



# Urban Ducks

From late February and into August, Animal Care & Control receives phone calls from residents who are concerned about the well-being of ducks who have selected, what appear to be, strange locations to nest and raise their young. Calls are received regarding a mother duck and ducklings crossing the road, or ducks nesting around a backyard swimming pool. Some calls are from residents who feel the presence of ducks at a private residence is a nuisance, and should be removed. This information is intended to help explain duck behavior, the laws protecting ducks and other migratory birds, and how to determine if a duck should be impounded for health and safety reasons.

There are many species of ducks that migrate through San Bernardino County. The most common species is the Mallard. During breeding season, males have a beautiful, glossy green head with a narrow white collar. They have a chestnut breast, a white tail, yellow bill and orange feet. The females look completely different – mottled brown with a whitish tail. A female's bill is dark and patched with orange and their feet are orange. They, as well as the males, have a prominent violet blue stripe bordered with white on the lower edge of their wings.

During January and February, mates are chosen and nesting areas are located. Mallards usually nest close to water. In urban areas, this means ponds, swimming pools, fountains, flood control channels and even very unusual locations. After nesting, both the male and female stay near the nest to defend it. Females usually lay about 8-10 eggs. After four weeks, the eggs hatch and the mother will take the ducklings to water, even if it means walking across a busy intersection. Females will aggressively protect their young so the entire brood should be avoided. In 10-12 weeks, the ducklings can sustain flight and will soon fly away and join other ducks who have completed the cycle.

**Federal law strictly prohibits interfering with nesting ducks.** Heavy fines are levied against anyone who violates the Federal Migratory Waterfowl Act. Once a nest is made, it cannot be interfered with and nature must be allowed to take its course. If a pair has selected your yard in which to nest, enjoy this natural occasion and in a few short weeks, the ducks and ducklings will be gone. If your pool is selected as a water source, place a screen in front of your filter opening so the ducklings will not be harmed and enjoy the show.

In any instance of an injured duck, Animal Care & Control should be called. An officer will respond and appropriate actions will be taken. Be aware, however, that many times the appropriate response will be to only remove the injured duck and leave the rest alone. Should a mother duck and ducklings be crossing a busy street, Animal Care & Control should be contacted so both human life and the ducks can be protected.

Steps to prevent ducks from nesting in undesirable areas should be taken prior to the arrival of duck mating season. The following is a list of steps, which may be taken to discourage ducks from making a backyard area a nesting site:

**Cover swimming pools during the nesting season;**

**Allow beach or pool balls to float on the surface of pools, ponds or fountains;**

**Clear away foliage from around water sources to eliminate a protected nesting area;**

**Enclose above ground decks with skirting to eliminate a nesting site.**

**For more information, contact:**

City of Adelanto  
Animal Care & Control  
(760) 246-2301  
[www.ci.adelanto.ca.us](http://www.ci.adelanto.ca.us)

