

WHITE-EYED DUCK AT WESTERN SPRINGS

On 30 April 1980, at the northern end of Western Springs Lake in one of the western suburbs of Auckland, I saw a strange duck. It was feeding with Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) in a patch of open water covered with *Azolla*. I watched the bird, in overcast conditions, at about 15 metres without binoculars for 5-10 minutes. I did not see it again until 3 May, when I found it on the western side of the lake. The light was excellent, and I was able to approach the bird up to 1 metre away and watch it for about 30 minutes. It was not seen to dive on the first occasion but did so on the second. It did not fly or call. Other duck species nearby were Mallard, Grey Duck (*A. superciliosa*), Shoveler (*A. rhynchotis*) and New Zealand Scaup (*Aythya novaeseelandiæ*).

Size nearest to Shoveler.

Head, neck, breast, back and tail dark brown.

Sides and flanks brown.

Centre part of primaries and secondaries white, forming a conspicuous wing bar; rest of wing brown.

Undertail coverts white.

Rump and abdomen not seen.

Underwing (lifted while preening) white with narrow dark border.

Bill dark, iris brown, legs and feet dark.

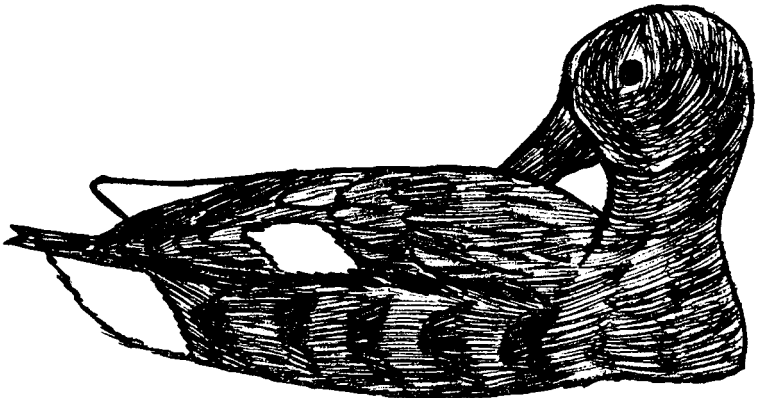


FIGURE 1 — Note white underwing with narrow dark border.

This bird has been identified as an Australian White-eyed Duck, or Hardhead (*Aythya australis*), probably a female. There are several records of this species in New Zealand, the most recent being one shot in Hawkes Bay in 1973 (*Notornis* 20: 185) and a flock of eight at Runanga Lake, Hawkes Bay, in May 1973 (*Amendments and additions to the 1970 Checklist*, 1980: 14).

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