

The Teal

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BOOK REVIEW

The Teal

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The Teal by Matthieu Guillemain and Johan Elmberg. 2014. T & AD Poyser; Bloomsbury Publishing, New York. 320 pp. \$85.00. ISBN 978-1-4729-0850-6 and E-978-1-4729-0851-3.

The Teal is a fine compendium on the ecology and management of a popular species of duck in the Northern hemisphere, the Eurasian or common teal (*Anas crecca*) and the American Green-winged teal (*Anas carolinensis*), hereafter teal. *The Teal* is a science-based book but written to reach myriad audiences that include researchers and wetland managers, wildlife students, and the laity. For example, Guillemain and Elmborg provide a demographic model (albeit simplified) of the teal life cycle in the Demography chapter (Chapter 8, p. 195), yet discuss the relevance of teal in human cultures, including the birds' table fare quality (Chapter 9). Hence, the book elegantly bridges scientific and popular discussions that will interest teal and general waterfowl enthusiasts.

Guillemain and Elmborg are accomplished wildlife scientists, and their perspectives are unique in that Elmborg largely studies the species in its northern breeding grounds (e.g., boreal forests of Finland and Sweden), whereas Guillemain primarily researches nonbreeding teal in the south of France (e.g., the Camargue). Hence, the two scientists nicely meld knowledge and synthesis of the bird's annual cycle, largely but certainly not exclusively from a Palearctic perspective.

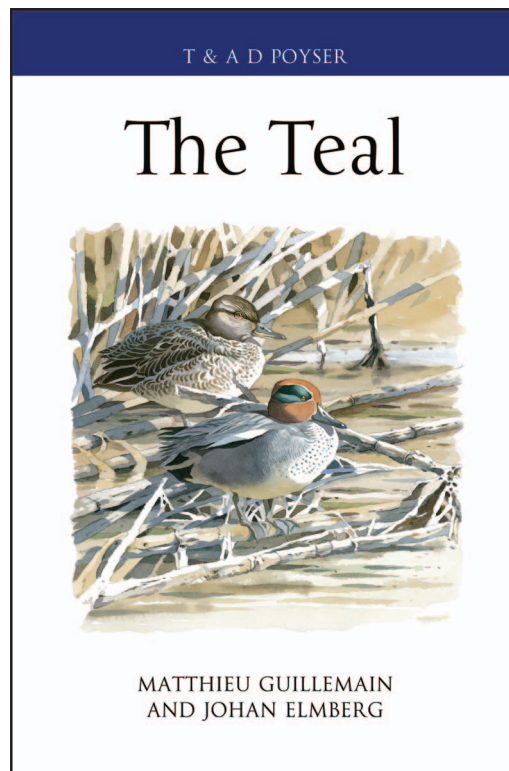
The Teal contains ten chapters and approximately 320 total pages. However, the primary text of the book (i.e. the ten chapters) ends on page 218. Thereafter, there are eight

separate Appendices (pp. 219–264), References (pp. 265–314), and an Index. The Appendices vary in content and greatly support the text. The Appendices contain information on body mass and measurements, scientific names of

plants and animals mentioned in the text, regions of the Holarctic important to teal, a detailed listing of foods (plant and animal) consumed by teal, and avian influenza and parasite implications in teal.

Following an enjoyable Foreword from noteworthy waterfowl scientists Drs. Robert (Bob) Clark and Anthony (Tony) Fox and the authors' Preface, the book begins (Chapter 1) by introducing the teal and relative waterfowl. This six-page chapter is intriguing in that it discusses origins of teal names per Linnaeus and other specific names (e.g., *kogamo*, or 'small duck') relative to the birds' period of presence in a given seasonal period (e.g., winter). Table 1.1 is rather unique in that it lists names of common teal per various world languages. Following this cerebral introduction to the bird, Chapter 2 discusses the general appearance and identification of teal, including age and

sex differentiation. As is common throughout the book, much of this and other chapters should be interpretable by a general audience of waterfowl enthusiasts (e.g., hunters, non-scientists). However, to their credit, Guillemain and Elmborg plot mean winter body masses of teal relative to other dabbling ducks, and provide a histogram of body mass and wing lengths of common teal by age–sex classes, which more align with a scientific publication. Hence, these authors skillfully present the ecology and science of



