

Ohio Migratory Waterfowl

Kitty Hayden, Wildlife Care Specialist

The Wildlife Center has been able to release several migratory waterfowl species this winter. Throughout the winter season raptors, songbirds, and waterfowl are the most common animals admitted to the center. A Red-Necked Grebe, a diving bird rarely found in Ohio, was successfully released in March. This bird had become grounded and unable to fly after failing to land on open water. Grebes like most diving birds have their legs positioned behind their body, making them very clumsy on land and almost incapable of taking flight from land. They need a very long run on the surface of water to take off. Red-Necked Grebes usually only fly when migrating and dive in water to escape their predators. An interesting fact about their migration is that they only fly over land at nighttime and they fly over water or coasts during the day. These birds are a large member of the Grebe family, with a wingspan of 61-88 cm. During the wintertime they have very drab plumage, but during springtime they develop a rusty reddish neck and black head to attract a mate. Another Wildlife Center patient that was admitted this winter was a female Bufflehead Duck, the smallest diving duck in North America. Buffleheads live in Canada during most of the year and can only be found in Ohio during the winter or non-breeding season. These small ducks nest almost exclusively in holes excavated by Northern Flickers. This Bufflehead was knocked out of her tree and was too thin and weak to fly. After almost three weeks of care and a Dawn bath to help her waterproof she was released in February.



Mating Season Plumage (spring and summer)



Non-mating Season Plumage (winter)



Males have a white head and are larger
Females have a black head and white cheek and
are slightly smaller



Female Bufflehead before release