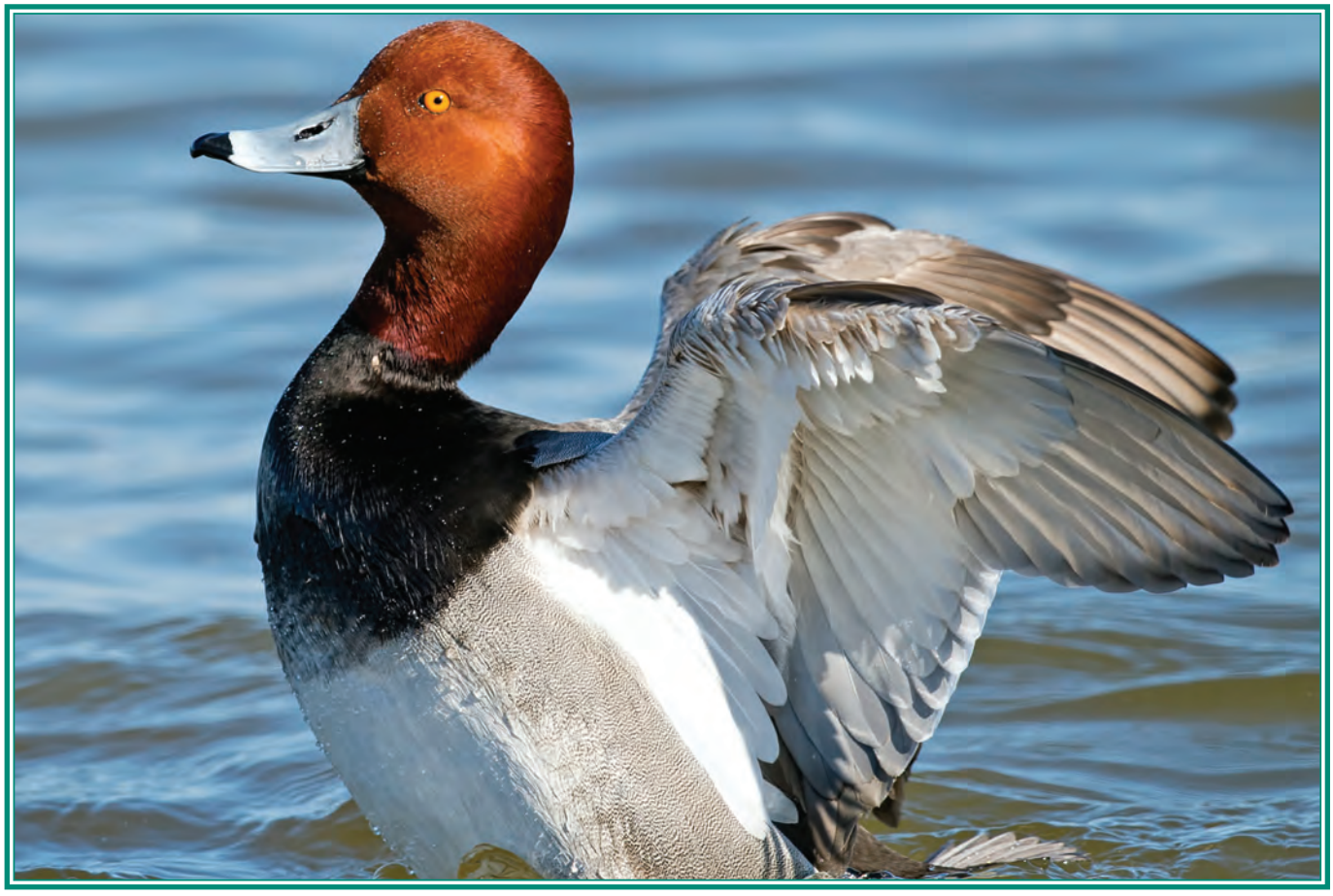
2018 Bird of the Year

Redhead Duck

Aythya americana



The Redhead is a duck that you may not be used to seeing in New Jersey. This duck is a member of the diving duck group and does most of its feeding by diving to the bottom of a lake or bay using its large feet. They primarily feed on snails, small clams and mussels, and aquatic vegetation. Redheads are not seen in very large numbers in most areas of New Jersey and are often seen mixed in with other larger flocks of diving ducks. The male (drake) redhead has a bold copper colored head, a black breast and tail, with gray sides and a gray back. The female (hen) is an overall light brown color with the sides being lighter than the back and breast. Both drake and hen redheads have a pale blue bill with a black tip. A thin white line separates the blue and the black. Redhead decoys were commonly made be carvers from all regions of Barnegat bay. Redheads were fairly common in the upper reaches of Barnegat bay before the opening of the Point Pleasant Canal in 1925. The canal transformed the upper bay from a non-tidal freshwater wetland to a tidal brackish marsh. Carvers either repainted their redhead decoys to emulate another species or just stopped making them altogether. Redhead numbers have remained fairly stable over time and they are a prized duck to New Jersey hunters.