teal in an easily readable format. Chapter 3 discusses distribution and numbers of teal in the Holarctic, where figures and tables on geographic ranges, breeding population size, and winter abundances of teal greatly complement the text. The chapter culminates with an interesting section on the conservation status of teal as designated under different world authorities, such as the Convention in International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES). Chapter 4, Movements and Habitat Use, begins to introduce the ecology and management of teal. Subsequent chapters include Feeding Ecology, Breeding Ecology, Mortality and Limiting Factors, Demography, Management/Harvest/Conservation, and the penultimate chapter (10) entitled The Teal's Future.

The hybridization of scientific and less technical prose is appealing for wider audiences than either style might have otherwise accomplished. Moreover, the chapters contain many black-and-white photos including those of the bird's distribution or range, foraging teal, nests, eggs, and an Audubon depiction of peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) killing teal and gadwall (*Anas strepera*; p. 168). The abundant photos illustrate important concepts of the bird's ecology (e.g., foraging depths) and other pertinent facts. Although the intended messages of some of the photos may not be so revelational for seasoned waterfowl ecologists, they will certainly educate a broader audience with less knowledge of the life history and ecology of the species, and waterfowl in general. In addition to these photos and handsome pencil drawings that head each chapter, midway through the book (p. 161) there are approximately 16 color figures (photos) of greenwinged teal in resting and courtship poses, details of wing-feathers, ducklings, a breeding and moulting habitat, and other impressive photos that illustrate the sociobiology of the bird. Collectively, the vivid photos and drawings should impress readers about the uniqueness of teal.

The scientific basis of the book is detailed, as the References section spans 50 pages. The Movements and Habitat Use, Feeding Ecology, and Breeding Ecology chapters compose the bulk of the ecology-based section of the book. Guillemain and Elmberg have devoted parts of their scientific careers to date on these subjects, so these chapters are well done and informative. These chapters provide histograms of band recovery data, decadal distribution of teal in Europe, habitat selection by birds during breeding and winter seasons (e.g., functional units of refuge/foraging areas), and other important facts. The feeding ecology chapter includes discussion and graphics on energy requirements, metabolic rates, the ecology of foraging (e.g., how water depths influence teal exploitation of wetlands), discussions of prey preferences, and generally how teal fit into the general waterfowl foraging community. The breeding chapter provides us with information on teal mate selection, courtship behavior, nest establishment, egg laying incubation, and brood ecology,

which includes duckling growth, foraging, brood habitat use, survival, and other aspects. In Chapter 7, Guillemain and Elmberg discuss Mortality and Limiting Factors which include diseases, pollutants, lead poisoning, predation, behavior related to hunting and effects of harvest, and habitat loss or modification. The Demography chapter and Management, Harvest, and Conservation chapter (8 & 9) nicely synthesize life history patterns of teal including survival rates of young and adults, fecundity and age structure, population trends, harvest management, all culminating with a plea for habitat management that benefits teal populations throughout the birds' annual cycle. In the last chapter, Chapter 10, Guillemain and Elmberg discuss general numbers and trends in the species, followed by their numerous 'Black Boxes,' or what they propose as gaps in our understanding of teal ecology and management. The authors specifically identify what they deem are the most pressing research needs for the species on both continents, but mostly with a Eurasian flair.

This book is a useful addition to our libraries for several reasons. Similar to Logan Bennett's *The Blue-Winged Teal: Its Ecology and Management* (1938 and 1966, albeit dated), we now have a compendium on the Holarctic greenwinged teal. *The Teal* is an excellent scientific synthesis of our current understanding of teal of the Holarctic, and the authors identify specific research needs. Abundant literature is used and numerous tables and figures support the text. *The Teal* provides us a much greater discussion on the ecology, life history, and management of the species than could be offered by either versions of *Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America* (Bellrose 1980, Baldassarre 2014), but Guillemain and Elmberg remained less technically rigorous than are parts of Batt et al. (1992), a classic book on ecology and management of breeding waterfowl. No one book can meet the expectations of all readers. However, I believe *The Teal* will be a fine addition to the libraries of waterfowl scientists and managers, students in wildlife/ecology, and the general public.

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