

Harbor Island, Naturally

MARCH 2010

A PERSONAL PROJECT OF JOHN ALBERT

VOL. 2, ISSUE 5



BLUE WINGED TEAL

THE LARGEST OF THE TEAL FAMILY

Blue Winged Teal (*Anas discors*) are winter visitors in the low country. They are the earliest duck to arrive in South Carolina and the last to depart. The male has a white crescent between its bill and eye. The rest of the body is brown on the upper portion, a cinnamon color with black dots. The female is a drab obscure bird. Both sexes have the blue wing patch which is best seen when they are in flight.

They favor fresh water ponds where they feed on grain and aquatic plants. Aquatic invertebrates, mainly snails and insects are also an important part of their diet. Blue Wings feed by tipping-up.

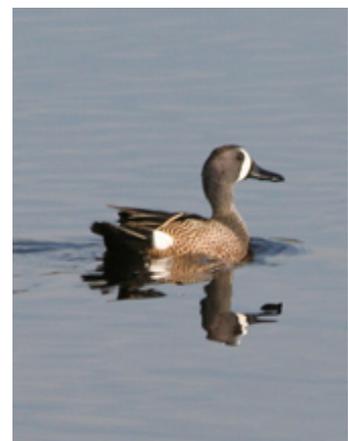
These teal nest in the prairie potholes of the Northern Plains. They lay 8 to 10 creamy white eggs in nests made of marsh grasses and cattails that are lined with down. The male deserts the female late in the incubation period.

Nests are often parasitized by other duck species. Parasitizing in birds consists of laying eggs in each others' nests. Ducks are especially vulnerable to this activity. Teal often cannot tell when this has happened and so may rear the offspring of other teal or ducks. In this case the Redhead Duck is the most likely culprit.



Female Blue Wing Teal

Parasitism generally means more work for the host female and a lower chance that her brood will survive. Blue Wings also frequently inter breed with Cinnamon Teal.



Male Blue Winged Teal

PHOTOS BY JOHN ALBERT

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South Carolina Bird Life, Alexander Sprunt, & E. Chamberlain, USC Press Columbia S.C. 1949.
The Birder's Handbook, Paul Ehrlich, David Dobkin & Darryl Wheye, Simon & Schuster, NY, 1988.