

Presumed hybrid Eurasian Teal x Garganey in Valencia, Spain, in January-February 2014

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From late January to early February 2014, an aberrant teal *Anas* was present among Eurasian Teal *A. crecca* at the barrier island-lagoon complex of L'Albufera de Valencia, Valencia, Spain. It was observed on 27 and 29 January and 4 and 6 February at the Racó de l'Olla reserve (39°20' N, 00°20' W), a 64 ha area of brackish marshes located in the beach barrier, which are used as a diurnal roost by wintering ducks and waders, mostly Eurasian Teal and Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*. During the winter of 2013/14, the numbers of Eurasian Teal usually were below 1000 individuals during most observations but were sometimes higher, eventually accompanied by one or two female-type Garganeys *A. querquedula*. The latter is a scarce migrant and rare winter visitor to the site.

On 27 January 2014, José Ignacio Dies noticed an odd teal roosting within a flock of 1300 Eurasian Teal and showing a dark-capped head

with pale cheeks, a weak green iridescence behind the eye and greyish flanks. Its striking head pattern at first sight somewhat recalled a moulting male Baikal Teal *A. formosa* but the general plumage features easily ruled out this option. Detailed observations soon revealed that it was a male in a fairly complete adult summer plumage and that hybridization was the best explanation for its unusual plumage. On 4 and 6 February, it briefly joined courting groups of Eurasian. It was observed to swim along females and to lift its head with raised crown and nape-feathers, but apparently silent and not performing the typical head-up-tail-up display of Eurasian (cf Cramp & Simmons 1977). The last observation on 6 February coincided with a two-third reduction in the number of Eurasian present at the site. Nothing indicated a captive origin. The plumage showed no damages indicating a possible captive origin. The bird was fully winged, not pinioned and be-

268 Presumed hybrid Eurasian Teal x Garganey / vermoedelijke hybride Wintertaling x Zomertaling *Anas crecca* x *querquedula* with Eurasian Teal / Wintertaling, L'Albufera de Valencia, Valencia, Spain, 27 January 2014 (José Ignacio Dies). On head of hybrid, note similar size and similar shape of border between pale and dark colour to lower border of green head patch of Eurasian Teal.

269 Presumed hybrid Eurasian Teal x Garganey / vermoedelijke hybride Wintertaling x Zomertaling *Anas crecca* x *querquedula* with Eurasian Teal / Wintertaling, L'Albufera de Valencia, Valencia, Spain, 29 January 2014 (José Ignacio Dies). Note size and shape of hybrid in comparison with Eurasian Teal. Note also pale yellow line on undertail-coverts.





270 Presumed hybrid Eurasian Teal x Garganey / vermoedelijke hybride Wintertaling x Zomertaling *Anas crecca x querquedula* with Eurasian Teal / Wintertaling, L'Albufera de Valencia, Valencia, Spain, 27 January 2014 (José Ignacio Dies). In hybrid, note coarser pattern of flank, mantle and rump feathers and undertail-coverts. **271** Presumed hybrid Eurasian Teal x Garganey / vermoedelijke hybride Wintertaling x Zomertaling *Anas crecca x querquedula*, L'Albufera de Valencia, Valencia, Spain, 27 January 2014 (José Ignacio Dies). Note upper scapulars showing washed-out pattern that is nevertheless still similar to Garganey, and partly obscured lower scapulars with creamy white coloration, pale-edged tertials and patterned undertail-coverts. **272** Presumed hybrid Eurasian Teal x Garganey / vermoedelijke hybride Wintertaling x Zomertaling *Anas crecca x querquedula*, L'Albufera de Valencia, Valencia, Spain, 27 January 2014 (José Ignacio Dies). Note breast pattern and slight greenish iridescence behind eye. **273** Hybrid Blue-winged x Green-winged Teal / hybride Blauwvleugeltaling x Amerikaanse Wintertaling *Anas discors x carolinensis*, male, Huntsville, Alabama, USA, 2011 (Mark Hall). Captive bird of known parentage.

haved similar to the Eurasian Teals it was associating with. The legs have been seen only briefly during preening but were without any obvious rings.

