

## Gadwall *Anas strepera*



**Folk Name:** Creek Duck, Gray Duck

**Status:** Winter Resident

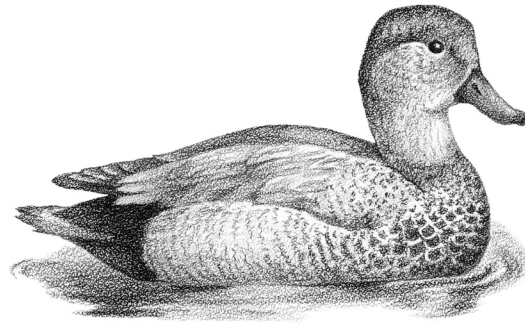
**Abundance:** Uncommon

**Habitat:** Lakes, ponds

The Gadwall is the first of our eight ducks classified in the genus *Anas*. These are our dabbling ducks (sometimes called river ducks) that forage on top of the water. They do not dive in search of food but simply tip over and probe the bottom of shallow waters for vegetation. Carolina naturalist H.H. Brimley called this practice “tippling”: “Tippling means they stand on their heads in the water with their feet moving rapidly to keep their tails aloft—as though they had to work hard to keep themselves in this position.”

The Gadwall is a fairly large dabbling duck that averages about 3 inches smaller than a Mallard. The male is gray with a noticeable blackish “rear end” (tail coverts) and with a white speculum that can be seen both on the water and in flight. The female is largely drab brown, like a female Mallard, but also shows a white speculum. This duck breeds primarily in the Prairie Pothole Region of the United States and Canada. The Gadwall is a regular but rather uncommon visitor to our region each winter. They prefer shallow water for feeding.

Gadwall generally arrive here in November and most are gone by April. Our earliest arrival date on file is 27 October in 1995, and our latest spring departure date is 9 May in 1998. Most Gadwall seen in this region are found in small groups, but counts of over 2,000 birds have been recorded at Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge since the turn of the twenty-first century. However, winter Gadwall counts there usually average about 200 Gadwall per count between December and March.



*Gadwall. (Jeff Lemons)*

The continental population of Gadwall appears to be faring well. In addition, the 2015 Mid-winter Waterfowl Survey conducted in North Carolina reported an estimate of 41,788 Gadwall which is a +102% change from the 10-year average and a whopping +445% change from the 64-year count average. South Carolina duck harvest data from the Broad River indicate Gadwall is the fifth most harvested duck over the past 12 years.