

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

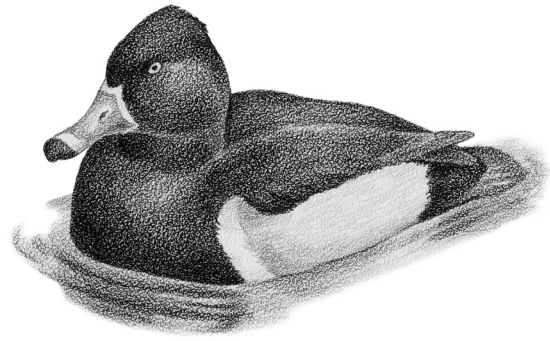


Folk Name: Bastard Redhead
Status: Migrant, Winter Resident
Abundance: Fairly Common to Common
Habitat: Lakes, ponds

For the past century, the Ring-necked Duck has been one of the most numerous ducks found in the Carolina Piedmont. A research study conducted by biologists at UNC Chapel Hill in 1947, ranked it as the third most abundant species of waterfowl found in winter in the Piedmont of North Carolina. Recent surveys have ranked it as the number one duck encountered in the Central Carolinas each winter. The North American breeding population of Ring-necked Duck has been growing and its breeding range expanding, unlike many of our other duck species.

Male and female Ring-necked Ducks have a high peak at the rear of their crown and a prominent white band on their bill. The male has a black head and another white ring at the base of the bill. The breeding male's back, rump, and breast are black, its flanks are gray, and there is a noticeable vertical white stripe between the flank and the breast. This duck gets its common name from a ring of cinnamon-purple color around its neck, which is actually seldom seen, except in very good light. Ring-necked Ducks are diving ducks, but they often feed in shallow water. They eat mostly plant food, but snails and the invasive Asiatic clam are also consumed. They tend to cock their tail upward while at rest.

Leverett Loomis collected a specimen in Chester County on May 7, 1884, and he reported this duck as "rather numerous" during the late 1800s. Frank Brown observed a flock on a branch of the Catawba River in Gaston County on March 22, 1931. Small numbers were regular visitors at Gaddy's Goose Pond from the 1940s onward. Ring-necked Ducks were reported on the earliest Christmas Bird Counts held in the region, with the first pair reported on the Chester Christmas Bird Count held December 23, 1938. They have been seldom missed on regional Christmas counts since, and despite massive shoreline development along lakes and creeks, the Ring-necked Duck ranks 29th in the top 30 birds counted on



the Charlotte CBC (per party-hour) over the past 20 years. This duck also ranks number one on the list of ducks harvested over the past 12-years at the Broad River wildlife management area in South Carolina, south of Chester.

Flocks of over 2,000 Ring-necked Ducks have been seen at Pee Dee NWR since the turn of the twenty-first century. Our earliest arrival date recorded in the region is 21 October in 1999 in Catawba County, and a very late departure date of 25 May in 2013 in Mecklenburg. Steve Patterson reported a drake (possibly an injured bird) spent the summer on a pond in Kershaw County in 2015.



Male Ring-necked Duck on left. (Jeff Lemons)