

Wigeon

Mareca penelope

Bird · Winter visitor · Sep–Apr



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A compact, round-headed grazing duck with a short blue-grey bill. Drakes have a chestnut head with a buttery-yellow forehead stripe, pink-grey breast and a white flash along the wing; females are warm brown. Wigeon winter on the Solway in large flocks, grazing the merse, wet grassland and estuary edge from September through to April, with almost none breeding in the area.

BEHAVIOUR

Unusually among ducks, wigeon graze like small geese, working across wet grassland and saltmarsh in tightly packed flocks with heads down. They also take advantage of swans and coots bringing weed to the surface, feeding on the scraps. The drake's call is unmistakable — a clear, rising, almost human whistle, 'whee-oo' — and a big flock keeps it up continuously.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Ducks, geese and swans (Anatidae)
SIZE	45–51 cm
UK STATUS	Amber-listed

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