Australian Bush Birds
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Australian Wood Duck - *Chenonetta jubata*

The male Australian Wood Duck - *Chenonetta jubata* - has rounded chestnut head with darker brown mane, neck and breast are spotted brown on white, sides are pale grey, belly and under tail is black. Eyes are black, bill is stubby and brown. Females have a rounded pale brown head with pale stripes, the body, especially the breast, is generally mottled/spotted brown and white. Reaches 48 centimetres in length.

Lives in pairs or small groups, most often seen walking around on grass, feeding as they go. Feeds mainly by grazing on short grass and pasture; also up-ends in shallow waters seeking aquatic plants. This duck species is better adapted to walking than swimming or diving and is most often seen grazing on grass near open fresh water but takes to the water rarely; for refuge, bathing or mating.
Wood Duck prefer to be walking about on grass; these ones (three males and two females) are sheltering from strong wind and are swimming around on the calm water not being affected by wind.

Wood Ducks on the water (left female, right male). The pale grey plumage on the back of this species is more obvious with the bird on the water than when looking at the duck on land.

During breeding season wood ducks perch in trees looking for tree holes to use for nests; they have well-developed claws on the ends of their half-webbed feet to assist in tree-climbing.

Mainly found in eastern New South Wales and south-eastern Queensland with another population in the south-west of Western Australia. Found in lesser numbers adjacent to these areas, including Tasmania. Lives near water in dams, pools and lakes but relies on adjacent open woodland or short grassland for grazing areas. An abundant species, often remaining in the same place. Although primarily a grass grazer the wood duck also takes insects and will eat crops if available. Sometimes they become a pest when eating crops.

Flocks of a hundred or more birds gather in southern districts in autumn and winter; these flocks are usually made up of pairs of birds which act independently of other so that flocks are continually changing. Flocks mostly disintegrate during the breeding season.

Wood ducks mate for life so courtship involves younger ducks who are not paired. Breeding takes place in spring in southern districts depending on rain falling. Breeding inland is irregular, after heavy rain. The nest is a bed of wood chips in a hollow in a living tree, sometimes far from water. Nine to 12 eggs are laid; smooth, white or cream; oval, about 58 by 43 millimetres. Incubation takes about 28 days by the female while the male stands guard. The young fledge in 50 days.

Soon after they hatch, the young are called out of the nesting hole (possibly high up in a tree) by their parents on the ground. With encouragement, they jump out of the hole and fall to the ground.
The ducklings are led away as a group, to water if available, and remain with the parents until they can fly (about 50 days). Mortality among ducklings appears high until they can fly to safety.

Both parents protect the ducklings and can display sham injured wings to divert intruders. Ducklings graze as soon as they hatch and also take any available insects.

Also known as the Maned Duck.