

# Be A Better Birder: Duck and Waterfowl Identification

## Lesson 4: Identifying Diving Ducks

Welcome to Lesson Four. Hi. I am Kevin McGowan and in this lesson we will be talking about diving ducks. We will go through the 19 most common diving ducks in North America, one by one. Remember, I encourage you to think in terms of subcategories of waterfowl, subcategories of any bird, to try to narrow your identifications down. And, we will be dealing now with three different subgroups of diving ducks: the regular diving ducks, sea ducks, and the mergansers.

We talk about the regular diving ducks. These are the ones that are most widespread and found in both salt and fresh water. Lots of black and white. Also red and some dark iridescence, greenish or purplish depending on the bird. Lots of white in this group, so white spots, patches are important for ID here. Among the females are largely mostly dull brown again, not as much internal patterning of the feathers as in the dabbling ducks, but a few patches of white and whitish here. Again, use the white when you can. In this group the shape of the bird is going to be more important for its identification than we saw in the dabblers.

Alright, let's get started. Regular divers. First up is the Canvasback. Canvasback is all about that sloping profile. It just looks like his head was squashed or something. Very unusual profile for a duck. The sides are gleaming white; it's the one of the brightest white ducks out there. And with dark on the ends, dark, deep mahogany red on the head, and black on the chest, and at the rear. In flight there is a thin, kind of a dull white stripe running the length of the wing, not a whole lot of pattern there. The female is pretty much like the male. Same shape and a little drabber, more subtly marked in brown and gray, but still giving you that light in the middle, dark on the ends appearance. These guys like large lakes and the ocean.

Similarly colored, but very different, is the Redhead. The Redhead, like the male Canvasback, has a red head and black chest and rear. Also, is pale in the middle, but the middle here is more of a gray, and definitely stands out in direct contrast with the Canvasback as being a duller bird. Note that the male has a blue bill with a black tip. Sometimes, you can see white, a white ring behind that black tip, but that's a bit variable. The female is less patterned than the Canvasback. She's more grays and browns, no real dark on the ends pattern. She also has a blue bill, or bluish bill with a dark tip like the male does. She's got a variable amount white on her face,

mostly near the base of the bill. We'll look at that more in just a second. She also tends to have an eyering with an arching line to the rear. We find the Redheads on large lakes in and into the ocean. They like to cluster together in fairly large flocks that are just shoulder to shoulder foraging.

Female Redheads as I said are variable. They have white in their face as well as often some white spots on their head. If you look at a flock of diving ducks and you see some dull-looking ducks that have white specs or even almost a half white head in an irregular pattern, chances are it's a Redhead. These however many ducks there are there, 11 ducks, 11 females, are basically from one flock, at one time of year. So even within a flock there's a huge amount of this variation. So, expect that anything from the white patch at the base, which is perhaps most typical, to an entirely white face.

Ring-necked Duck is a little bit smaller duck, a medium-size diving duck. And it's known for a couple of things. One of them is the bump on the back of the head. It's got a big peak, almost a crest on the back of the head. Also, it's black and white, but note that it's black in the front and the back, and on its back. It has grayish sides with a white finger or triangle coming up from the shoulder. So, like the Redhead it is not completely white like a Canvasback on the sides. But, you usually see the contrast of that white triangle and the slightly darker gray sides. The bill is strikingly patterned as well; it has a blue saddle across it, white with a blue saddle. Or, you can think of it as blue with white rings and a dark tip. The female is a rather dull-colored, but she almost always shows a fair amount of white, irregularly edged white, but not sharp white patches, but white at the base of the bill, and an eyering. She also shows not quite as colorful a pattern on the bill as the male, but usually you can see a hint of the ring on the bill.

Ever wonder why they call it a Ring-necked Duck and not a Ring-billed Duck, which seems like it would be a more appropriate thing? But, in fact it is a ring on the neck that was most obvious to the people who were identifying it. Can you see it right here? I'll outline it. It's this little wine-colored ring in the darker black. That's the ring on a Ring-necked Duck. Hard to see in the field, but it really does exist.

