Redhead and Canvasback generally arrive in the region in November and leave by March. Both are relatively scarce here, usually found in small flocks, while they can be found in huge rafts along the coast. Our earliest arrival date for Redhead is 15 October in 2010, and our latest recorded date of departure is 6 May in 1967. Our largest count in a single day is a total 108 Redhead counted on Lake Hickory on February 20, 2005.

Like the famous Canvasback, the Redhead was widely acknowledged as being a succulent treat on any dinner table, and like its cousin, the Redhead had a preference for the submerged aquatic plant “wild celery.” North Carolina ornithologist W.L. McAtee wrote: “The scaups or bluebills and the redhead also are very fond of wild celery and are fully as capable of getting the delicious buds as the canvasback...all parts of the plant are eaten



Male and female Redheads. (Phil Fowler)

by ducks but the tender winter buds and root stocks are relished best.”

Overall, the population of Redhead appears to be faring well. The 2015 Mid-winter Waterfowl Survey conducted in North Carolina reported an estimate of 37,222 Redhead, which is a +148% change from the 64-year count average.