

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

An Old World relative of the Ring-necked Ducks and scaups, the Tufted Duck is a rare annual winter visitor to the Pacific coast of North America. Few of these birds make it as far south as southern California. In San Diego County there are only three records of the Tufted Duck, the southernmost in the New World, plus three of hybrids with scaups.

Winter: San Diego County's pure Tufted Ducks were a female in south San Diego Bay (V10) 18 February 1985 (R. E. Webster, Roberson 1993), a male at Miramar Lake (N10) 13 January–9 February 1992 (P. A. Ginsburg, Patten et al. 1995b), and a male at Famosa Slough (R8) 5 February–1 March 1998 (B. R. Zimmer, FN 52:256, 1998).

Apparent hybrid Tufted Ducks × scaups were at San Elijo Lagoon (L7) 20 February–22 March 1987 (S. Ranney-Gallagher, King et al. 1987) and 18–24 February 1996 (E. L. Mills, NASFN 50:222, 1996) and at the San Luis Rey River mouth (H5) 16–29 February 1992 (T. Clawson, Patten et al. 1995b).



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Taxonomy: The frequency of Tufted Duck × scaup hybrids suggests that some Tufted Ducks straying across the Bering Sea to Alaska mate with their closest available relatives, in lack of mates of their own kind.