

Duck Information

Category : General Wildlife Info

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Males and females pair up in late fall. Nesting begins in early to mid Spring. Nests are usually made away from the ducks' main body of water. The male and female will scout out the nest site together, looking for sites with low predator activity. Even though she can safely fly in and out of the nesting location, she does not anticipate that she'll have to *walk* out once the ducklings hatch. Nests may be located close to busy streets or in enclosed courtyards. The female will return to the selected site to lay an egg each day, then return to the water to be with the male. Mallards lay between 8-12 eggs and muscovies lay between 12-18 eggs. The egg laying process last for an equal number of days. Once egg laying is complete, she will leave the male (who will wait at the water for her) and she will begin incubation. By waiting to incubate until egg-laying is complete, this ensures all the eggs hatch at the same time. At this stage the females will only leave the nest to quickly get food/water and briefly visit with the male, usually very early in the morning and late in the evening. She can be observed taking flight in the direction of her preferred body of water. In 24 to 28 days for mallards (28 to 32 days for muscovies), all the eggs will hatch within a twenty-four hour period and the mother will lead her brood back to the water where her mate should be waiting. Returning to the male ensures protection for both the female and the ducklings.

If an unattended nest is discovered and it has less than 8 eggs, it may be safe to assume that the female has not yet completed egg laying. She will only begin incubating the eggs once egg laying is complete.

Estimating Nesting Period And When Waterfowl Eggs Will Hatch

Days allotted for egg laying1 day for each egg

How Many Eggs In Nest?

- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20

If less than 8 then incubation has probably not yet begun

Days allotted for incubation Mallard - 24 to 28 days

Muscovies - 28 to 35 days

Goose - 29 to 31

Select Waterfowl

Mallard

Muscovy

Goose

How long ago female began sitting on the nest fulltime (when she began incubation) (# of days)

The total nesting period (from start to finish) should last approximately days and the eggs should hatch in approximately days.

If incubation has begun, the eggs can also be candled to determine how far along they are. [Click Here](#) to see the stages of egg development.

Ducks may be orphaned for the following reasons: late hatching, stray or too weak during walk back to water, injured, human interference. Attempting to pair a singular duckling back with its mother is not recommended. It will be killed if it is paired with the wrong mother. It can not survive on its own without its mother's warmth and protection. Lone ducklings quickly fall prey to other ducks, turtles, and egrets/herons. Orphaned ducklings should be rehabilitated with ducklings of similar age and size. Ducklings are also extremely fragile, easily chilled and can be injured due to overhandling. An improper diet can rapidly lead to hypoglycemia. A very young duckling that is staggering or appears "drunk" is hypoglycemic and will die unless it is provided with some source of sugar. Dextrose or a small amount of table sugar mixed with water can be smeared onto the duckling's tongue. It should respond to the sugar within 20-30 minutes. It should immediately be provided with the correct diet to prevent the condition from occurring again. Mallard ducklings are federally protected birds and must be reared by a permitted wildlife rehabilitator. Click here to find a rehabilitator near you: [Wildlife Rehabilitator Listings](#). Muscovy ducklings are considered domestic ducks and can be reared by individuals without permits. [Click here to obtain information regarding the rearing of muscovy ducklings](#).

If the nest is in potentially dangerous location:

- 	 "Guess" when the eggs will hatch based on observations. How long has the female been seen on her nest fulltime? It is important to have a general idea of when the ducklings will hatch.
- 	 If the nest is in a residential area mom and ducklings can be chaperoned on their walk back to the water if there is a concern about vehicular traffic in the neighborhood. Use the guesstimated date to plan for this walk. Also get the assistance of a couple of neighbors, but discourage bringing children along because the mother duck may view them as a potential predator.
- 	 If the nest is separated from the water body by a major road, the following should be done:
- 	 Find out what body of water the female utilizes. Try to observe her as she leaves the nest for her early morning or late evening feedings. If intervention is needed, taking mom and ducklings to the wrong water body will only make matters worse. In other words, you can not guess (you must know where she is headed). Once she begins incubating, the female can be seen flying to the water source where her mate is waiting (once or twice a day - early morning or late afternoon), for food and

water. The water body is usually within 200 yards of the nest site. Even if the exact location is not known, the direction which she usually heads is needed.