So remember the Ring-necked head shape, because of that the big bump at the back. It's hinted at in the head shape of Lesser Scaup, as you'll see in a moment. But, remember when you're telling the Ring-necked from scaup, the back is black on the Ring-necked Duck, white on a scaup, or whitish.

Lesser Scaup is a medium-size diving duck. Dark on the ends and pale in the middle. All the scaup are dark on the ends and pale in the middle. It has a slight bump or a peak on the back of the head, not nearly as distinct as that of a Ring-necked, but similar. It has a blue bill; often times the scaup are called "bluebills." Has a blue bill with a small black tip. The male has essentially a black head although you can see a purplish iridescence to it sometimes in good light. The chest, rear end are black and the sides are white or gray. The back tends to be grayish. Again dark on the ends, light in the middle. Not quite bright white the way a Canvasback would be on its back. Female is drabber, more brown and she has a white patch at

the base of the bill, a little better defined than that of the Ring-necked Duck. These guys have white wing stripes, but the wing stripes extend only halfway out the wings. The secondaries are white, the primaries are grayish. They're found on lakes and ponds the winter, in fresh water or brackish water. These tend to be more of the pond ducks than the Greater Scaup which is a large lake or ocean-going duck.

Greater Scaup is slightly larger than the Lesser Scaup, but they have to be right next to each other to see that at all. They really look about the same size. These guys have a more rounded head without a peak at the back. Again the bill is bluish, with a black tip. Male with a black head. This time if you see any iridescence it is going to be green and not purple. Black on the chest and back and then gray sides. They tend to have whiter sides than the Lesser Scaup and that's just a rule of thumb. Don't use that as a as a real definitive characteristic. Females dull brown, look very much like the Lesser Scaup, and again with a fairly well-defined white patch on the face at the base the bill. In the Greater Scaup, the wing stripe extends out into the hand portion, out into the primaries. It's subtle as we'll see, but that is the one of the best characteristics to distinguish the two species. These guys again are found on large lakes, ponds, and bays. Mostly marine in the wintertime. They like larger bodies of water than the Lesser Scaup do.

Very, very similar species, Greater and Lesser Scaup. This is more advanced birding and may be beyond this course, but we'll take a stab at it. The wing stripe is diagnostic, but it's hard to see, and it can be confusing from below. The Greater Scaup, which is the guy at the top, has white, real white, extending out. Here's the break in what we call the hand going out into the primaries. Whereas here's the break for the Lesser Scaup, and these are just actually gray and not white. Pretty confusing. It is real, and easy in the hand, but is not always that helpful. Here's a picture of distant, both species flying together. See if you can contrast the Greater one on the bottom with white going out and the other just gray. But it can really be hard to tell if you've seen that or not.

Head shape is probably the better characteristic to use most of the time. The Greater Scaup is rounded more like a Mallard. The Lesser Scaup has a bump at the back like a Ring-necked Duck. But that can be changed too. Both species, when they start to dive they push all the air out of their feathers by pulling them together and the bump can disappear from a Lesser Scaup pretty quickly. So think of it this way: Imagine this picture in your mind. The "**Greater is Green**" like a Mallard. The iridescence is green like a Mallard's and its head is rounded like a Mallard. The "**Lesser is Lumpy**" like a Ring-necked Duck. Again it has purple iridescence, as does the Ring-necked Duck. So remember **greater green** and **lesser lumpy**. They aren't going to look just like a Mallard or Ring-necked Duck but they should remind you of one more than the other. So, when you look at a scaup, think does it looks more like a Mallard, or more like a Ring-necked Duck?

The nice thing about this head shape difference is it works really well when they're sleeping too, and on both sexes. You can see here that when they put their bill down, that exposes the back of their head, and you can see if there's a little peak or if it's round.

