

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

Though the Blue-winged Teal is regular in San Diego County in small numbers, at least from October to April, it is scarce enough that the species can never be expected—except at Famosa Slough and the San Diego River flood-control channel. The Blue-winged is very closely related to the Cinnamon Teal, and in San Diego the Blue-winged is almost always seen in the company of the Cinnamon.

Winter: Because the Blue-winged Teal's spring migration apparently starts in late January, the map shows for wintering only locations where the species was noted 1 December–20 January; later records are mapped as migrants.

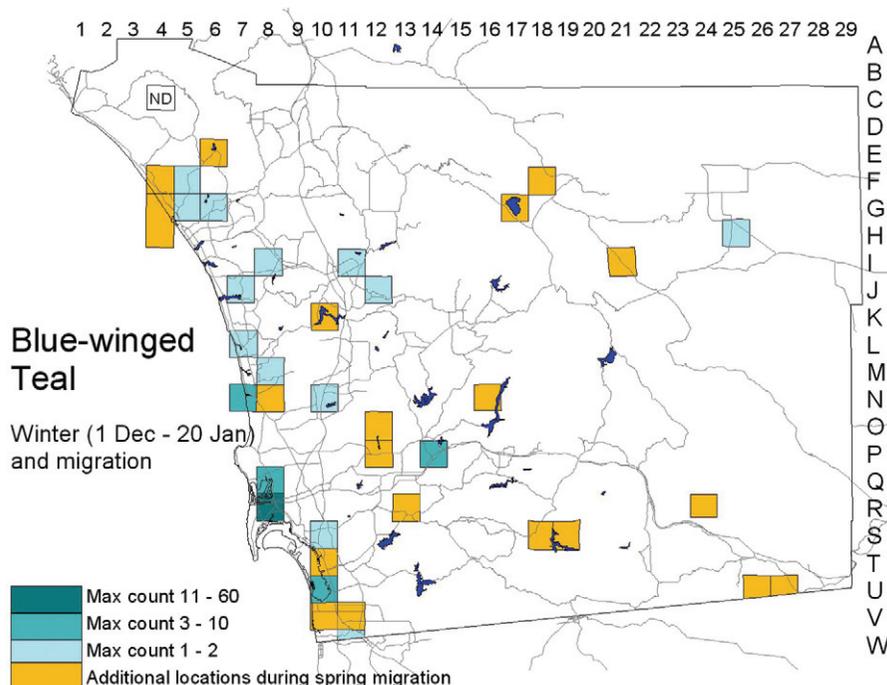
The San Diego River flood-control channel and nearby Famosa Slough (R8) are by far the primary spots for wintering Blue-winged Teals in San Diego County. Typical numbers at both places are from five to ten, but up to 60



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

have been noted in the flood-control channel (9 January 2001, R. E. Webster, NAB 55:227, 2001), and up to 20 have been noted at Famosa Slough (1 and 6 January 2000, J. A. Peugh). Occasionally the birds extend to nearby Mission Bay (Q8; six on 16 January 2000, J. C. Worley).

Elsewhere wintering Blue-winged Teals are rather rare; at other sites counts during the atlas period did not exceed four. Their locations include south San Diego Bay, the coastal lagoons, and lakes and ponds scattered through the coastal lowland. Though we did not encounter any wintering at higher elevations from 1997 to 2002, there are two records each of two individuals on Lake Henshaw Christmas bird counts, 23 December 1985 and 31 December 1989. There are also three winter records from the Borrego Valley: one at the Borrego sewage ponds (H25) 18 January 1993 (A. G. Morley), one on the Anza-Borrego



Christmas bird count 20 December 1987, and two on the count (on ponds at Ram's Hill, H25) 21 December 1997 (R. Halford)

Migration: Spring migration of the Blue-winged Teal follows closely behind that of the Cinnamon Teal. The birds are probably on the move by late January (four at Crestwood Ranch, R24, 22 January 2000, A. P. and T. E. Keenan, J. S. Larson), certainly by early February (14 on Barrett Lake, S18/S19, 5 February 2000, R. and S. L. Breisch). During the atlas period we did not find the Blue-winged Teal noticeably more numerous in spring migration than in winter, but we did find migrants occasionally at ponds isolated in dry regions such as Lake Domingo (U26; two on 9 February 2000, F. L. Unmack) and San Felipe Valley (I21; five on 26 April 1999, J. O. Zimmer). Wintering birds or migrants evidently remain to late April (nine in the San Diego River flood-control channel 27 April 1999, M. B. Stowe).

The Blue-winged Teal's fall migration is poorly known because of the species' close similarity to the Cinnamon Teal when in eclipse plumage. But fall migrants evidently begin returning as early as 23 July (Unitt 1984).

Breeding distribution: The Blue-winged Teal has never been confirmed breeding in San Diego County, though it has been as near as Bolsa Chica, Orange County (Hamilton and Willick 1996). Such breeding is quite possible in San Diego County, however, as the species remains occasionally through the summer. From 1997 to 2001 we noted the Blue-winged Teal seven times from May through early July. All these birds were along or near the coast, except for one at Swan Lake (F18) 24 June 2000 (C. G. Edwards). Only one of these records, however, is of more than one individual (two at Los Peñasquitos Lagoon 2 June 2001, K. Estey).

Conservation: By the end of the 20th century the number of Blue-winged Teals wintering in San Diego County had increased over that in the 1970s. The change equalized the formerly noticeable difference between the species' status in winter and in spring migration.

Taxonomy: The Blue-winged hybridizes occasionally with the Cinnamon Teal, and such hybrids have been noted in San Diego County during spring migration.