
Blue-winged Teal

Spatula discors

Class: *Aves*

Order: *Anseriformes*

Family: *Anatidae*

Characteristics: Small, dabbling 16 in, 13 oz duck with 23 inch wingspan. Grayish - blue head with white facial crescent, light brown body with white patch near rear, and a black tail. Female is mottled brown. Both have sky-blue patch of feathers on the wing, a green speculum and yellow legs. Sexually dimorphic with female larger and male more colorful.

Behavior: Male call is a short whistle, female a soft quack. Lives in small groups, or pairs, and is active during the day. Walks well on land and in shallow water using growth of bulrushes and cattails as escape cover. Feeds by dabbling and up-ends to reach submerged vegetation. As a long distance migrant will flock as far as South America being the first duck south in fall and last north in spring.

Reproduction: Female accepts a male by stretching her head outward, lowering it, and pointing toward the male after which they both perform a head pump as if nodding "yes." Female matures after first winter and builds nest, sometimes communally, on dry ground in grassy site near open water where she lays 10-12 eggs incubated in 21-27 days. During incubation male leaves mate for molting cover and becomes flightless for 3-4 weeks. Ducklings walk to water within 12 hours after hatching and fledge in 6-7 weeks.

Diet:

Wild: Vegetative matter, such as grasses, and plant seeds. May include mollusks, crustaceans and aquatic insects.

Zoo: Scratch grain, waterfowl pellets

Conservation: Protected by Migratory Bird Act. Although bag limits have been set and the U.S. and Canada have banned pesticides and other contaminants, the most important negative influence is habitat degradation and loss from wetland draining and conversion to agriculture.

FYI: Predators include humans, snakes, turtles, dogs, crows, squirrels, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, minks, skinks and badgers. Can carry and spread Avian Influenza which can decimate bird populations and be transmitted to humans.



Range & Habitat:

North America migrating to Central and Northern South America- on shorelands, calm waters of marshes, lakes, ponds, pools and shallow streams with dense vegetation.



Lifespan:

Up to 17 years

Special Adaptations:

Hard hook at end of bill for acquiring food, bumps along edges for straining food, and touch receptors at end for filtering food

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