So let's try it. Here we've got two. Which of these ducks is greater and which one is lesser? You give it a couple seconds think about it. 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1

Lesser was on top, with that little bump in the back. The Greater Scaup with a bulging forehead. Got that right? Great! Just don't get overconfident, because this can be a lot trickier than I'm making it out to right now. But give it a go and see what you can do.

Next up is the Ruddy Duck. Ruddy Duck is a little duck, one of our smaller ducks. And, the male is nice, brightly- colored reddish in breeding plumage, with a blue bill, without a black tip. But in the winter he is pretty dull, he loses all that color, but he always has that big white cheek. Big, BIG, white cheek patches. He tends to have a dark cap. They have a long tail and when they're swimming and doing regular stuff, that tail is held down like any other diving duck. But they often have them sticking up, like this little flock down on the right-hand corner there. They use it in display and they often have that up so that's often a good characteristic to watch for in these guys. The female is browner and she has a dark line through a pale cheek patch. Notice in the flying ducks they don't have any markings in the wings. No white or distinctive markings at all, which is a bit unusual for the diving ducks.

Bufflehead, again a rather small duck. Black and white, that's all you get. With that it has a small gray bill. The male Bufflehead has a **big** white patch on the **side** of the head. Notice that this goes to the **back** of the head, whereas the Ruddy Duck had a big white **cheek** patch. So big white patch on the face but distributed slightly differently. Again, a lot of black and white, white body with a dark back, rounded head. These guys do have a white patch in the wings when they fly so watch for that. The female is a little duller and darker than the male, but still shows a fairly good black and white pattern, especially the small white patch in the ear which is always distinct on a female Bufflehead.

Common Goldeneye is a little bigger duck, a medium-size diving duck. A big head, colored a lot like the Bufflehead, a lot of black and white. Very steep forehead, kind of an unusual shaped bill. The male is essentially white, with the black back and head and the most distinctive thing here is the circular round spot, white spot on the face. It's smaller than on a Ruddy and it is below the eye. Notice the eye is in fact gold, so goldeneye is good name for these guys. The female a similar shape, but she is a little smaller and gray, more gray with a brown head. There's a lot of white in the wings in both the male and female of these birds. Her bill is also shortened triangular, usually with mostly black but sometimes a yellow tip with that can be variable, up to almost half the bill. First winter male is similar to the adult male, but has a browner head, gray sides and chest. A smaller and less distinct white oval on his face. These guys are mostly silent except during courtship, and even then, that's not very loud. But their wings whistle when they fly so you can often hear them coming. Common Goldeneye is one of the last ducks to migrate

south in the fall and they often winter as far north as open water permits. They tend to like large bodies of water.

Barrow's Goldeneye is a very similar species with a much more restricted range. It's found in Iceland and in the Western mountains. Again, the male is black and white with a white body, black back and head. Black rear. He's a little more black on the back and instead of having of round spot, an oval white spot on the face, it is a curved **teardrop** shape, like an apostrophe-shaped white on the face. He has sort of a checkerboard black and white in the wings. Again, both male and female, a lot of white in the wings.

The female it is similarly shaped with a very steep forehead. She has kind of a chocolate brown head. In the West the female's bill is mostly yellow. The Iceland bird's bill is not quite so yellow, but that's a good way to, rule of thumb the two separate the female Barrow's from a Common is that her bill is almost entirely yellow. Again, quiet, except their wings whistle in flight.

There are three obvious differences between the males of these two species to me, one is the head shape. Note that the forehead of the Barrow's Goldeneye is fairly steep, and the head is mostly rounded. Whereas the Common Goldeneye's is kind of an odd shape, is rounded in the back and scooped in the front, so there's a difference in their overall head shape. Also, of course, the spot difference: it is round in the Common Goldeneye and teardrop-shaped in the Barrow's Goldeneye. But the thing that I find most distinctive, the easiest way to pick a rare Barrow's out of a bunch of Common Goldeneye's is this checkerboard pattern on the back. Notice that the black comes down in a bar almost reaching the water, and in the Common Goldeneyes white goes all the way up to the back. There's some patterning there but it never turns into a real checkerboard pattern. But you have to be careful because young male Common Goldeneyes, this is a young male Common Goldeneye here and note that his head looks different because he's got it in a different posture. His patch looks more pointy than the adult male in front of them and notice that he's much darker on the back and darker on the sides. But, that's just a standard, to be expected, usual first-year male Common Goldeneye.

