



Photo by Gary Kramer

## NEW MOTTLED DUCK REGULATIONS

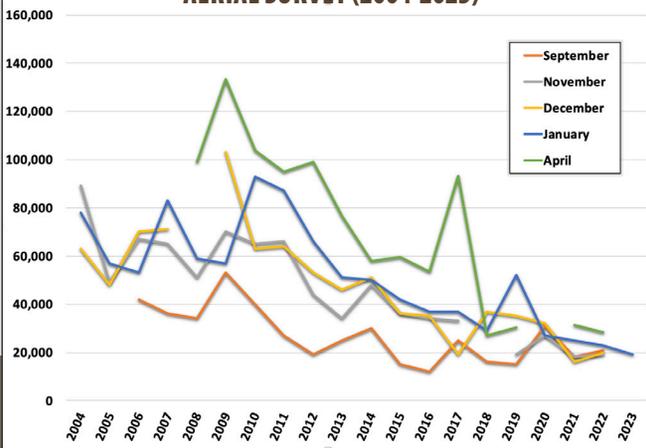
Beginning with the 2023-2024 Waterfowl Hunting Season in Louisiana, the daily bag limit on mottled ducks (in both zones) will be 0 for the first 15 days of the regular duck season. For the last 45 days of the season, the daily bag limit on mottled ducks will be 1.

- The bag limit during special youth and veterans hunting days is 0 if before the regular season begins and 1 if occurring afterward.
- Mottled duck harvest is not permitted during the September Teal Season.

### WHY THE NEW RULES?

The West Gulf Coast population of mottled ducks has shown variable peaks and lows, but the overall trend in population since the 1970s shows a steady decline. Although the population remains at a level that supports harvest, a more recent (2009-present) declining trend, apparent in five different annual surveys, shows an estimated 65% decline since 2009 in Louisiana. This has resulted in the recommendation to reduce harvest of this species in the Mississippi Flyway by 50%.

**MOTTLED DUCK ESTIMATES FROM LOUISIANA COASTAL AERIAL SURVEY (2004-2023)**



## PENALTY FOR TAKING A MOTTLED DUCK OUT OF SEASON

Taking a mottled duck outside of legal hunting days is a violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Louisiana Revised Statute 56:118 "taking a migratory game bird out of season." This is a Class 4 violation and is enforced according to the provisions of RS 56:34:

- Penalties for a Class 4 violation (first offense) shall be not less than \$400 nor more than \$950 or imprisonment for not more than 120 days, or both.
- Penalties for repeat offenses are greater.
- Penalties include forfeiture of anything seized in connection with the violation.



For information specific to mottled ducks (range map, regulation changes and ID):  
[www.wlf.louisiana.gov/subhome/waterfowl](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/subhome/waterfowl)

To hear different mottled duck calls:  
[www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Mottled\\_Duck/sounds#](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Mottled_Duck/sounds#)

For current waterfowl regulations information:  
[www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/seasons-and-regulations](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/seasons-and-regulations)

For more information, contact:  
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# MOTTLED DUCKS

## New Regulations & Identification



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## KNOW YOUR TARGET!

In order to remain legal beginning in the 2023-2024 Waterfowl Season, the ability to identify mottled ducks in the air before making the decision to pull the trigger will be especially important to Louisiana waterfowlers. In past years, with the one-mottled duck bag limit, hunters had some leeway for identifying the first duck of the morning. Increased caution was necessary only if the first bird bagged was a mottled duck. This becomes more challenging when the limit is zero to start out the morning. See below for some identification tips for duck hunters.

**SIZE:** Mottled ducks are among the largest duck species typically harvested in Louisiana, comparable in size to the mallard, northern pintail or gadwall. These large bodied ducks have a slower wingbeat than the smaller teal species.

