

**California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System**  
**California Department of Fish and Wildlife**  
**California Interagency Wildlife Task Group**

---

GREEN-WINGED TEAL

*Anas crecca*

Family: ANATIDAE

Order: ANSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

B077

Written by: S. Granholm

Reviewed by: D. Raveling

Edited by: R. Duke

#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The green-winged teal is a common to abundant winter resident of the Central Valley, northeastern and coastal California. It inhabits lacustrine and slow-moving riverine habitats, often with bordering fresh emergent wetlands, nearby grasslands, wet meadows, and wet croplands and pastures. Fairly common August and September, common to abundant October to March, and fairly common in April in the Central and Imperial valleys. Northeastern California has similar abundance patterns, with fewer individuals in midwinter. Widespread, but less numerous, in other lowlands throughout state, and mountains of southern California. Highest numbers occur in fall in the Imperial Valley, and in March in Modoc Co. Small numbers remain to breed in northern California, May to July, mainly in northeastern counties. Rarely found in estuarine and saline emergent habitats. Sometimes nests amidst dense shrubs, willow thickets, or in open woodlands (Cogswell 1977, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1978, 1979, McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Feeds on seeds of aquatic plants, and to a lesser extent on seeds of terrestrial grasses, forbs, and grains; also eats leaves and stems. Prefers small seeds (Bellrose 1976). Aquatic insects and other invertebrates are reported to form only a small part of diet, but most data are from fall and winter. In summer probably feeds heavily on invertebrates (Bartonek 1972). Forages in very shallow emergent wetlands, mud flats, temporarily flooded fields, ditches, and dry upland fields near water. Filters food from soft mud, bottom detritus or surface waters. Feeds by slowly walking or swimming, reaching under surface with head and neck; uncommonly tips up. Often feeds at night (Palmer 1976, Tamisier 1976).

**Cover:** Rests on water or shores of emergent wetlands, ponds, quiet streams, ditches, or lakes. Sometimes perches on stumps, or on low branches of dead trees.

**Reproduction:** Nests on upland sites, usually within 60 m (200 ft) of water, but up to 90 m (300 ft) away. Nest usually well concealed by vegetation, in dense stands of grasses, sedges, forbs, or brush; sometimes in open woodlands (based on minimal data from the main breeding grounds in northern continental United States, Canada, and Alaska, as summarized by Bellrose 1976 and Palmer 1976). Used artificial islands in southeastern Alberta (Giroux 1981).

**Water:** No additional data found.

**Pattern:** Nests in dense, herbaceous or brush cover near suitable aquatic feeding areas, usually bordered by emergent vegetation. When not breeding, prefers shallow, quiet water bordered by emergent vegetation. Requires less open water than the larger ducks.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, circadian activity; feeds more at night than most waterfowl.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Most of the California wintering population migrates north to the northern continental United States, Canada, and Alaska. The small breeding population may be nonmigratory.

Home Range: Very little information. Home range of 1 pair in South Dakota was 243 ha (600 ac) (Drewien 1967). In Alberta grassland, Keith (1961) found a 5-yr average density of 1 nesting pair per 24 ha (61 ac), in a small sample.

Territory: No information found.

Reproduction: In California, nests from May to July (Cogswell 1977). Most pairs are formed on winter range or during spring migration. Monogamous, solitary nester, with nests widely dispersed over much of breeding range, and few, if any, high-density breeding areas. Bent (1923) reported apparent polyandry. Clutch size is 6-11, average 8-9. Single-brooded (Harrison 1978), with incubation 20-23 days, usually about 21. Precocial young are tended by female only. Age at first flight probably about 35 days. Young become independent at about 23 days (Harrison 1978), and first breed at 1 yr (Palmer 1976).

Niche: Competition with other ducks for food and nest-sites probably negligible (Johnsgard 1975b). Nest predators, including skunks, minks, crows, and ravens can reduce nesting success (Johnsgard 1975b). Not known to be subject to nest parasitism by other ducks.

## REFERENCES

- Bartonek, J. C. 1972. Summer foods of American wigeons, mallards, and a green-winged teal near Great Slave Lake, N.W.T. *Can. Field-Nat.* 86:373-376.
- Bellrose, F. C. 1976. Ducks, geese, and swans of North America. 2nd ed. Stackpole Books, Harrisburg, PA. 544pp.
- Bent, A. C. 1923. Life histories of North American wild fowl. Part I. U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 126. 250pp.
- Cogswell, H. L. 1977. Water birds of California. Univ. California Press, Berkeley. 399pp.
- Drewien, R. C. 1967. Ecological relationships of breeding waterfowl to prairie potholes. South Dakota Dep. Game, Fish and Parks, Pierre. P.R. Rep. W-756R-8. 10pp.
- Garrett, K., and J. Dunn. 1981. Birds of southern California. Los Angeles Audubon Soc. 408pp.
- Giroux, J. F. 1981. Use of artificial islands by nesting waterfowl in southeastern Alberta. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 45:669-679.
- Grinnell, J., and A. H. Miller. 1944. The distribution of the birds of California. *Pac. Coast Avifauna* No. 27. 608pp.
- Harrison, C. 1978. A field guide to the nests, eggs and nestlings of North American birds. W. Collins Sons and Co., Cleveland, OH. 416pp.
- Harrison, C. J. O., ed. 1978. Bird families of the world. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York. 264pp.
- Johnsgard, P. A. 1975b. Waterfowl of North America. Indiana Univ. Press, Bloomington. 575pp.
- Keith, L. B. 1961. A study of waterfowl ecology on small impoundments in southeastern Alberta. *Wildl. Monogr.* 6:1-88.
- McCaskie, G., P. De Benedictis, R. Erickson, and J. Morlan. 1979. Birds of northern California, an annotated field list. 2nd ed. Golden Gate Audubon Soc., Berkeley. 84pp.
- Palmer, R. S., ed. 1976. Handbook of North American birds. Vol. 2. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT. 521pp.
- Palmer, R. S., ed. 1976. Handbook of North American birds. Vol. 3. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT. 560pp.
- Tamisier, A. 1976. Diurnal activities of green-winged teal and pintail wintering in Louisiana.

Wildfowl 27:19-32.

- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1978. Concept plan for waterfowl wintering habitat preservation: Central Valley, California. U.S. Dep. Inter., Fish and Wildl. Serv., Portland, OR. 196pp.
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1979. Concept plan for waterfowl wintering habitat preservation: California coast. U.S. Dep. Inter., Fish and Wildl. Serv., Portland, OR. 234pp.

B077

---

Life history accounts for species in the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) System were originally published in: Zeiner, D.C., W.F.Laudenslayer, Jr., K.E. Mayer, and M. White, eds. 1988-1990. California's Wildlife. Vol. I-III. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California. Updates are noted in accounts that have been added or edited since original publication.