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

CINNAMON TEAL   *Anas cyanoptera*
Family: ANATIDAE   Order: ANSERIFORMES   Class: AVES
B083

Written by: S. Granholm
Reviewed by: D. Raveling
Edited by: R. Duke

DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

   The cinnamon teal is common and locally abundant during spring and fall migration, and
fairly common through the summer, nesting widely in lowlands throughout California, including
areas east of the Cascades and Sierra Nevada. At same seasons, uncommon on mountain
lakes of southern California, and rare on northern mountain lakes in summer (Cogswell 1977).
In California, found in lacustrine, slow riverine, and fresh emergent habitats, and less often in
nearby herbaceous and agricultural fields, as well as estuarine and saline emergent habitats.
Most common in smaller bodies of water with marshy borders. Requires freshwater habitats
for nesting. In northern California, very uncommon December to February in coastal areas
(and absent from the more northern counties), uncommon November to February in the
Central Valley, and rare and irregular December to March east of the Cascades and Sierra
Nevada (McCaskie et al. 1979). In southern California, during November to January,
uncommon along the coast, less numerous at the Salton Sea, and rather rare elsewhere
(Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

   Feeding: About 80% of diet is plant matter, largely seeds and vegetative parts of sedges,
pondweeds, and grasses (Palmer 1976). Animal matter mostly is mollusks and insects.
Usually feeds in shallow water by skimming or filtering foods from surface or subsurface
water, sometimes by tipping up. Also searches bottom sediments, and rarely dives.
Occasionally feeds on shore close to water. No information on food of ducklings.

   Cover: Broods and flightless, molting adults require good escape cover, such as emergent
vegetation (Palmer 1976). Typically rests on small ponds in midday. No information on
roosting habitat.

   Reproduction: Requires freshwater habitats for nesting. Nest is in dense emergent
vegetation, or in dense grass, as far as 30 m (100 ft) from water (Cogswell 1977). Prefers
vegetation less than 60 cm (24 in) high, bordering small, shallow bodies of water (Johnsgard
1975b), but also will use larger water bodies. Some pairs nested on artificial islands in
southeastern Alberta (Giroux 1981).

   Water: No additional data found.

   Pattern: Prefers freshwater ponds, lakes, or slow streams bordered by fairly dense
emergent vegetation, especially for nesting.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

   Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity. Apparently migrates during daytime
(Johnsgard 1975b).

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Authorities disagree on the timing and extent of migration. Breeders in northernmost California, and areas east of the Cascades and Sierra Nevada, depart for the winter, and population density declines noticeably elsewhere in the state, suggesting a general southward movement. Many individuals apparently migrate to the main wintering grounds in Mexico.

Home Range: No data found.

Territory: In Utah, defended areas in one study mostly were less than 27 x 27 m (90 x 90 ft) in extent; in another study, territory centers were only 9-27 m (30-90 ft) apart (Palmer 1976). Breeding densities of 17 pairs, or more, per 40 ha (100 ac) are not uncommon (Johnsgard 1975b).

Reproduction: In California, nests April to July (Cogswell 1977). Monogamous, solitary nester. Clutch size ranges from 4-16, but successful, unparasitized nests usually average 9-10 eggs. Single-brooded. Incubation 21-25 days. Precocial young usually tended by the female alone, but sometimes a drake also is in attendance; whether he is her mate from the beginning of the nesting season is unknown. Young fly first at about 7 wk, and breed first as yearlings (Palmer 1976).

Niche: Nest often parasitized by other ducks, especially the redhead, which parasitized 22% and 29% of cinnamon teal nests studied during 2 seasons in Utah (Palmer 1976). Predation often causes heavy nest losses. Important predators were skunks, Norway rats, and raccoons in Sacramento Valley (Anderson 1957), and the California gull in Utah. Minks and weasels sometimes kill incubating females. Wetland drainage has reduced populations in some areas.

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