

Labrador Duck Reading Comprehension

Name _____

The Labrador duck, sometimes known as the pied duck or sand shoal duck, was a species of sea duck that went extinct in the 1800s. It was the first North American bird species to go extinct; the last duck was seen in New York in the 1870s. The duck was rare even before it went extinct, and because of this, we have little information about the duck and why it may have disappeared.

Male Labrador ducks were black and white with white wings, and females were mostly gray. The ducks' bills were almost as long as their heads, and they had a refined beak shape—a wide, flat tip—that was tailored for a strict diet of mollusks. The Labrador duck was unique among North American ducks in that its breeding range was confined to the North Atlantic regions of Canada, although it wintered as far south as New York and New Jersey. No other North American duck breeds exclusively in this area, as all others that breed in the North Atlantic breed in other locales as well. Having a narrow breeding and wintering ranges likely made the Labrador duck more vulnerable to changes in its habitat than other ducks.

There are various theories for why these sea ducks may have gone extinct. While they were killed and sold in New York and Baltimore markets for their meat, they were poorly regarded for taste. Overhunting alone cannot explain the ducks' extinction, but overharvest of the birds and their eggs in breeding grounds might have been a contributing factor. They were also hunted for feathers. In addition, the birds may have struggled to find food in the winter; mussel and shellfish populations declined as a result of human population growth on the coast, leading to less food for the ducks during the winter months.

Fifty-five old specimens of the Labrador duck are preserved today in museums around the world. Even though our information about the species is incomplete, the extinction of this beautiful duck can serve as a reminder of how delicate our ecosystems are.

1. Which best describes the Labrador duck?

- A duck that was once common but became extinct because of overhunting
- A duck that was never common but became extinct for various reasons
- A duck that was once common but became extinct for various reasons
- A duck that was never common but became extinct because of overhunting

- 2. Where would you be least likely to see a Labrador duck when it existed?**
- a. In the ocean
 - b. In the North Atlantic
 - c. In the Pacific Ocean
 - d. New York
- 3. What is not explained in the passage?**
- a. What was the effect of the extinction of the Labrador duck?
 - b. How did the Labrador Duck differ from other ducks?
 - c. What are some theories behind the extinction of the Labrador duck?
 - d. How may have a narrow breeding range affected the Labrador duck?
- 4. Which of the following represented an adaptation discussed in this passage?**
- a. The bill of the Labrador duck
 - b. The coloring of the Labrador duck
 - c. The breeding range of the Labrador duck
 - d. The feathers of the Labrador duck
- 5. According to the author, what was the major difference between male and female Labrador ducks?**
- a. coloration
 - b. size
 - c. bill shape
 - d. wintering range
- 6. What could be a title for the third paragraph?**
- a. The Effect of Hunting on the Labrador Duck
 - b. The Labrador Duck: The Story of a North American Bird
 - c. A Complete History of the Labrador Duck
 - d. The Mystery of a Lost Species: What Happened to the Labrador Duck?
- 7. Which of the following does not qualify as a cause and effect relationship?**
- a. As a result of overhunting, Labrador duck populations declined
 - b. As a result of the narrow breeding and wintering range of the Labrador duck, the mollusks that it preyed upon likely became scarce
 - c. As a result of human population growth, Labrador duck populations declined
 - d. As a result of the harvest of its eggs, Labrador duck populations declined