



MUSCOVY DUCK



The **Muscovy duck** is a large duck native to Mexico, Central and South America. They are large ducks, with the males about 76 cm (30 in) long, and weighing up to 7 kg (15 lb.). Females are considerably smaller, and only grow to 3 kg (6.6 lb), roughly half the males' size. The bird is predominantly black and white, with the back feathers being iridescent and glossy in males, while the females are more drab. The amount of white on the neck and head is variable, as well as the bill, which can be yellow, pink, black, or any mixture of these. They may have white patches or bars on the wings, which become more noticeable during flight. Both sexes have pink or red wattles around the bill, those of the male being larger and more brightly colored.

REPRODUCTION

The hen lays a clutch of 8–16 white eggs, usually in a tree hole or hollow, which are incubated for 35 days. The sitting hen will leave the nest once a day from 20 minutes to one and a half hours, and will then defecate, drink water, eat and sometimes bathe. Once the eggs begin to hatch it may take 24 hours for all the chicks to break through their shells. When feral chicks are born they usually stay with their mother for about 10–12 weeks. Their bodies cannot produce all the heat they need, especially in temperate regions, so they will stay close to the mother especially at night.

Often, the drake will stay in close contact with the brood for several weeks. The male will walk with the young during their normal travels in search for food, providing protection.