

Probable Hybrids of Cinnamon \times Blue-winged Teal from Southern Alberta¹

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Plumage characteristics of three recent and nine previously reported probable hybrid Cinnamon \times Blue-winged Teal are summarized: males are the rufous color of Cinnamon Teal but retain the white facial crescent and often the white flank patch of the Blue-winged Teal.

Key Words: Alberta, hybrids, Cinnamon Teal, Blue-winged Teal, *Anas cyanoptera*, *Anas discors*.

Until recently most of our knowledge on the occurrence of Cinnamon (*Anas cyanoptera*) \times Blue-winged (*A. discors*) Teal hybridization has come from aviaries. Kortwright (1942; p. 212) states that "... even in captivity crosses between the two species are unknown." Delacour and Mayr (1945), however, state that the two species freely interbreed. Spencer (1953; p. 20) states that "although extremely uncommon among wild Cinnamon Teal, hybrids are by no means unknown." Of the Blue-winged Teal, Delacour (1956; p. 170) remarks that "In captivity they cross too readily with Cinnamon Teal, and when both species are kept on the same pond it is usual to rear a majority of hybrids . . . This is the more surprising that these two closely allied Teal seldom cross in the wild state in the rather narrow areas where they co-exist in North America." He goes on to say that Cinnamon Teal "... persecute the weaker Blue-winged Teal . . ."

In recent years there has been an increasing number of reports of wild Cinnamon \times Blue-winged Teal hybrids; many of these have come from southern Alberta and Saskatchewan (Wedgewood and Wedgewood 1975; Lang 1973; Lahrman 1971). Also there have been reports of male Cinnamon Teal and Blue-winged Teal simultaneously courting a single female of one of the species (Butot 1974; Anderson and Miller 1953).

In the spring of 1974, we observed three ducks which we believe were male hybrids of Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal. One individual was observed on 20 May at 16:55, and another at 17:02 at a slough 0.5 km east of the southeast corner of Eagle Lake, near Namaka, approximately 56 km east-southeast of Calgary, Alberta. The first duck was

alone and swam from view within 2–3 min of being sighted. The second bird was in the company of two normally plumaged male Cinnamon Teal and a female typical of the nearly identically appearing Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal females. The third individual was observed by us on 9 June at 19:45, at Second Vermilion Lake, Banff, Alberta. It was in the company of two normally plumaged male Cinnamon Teal and a female of either teal species.

A search of literature as well as present sightings yields 11 field descriptions of apparently wild Cinnamon \times Blue-winged Teal hybrids. It is not surprising that all individuals have been male as hybrid females would be virtually undistinguishable in the field. We have described the major plumage characteristics in Table 1.

In summary, the plumage of male Cinnamon \times Blue-winged Teal hybrids may be characterized as follows: a body having the rufous coloration of the Cinnamon Teal and the white facial crescent of the Blue-winged Teal; the white flank patch of the latter is often present and the breast is sometimes spotted.

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TABLE 1—Plumage features of male Cinnamon × Blue-winged Teal hybrids

Body coloration	White facial crescent	White flank patch	Breast spotting	Location and source
1. Dark cinnamon	Distinctive	Distinctive		Utah; Wilson and Van den Akker 1948
2. Cinnamon	Snow-white			Colorado; Bent 1923
3. Cinnamon	Distinct	Believed lacking		Utah; Spencer 1953
4. Cinnamon	Prominent			Alberta; Spencer 1953
5. Cinnamon	Clear		Indistinct	California; Anderson and Miller 1953
6. Reddish	Washed out*	Prominent*	Present	Saskatchewan; Lahrman 1971
7. Cinnamon	Faint			Alberta; Lang 1973
8. Rusty red	Small	Light		Saskatchewan; Wedgwood and Wedgwood 1975
9. Cinnamon	Prominent	Prominent		Alberta; this paper
10. Cinnamon	Washed out	Absent		Alberta; this paper
11. Rufous-cinnamon	Washed out	Washed out		Alberta; this paper

*Authors' interpretation from photo.

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Common Garter Snake Predation on Ring-billed Gull Chicks

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A Common Garter Snake was observed eating two freshly hatched Ring-billed Gull chicks.

Key Words: Common Garter Snake, Ring-billed Gull chicks, predation, *Thamnophis sirtalis*, *Larus delawarensis*.

In this note I describe an act of predation upon Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) chicks by a Common Garter Snake, *Thamnophis sirtalis*. The gull colony is on Mugg's Island, Toronto Harbor, Toronto, Ontario. The observation was made from a blind situated in a Ring-billed Gull colony of approximately 6000 pairs. About 50 pairs of Herring Gulls, *L. argentatus*, also nest on the island.

The incident began at 07:35 EST on 25 May 1978 as the snake moved from beneath the platform which supports the blind. The 80-cm reptile moved approxi-

mately 4 m to the edge of a gull nest which contained three chicks. Two chicks were about 48 h old and the third was less than 24 h old. Freshly hatched chicks average 35–45 g. The snake tested one half of an eggshell lying at the nest rim with its tongue, grasped the shell between its jaws, and moved it about 20 cm from the nest. The snake then raised its head approximately 5 cm above the substrate, froze momentarily, and lunged rapidly at a chick, seizing it by the bill. The snake engulfed the chick up to the wings within 4 min and then writhed several times.



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