

Possible Blue-winged X Cinnamon Teal Hybrid In Ohio In 1974

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On 10 April, 1974 between 5:00 P.M. and 6:30 P.M. the authors, Dr. Mary A. Trautman, James E. Stahl, and Michael J. Flynn observed a flock of eight blue-winged teals at Thoreau Lake in Walden Wildlife Refuge, Blendon Woods Metropolitan Park, Franklin County, Ohio. Conditions for observations were optimum. The sun, in a cloudless sky and behind us, was shining directly upon the teal which were less than 200 feet distant. We were in a well concealed observation shelter or hide containing rests for our 20x telescopes and 9x field glasses. Of the eight teals, three were male and four female Blue-winged Teals (Anas discors), the remaining duck had the superficial appearance of a male Cinnamon Teal (Anas cyanoptera). As the latter bird stood on a log with its head and breast facing us it gave every indication of being a typical Cinnamon Teal. The breast and head were a deep cinnamon, except for the crown, sides of head, and hind neck which were more dusky. The iris of the eye was a deep orange-red, not hazel-brown as in the male Blue-wings with which it associated. The bill was bluish black and appeared to be slightly larger than in all except one of the three Blue-wings. The tarsi were a brilliant yellow-orange, a slightly deeper orange than were the tarsi of the male Blue-wings. Whenever the bird stood or swam at right angles to us, or when the tail was closer to us than was the head, there remained the superficial coloration of a male Cinnamon Teal. However, when it attempted to court a female or displayed aggressive behavior toward a male thereby slightly fluffing the feathers of the head and sides, the middle portions of the feathers became visible. At such times we could see the outline of a whitish crescent before the eye, resembling in size and shape the white crescent on the Blue-wings. This whitish coloration was most pronounced above the eye. As the flank, side and breast feathers ruffled we obtained momentary glimpses of many dark spots beneath the chestnut coloration, similar to those on the male Blue-wings. The coloration of the back appeared to be similar to that of the Blue-wings and we saw no difference in coloration of the tail.

The most pronounced difference and one indicating relationship with the Blue-wing was the squarish white patch on the side of each rump. Such a white patch is absent in a male Cinnamon Teal. Unlike the other Blue-wing Teal characters, this white patch was not modified or reduced in size, shape or whiteness, but was similar to the white flanks of the male Blue-wings.

In communication with Drs. Lester L. Short, Jr. and Jean Delacour we were informed that our description agreed quite closely with captive hybrids of known ancestry, except possibly for the size of the white flanks. Also, that "Curiously enough there are few wild hybrids where the two species meet. But, in confinement they are all too common." (Communication Delacour, 3 May 1974). Although this individual gave every indication that it was a hybrid, the possibility of its being an erythristic individual cannot be ruled out.

We wish to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to Drs. Short and Delacour for their advice and assistance.

Ed. Note: For a further discussion of hybrids between these species and color drawings of five hybrid heads by Sutton see The Wilson Bulletin Vol. 91 No. 3 (1979).