



A Transatlantic Visitor on the Forde Abbey Pond

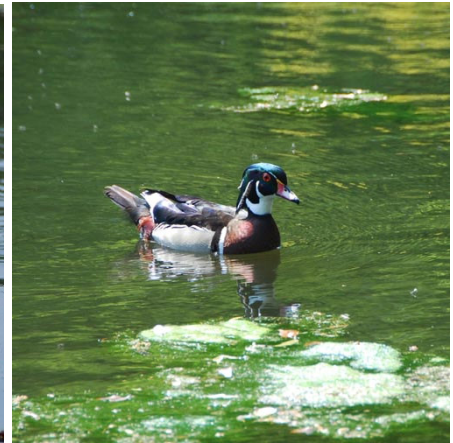
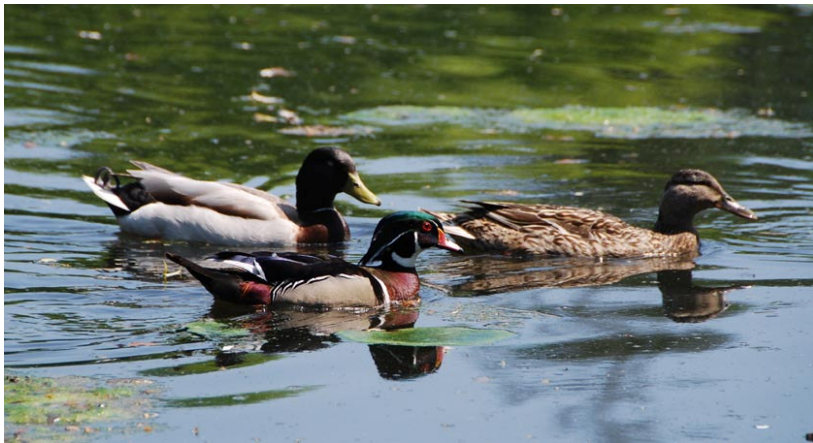
Forde Abbey has a new resident in the form of a male North American Wood Duck who has made the Great Pond his home. A native breed of the wooded swamps, lakes and marshes of North America it is highly unusual to find one in the wild in the UK. He is currently sporting the distinctive brightly coloured breeding plumage that really makes him stand out in a crowd.

Owner Mark Roper has admired the visitor several times in recent weeks. “He is the most spectacular looking bird and quite puts our mallards to shame.” Also known as the Carolina Duck, it is generally accepted to be one of the most beautiful waterfowl and its scientific name, *Aix sponsa*, actually means "water bird in bridal dress".

The Forde Abbey duck has now been around for a couple of weeks but it is unclear whether he plans to stay. Certainly finding a suitable mate will be a difficult task and he has only a limited time in which to do so as the brilliant purple, blue and green plumage fades as the summer wears on. However, Mark’s daughter, Alice Kennard, thinks he may have found his perfect partner. “He appears to have become very attached to one of our mallards and is ready to defend his choice against all contenders. I have seen him chase off the competition so perhaps he will stay for the summer.”

North American Wood Ducks have been known to breed with other varieties of duck although they are definitely serial monogamists – this year’s fancy probably won’t be to his taste next year!

The RSPB says that any North American Wood Duck found in the UK is very unlikely to be a wild bird and has probably escaped from a private collection. Small feral populations have temporarily established themselves in this country in the past but are not considered to be self-sustaining. As far as Forde Abbey is concerned, whatever the reason for his appearance he is more than welcome to stay!



End

15th May 2008

For Editors:

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Forde Abbey

Established in 1141 as a Cistercian monastery, Forde Abbey became a private home following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539. Passed around a series of absentee landlords for more than a century it was saved by Edmund Prideaux, Cromwell's Attorney General in 1649. Under his supervision Forde Abbey became a family home and remains so to this day. It has now been the home of the Roper family since 1905 and is at the heart of a 1600 acre estate.

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