Okay. So let's work through a little bit of the diving ducks. This image has four sort of obvious species in it. Let's work through it. First off let's get rid of the Mallards. Mallards are pretty conspicuous; we can see them most of the time so will just to dispense with the Mallards. First thing when I see my scan here is this little duck down in front with a big, bright-white, cheek patch. What's that? It's got a little scooped bill and a big white cheek patch. That makes it a Ruddy Duck. There's actually another Ruddy Duck over here. Here's a female Ruddy Duck with a stripe, you can see the stripe on her cheek. Alright, what else do we have? Those are the obvious ones. Then there's duller ducks kind of in the middle. Here we have right in the foreground this guy that's dark on the ends, black on the ends and white in the middle. That is one of the scaup. And notice that he's got this bump on the back of the forehead. This is a Lesser Scaup right there. Right behind him are some all brown ducks with big white patch on the face. Those are also scaup, those are female scaup. Here these two. And we can see here that she's got a rounded bulging forehead and not a peak at the back. That makes her a Greater Scaup. So Mallard, Ruddy Duck, Lesser Scaup, and Greater Scaup in this image.

Alright here's a perhaps more realistic scene for us here in Central New York. It's snowing out there today. It is dull gray, there's no color available. It's just a snowy, low light day. We've got a bunch of birds here. There are three diving ducks and a dabbling in it. So let's look. What do you see? Work through it again. For me, I see the biggest whitest ducks in there grabbing attention are these guys and these guys, and look at that profile! That flattened head—that is obviously a Canvasback. And notice how well the Canvasbacks stand out by their whiteness. I can't see any red on those guys, I don't know if you can. But if we look down here in the corner, here's a round-headed duck, that's dark on the ends and gray in the middle. And look it's got a little ring on its bill. Do you know what that is? That's a Redhead. And again, I'm not seeing the red on that, but the overall shape of the nice rounded head, stocky duck, and pale bill with the dark tip and a white ring behind it, that makes this a Redhead.

Alright. Dead center in here is another black and white duck. right there. and what do you see on it? It's got black and whitish sides, and its swimming away, but the back, notice that the back is black, unlike the Canvasback or Redheads or scaup. And that makes this a Ring-necked Duck. We can't see the ring on the neck or the ring on the bill or the white thing on the, little thing coming up the shoulder. But if we look up at the top of the image here, there is one with the white shoulder mark, and you can, if you squint your eyes, you can convince yourself that you see a little ring around that bill. So these are two Ring-necked Ducks here. And bonus points if you noticed the dabbling over here with its butt up in the air, with a black rear end, white patch, and a white wing stripe. Can't see the forehead stripe but this is an American Wigeon. Bonus points if you got that.

Alright, let's talk sea ducks. This is a subgroup of diving ducks that mostly prefer saltwater to fresh, and they're only rarely found away from large bodies of water. We're going to talk only about two species of eiders. There are two other species that are, have very restricted ranges that we won't talk about. Then the three scoters, and then the smaller Harlequin Duck and Long-tailed Duck. Lots of white in these male divers too. The sea duck females are brown and, well, the eiders are brown and rather drab duck looking. The scoters are duller but still kind of strikingly patterned black and white like the males.

The Harlequin and Long-tailed Ducks, again, mostly black and white and a little crisper patterns on them perhaps than the other females. Again lots of white, so the white spots are important to pay attention to.

