

# The Duck Pond

Book 4



An updated reprint of

‘Nature Knowledge The Newton Readers Book 1’

**Reading Made Simple**

The Newton Readers Book 1 (Published by Blackie and Son Ltd. in the 1800's) was an early reader many years ago, which imparted nature knowledge to children as they learned to read. It must be one of the greatest advantages of learning to read, that the world of knowledge is opened to the young mind, which is ready to absorb all manner of fascinating facts, so taught in an interesting manner. Few copies of this book remain in existence. I can find no record of the subsequent books.

In order to preserve the book for future generations, I have reprinted this first book in sections to make it more accessible for the early reader, and given it a more updated feel with a colour frontage while keeping the original line drawings alongside the text. I have modified the text only slightly where it was necessary, due to the age of the original publication, whilst by no means detracting from its charm. I have not added more pictures to the text as I believe that children should be taught to focus on the words for meaning, and to avoid seeing all literature as entertainment.

You will find that the stories depict the age in which they were written and as such also impart historical knowledge to the reader, which the wise parent/teacher can use profitably

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## How to help your student with harder words in the text.

There are a few words, that the early phonic reader may not yet have encountered. I explain below how to approach them. Teacher/parent - read this page first yourself so that you are equipped to help. If you know that your student cannot sound any words in the book, then simply supply them to keep the sense of the passage. Most of these harder words do belong to a phonic family, but you don't want to spoil the flow by using them as a teaching point while they are reading the text. If you feel it is appropriate, then you may use the notes below to draw the student's attention to a few.

### Chapter one: THE DUCK POND

**water** Just supply the word

**busy** Just supply the word

## THE DUCK POND

1. Jack took Dick to see the ducks in the farm-yard. Some were swimming in a large pond, and every now and then Dick saw them push their heads under the water.

2. Some were in the mud at the sides of the pond, and were picking something out of it with their bills. Some, he saw, were busy cleaning their pretty white feathers.

3. “Do the ducks fly away?” asked Dick.

“These ducks cannot fly,” said Jack.

“Their wings are not strong enough to lift their heavy bodies. But wild ducks can fly.”

4. “ They swim well, don’t they?” said Dick.

“Yes, they can swim. Hens could not swim like that, for they have no skin between their toes as ducks have. My brother Percy told me that.”

5. “Oh, there is a duck standing on its head in the water!” said Dick. I can see nothing but its short tail and feet.”



6. “It is getting some duck food,” said Jack.

Ducks find a great many worms, and weeds and other things in the mud at the bottom.”



“Now it’s up again,” said Dick. “But doesn’t it get wet?”

7. “Ducks have a little oil on the feathers,” said Jack, “and water will not stick to anything that is oily.”

“Then don’t ducks get wet when it rains?”  
asked Dick.

8. “No, the rain-drops run off their backs and do not wet them; but *hens* don’t like water, because it sticks to their feathers, and makes them wet and cold.”

## MORE ABOUT THE DUCKS

1. Jack now ran into the house to fetch a piece of bread for the ducks. When he came back, the ducks saw what he had in his hand. They hurried out of the water, and very soon all of them were round the boys.

2. Jack threw some crumbs to them, to let Dick see them feed.

“How quickly they gobble it up!” said Dick.

“They don’t seem to chew their food as we do.”

3. “No, Dick; they do not chew it, for they have no teeth. But they have something just as good.”

“What is that?” asked Dick.

4. “They have a gizzard,” replied Jack, “which is a kind of bag in which the food is ground between two hard pads of flesh.”

5. “But are the pads hard enough to grind the dry crusts they are eating?” asked Dick.

6. “Well,” said Jack; “it is not only the hard



flesh that grinds the food. The food gets wet and becomes softer before it gets to the gizzard. The ducks also swallow sand with their food, and that helps to grind up the hard pieces.”

7. The two boys then began to walk

round the pond. Dick picked up a

fine white feather from the ground.

“How light it is!” he said.

8. “Yes,” said Jack. “One part of the stalk is hollow; the other part is not, but is filled with some stuff which is as light as cork. That large feather came out of a duck’s wing.”

“Was it pulled out?” asked Dick.

A White Duck’s  
Feather.



9. “No,” said Jack, “it fell out. Ducks, as well as other birds, cast off their feathers every year, and get new ones.”

10. He showed Dick that the feathers were wide and flat, so that when the duck’s wings were closed, they would take up very little room.

11. He then took up one of the ducks, and opened its wing, to show his friends how large it was when the feathers were spread out.

12. And he told him to feel the very soft feathers, called “down”, on the breasts of the bird. Dick did so, and found that the breast feathers had no hard stalks.

## The Duck Pond

### Can you remember?

Tell me about ducks and flying.

Ducks cannot fly, because their wings are not strong enough to lift their heavy bodies.

Tell me about ducks and swimming.

Ducks have skin between their toes, so they can swim well.

Why do ducks dive?

Ducks dive to pick up worms and weeds, and other things on which they feed, from the mud at the bottom and sides of the pond.

Do ducks like getting wet?

Duck's feathers do not get wet, because they have a little oil on them.

## **More About Ducks**

### **Can you remember?**

**Tell me about duck's teeth.**

Ducks have no teeth, so they gobble up their food whole; they cannot chew it.

**Tell me about the duck's gizzard.**

Ducks have a gizzard. The gizzard is a kind of bag in which the food is ground between two large pads.

**Tell me about ducks feathers.**

The duck's feathers are very light. Part of the stalk of the feather is hollow, and part is filled with light stuff.

**Tell me about the wing feathers.**

The wing-feathers of the duck are wide and flat, so that when they spread the wings are a good size, and when closed they take up little room.

**Tell me about the breast feathers.**

The breast-feathers are very soft. They have no hard stalks, and are called 'down'.