- Based on the "guesstimate" of when the eggs should hatch, approximately one week before the due date erect a 12-24 inch tall wire or mesh fence around the nesting site. The openings should not be larger than 1 inch, otherwise the ducklings can escape, but the diameter should be wide enough to allow mom to fly in and out. This fence will prevent a mom from moving the ducklings until assistance can be provided. However, this **only be done if the nest is in a location where someone is observing it daily and the move can occur on the same day (otherwise the ducklings could die from dehydration, starvation, or predation).**

- Once the ducklings hatch, they can be moved into an escape-proof pet carrier and **walked to the water body. Only one person should do the "walk"; a crowd of people or too much activity will deter mom from staying nearby. Mom must be able to hear and preferably see the ducklings throughout the move so she does not get too discouraged and abandons them. If mom flies away, set the carrier down until she returns (usually within a matter of minutes) then resume the "walk". Once you arrive at the water body, set the carrier down then back away and let mom and babies vocalize with one another for a minute or two. If you open the carrier before they have identified their mom, they will scatter.**

If a mom and ducklings are already on the move and are headed for imminent danger:

- Decide whether it is possible to delay the move until traffic volume is lower and they can be chaperoned across the street, or whether they will need to be captured and relocated to the other side of the street.

- Create a barrier to prevent mom from attempting to cross the street (human deterrence, sheets, fencing, etc) and encourage mom to return to the nesting site (or someplace that the babies can be easily captured).

- Ducks and ducklings remain calmer when humans move in slow, deliberate moves. To herd the ducklings to an area for easier capture, volunteers should form a semi-circle around the ducklings (maintain a 6-12 foot buffer) and slowly walk the ducklings towards the preferred area. Use movements similar to guiding a plane in for a landing; long, slow sweeps with your arms works best. Mom will stay with the ducklings until she feels threatened, then she will briefly fly away. Once the ducklings are cornered, use the bed sheet to create a makeshift fence and transfer the ducklings to the pet carrier. Moving mom with the babies is preferable, but impossible if she is capable of flight. Do not begin the move until mom has returned.

- It is important to know what direction mom was originally headed. Relocating her to the wrong body of water will leave her and the ducklings without the protection of the male. She may even attempt to move them to the proper location, again placing herself and the ducklings in danger.

Ducklings In The Pool

If ducklings get trapped in a pool, the quickest method to get them all safely out and back with mom is to build them a small ramp to help them over the edge. It is imperative that this be done as quickly as possible because the ducklings can not go without food too long and will soon get weak and cold. All filtration systems should be turned off until the ducklings are safely out of the pool.



The easiest ramp to build is made from a piece of styrofoam and a towel. Use a very large bath towel and the lid of a styrofoam cooler (available at most convenience stores). Wet the towel (to increase its weight) then float the styrofoam lid at the edge of the pool and drape half of the wet towel over the styrofoam lid. The other half of the towel should be draped over the edge of the pool. It can be weighted down with a brick if needed.

The styrofoam will serve as a floating dock that the ducklings can jump onto. The towel will allow them to make their way over the edge of the pool.

Ducks In The Pool

Imagine how happy those ducks are; you were nice enough to provide them with a wonderful pool, surrounded by wonderful landscaping and safely enclosed from predators. It just didn't occur to them that you didn't do it for them. They've learned from repeated visits that it is a safe place to be. Then, after you chased them away a few times, they continue to return but they learned it is only safe when humans aren't nearby. You'll have to condition them to understand that it just isn't safe anymore.

There are several things you can try. Float beach balls, animal floats or mylar balloons in the pool. The wind should keep them moving and their unpredictable movements will be unnerving to the ducks.

Make note of their preferred visiting hours and borrow a neighbor's dog during that time for a few days in a row. The presence of a potential predator is an effective deterrent.

Owl or hawk statues will work, but it is best to use motion-activated ones or move stationary ones to different locations around the pool.

One trick that works is to use a remote control boat. Anytime they arrive, it can be used to chase them from the pool from a distance. Tying balloons and long mylar tape to the tail of the boat increases its effectiveness.

Humane Domestic Duck Management

For the complete article on Duck Management for Communities, [Click Here](#).

The goal is to humanely keep populations in check so that acts of cruelty against domestic ducks are reduced. Many people don't like Muscovy ducks and feel they have a negative impact on wild duck populations. When they outnumber wild populations, incidents of cruelty increase.

During the laying period (before incubation), the eggs are still dormant and should be vigorously shaken to cause the internal structure to change. Each shaken egg should be

dated with a crayon the day it is shaken and returned to the nest. It can also be coated with vegetable oil. If the eggs are not returned to the nest, the female will mate again and start a new one. Do not shake two of the eggs so that the female will have young to care for, instead of starting another nest once she realizes that the eggs won't hatch. Keep the unshaken eggs on top of or away from any oiled eggs. The shaken eggs can be safely discarded one week after the female leaves the nest with her new ducklings; or 45 days after incubation began. NEVER shake an incubated egg; it has begun development and rather than rendering the egg infertile it will result in a deformed duckling.

Note: This information refers to domestic ducks only! It is a violation of federal law to disturb the eggs, nests, or raise ducklings of all wild ducks without first obtaining the necessary permits.