Fulvous Whistling Duck
Dendrocygna bicolor

Scientific Name
Dendrocygna bicolor

Other Names
Fulvous tree duck

Range
Africa, Asia, southwestern United States, South America, Mexico

Habitat
Lakes, ponds, freshwater marshes, swamps and fields under irrigation

Average Size
Length: 18 – 21 inches
Weight: 1 – 3 pounds

Description
A medium-sized duck with tawny to dark brown feathers. Broken horizontal white slashes line each side of the body with white feathers under the tail. The bill, legs and feet are gray.

Diet
In the wild: Grass seeds, fruits and vegetation
In the zoo: Commercial waterfowl grain and greens

Life Span
Estimated to be 10 years

Incubation
25 – 28 days

Fledging Period
8 – 9 weeks

Clutch Size
8 – 14 eggs

Predators
Carnivores, birds of prey, snakes and humans

Population Status
Vulnerable

Behavior
The fulvous whistling duck is a gregarious bird that associates freely with other species. They are usually found in small groups during breeding season, but large flocks numbering in the thousands outside of that time. Although they are mostly sedentary, fulvous ducks are subject to seasonal movements depending upon changes in the availability of food and water. They feed mostly in the early morning and early evening (crepuscular) by up-ending, dabbling and occasionally diving. This particular species is rather shy and wary.

Reproduction and Breeding
In North America, fulvous whistling ducks breed from May to August. Unlike many waterfowl species, they do not perform complex mating displays and vocalizations, but the pair bond formed may last for several years. The nests are made in dense marsh vegetation trampled down to form a platform above the water. Some nests are found in tree cavities close to the ground. This species is considered to be a "parasitic nester" where the females will "dump" eggs into the nest of other fulvous ducks and sometimes other duck species’ nests, hoping another mother will raise her ducklings and increase the number of offspring she has. Both the male and female incubate the eggs and once they hatch, the male will assist with protection of the young. The young leave the nest soon after hatching and hide amongst dense vegetation.

Conservation
The population of fulvous whistling ducks in the United States is increasing, while populations in Africa, Asia and South America are decreasing. This species is hunted in many rice-growing areas, and due to their love of feeding in flooded crops, they are often exposed to pesticides, lead poisoning and suffer mortality through collisions with power lines. The damming of rivers in some areas of their range and changes in marshlands (invasive water plants, increased sedimentation and agriculture activities) decrease the amount of usable habitat for this species.
Amazing Facts
This is one of the most widespread waterfowl species in the world.

There are eight species of whistling ducks.

Sometimes, young ducks climb on the backs of their parents for a ride.