King Eider is a **big** duck. The male is spectacular; he's got a black body, a white chest, a light blue crown and nape, and that big orange bill with a big flange going up it. And notice these got these funky little shark-fin-shaped back feathers that he uses for display. That's kind of cool. He often has green on the face, a lot of white in the wing when he flies. The female is mostly reddish-brown and barred with black. The first year male is similar to the female but has a pale chest. That would be this duck down here, is a first year male. The female Common Eider is similar to the King Eider but their head shapes are different. I'll tell you about that in a minute. This bird has a very far northern distribution. In fact, most individuals don't come down to the United States during winter but stay up in northern Canada.

Common Eider again is another odd-shaped duck, big and stocky with an odd, sort of flattened wedge-shaped head. It has a long shield, is what we call it. A long bare part that comes up from the bill, up onto the forehead. Male again bold black and white, black-capped, white back, black undersides, white chest, and then some funky green on the neck. The eiders have this weird greenish color. Again extensive white in the wings. The female is brown, brown all over, with black barring, especially a lot of barring on the sides and flanks. The head shape is distinctive, very similar to the males, and she also shows a bit of that bill shield going up the forehead, but it's dark on her not orange like on the male. These guys breed on the Marine coasts from Alaska and Canada down to southern Alaska and Massachusetts, on both coasts. Also through northern Eurasia and they winter a little further south, southern Alaska, Hudson Bay, North Atlantic, southward to New Jersey.

Telling the eider females apart can be pretty difficult. The differences are the forehead shape. The Common's is very flattened and the King's is a little more rounded. Also their gape, if you look at the back of the bill, the Common Eider, seems to be kind of dour and the King Eider is smiling. Then the shape of the stripes on the side, stripes on the Common, and nothing or zigzag pattern on the King Eider.

Next up is the Harlequin Duck. Harlequin is awfully pretty. The male is just a mass of patterns. Look at all that white. A white shoulder a mark like a Green-winged Teal. Rusty sides and blue, steel blue body and head with the nice white ear patches. A white comma on the forehead. Just all kinds of pattern in that guy. The female is less patterned, a little bit more like a Bufflehead, with white on the face. But notice that both the male and the female have this very distinct white spot, white ear spot. It is a very concentrated small round spot behind the eye, behind the ear. As I mentioned before in Lesson 2, the Harlequin Duck likes fast-moving water. It breeds on fast flowing streams and winters along rocky coasts where there's a lot of crashing surf. These guys like their water rough for sure.

Surf Scoter. Scoters are big black ducks of oceans and large lakes. Surf Scoter is big stocky duck with mostly all dark, no white in the wings. The male has one or two big white patches on the head and a brightly colored bill that's got orange and white. These guys are sometimes called "skunk heads" and you can see that with a black and white on the face. The female is similar but more dull, instead of being shiny black she's kind of a flat black and she has whitish patches on her face. These ducks breed across Alaska and northern Canada, wintering along the Pacific and Atlantic Coasts. They winter in shallow marine coastal waters, usually over pebbly or sand bottom where they dive down and get crustaceans, and mollusks, and things like that off the bottom.

White-winged Scoter is similar to the last, although it is White-winged because it has a nice big white patch in the speculum and that's great. When a scoter flies by, if it has white in the wings, it's a White-winged Scoter. Not a problem. We often talk about the 'dark-winged scoters' if they're flying too far offshore where we can't get any information off their heads, we can just count them as dark-winged scoters. The male also has a white, comma-shaped patch around the eyes. Notice his funky bill; he's got a red bill and swollen nostrils, so it gives him this this

odd, sort of stair-stepped profile. The female is the same way. She has variable white patches on the cheek. Sometimes there's nothing. Sometimes there are very distinct patches. The female Surf Scoter is similar but she has more of a capped look, with more white on the cheek. These guys winter along the Pacific and Atlantic coasts and some in the Great Lakes. The White-winged Scoter breeds farther inland than the other two scoter species, and is by far the scoter most likely to appear inland on lakes and rivers during migration.

