

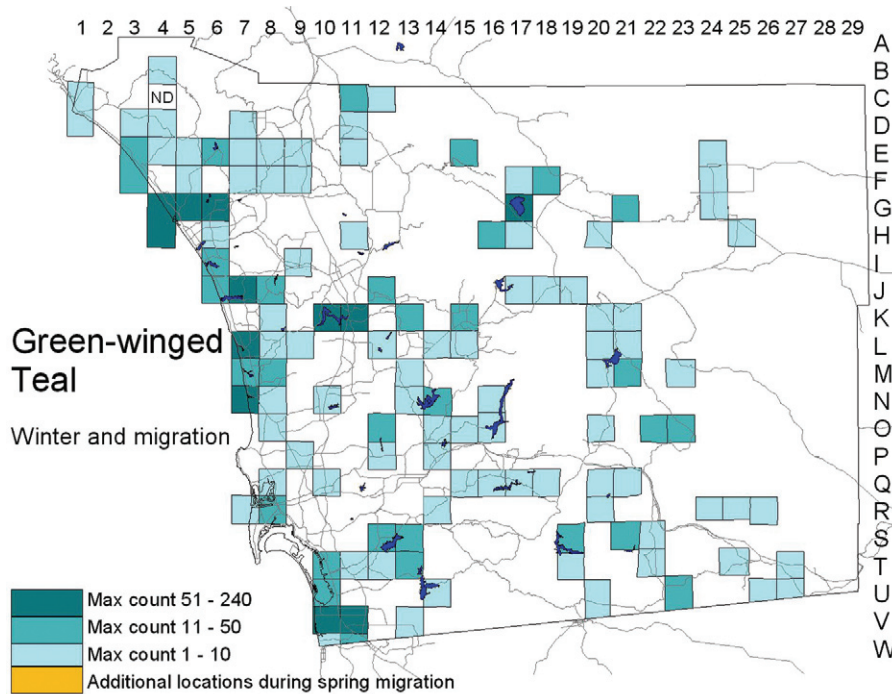
Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca*

California's smallest duck, the Green-winged Teal is a winter visitor to San Diego County. It is less numerous than most other dabbling ducks but still locally common. It shares both coastal wetlands and inland lakes with the other ducks, favoring shallow fresh and brackish water over salt. There are a few records of stragglers remaining through the summer but only one old record of nesting.

Winter: The Green-winged Teal is widely distributed in San Diego County but at most sites the numbers are rather small. Flocks seldom number over 50 individuals. Along the coast, the species' primary sites are the Santa Margarita River estuary (G4; up to 200 on 15 January 2001, P. A. Ginsburg), Batiquitos Lagoon (J7; up to 115



Photo by Anthony Mercieca



M23, 26 February 2000, E. C. Hall; one along Vallecito Creek between Mason and Vallecito valleys, M24, 27 February 1988, Massey and Evans 1994). Most Green-winged Teals depart in March and early April. From 1973 to 1983 King et al. (1987) found the species regularly into early May, but from 1997 to 2002 our only sighting later than 16 April was of one at Los Peñasquitos Lagoon 3 May 1998 (D. K. Adams, K. Estey).

Breeding distribution: King et al. (1987) noted the Green-winged Teal at San Elijo Lagoon on four occasions in June or July 1973–83, with a maximum of five individuals on 3 July 1983. During the atlas period we found no summering individuals. J. B. Dixon's report of

on 6 February 1998, C. C. Gorman), San Elijo Lagoon (L7; up to 170 on 26 December 1999, R. T. Patton), and Los Peñasquitos Lagoon (N7; up to 102 on 3 February 2002, S. E. Smith). Important freshwater sites in the coastal lowland are Lake Hodges (K10/K11; up to 240 on 26 December 1999, E. C. Hall) and the pond along Dairy Mart Road in the Tijuana River valley (V11; up to 150 on 20 December 1997, G. McCaskie).

Farther inland the Green-winged Teal is irregular, as attested by its great variation on Escondido and Lake Henshaw Christmas bird counts. During the atlas period our highest numbers in the foothills and mountains were 110 at Lake Henshaw (G17) 29 December 1997 (J. O. Zimmer), 50 in the southeast corner of the Lake Cuyamaca basin (M21) 11 February 1998 (P. D. Jorgensen), and 40 at Barrett Lake (S19) 29 December 2000 (R. and S. L. Breisch).

In the Anza–Borrego Desert the Green-winged Teal is rare but more frequent than the Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, or Cinnamon Teal. Most records are from ponds in the Borrego Valley, with up to 10 at the Roadrunner Club (F24) 28 February 1999 (P. D. Jorgensen) and 12 at the Borrego sewage ponds (H25) 9 February 1993 (A. G. Morley).

At any one site in San Diego County the numbers of Green-winged Teals wintering vary much from year to year. But comparison of the results of San Diego County's Christmas bird counts suggests little if any correlation among the counts.

Migration: The Green-winged Teal begins arriving in mid August but does not reach full abundance until December (Unitt 1984, King et al. 1987). Sightings at desert oases in the latter half of February show that spring migration begins by then (25 at Lower Willows, D23, 18 February 1982, P. D. Jorgensen; one at Butterfield Ranch,

a “nest containing 11 pipped eggs” in the San Luis Rey River valley 18 May 1931 (Willett 1933) is still the only record of the Green-winged Teal nesting in California south of Kern County.

Conservation: Christmas bird count results suggest that in San Diego County the Green-winged Teal could be going into decline. From 1975 to 1984 the species' average on the Oceanside count was 427, but from 1997 to 2002 it was 137. The Rancho Santa Fe count averaged 502 from 1981 to 1990 but 253 from 1997 to 2002. King et al. (1987) recorded a winter average of 220 on their monthly surveys of San Elijo Lagoon 1973–83, but our maximum count there during the atlas period was only 170. Over the species' range as a whole, however, the Green-winged Teal increased through the second half of the 20th century (Johnson 1995).

Taxonomy: *Anas c. carolinensis* Gmelin, 1789, is the subspecies of the Green-winged Teal resident in North America. The nominate subspecies of the Old World, *A. c. crecca* Linnaeus, 1758, also reaches California as a rare visitor, being more frequent farther north. There are nine records from San Diego County, from Bonita (T11; 29 January–24 February 1962, AFN 16:364, 1962), San Elijo Lagoon (18–24 March 1973, AB 27:662, 1973), Batiquitos Lagoon (12 December 1973, AB 28:692, 1974), Lake Cuyamaca (M20; 11 March 1979 and 16 March 1980, AB 33:312, 1979 and 34:306, 1980), Lake Henshaw (5–12 February 1982, R. Higson, AB 36:330, 1982), and the San Diego River mouth (4 February–12 March 1989, G. McCaskie, AB 43:365, 1989; 17–19 February 1990, J. O'Brien, AB 44:328, 1990; 13 January–5 March 2001, P. E. Lehman, NAB 55:227, 2001). Also, an apparent hybrid *crecca* × *carolinensis* was at Bonita 4 January–1 February 1963 (AFN 17:358, 1963); it showed both the vertical white stripe of *carolinensis* and the horizontal white stripe of *crecca*.