

FACT SHEET

No hunting of Hardhead

Hardhead (*Aythya australis*) cannot be hunted during the 2024 duck season. In 2021, the species was listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. The information below will remind you of the key distinguishing features to look out for in the Hardhead.

Importantly, if you are NOT SURE, DON'T SHOOT. The penalties for illegally shooting protected species could include a substantial fine, imprisonment or both.

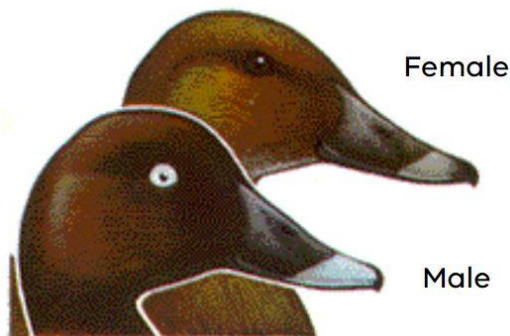
Appearance

The Hardhead is a medium-sized, dark brown bird with white feathers under the tail and a white band across the belly. Males are unmistakable in appearance and have a deep brown body and chocolate brown head, a bright white eye and white undertail. The bill is black with a wide pale blue strap across the tip.



Male

Female



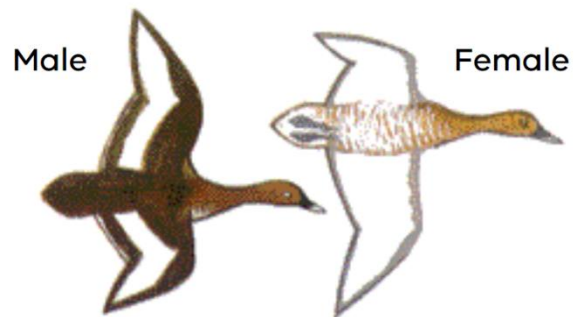
Female

Male

Females are similar in appearance, however their plumage is more subdued, and the eye is dark.

In flight

The Hardhead is the only Australian duck with a solid, broad and conspicuous white band across its entire upper wing. Even at distance, the impression is of a large, dark duck with long white wing bands, making the species unmistakable and one of the easiest ducks to identify while in flight, even in poor light.



Male

Female

The Hardhead is swift in flight with rapid, short wing beats. They fly strong and fast with relatively long, slender wings set well back on the body. The underwing is translucent white and the upperwing has a white strip on the trailing edge, and a large white band across the belly.

Their trademark white band on belly and pure white underwings are obvious in flight and important features to look for.

On the water

The Hardhead is a medium-sized dark-coloured duck, floating low in the water, often with the white undertail held flat against the surface. Even from a distance, Hardhead have a distinct profile that is different to all other Australian ducks. Its slim shape makes their triangular head look disproportionately large. They will often take off steeply, uttering a hoarse rasping quack.



Male

Female

Habitat and distribution

The Hardhead is widely distributed throughout Australia. While it is a diving duck, the species is usually found in deeper, permanent freshwater swamps and lagoons of the Murray-Darling Basin and south-east South Australia, and occasionally in sheltered estuaries. Hardhead are also common in south-west Western Australia.

They are rarely seen on land and tend to roost on low branches and stumps near the water, and will often congregate in flocks near the middle of waterbodies.

To see high definition video footage of the Hardhead and other waterfowl species, visit the GMA website and go to the Education section to find the DuckWISE education videos (www.gma.vic.gov.au/education/duck-hunting-education/duck-wise-education-video).

Tips for identifying Hardhead

- Dark upper body with pale underwing and belly
- Male has a white eye
- Swift in flight; rapid and short wing beats
- White wing band on upper wing
- Wings set back on the body
- Found in permanent freshwater swamps and lagoons of the Murray-Darling Basin



Male



Female

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