



# Ducks Nesting In Enclosed Areas and Ducks in the Pool

## Duck migration:

Mallards often migrate unless there is sufficient food and water available throughout the year. Many migrating individuals spend their winters in the Gulf Coast and fly to the Northern U.S. and Canada in the spring. For migrating Mallards, spring migration begins in March. In many western states, Mallards are present year-round.



*Male Mallard*  
Tim Ludwick/USFWS

## Territory and Breeding:

Breeding season varies among individuals, locations, and weather. Mallards begin to defend a territory about 200 yards from where the nesting takes place. They often defend the territory to isolate the female from other males around February-mid May. Mallards build their nests between March-June and breed through the beginning of August. These birds can be secretive during the breeding seasons and may nest in places that are not easily accessible.

In the early evening for a week or more, a Mallard pair will be searching for a place to build a nest. The female is more persistent in the search and will quack often, accompanied by alertness. The nest may be located under shrubs or bushes, in an open field, garden, tall grass, or on muskrat homes. It starts out as a few scrapes in the ground, and once eggs are laid, leaves, grass, reeds, and down feathers from the females' breast are added for protection.

After about 25 days of incubation, the chicks will hatch. The mother will lead her chicks to the water within 24 hours after hatching. Keep children and pets away from the family.

## Ducks in enclosed areas and in the pool:

Your yard may be providing ducks with the ideal place to build a nest. You may have vegetation and water that provides them with resources to live and build a nest in hopes they will succeed in raising a brood.



*Female Mallard*  
Tim Ludwick/USFWS

Here, we provide you with some suggestions when ducks have decided to make your yard a temporary home.

## ***What to do to discourage nesting and swimming in pools:***

- When you see a pair of ducks, or a female quacking often, they may be searching for a nest site. If you do not want the ducks to nest in your yard, chase the ducks away when you see them spending their early evening in the yard.
- If you have a dog, allow it to patrol the yard before the ducks build a nest to help keep the birds away.
- If you find an inactive nest (an empty nest with no eggs), you may destroy it. You may need to do this often as they may attempt to re-establish a nest. It is prohibited to purposely destroy a nest with eggs inside.

- Place brightly colored inflatable pool toys in the pool. Ducks may be discouraged by the objects.
- Cover your pool when it is not in use.
- Keep low-lying shrubs and short grass to discourage them from establishing a nest.
- Do not leave food out and do not feed the ducks.

***What to do if you find ducks in your pool:***

- If there are ducklings in the pool, provide a makeshift ramp to allow the ducklings to get out. You can use any surface that is not too slippery for the duckling's feet, to help them walk out of the pool. Ducklings are not able to fly out of the water, nor can they step out from the pool's tall ledge. The ducklings may drown if they become exhausted.
- If you find bird feces in the pool, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends to make the pool unavailable for use until the feces is removed. The pool should then be treated by a) increasing the chlorine concentration and temperature and b) maintaining the pH level at 7.5 or less for 30 minutes.

***Getting ducks out of the yard:***

- Leave a gate open to make it easy for the ducks to exit the enclosed area. You may calmly escort the ducks out of the enclosed area, but you may not trap or pick them up without a permit.

**Legal Status:**

Mallards are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. It is illegal for any person to take, possess, transport, sell, or purchase them or their parts, such as feathers, nests, or eggs, without a permit. Active nests with eggs or chicks may not be purposely touched or destroyed without a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Inactive (empty) nests do not require a permit to destroy, provided no possession occurs during or after the destruction. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does not issue permits to remove Mallards, eggs, nor nests that are occupying a pool or an enclosed area.

For further information about Mallards and other migratory bird concerns, please contact: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Southwest Region, Division of Migratory Birds and Habitat at 916/978-6183 or email: [permitsR8MB@fws.gov](mailto:permitsR8MB@fws.gov).



*Male Mallard*  
Tim Ludwick/USFWS