

For us drakes—male ducks—romance starts in the winter after we migrate to Japan. Primping and preening is a must because the female ducks won't give us a second look without our fancy breeding plumage.

Many of us spend time out on Lake Towada, but the lake is huge and we're small, so sometimes we're hard to spot. One good way is to head to the lounge or up to the observation deck above, and scan the lakeshores with binoculars. By the way, did you know that all the wood in this Visitor Center is from the forests around Towada as well?

Common Goldeneye

The common goldeneye gets its Japanese name, *hojiro-gamo* ("white-cheek duck"), from the white mark on the male's cheek.

Mallard

Mallard ducks are sometimes called *aokubi-kamo* ("green-necked ducks") due to their iridescent green head and neck feathers. They spend the winter months in the Lake Towada region, and migrate northwards as the seasons change.

Common Pochard

With a reddish-brown head and a white body, the common pochard (*boshi-hajiro*) drake stands out from the waterfowl crowd by its contrasting colors. As diving ducks, they prefer lakes and large, slow-moving rivers. The female's eyes are brown; while the males have red, ruby-like eyes. These ducks are found in Towada only during the winter months.

Common Merganser

With a long, slender bill that ends in a hook, the common merganser's (*kawa-aisa*) diet consists mainly of fish. Its slender body is ideally adapted for chasing fish through the water. Common mergansers can be found in mating pairs or small flocks around lakes, marshes, and estuaries. In Towada, they can be seen only during the winter.

Mandarin Duck

The male mandarin duck's (*oshidori*) breeding plumage is truly stunning, setting it apart from all other ducks. Look for the triangular "sail" feathers on the male's back. Mandarin ducks spend the entire year at Lake Towada, and can be seen every seasons.

Tufted Duck

The male tufted duck (*kinkuro-hajiro*) stands out for its long crest feathers. The female also has crest feathers, but these are shorter than the male's. The female also has a white patch at the base of her bill. Both male and female tufted ducks have bright yellow eyes. The tufted duck is a winter visitor that can be found around the lakes and coastal areas.

A Change of Plumage Before Proposing

When ducks first arrive here, the males are still in their drab summer plumage. To prepare for the winter mating season, they molt into their fancy breeding plumage. Then they put much of their energy into swimming around and courting the females.