

Mallard

Regno: fauna

Birds

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Mallard - *Anas platyrhynchos*

The most common, most widespread and adaptable wild duck in Europe.

The nuptial dress of the adult drake is absolutely unmistakable; the female, or duck, is similar in colouring to other ducks but can be recognised by her blue-violet wing speculum and large size.

The juveniles look like the females and it is not easy to tell them apart in the field. In the summer months, after the post breeding moult, the drakes assume a livery similar to the females (called eclipse), but nevertheless some hints of colours still remain like its yellow-olive bill which help identification.

Because it is so ecologically adaptable, the Mallard frequents disparate types of inland and coastal wetland habitats. It nests in areas well covered with grasses or shrubs, usually just a short distance from the water.

It lines its nests with down that the duck plucks from her breast, she lays 8 -17 eggs. Its diet is very varied, like its techniques for looking for food. Its bill enables it to "graze" the ground as well as "sieve" the water.

It feeds where the water level does not exceed 30 centimetres. It only submerges its neck or the front part of its body. Species of ducks which feed like this are called "dabbling ducks", whilst the others that submerge completely are called "diving ducks".

A major target for hunters, the Mallard does not over-winter in northern Tuscany, except for a few individuals in the inland protected areas because the surface area is insufficient to offer the species its minimum requirements for tranquillity, as it is sensitive to human disturbance.

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