Some differences between female White-winged and female Surf. Notice the, well of course white in the wing if you can get it, but you'll see with these two swimming right here, the white-wing (These photos are actually backwards. This is the Surf Scoter [on the right] and this is the White-winged Scoter [on the left]) and notice the stair-step profile of the White-winged Scoter and more of a slide and then a forehead on the Surf. You can see more of a capped appearance on the Surf Scoter too.

Black Scoter, also dark-winged, basically their body is all dark, not much showing when they fly. The male has this interesting bright orange knob at the base of the bill. Otherwise he's completely shiny black. The female is blackish with a big white cheek patch, looks a lot like a Ruddy Duck cheek patch. Winter Ruddy Duck is smaller and usually shows a light chest, not an all dark bird like the Black Scoter. These often are found in tight flocks like Redheads. When they turn up here in central New York on Cayuga Lake, here in Ithaca, you almost always see them clustered together in a tight little circle.

Alright, Long-tailed Duck, another interesting sea duck. Found mostly in the oceans and to a lesser extent on the Great Lakes and other large lakes. Formerly known as Oldsquaw, if you've seen that in the books, but it is now known as a Long-tailed Duck. A lot of black and white here. Note also their wings are black, both male and female wings are black, whether it's summer or winter plumage. These ducks are very different from summer to winter being mostly white with a black patch on the face in the winter. The males mostly black with a white patch in the summer, but still with a long tail in in both plumages. Females are extremely variable, usually showing a lot of smudgy black and white, usually with a big ear or cheek patch of dark. Male has a dark bill with pink tip. Notice the multicolored bill for these birds too. Again very complicated molts and patterns, but in the winter the male is a strikingly white duck with a black chest and all-black wings that you can see at a long distance. They are also fairly noisy, making a fun "Alouette, Alouette" kind of call.

Alright, let's turn to the last group, these are the mergansers. Mergansers are specialized fish-eating ducks, and they have long, thin, serrated bills. There are three species in North America, plus another rare one. And, they show a lot of white pattern. The males of course very striking individually marked patterns of white. The females usually with a little bit of white here and there. And all of them, both sexes in all three species show white in the wings, especially in the speculum.

Hooded Merganser is an interesting little medium-size duck. Again, long, thin bill, but he has a big white patch on the back of his head like a Bufflehead. But he has rusty sides and white only



on the chest, whereas a Bufflehead would have white all the way around the sides and on the chest. Notice that this is a display characteristic, this fluffy crest, and that the male can put it up or put it down. So, what he looks like varies a lot with the way that he wants to look, and by pulling his crest up or down. The female's body, brownish, but her head is brownish with bushy crest. She mirrors the big crest of the male Hooded Merganser, but usually it's just a fluffy, very fluffy brown crest. She also has a small white patch in the wings. The males are a bit larger. First year male is similar to the female but has a dull brown crest with a white patch and usually some feathers on the head and sides looking kind of funky. This is a first year male right here. These birds also have a whistling sound in flight. They are typically fairly quiet otherwise. They breed in forested wetlands and wooded ponds, up in the trees. They breed in the trees and then the young come down to the water until they can fly. In migration they are found in a wider range of water. Sometimes along the coast, and in shallower waters than other mergansers.

Common Merganser. A long, thin diving duck. Long, orange-to-red bill with serrations on it. Shiny green head, bright orange feet. A striking bird. The female is gray and rusty brown, her head is rusty brown with a short ragged crest. Her chin is white and then the rest of her is slate gray. The belly and the flanks are whiter. Again they have a white wing patch. She has a good patch in the speculum. The Common Merganser male has white at the base of the wings, all the way across the wings. The wings again, these are mostly quiet except when they're displaying, but the wings do make a rushing noise when they're flying. These breed along lakes and rivers bordered by forests. Again they breed in the trees and drop down and hang out on the, usually down the rivers and into the lakes. They winter on large lakes and in coastal estuaries, but they prefer fresh water.