Description

SIZE & STRUCTURE Similar to Eurasian Teal. Short crest at rear of head, similar to Eurasian but slightly shorter.

HEAD Forehead, crown and nape dark brown with slight reddish hue, brown extending to side of crown and reaching and surrounding eye. Below, brown patch with pale creamy border to lower cheek; shape of border very similar to lower border of green head patch of Eurasian

Teal (plate 268). Behind eye, some green iridescence on brown patch under certain light conditions (plate 272). Lower cheek with pale warm ochre coloration, divided by downward creamy-white stripe over cheek (plate 268-272). Whole rear part of cheek appearing slightly darker than frontal part. Frontal part becoming paler towards pale downward stripe.

UNDERPARTS Breast with pale brown ground coloration, darkest at side and paler to centre. Fairly dense dark spotting on centre of breast, reverting to more scaly pattern towards side of breast. Brown colour reaching further onto flank than pale ground coloration of breast

of Eurasian Teal (plate 271-272). Transition from breast to flank colour and pattern not extremely sharp but still well visible. Flank with black vermiculations on white, thicker and wider apart than in Eurasian (plate 268 and 271). Belly only seen partly but appearing whitish, paler than and sharply separated from breast. Undertail-coverts pale yellowish-beige with darker brown spotting, towards rear flank pattern becoming more scaly than spotty (plate 268, 271 and 272). Horizontal line of creamy-white feathers starting before tail base and reaching further towards back just below tail (plate 269).

UPPERPARTS Mantle and rump feathers plain brown with thin pale beige edge (plate 270). Upper scapulars slightly drooping, along upper side of shaft with washed-out white stripe, on lower side of shaft becoming paler from shaft to side into wider pale area (plate 270). Lower scapulars forming creamy longitudinal stripe, often partly covered by upper scapulars (plate 269-270).

WING Upper forewing not well seen but appearing pale grey in one photograph where just visible. Speculum not seen well but at least bordered by white rear line, wider than thin white line in Eurasian Teal. Tertials appearing straight, dark grey-brown with thin pale fringe, latter broader on lower side of each feather. Lowest tertial with washed-out whitish stripe alongside shaft (plate 270).

TAIL Tail-feathers greyish brown with thin whitish edge (plate 268).

BARE PARTS Bill dark grey to black, similar to Eurasian Teal (plate 268-272). Legs only seen very briefly in preening bird, therefore no exact colour noted.

Identification and comparison with other hybrids

The bird was obviously a small dabbling duck hybrid, similar in structure and size to Eurasian Teal, which can be assumed to be one parent. Characters indicating Eurasian as a likely parent were the small size, reddish-brown colour tones of the head, shape of the border between darker cap and pale cheek and creamy-white stripe on the lower scapulars. A horizontal paler unspotted line in the pale yellow-beige undertail-coverts just below the tail was at the same place as the upper border of

the pale yellow triangle on the undertail-coverts of Eurasian. Furthermore, a slight greenish iridescence on the head (in the region of the green head patch of Eurasian) as well as the uniformly grey, vermiculated flanks may also hint to Eurasian as one parent.

The question remains: what species was the other parent? Due to the small size, the assumption appears justified that the second parent was most likely also a small species, comparable in size with Eurasian Teal. But the bird did not match the pattern and coloration of any other documented hybrid of Eurasian or Green-winged Teal *A. carolinensis*, even when taking into consideration that many hybrids are more variable than pure species, as for example documented in Lehmus (2011).

Cinnamon Teal *A. cyanoptera* hybrids with Eurasian or Green-winged Teal (figure 1) could be excluded fairly easily, as they retain much of the reddish brown body coloration of Cinnamon combined with Eurasian or Green-winged head pattern and black undertail-coverts (Gillham & Gillham 2002, Lehmus 2010; see also <http://tinyurl.com/lq4kwpm>).