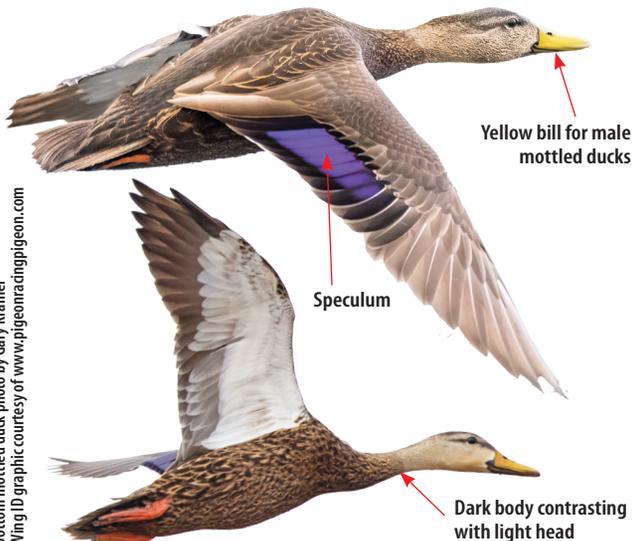
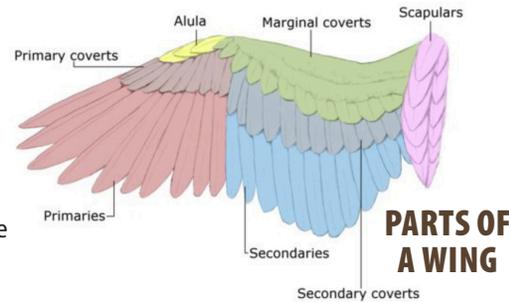
**MARKINGS:** Overall, mottled ducks are a dark brown bird. They are easier to distinguish after sunrise. Mottled ducks are most similar to the mallard. Drake mallards look nothing like a mottled duck aside from the shape and silhouette, but the female mallard is very similar.

**SOUND:** Both sexes of mottled ducks sound similar to their mallard counterparts. Female mottled ducks quack in the familiar mallard fashion, whereas the drakes make a low raspy raeb sound similar to male mallards (see link on back panel).

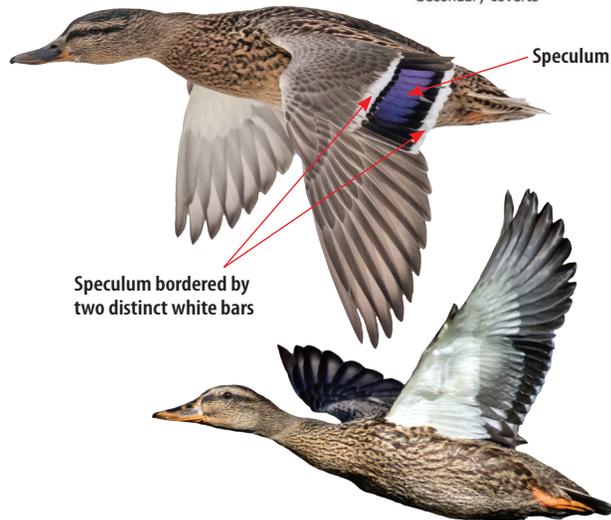
**GROUPING:** Mottled ducks are the first to begin pairing in winter. Some begin pairing up as early as October. Thus, mottled ducks are seldom encountered during the hunting season in large flocks. Singles, or pairs of mottled ducks working decoys are far more common.

## HOW TO DISTINGUISH A MOTTLED DUCK FROM A FEMALE MALLARD

- Mottled ducks have a much darker brown body that contrasts with a buffy-brown/tan head
- Mottled ducks lack the two distinct white bars that traverse across half the length of each wing of a female mallard.
- Both mallards and mottled ducks have a blueish or purple speculum. Only mallards have a speculum bordered by two distinct white bars formed by white secondary coverts tipped with black, and white tipped secondaries.
- Mottled ducks may have very faint white tips on secondaries, but will not have white on secondary covert feathers.



MOTTLED DUCK



FEMALE MALLARD

Photo by Shutterstock.com



GADWALL

Photo by Todd Steele



MOTTLED DUCK

Photo by Shutterstock.com



NORTHERN SHOVELER

## SIMILAR LOOKING SPECIES

Mottled ducks have dark brown bodies with lighter neck and head when viewed from above or below. Most other large duck species, both male and female, will have white bellies with darker feathers around the breast (gadwall, wigeon, wood duck, pintail drakes, scaup, ring-necks). Hen shovellers & pintails appear similar to the female mallard - light brown throughout, no body-head contrast. Male shovellers have dark belly and white chest - quite different than all other ducks.

One species that poses the most challenge and looks the most similar to the mottled duck is the American black duck, which differs by only being slightly darker brown in the body feathers. Black ducks will rarely be observed in coastal Louisiana. They are a very cold-hardy bird that typically doesn't arrive in North Louisiana until late-December or January, well after the 15-day restricted period when mottled duck hunting is not open.

## IDENTIFICATION IS KEY!

Species identification is one of the most difficult aspects of duck hunting, challenging the hunter to make split second identification or let the bird fly and make another pass until ensuring it is legal take. Yet the challenge and proficiency gained from study and experience make duck hunters some of the most skilled wildlife harvesters in the field. Beginning in 2023, novice duck hunters in Louisiana should study up and get comfortable identifying ducks on the wing before the season starts and let seasoned duck hunting partners make the shot call if they are unsure of their target.