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[Home](#) > The changing relative abundance of grey duck (*Anas superciliosa*) and mallard (*A. platyrhynchos*) in New Zealand

The changing relative abundance of grey duck (*Anas superciliosa*) and mallard (*A. platyrhynchos*) in New Zealand

Title	The changing relative abundance of grey duck (<i>Anas superciliosa</i>) and mallard (<i>A. platyrhynchos</i>) in New Zealand
Publication Type	Journal Article
Year of Publication	2017
Authors	Williams, M
Journal	Notornis
Volume	64
Issue	4
Pagination	211-228
Type of Article	Full article
Keywords	Anas platyrhynchos , Anas superciliosa , Anatidae , grey duck , hybridisation , mallard , New Zealand , status

Abstract

Change in the relative abundance of grey duck (*Anas superciliosa*) and mallard (*A. platyrhynchos*) in New Zealand from 1950 to the present day, is summarised from trapping records, hunters' kills, and field studies. Mallards achieved numerical ascendancy over grey duck throughout most of New Zealand by the late 1970s, merely 20 years after the cessation of mallard releases by historic acclimatisation societies. Post-1990, the relative abundance of grey duck in almost all districts, as recorded from hunters' kills, appears to have stabilised at 90%, or higher. Uncertainty about hunters' and the public's ability to discriminate between grey ducks, their hybrids with mallard, and variably-polluted mallard females is demonstrated and most modern (post-1990) records of relative species abundance are regarded as quantitatively suspect. Ducks identified as grey ducks by hunters are now a relative rarity throughout New Zealand, except in Northland and West Coast. Post-1990 duck trapping in North Island indicates that grey ducks, where reported, are patchily rather than generally distributed. The absence of genetically-validated criteria for discriminating ducks of grey duck x mallard hybrid ancestry continues to confound field identifications of both

Attachment	Size
Full article	864.68 KB

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