Blue-winged Teal *A. discors* hybrids with Eurasian or Green-winged Teal appear much closer to the mystery bird in general pattern (plate 273) but could also be excluded. These hybrid types in general show a markedly green iridescent head patch, similar to that of Eurasian or Green-winged, and bordered with pale lines below and above. The iridescence is not well visible in plate 273 but see <http://tinyurl.com/pax2nbf>. Additionally, the forehead and crown are dark in this hybrid. A pale bridle stripe over the cheek is present in most hybrids of this combination (plate 273), although none of the parent species show this. However, the cheek pattern and coloration with the pale bridle stripe in most individuals is quite close to the Valencia hybrid. Tertial and scapular

FIGURE 1 Hybrid Cinnamon Teal x Eurasian Teal / hybride Kaneeltaling x Wintertaling *Anas cyanoptera* x *crecca*, male (Jörn Lehmus). Drawing of escaped bird of captive origin in Braunschweig, Germany, in 2010.



FIGURE 2 Hybrid Eurasian Teal x Baikial Teal / hybride Wintertaling x Siberische Taling *Anas crecca* x *formosa*, male (Jörn Lehmus). Drawing of captive bird in northern Germany in 1990s.



pattern in Blue-winged x Green-winged hybrids are fairly uniform with some paler elements but without pale feather edges in the tertials. In contrast, the Valencia bird showed a thin pale edge to the tertials and drooping scapulars with a white striped pattern. The flank coloration in Blue-winged x Green-winged hybrids differs also from the Valencia bird. In the former, the stripes are broader and the ground coloration is browner towards the lower flank and breast and finer and whiter to the rear. In contrast, the Valencia bird had uniformly vermiculated flanks without any change of the white ground coloration to brown or beige colours. Additionally, Blue-winged x Green-winged hybrids or Eurasian Teal have at least partly (sometimes fully) black undertail-coverts. Images of Blue-winged x Green-winged hybrids are found on several websites (eg, <http://tinyurl.com/pepxrgb> and <http://tinyurl.com/nxgavw6>).

Baikal x Eurasian Teal hybrids also show a strongly iridescent green head patch surrounded by pale lines (figure 2; cf Kuroda & Kuroda 1964). The head pattern differs clearly from that of the Valencia bird although the pale bridle stripe over the cheek is similar. The undertail-coverts are black (barred and spotted in the Valencia bird). A photograph of this hybrid type on internet shows a bit more patterned and darker scapulars but it is otherwise very similar to the drawing in figure 2. Therefore this hybrid was also considered unlikely for the Valencia bird.

Garganey hybrids

The only species left when considering the smaller dabbling ducks of the Northern Hemisphere is Garganey. No well-documented Garganey x Eurasian Teal hybrid is known to us although, eg, Gray (1958) and Johnsgard (1960) mention this hybrid but without detailed documentation. McCarthy (2006) provides six further references concerning presumably this hybrid, stating that captive and natural hybridisation was reported, but Gillham & Gillham (1996, 2002) do not list this hybrid. Although Garganey characters like the head pattern with the distinctive white eyebrow and the long drooping scapulars are missing in the Valencia bird, there are several traits hinting to this parentage.

The mentioned typical Garganey head pattern seems to be suppressed in Garganey hybrids in general. Neither of the two breeding plumage Garganey hybrids from the Museum of Natural History (MNH) at Tring, England, examined by us shows any trace of this pattern (figure 3-4).



274 Hybrid Garganey x Northern Shoveler / hybride Zomertaling x Slobeend *Anas querquedula* x *clypeata*, male (Zoological Society London, 1855, most likely bred London Zoo), Natural History Museum, Tring, England, 22 April 2014 (Hein van Grouw). Eclipse plumage but with some breeding plumage feathers.

