

**HYBRID BLUE-WINGED TEAL X NORTHERN SHOVELER
MONTEZUMA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE,
SENECA CO., NEW YORK, 9 MAY 2011**

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On the morning of 9 May 2011, we were returning to Ithaca from Rochester and decided to take a quick look at the birds along the Wildlife Drive at Montezuma NWR, Seneca County. We arrived at the visitor center and as we scanned the shallow pool with binoculars we found an odd looking duck with the Northern Shovelers (*Anas clypeata*). It appeared similar to the shovelers in shape and overall coloration, but slightly smaller with a slightly smaller bill (bill similar in shape to a Cinnamon Teal, *Anas cyanoptera*). The most distinctive aspect of the bird was a bold white facial crescent, which recalled a narrow version of that seen on a male Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*). After looking in a scope, we could easily see other characters in common with Blue-winged Teal including brown spotted breast, spotting that continued onto the sides and flanks (which were rufous toned, unlike Blue-winged Teal). We quickly realized this was a hybrid male Blue-winged Teal x Northern Shoveler, a rare hybrid combination which neither of us had seen before. We were able to obtain a series of fairly good photographs that demonstrate why we identified this as a hybrid Blue-winged Teal x Northern Shoveler. Two photos, with detailed discussion of identification included in the captions, are presented as Figures 3 & 4 on pages 242-243 of this issue.

The bird also bears some similarity to Australian Shoveler (*Anas rhynchos*) of Australia and New Zealand, but that species has a much larger bill, heavy markings across the breast, and blue-gray tones to the head.

The entire time we watched the bird, it remained with or near Northern Shovelers. It spent a lot of time actively displaying near a female or aggressively chasing or biting male Northern Shovelers.

OTHER RECORDS OF THIS HYBRID COMBINATION

We are aware of only one other hybrid Northern Shoveler x Blue-winged Teal reported from New York State, a bird photographed at Prospect Park, Kings County (Brooklyn) on 22 January 2010. Initially identified as an Australian Shoveler, photographs on the *City Birder* blog (Jett 2010) allow for confident identification as a hybrid:

<http://citybirder.blogspot.com/2010/01/strange-waterfowl.html>

One of these photographs is reproduced here as Figure 5, on page 243. As with the bird that we photographed, note that the Prospect Park bird has a green head and finer markings on the breast than one would expect in Australian Shoveler (Madge and Burn 1988).

Hybrids between Blue-winged Teal and Northern Shoveler are rare in the wild, but this combination has been documented several other times from North America, mostly in the West. There are also several records of this hybrid combination from Europe (e.g., United Kingdom and Germany), some of which may be the result of wild vagrant Blue-winged Teal hybridizing with native Northern Shoveler. Vagrant Blue-winged Teal often appear with Northern Shoveler in Europe and it may be more likely for vagrants to hybridize in Europe than North America given the small number of prospective mates for Blue-winged Teal. For more information on occurrence outside New York, see references in McCarthy (2006).

LITERATURE CITED

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Figure 3. Blue-winged Teal x Northern Shoveler hybrid, Montezuma NWR, *Seneca*, 19 May 2011, © C. L. Wood. The Blue-winged Teal influences are best appreciated when the bird is head-on. In addition to the obvious white crescent on the face (narrower than in Blue-winged), note the pale brown breast with fine spotting. The head appeared glossy green, similar in color to Northern Shoveler. See pp. 206-207.



Figure 4. Details same as in Fig. 3. Note the extensive cinnamon sides similar to a Northern Shoveler but with small black spotting. The color is richest in the center and paler on top and near the rump. The extensive green in the secondaries and blue upperwing coverts bordered by a bold white bar are very similar to the upperwing of a Northern Shoveler, as is the bold white underwing. The tail appears similar to that of a Blue-winged Teal. Also note the brownish breast with fine black spotting, white neck-ring, and white facial crescent.



Figure 5. Blue-winged Teal x Northern Shoveler hybrid, Prospect Park, *Kings*, 22 Jan 2010, © Rob Jett. Note that this bird also shows a green head and finer markings on the breast than one would expect in Australian Shoveler. See pp. 206-207.