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# Muscovy Ducks foraging on garbage directly from rubbish bins

January 2025



On 24th January 2024, we observed eight domestic-type Muscovy Ducks *Cairina moschata* and one domestic-type Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* or Muscovy Duck x Mallard hybrid in the vicinity of rubbish bins at Ponta do Sol, Madeira, Portugal, where a free-flying population of the species exists. Two birds were foraging on leftover vegetables, taken from within the bin (plate

40).



**16.** Two Muscovy Ducks *Cairina moschata* feeding from a rubbish bin, Ponta do Sol, Madeira, Portugal, January 2024.

Although such scavenging behaviour is common in many bird species, such as gulls and sparrows, it appears to be rare in wildfowl. Eitniear *et al.* (2020) describe Muscovy Duck as ‘an opportunistic consumer’ but, although birds in captivity readily feed on discarded food and scraps, there appears to be – perhaps surprisingly – no record of free-flying birds exploiting food sources such as those noted here.

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## References

Eitniew, J. C., Bribiesca-Formisano, R., Rodríguez-Flores, C. I., Soberanes-González, C. A., & Arizmendi, M. d. C. 2020. Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata*), v.1.0. In: Schulenberg, T. S. (ed.), *Birds of the World*. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca.

**Editorial comment** Although the (seemingly fairly large) free-flying population of Muscovy Ducks in Madeira is yet to attain naturalised status, it was felt that this note was worthy of inclusion, since observations of free-flying populations of domesticated species often go ignored – despite the fact that many of these populations go on, in time, to establish feral populations.

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