

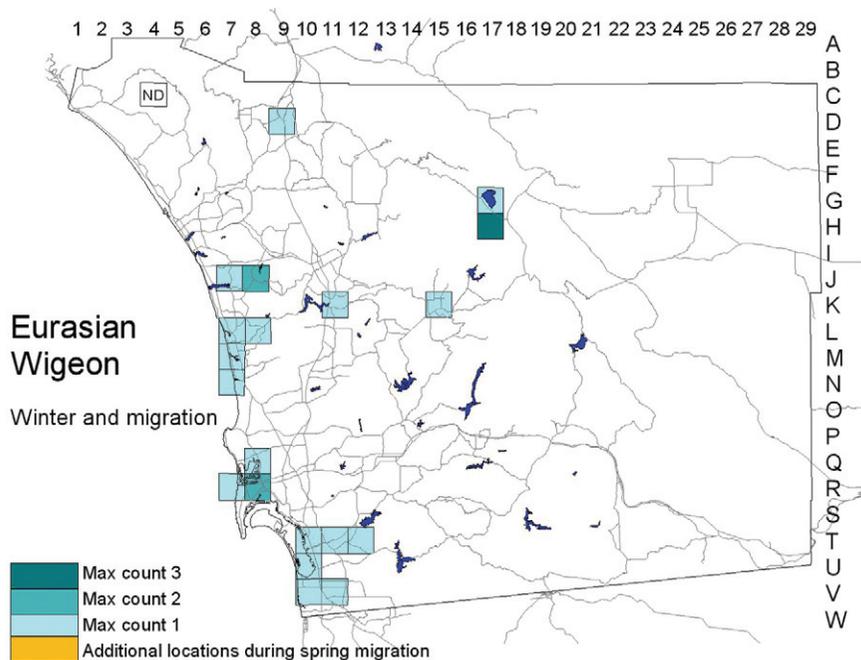
Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Of the birds with a primarily Eurasian distribution that reach southern California, the Eurasian Wigeon is the most frequent. In San Diego County several are found each winter, always with flocks of American Wigeons.

Winter: The Eurasian Wigeon may turn up wherever the American Wigeon flocks in large numbers. Locations for the species are well scattered over the coastal slope, both along the coast itself and well inland. Usually only a single Eurasian Wigeon is noted among a flock of Americans, but there are many records of two individuals together and a few of three, as in the Tijuana River valley 11 March 1989 (J. O'Brien), at Mesa Grande (H17)



Photo by Kenneth W. Fink



27 December 1999 (K. L. Weaver), and at Lake Henshaw (G17) in 1983, 1985, and 1986 (R. Higson, AB 27:337, 1983).

The Eurasian Wigeon is now an annual visitor to San Diego County. During the five-year atlas period the number found each winter ranged from four in 2001–02 to nine in 1999–2000. It is likely that many of the birds return to the same wintering site year after year. Such returnees presumably accounted for the repeated observations along San Marcos Creek near Rancho Santa Fe Road (J8; up to two 26–28 December 1999, W. E. Haas, E. C. Hall), in the San Diego River flood-control channel (R7/R8; often two individuals), and the Sweetwater River flood-control

channel (T10/T11; one on four consecutive San Diego Christmas bird counts).

Migration: November through March is the main season for the Eurasian Wigeon in San Diego County. A somewhat increased frequency of sightings in February and March may reflect spring migration. Extreme dates are 29 September (1985, San Elijo Lagoon, L7, J. L. Coatsworth, AB 40:158, 1986) and 29 April (1996, Baticuitos Lagoon, J7, P. A. Ginsburg, NASFN 50:332, 1996).

Conservation: By the turn of the millennium the Eurasian Wigeon was being found considerably more often than in the 1960s and 1970s. It is unclear whether this apparent

change is the result of more observers looking in more places or of the Eurasian Wigeon's sharing in the increase of the American Wigeon.

Taxonomy: The Eurasian Wigeon hybridizes with the American regularly. California may be a likely area for such hybrids to be seen if they result from Eurasian Wigeons straying into the breeding range of the American, crossing with Americans, then migrating south with flocks of Americans along the Pacific coast. Sightings of hybrids in San Diego County are from Lake Henshaw 24 February 1985 (G. McCaskie, AB 39:210, 1985) and south San Diego Bay 10 December 1988 and 5 December 1992 (G. McCaskie, AB 43:365, 1989; 47:300, 1993).