

Natural Resources • Dabbling or Diver?

Project Skills:

- Youth will use field characteristics to distinguish between dabbling and diving ducks.

Life Skill:

- Critical thinking: reason, compare, and analyze information

Grade Levels: 6 and above

Method: Game Show

Time: 20-25 minutes

Supplies Needed:

- Contest Cards
- Handouts: "Dabbling or Diver? Prep Sheet"

Do Ahead:

- Make sufficient copies of "Dabbling or Diver? Prep Sheet"
- Prepare contestant cards

Youth Leader Roles:

- Circulate among members and answer questions in prep stage
- Serve as host

Keywords:

- Birds, characteristics, identification, shooting sports

BACKGROUND

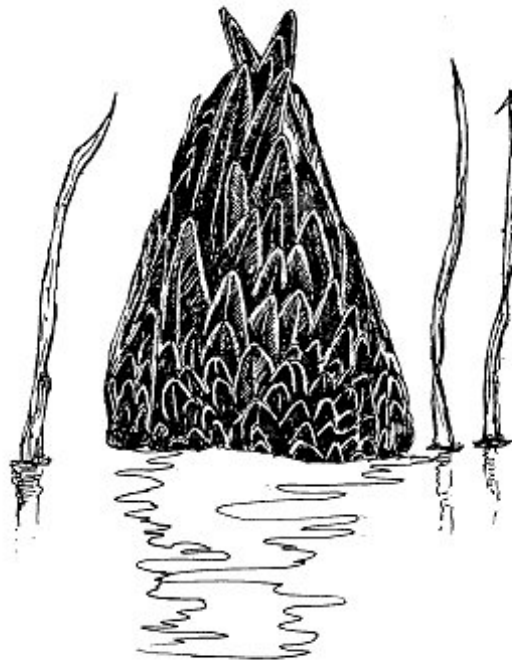
Dabbling or diver? It's the first question to ask when identifying a duck.

Dabbling ducks, such as mallards and blue-winged teal, spend most of their time in shallow water, foraging for seeds and insects. You may have seen these ducks in shallow lakes, looking for insects – tails tipped up in the air like the drawing on the right.

Diving ducks, such as scaup and ring-necks, dive for their food, which includes fish, invertebrates and plants. One minute you see them and the next they have disappeared under water.

These two categories of birds are easy to tell apart while they are on the water. Dabblers float high on the water, while divers are so low that you can't see their tail feathers. And when they leave the water, dabblers simply burst straight up into the air. Divers, on the other hand, must run along the surface of the water to get enough speed to lift their heavy bodies.

Using a simple game show format, youth will learn a few easy field characteristics that set these ducks apart from each other. This activity can be used in a variety of 4-H settings from afterschool to project meetings.



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WHAT TO DO

Getting Started:

Give the youth the attached handout. While they work in pairs, give them 10 minutes to look over the material.

Game Show:

Option 1:

Identify a Game Show “Host.” Suggestions include a Youth leader or a Project leader. The Host invites two volunteers to come up and be contestants today on “Dabbling or Diver.” Each contestant gets two 8 1/2 x 11 inch cardstock sheets, one with DABBLER printed on it, the other, DIVER.

The Host develops questions from the “Diver or Dabbling? Prep Sheet.” Here is a suggested format:

Which duck rides low in the water, with no sign of its tail? Dabbling or Diver?

The Host reads the question and gives the contestants time to think it over and select either Dabbling or Diver as their answer. When the Host asks them to do so, the contestants show their selected card at the same time.

NOTE: Determine in advance if score will be kept or not.

You may want to coach the Host in using a “game show host voice,” which makes the contest even more fun to watch.

Option 2:

Each youth gets a set of cards and everyone plays, as above.

TALK IT OVER

Reflect:

- What helped you most in learning the difference between the two types of ducks?
- How did your partner help in this activity?
- What did you like *most* about the game show?

Apply:

- Why might a duck hunter want to know the difference between a dabbling and a diver?
- Let's say that you and your family are constructing a pond on your land. You'd like puddle ducks to visit. What features would you put in your pond?

ENHANCE/SIMPLIFY

Enhance for Older Youth:

- For older learners, give them additional points for sharing their reasons. For example, diver's feet are off-center so that they can dive better.

Simplify for Younger Learners:

- For younger learners, let them use their prep sheet during the contest or have them work in teams.





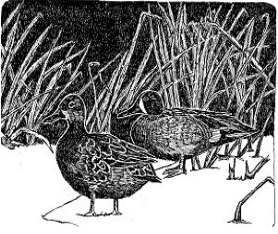

ADDITIONAL WEB LINK

- Images from “Ducks at a Distance” at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18884/18884-h/18884-h.htm>.

Sources:

- Created by Paula Rogers Huff, 4-H Youth Development Agent, UW-Extension, Oconto County. Huff has a M.S. degree in Wildlife Biology from Iowa State University.
- Line art created by Tom Kelley, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Content reviewed by Tom Nigus, Wildlife Supervisor, North East Region, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources.

Prep Sheet • Dabbling or Diver?

	Dabblers	Divers	Explanation
Food	Seeds and insects	Fish, invertebrates, plants	
Getting food	Tip head down, bottom up to get at insects and seeds	Dive to get food	Tied to location of food.
Water depth	Shallow	Deep	This is tied to food – more seeds and insects are found in shallows; fish in deeper waters.
Water position	“Float” on water, tail visible 	“Rides low” in water, tail usually beneath surface 	Divers are more compact, heavier-bodied birds with a lower profile in the water.
Take-off	Burst directly from floating position 	“Run” along surface of water 	Divers are heavier-bodied birds and need to build up speed before they can take off.
Taste	Mild-flavored dark meat	The most likely to have a “fishy” taste	Consider their food source – which one eats fish?
Foot position	Near the center of body 	Off-center, near the tail 	Legs near the center help dabblers walk on land; legs nearer the tail make the duck a better diver!

Photo/Art Credit: U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

