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WILD DUCKS.

To see a waddling and swimming fowl, like the barnyard duck, spread a good-sized pair of wings and mount up into the air until it became a small speck in the sky, would be a remarkable sight; yet this is just what its cousin—the wild duck, who is a very “high flyer”—does continually. It can also swim and float, for, like its plainer relative, it belongs to the swan family, and must, therefore, be at home on the water.

These wild ducks are beautiful birds, and each family of them has its own peculiar style of dress. Thus, the summer or wood duck—which is the handsomest of all the species—appears in the most gorgeous colouring, with softly-shaded tints, and it moves so gracefully that it seems more like a swan than a duck. It is called the summer duck, because it is the only one of its tribe that is seen here during the summer months; and because its eggs are usually laid in a hollow tree or stump, it is also called the wood duck.

The mallard—although it looks more like the common duck—is nearly as handsome as the summer duck, and has a great variety of glowing and beautiful colours in its plumage: “The dark emerald of the head, the snowy-

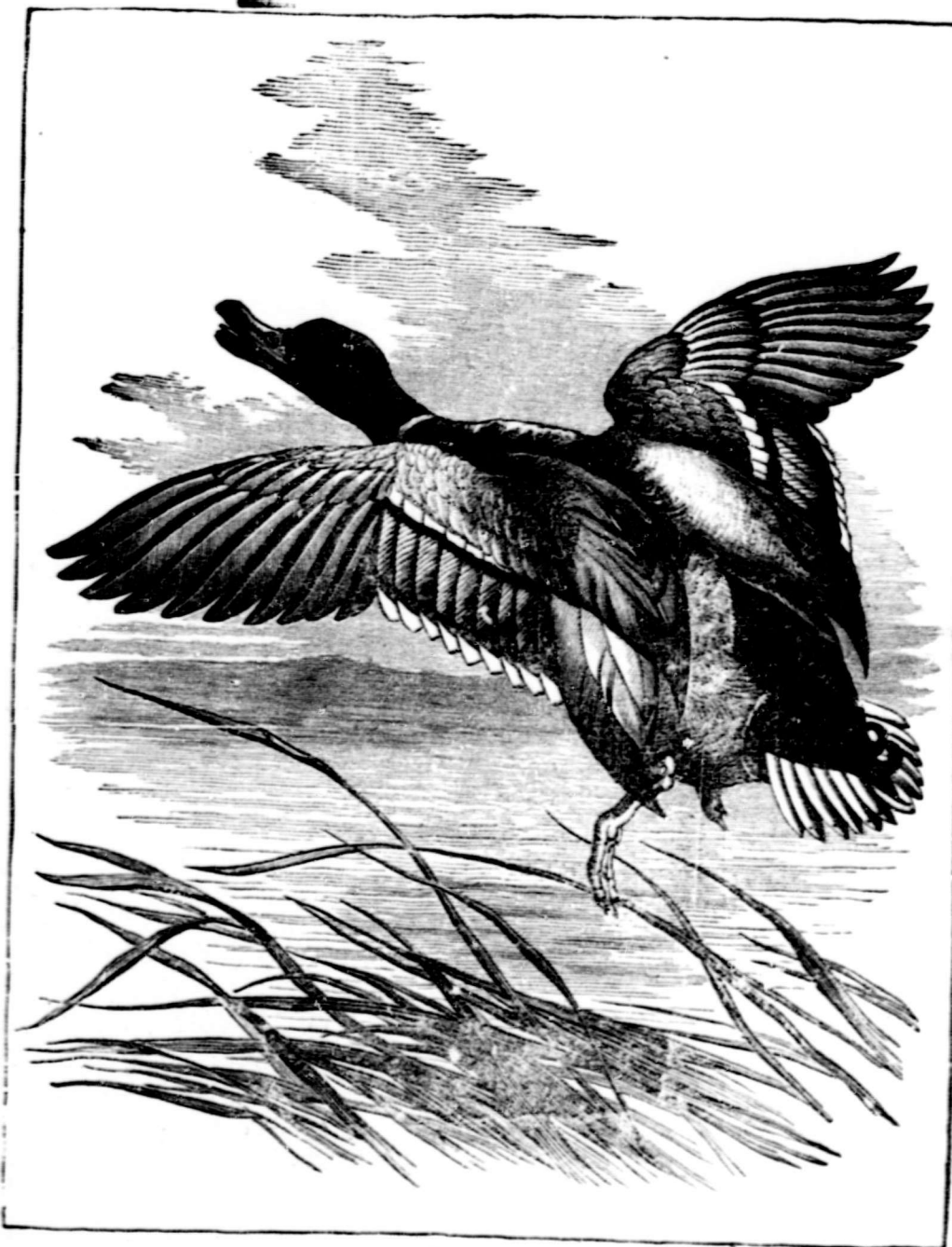
white line which encircles the neck, the brownish carmine of the chest, the gold and blue and crimson of the wings, the clear, flashing transparency of the

colouring, that it seems to have been laid on with a fine brush. The head is of emerald, streaked with chestnut; the wings of the freshest green, and the back is finely pencilled.

These ducks are all very much sought after for their tender, juicy flesh; but none are quite equal to the canvas-back. This delightful but rather stupid duck begins to arrive from the north early in October, and it always comes in great flocks and is slaughtered in countless numbers. It dearly loves the wild celery, for which it has to dive, as the root—the only part it cares for—grows under water; and the widgeon, another duck that likes celery, is sure to be the companion of the canvas-back.

This widgeon has been described as a “thorough rascal,” getting his living by stealing from others. He cannot dive as his companion can; but he is quite as fond of celery, so he waits patiently until his victim disappears in quest of food. “A violent commotion now goes on under the water. It is the struggle of the duck with the plant. Finally, the luckless canvas-back emerges, blinded

momentarily by the water. The widgeon ‘gibbles’ quickly forward, snatches the morsel, and is off ere the dupe has got the water out of his eyes.”



A WILD DUCK.

eye—are all beautiful features.” The blue-winged teal and the green-winged teal are both beautiful birds. The latter has such soft, beautiful shaded