Red-breasted Merganser is similar to the last one, except that he actually has a red chest. A lot of people see a long, thin diving bird with a thin, red beak, and they get the two confused, but the red chest of the Red-breasted Merganser should always point it out. He has a shaggy crest on the back of the head, again big white patches in the wings in flight, and he does have an iridescent green head, although it doesn't shine quite the same way that the Common Merganser does. The female has a rusty brown head with a long ragged, kind of double crest; that the feathers are not the same length, and so it makes it look messy. And remember: the Common is clean and the Red-breasted is really messy. These guys winter all along the coasts and in the Great Lakes, from Alaska to Newfoundland down to Mexico. They like saltwater more than the other two species of mergansers

Okay. Those are the divers. Let's do just a couple of quick talk-through examples here. Here are three black and white birds. This is a picture from Lake Ontario, in March, I believe. What are they? What do we see? Black and white. Well the question is, where's the white? And what you can see in this odd profile of the bird in the back, all white body and chest. Can't tell with the tail is. Dark head and back. And then of course, these white oval patches. That makes that, what? Common Goldeneye. A little smaller than the Common Goldeneye, but similarly patterned to some extent, is this guy down here. Again white chest and sides, but a dark head and back. But instead of having a white oval, it's got these, well it's hard to tell what it is, this wraparound

thing. But if you looked at that sideways, that would be a big patch on the back of the head. This is a, what? A Bufflehead. And man, what's this thing off to the left? It is hard to tell what's, even what's, which way is up on this guy. But notice black and white. This is the chest, a nice black chest. White on the sides, white on the head. And I'll tell you that he is sleeping with his bill in his back. And this black patch is on the face. This, even though you can't see the tail, this is indisputably a Long-tailed Duck.

Alright. Staying with winter in Lake Ontario. Let's look at this one a minute. There's a Ring-billed Gull, we will discard the Ring-billed Gull. But there are four duck species in here. Can you see them? What do you see? Well, here are a couple of Long-tailed Ducks that are showing their tails. So that's good; that makes them kind of easy. And then we've got a dark duck here, with a big white wing patch. That's a White-winged Scoter. Not too bad. Now what else do we have here? We have some ducks over here that are light in the middle and dark on the ends, those are scaup. Now which one? If we look, we can see that the head looks pretty rounded, looking more like a Mallard than a Ring-necked Duck. These are Greater Scaup. And if you comb through, I see a lot more scaup, more White-winged Scoters. But here's one. Here's another, dark on the ends, light in the middle. But look, there's a bump on the back of the head making it look more like a Ring-necked duck than a Mallard. This is in fact a Lesser Scaup. Good.

All right, final picture. Lots of black and white. In fact, nothing but black and white here. How many species do you think there are in here? Well, obviously there are coots. This is a line of coots. When I first took this picture I was just looking at this line of coots that I just thought they were, there were coots. But then I noticed a couple of other things creeping in. Notice that there is a, right here there is one that's got, it's not black on the back, it's pale on the back. And it has a little bump on the back of the head. That's a Lesser Scaup. And then, somebody sneaking in, kind of bigger and all black, with a pale bill, but white in the eye and white in the wing. That's a White-winged Scoter. And then, right above it is somebody looking away. This one's a little harder. Ok, it's got gray sides and a dark head, but a nice white down in the wings, would be in the wing. This is a female Common Goldeneye. So that's 1,2,3; 1,2,3,4. What else do we have? Did you notice, here's a little face peeking up from underneath a wave? That, with a white face and a dark cheek patch, that's a female Long-tailed Duck. So even though it looks at first blush like this is just a flock of coots, just all black and white, when you poke through and pay attention, looking where the white is and where the black is, it turns out there are a bunch more species. And this is one of the things that I find really fun about winter birding, is that there are a lot of other species sometimes crammed into just one little space that you didn't even realize it.

So that's the end of Lesson Four. All of the divers and that's all of our ducks. The next lesson will take us into the not-ducks, with geese, swans, loons, grebes, and more. But before you go there, please do go through the exercises. Match the mates and try to use some of the things we put together to help you learn the diving ducks. And I hope that these things are helping you Be a Better Birder. I'll see you next time.