

Summer Migration of a Duck Couple from Graz to Rovinj: A Vacation from Stadtpark Attractions

Quacky McFluff,
Waddles Feathersworth

Abstract: This study examines the seasonal migration of a duck couple, Mr. and Mrs. Mallard, from Graz's Stadtpark to Rovinj. Utilizing a combination of observations, interviews, GPS tracking, and photographic documentation, this paper aims to understand their travel behavior, challenges encountered, and overall experiences during their vacation. The findings reveal not only their migratory path but also the benefits and adventures of their temporary escape from the bustling life of being park attractions.

Introduction:

Urban ducks, particularly those residing in popular city parks, have adapted remarkably well to their human-saturated environments. However, the idea that these ducks might seek vacation similar to their human counterparts has seldom been explored. This paper investigates the migration of Mr. and Mrs. Mallard, two well-known ducks from Graz's Stadtpark, who ventured on an improbable journey to Rovinj. Known for their social antics and graceful swims that entertain park visitors, this couple showcases a lesser-known side of urban wildlife behavior—the desire for a vacation.



The duck couple arriving at Rovinj's waterfront, with colorful Mediterranean buildings and boats docked at the marina

Methods:

This study employed a multi-faceted approach to thoroughly document and understand the migration of the duck couple.

1. Observation:

- Regular visual monitoring of Mr. and Mrs. Mallard over two months preceding their departure.
- Behavioral logs noting their daily routines, feeding patterns, and interactions with other park residents and visitors.

2. Interview:

- Structured quacking interviews conducted using a duck translator device, aiming to capture their motivations, expectations, and reflections on past migratory experiences.

3. GPS Tracking:

- Lightweight, anatomically designed GPS devices were securely attached to the back feathers of both ducks. Data collected helped map their real-time movements and migratory patterns.

4. Photographic Documentation:

- Photographs were taken throughout the duck couple's migration.

5. Behavioral Analysis:

- Comparative analysis of pre-departure, en route, and post-arrival behavior to understand how the vacation impacted their overall wellbeing and social dynamics.

Results:

Departure:

- **Date:** Mr. and Mrs. Mallard departed Stadtpark on June 15, 2024.
- **Behavioral Changes:** Increased preening and social visits with other ducks leading up to the departure date, possibly indicating a form of social farewell.

Route:

- **Path:** The couple followed a southwesterly trajectory through Slovenia, making brief stopovers at scenic and resource-rich water bodies including Lake Bled and the Drava River.

Challenges:

- **Weather:** Encountered sudden rainstorms in the Slovenian alps, necessitating improvised shelters.
- **Urban Obstacles:** Navigated busy roads and urban sprawls, notably a hectic encounter with local traffic near Ljubljana.
- **Predatorial Encounters:** A suspenseful face-off with a curious but ultimately non-threatening fox.

Arrival:



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- **Date:** June 18, 2024.
- **Behavioral Observations:** Immediate engagement in foraging, exploration, and interaction with local Rovinj ducks. Noticeable relaxation and an uptick in playful behavior.

Activities:

- **Foraging:** Exploration of local cuisine such as crustaceans and unique aquatic plants.
- **Socializing:** Integration with native duck populations, exchanging quacking dialects, and partaking in communal swims.
- **Cultural Immersion:** Attending local duck festivals and observing human beach-goers with great curiosity.

Discussion:

The migration exemplifies Mr. and Mrs. Mallard's intrinsic drive for exploration and leisure, which parallels the human need for vacation. Such behavioral tendencies highlight the adaptability and cognitive complexities of urban-dwelling ducks. The route data revealed instinctive navigation skills, while encounters with urban and natural challenges tested their resilience. Social engagements with Rovinj ducks and participation in local duck activities underscored a successful cultural immersion.

Conclusion:

Mr. and Mrs. Mallard's adventurous endeavor from Graz to Rovinj offers enlightening insights into urban duck behavior, particularly concerning spontaneous travel and recreational activities. This study contributes to a broader understanding of how such migratory behavior may benefit urban ducks' wellbeing, promoting greater focus on enhancing leisure opportunities within urban wildlife management strategies.

References:

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Disclosure:

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.