

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

Bird

Scientific Name

Dendrocygna viduata

Other Names

White-faced tree duck

Range

Northern and southern South America, Trinidad and Tobago, Sub Saharan Africa, Madagascar and the Comoro Islands

Habitat

Natural and artificial wetlands, swampy lakes and rivers, fresh water lagoons and estuaries

Average Size

Length: 15 – 19 inches

Weight: 1 – 1 ½ pounds

Description

A medium-sized duck with a white throat, black beak, white circles around the eyes and a black belly. The flanks and under-feathers are barred black and white while the breast and upper back are chestnut. The legs and feet are bluish-gray.

Diet

In the wild: Aquatic vegetation, seeds, rice, mollusks, crustaceans and aquatic insects
In the zoo: Commercial waterfowl chow and greens

Lifespan

Estimated at 15 years

Incubation

26 – 28 days

Fledging Period

8 weeks

Clutch Size

6 – 12 eggs

Predators

Birds of prey, carnivores and humans

Population Status

Not Threatened



Behavior

White-faced whistling ducks are highly social birds that congregate in huge flocks numbering in the thousands when not in breeding season. They rest on the banks of bodies of water during the day while preening themselves and each other, but they rarely perch. They feed at night, usually on the surface of the water, but they have the ability to dive underwater for food. They stand more erect than other ducks due to their long legs, making walking easier for these ducks than for others. Their broad wings allow them to be maneuverable fliers rather than fast ones.

Their triple note “whee-whee-whee” call is used as a contact call for birds in a variety of situations. It’s used during feeding, as a prelude to flight, during flight and when settling in. If disturbed at rest, or when with ducklings, they will fly around repeating only a single “whee”.

Reproduction and Breeding

Like most waterfowl, the white-faced whistling duck performs many displays before breeding begins. Mutual preening is an important part of the pair formation and maintenance. Bill-dipping, cheek-rolling movements and vocalizations are also common. A pair may also indulge in post-mating displays. The nest is made on the ground in some cover. Both parents share in incubation of the eggs, protection of the nest and guarding of the young. The ducklings are able to feed themselves after the first day.

Conservation

Easily identified by their white faces and three-note whistling call, this duck is common in many parts of its range. In Africa, this species is hunted by local peoples for food and is sometimes taken for use in medicinal markets.



Sacramento Zoological Society
3930 West Land Park Dr., Sacramento, CA 95822
T: 916-808-5888 F: 916-264-5887 E: info@saczoology.org

saczoology.org

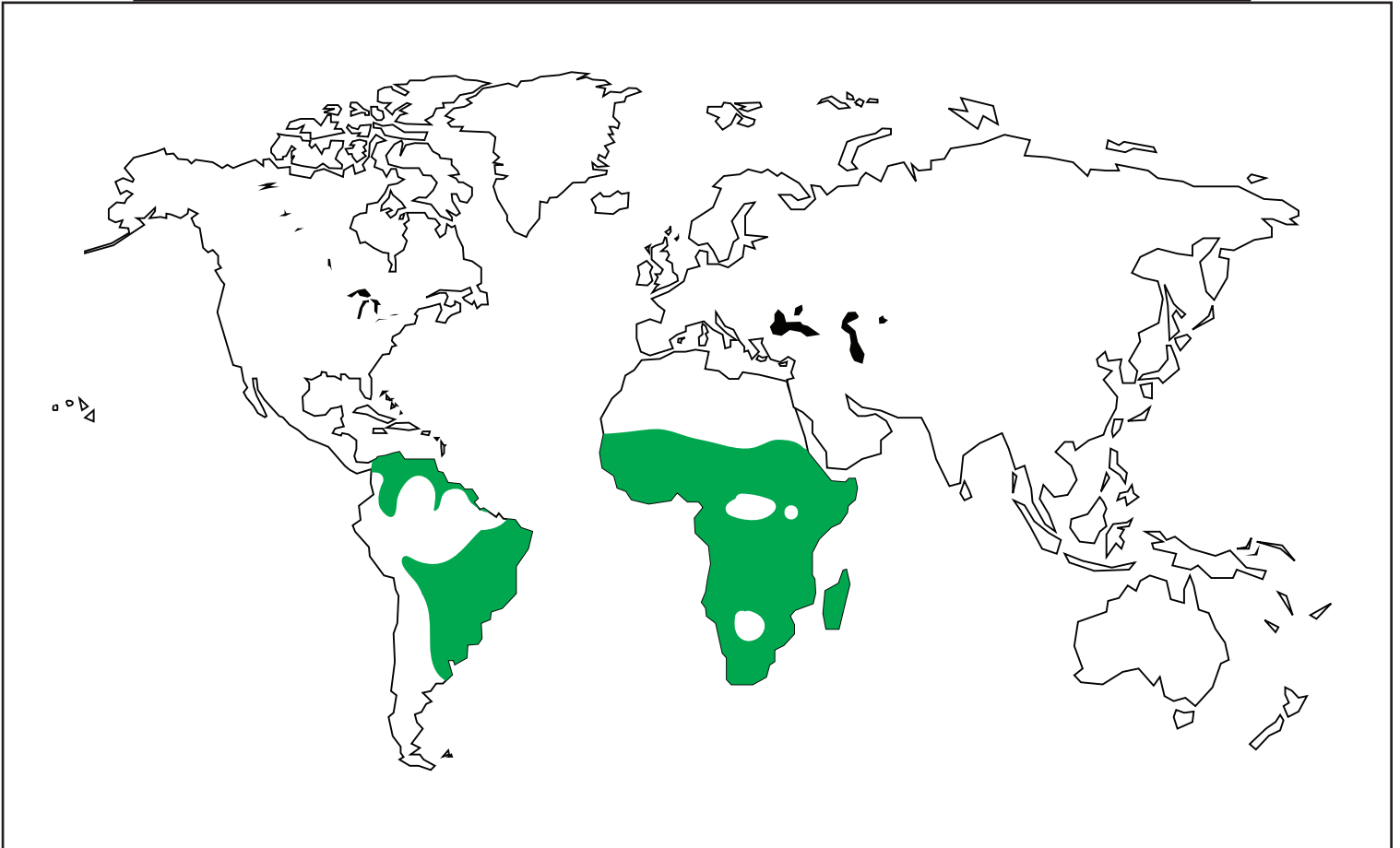
Amazing Facts

There are eight different species of whistling ducks, each with its own distinctive call.

The white-faced whistling duck has an unusually large range compared to other birds.

The faces of the young ducks are gray.

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