

Eurasian Wigeon Pair in Uxbridge

At 10:00 A.M. on May 9, 1992, Sheila Carroll and Mark Lynch and their birding class found a male Eurasian Wigeon with a female wigeon on the Blackstone River in Uxbridge. This is the first Worcester County record for this species since the Forbush Bird Club began publishing *The Chickadee* in 1931. From a distance of three to four hundred meters, even with spotting scopes, the species identity of the female was not clear.



Eurasian Wigeon, female
May 11, 1992, Uxbridge, MA
Photo by Robert C. Bradbury

Attempts to find these birds again later that afternoon were apparently unsuccessful until about 7:00 P.M., when I saw these two ducks fly in and land at the same place. However, the female was still too far away to identify in the failing light. As darkness came, the birds roosted on the muddy bank of a small cove of an island in the middle of the river.

On May 11 from a canoe, I was able to observe and photograph these birds in this same cove from as close as twenty meters. I identified the female as a red-phase Eurasian Wigeon based on its reddish-brown head, face, and upper neck, all of which were conspicuously darker than the lower neck, breast, and sides of the body. On May 12 Francis McMenemy observed the female standing on the shore of this same cove and reported seeing gray axillaries when it raised one wing. He also reported that the legs appeared to be unbanded.

During my hour-long observations of this pair on May 11, the male wigeon was never more than about fifty meters from nor out of sight of the female. At one point, both birds flew together upriver before the female returned to the cove, and at another point, the male circled over me several times when I moved toward the female. I later learned that these two wigeons were seen on May 5 in the same cove, but the observer saw the birds at a distance and thought they were American Wigeons. These birds were not reported after May 12, despite a careful canoe search on May 15. Because there are apparently no breeding records of Eurasian Wigeon in the United States, careful attention should be given to any spring sightings of male and female pairs.

Robert C. Bradbury, Worcester



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