Additionally, neither of the three Garganey hybrids documented photographically by Gillham & Gillham (1996, 2002) exhibit this pattern. These hybrids are Garganey x Falcated Duck *A falcata* (Gillham & Gillham 1996), Garganey x Hottentot Teal *A hottentota* (Gillham & Gillham 1996) and Garganey x Silver Teal *A versicolor* (Gillham & Gillham 2002). All three show a dark-capped head, which is not surprising in the latter two as the non-Garganey parent also shows this trait. But alternatively, a more uniform brown or reddish-brown coloration of the head can come through, eg, in Garganey x Red Shoveler *A platalea* and Garganey x Cinnamon Teal, as demonstrated by two museum specimens from MNH (figure 3-4). None of these Garganey hybrids showed a head pattern with creamy vertical cheek-stripe similar to the Valencia bird, a pattern that may be shown by moulting Baikal Teal but also by hybrids with (figure 2) or without (plate 273) Baikal parentage. However, the general head pattern may be considered as a variation of a capped head pattern as described for the first three hybrids.

The undertail-coverts of the Valencia bird appeared very unusual with their spotted and partly barred pattern. The only species showing similar undertail-coverts is again Garganey. Garganey hybrids also tend to have at least partly pale undertail-coverts with brown spotting or barring over the pale feathers, as shown by Garganey x Cinnamon Teal, Garganey x Red Shoveler and a mainly



FIGURE 3 Hybrid Garganey x Cinnamon Teal / hybride Zomertaling x Kaneeltaling *Anas querquedula* x *cyanoptera*, male (captive bird of known parentage, Collection B L Sage, 1964), Natural History Museum, Tring, England, 2 September 2011 (Hein van Grouw)

eclipse-plumaged Garganey x Northern Shoveler *A. clypeata* hybrids (figure 3-4, plate 274). The breast colour of the Valencia bird, being darker and browner than in Eurasian Teal, was also a good fit for a hybrid with Garganey.

The upper scapulars of the Valencia bird were drooping but clearly shorter than in Garganey. They showed a washed-out Garganey-like scapular pattern. These relatively short upper scapulars

are not an argument against Garganey parentage, as the other parent (Eurasian Teal) has short greyish scapulars. In other hybrids where one parent has long scapulars, for example some Baikal Teal hybrids (eg, Eurasian x Baikal Teal, figure 2; cf Kuroda & Kuroda 1964), these are also short. The tertials also were close to Garganey's in shape and pattern. The flank was slightly paler than in Eurasian Teal, which seemed at least in part due to



FIGURE 4 Hybrid Garganey x Red Shoveler / hybride Zomertaling x Argentijnse Slobeend *Anas querquedula* x *platalea*, probably male, incorrectly labeled as female (captive bird of known parentage, Collection B L Sage, 1964), Natural History Museum, Tring, England, 2 September 2011 (Hein van Grouw)

the slightly wider distances between the thin black vermiculation lines.

Conclusion

Several traits of the Valencia bird indicated that Garganey was most likely the second parent of this hybrid. Head pattern, scapular pattern and shape, tertial shape, flank coloration and pattern, undertail-coverts coloration and pattern, breast

coloration and pattern as well as the greyish forewing all pointed to a hybrid Eurasian Teal x Garganey. While some of these characters occur in other hybrids, no other hybrid combination shows exactly this set of traits. The Valencia hybrid is, to our knowledge, the first detailed photographic documentation of a presumed hybrid Eurasian Teal x Garganey.

Samenvatting

VERMOEDELIJKE HYBRIDE WINTERTALING x ZOMERTALING IN VALENCIA, SPANJE, IN JANUARI-FEBRUARI 2014 Een vermoedelijke hybride Wintertaling x Zomertaling *Anas crecca* x *querquedula* werd op 27 en 29 januari en 4 en 6 februari waargenomen in L'Albufera de Valencia, Valencia, Spanje. Dat één van de ouders een Wintertaling was, was op grond van onder meer kleur en tekening van de kop snel duidelijk. Determinatie van Zomertaling als de vermoedelijke andere oudersoort is gebaseerd op het koppatroon, patroon en vorm van de schouderveren, vorm van de tertials, patroon en kleur van borst, flanken en onderstaartdekveren, en de grijzige voorvleugel. Dit is het eerste met foto's gedocumenteerde geval van een vermoedelijke hybride Wintertaling x Zomertaling.

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