

# COMMONLY KEPT PERCHING DUCKS

## INFORMATION SHEET

It is recommended that as well as reading this leaflet you also read the information leaflet "Starting To Keep Wildfowl". This covers details of enclosure, fencing and general husbandry requirements.

Mandarins and Carolinas are two examples of part of a varied tribe of waterfowl, the Cairinini or Perching ducks. These range from the diminutive Pygmy Geese up to the massive Spur-winged Geese and Muscovies. The other species in the tribe are the Brazilian Teal, the Australian Wood Duck or Maned Goose, the Comb Ducks, the Hartlaub's Ducks and the White-winged Wood Duck. Some people also include the Ringed Teal and they certainly show many behavioural similarities to the Mandarin and Carolina. (See the full list of species at the end of this leaflet.)



The Mandarin and Carolina are two of the most commonly kept ornamental waterfowl and are regarded by many to be among the most beautiful birds in the world.

### BEHAVIOUR

As the name implies, Perching Ducks tend to be rather more arboreal than other waterfowl. Given the chance both Mandarins and Carolinas spend much of their time perched high up in the trees around a favourite pool.

Small pools in a woodland clearing are far preferred to large open lakes. They are also capable of flying at speed through thickly wooded areas. In captivity Mandarins and Carolinas love to perch on a branch positioned over the water.

### ENCLOSURE

The facilities required to keep Mandarins and Carolinas are much the same as outlined in the BWA information leaflet "Starting To Keep Wildfowl" with the exception of their specialised nest boxes. They need a foxproof pen with a small pond and plants or other cover to give shade and protection from the wind and weather.

The smaller species of Perching ducks adapt well to netted aviaries and are best enjoyed in relatively small enclosures as they tend to disappear in the distance of a large enclosure. A branch across the edge of the pond will be a popular perching place and give an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of these birds. Ensure that there are no fence posts set at an angle or strong shrubs near the fence that a Mandarin could scramble up and escape.

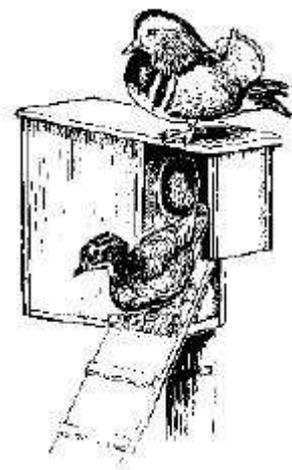
### NESTING

This desire to be up amongst the branches is particularly strong when nesting. In the wild the females are entirely dependent on suitable nesting cavities in hollow tree trunks. Thus in captivity they like to get up off the ground into a nest box with a small entrance hole.

A potential nest box is shown.

Ringed Teal and Maned Geese also like to nest in raised boxes, the Ringed Teal only requiring a small box with a small hole and the Maned Goose, of course, needs a larger box with a large hole. Brazilian Teal, the only other Perching Duck kept in any numbers, do not have to have a raised nest box as they will generally nest in cover on the ground.

Mandarins and Carolinas both lay about 10 creamy white eggs and incubation lasts for about 30 days.



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Although so closely related, a hybrid between the two species has never been reported. Carolinas often hybridise with dabbling or even diving ducks, but the Mandarin has been found to have a different chromosomal composition to all other ducks, thus preventing hybridisation.

## PLUMAGE

The males of both Mandarins and Carolinas are extremely ornate during the breeding season. They have a long flowing crest on the head and the Mandarin has enlarged tertiary wing feathers. These curious "sails" are dark blue below and orange above. Towards the end of May and the beginning of June both species change over to an eclipse plumage rather similar to the females. Their bright breeding colours return during the autumn. The females of the species are rather similar in appearance to each other, both being a pale mottled greyish colour with a white throat, eye stripes and belly.

## FEEDING

Feeding requirements are fairly simple for the commonly kept species of the Perching Ducks as they only need a mix of wheat and breeder or layers pellets. This should be fed twice a day at regular times allowing a small handful for each bird per feed. Maned Geese also need a permanent supply of short grass for grazing.

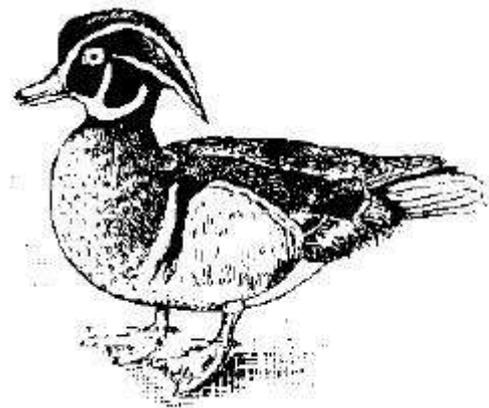
## A LIST OF THE CAIRININI TRIBE

(Wood Ducks or Perching Ducks and Geese):

Lesser Brazilian Teal - *Amazonetta brasiliensis brasiliensis*  
Greater Brazilian or Schuyll's Teal - *Amazonetta brasiliensis ipecutiri*  
Australian Wood Duck or Maned Goose - *Chenonetta jubata*  
Mandarin Duck - *Aix galericulata*  
North American Wood Duck or Carolina - *Aix sponsa*  
African Pygmy Goose - *Nettapus auritus*  
Green Pygmy Goose - *Nettapus pulchellus*  
Indian Pygmy Goose or Cotton Teal - *Nettapus coromandelianus coromandelianus*  
Australian Pygmy Goose - *Nettapus coromandelianus albipennis*  
Comb Duck - *Sarkidiornis melanotos melanotos*  
South American Comb Duck - *Sarkidiornis melanotos carunculatus*  
Western Hartlaub's Duck - *Pteronetta hartlaubi hartlaubi*  
Eastern Hartlaub's Duck - *Pteronetta hartlaubi albifrons*  
White-winged Wood Duck - *Cairina scutulata*  
Muscovy Duck - *Cairina moschata*  
Spur-winged Goose - *Plectropterus gambensis*  
Black Spur-winged Goose - *Plectropterus gambensis niger*

### and closely related to Perching Ducks:

Ringed Teal - *Calonetta leucophrys*



This leaflet is only a brief introduction and the successful husbandry of all livestock depends on being well informed about them. The BWA Bookshop sells a number of specialist publications which cover all aspects of keeping both Wildfowl and Domestic Waterfowl. All new keepers are strongly advised to obtain a book appropriate to their interest.