

Photography and Essay By BILL COATNEY

The Northern shoveler is also known as a shoveler, smiling mallard, spoonbill, spoonie, boot-lip, hollywood, hollywood mallard and other terms not polite to print. If we were wearing togas and spoke Latin, we would call it *Anas clypeata*, which it appears means "shoveler" or "broadbill" depending on the translation you read.

The Northern shoveler gets bad-mouthed for its unique bill shape and depending on habitat, its taste as table fare.

Some biologists estimate that this duck will eat small crustaceans, invertebrates and plankton up to 33% of its diet. Shovelers rarely tip up but usually have their bills sweeping back and forth filtering whatever food is available. This bill has small comb-like structures that allows it to skim the water surface for its food. This adaptation gives the Northern shoveler an advantage since it

doesn't compete with typical dabbling ducks for food resources. In the winter the shoveler may feed mostly on seeds and other aquatic plants like sedges, pondweeds and grasses. If the habitat includes mollusks, insects, crustaceans, they will eat them as well. In short, they aren't picky eaters like pintails.

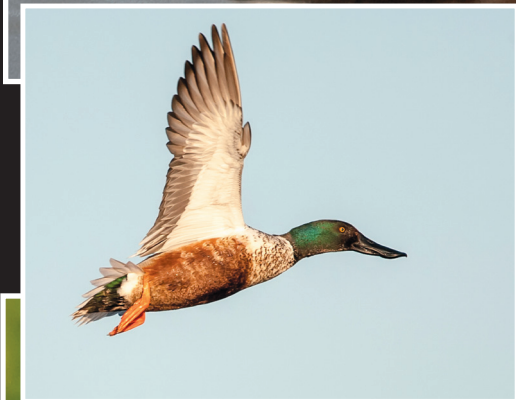
It may also account for the differences in opinion of the bird as table fare. Some hunters treat them as they would mallards for the table. Others think that times are hard if you have to shoot one and treat them like divers as far as preparing them for the table.

They lay between 9 and 12 eggs in a loosely-made nest of grass, etc. This high reproduction rate paired with their ability to find food, has made the shoveler one of most common ducks. Biologists have reported that the shoveler is considered one of the most

territorial of all dabblers. Their pair bonds remain intact through incubation, unlike most ducks. In 2015, the shoveler was second only to the mallard in numbers.

Migrations are a prolonged event through both fall and spring. Migration starts in August and continues into November. While a larger duck, they have a blue shoulder patch like the blue-winged teal. This can make early teal season challenging as far as identification. Their migration in spring peaks near the end of April.

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'Mr. Hollywood'

