

green-winged teal *Anas crecca*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The green-winged teal is the smallest duck in North America. It averages 14 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). Both male and female have a dark-green wing patch. The male has a gray body. A green patch is present on his rust-colored head. A vertical white mark in front of the wing is visible when the bird is swimming or not in flight. The female is brown. Three of the toes are webbed to help with swimming. The bill is flattened and has a toothlike fringe on its edge.

BEHAVIORS

The green-winged teal is a common migrant statewide, an uncommon winter resident in southern Illinois and a rare summer resident in northern Illinois. It flies in swift flocks. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in February. Most green-winged teal nest in the northern United States and Canada. The nest is built in grasses at the edge of a lake. Composed of grasses and leaves, the nest is lined with down feathers. Six to 18, white, cream or green-brown eggs are laid by the female, and she alone incubates them for the 21- to 23-day incubation period. Fall migration into the state begins in mid-September. These ducks winter as far south as central Mexico. The green-winged teal feeds on mud flats, in vegetation on shallow ponds and pools and in shallow streams. It eats aquatic plants (nutgrass, millet, smartweed), insects and mollusks.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; lakes, ponds and reservoirs; Lake Michigan; marshes; peatlands; rivers and streams; swamps

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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