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NOTES ON A NEW SUBSPECIES OF BLUE-WINGED TEAL.

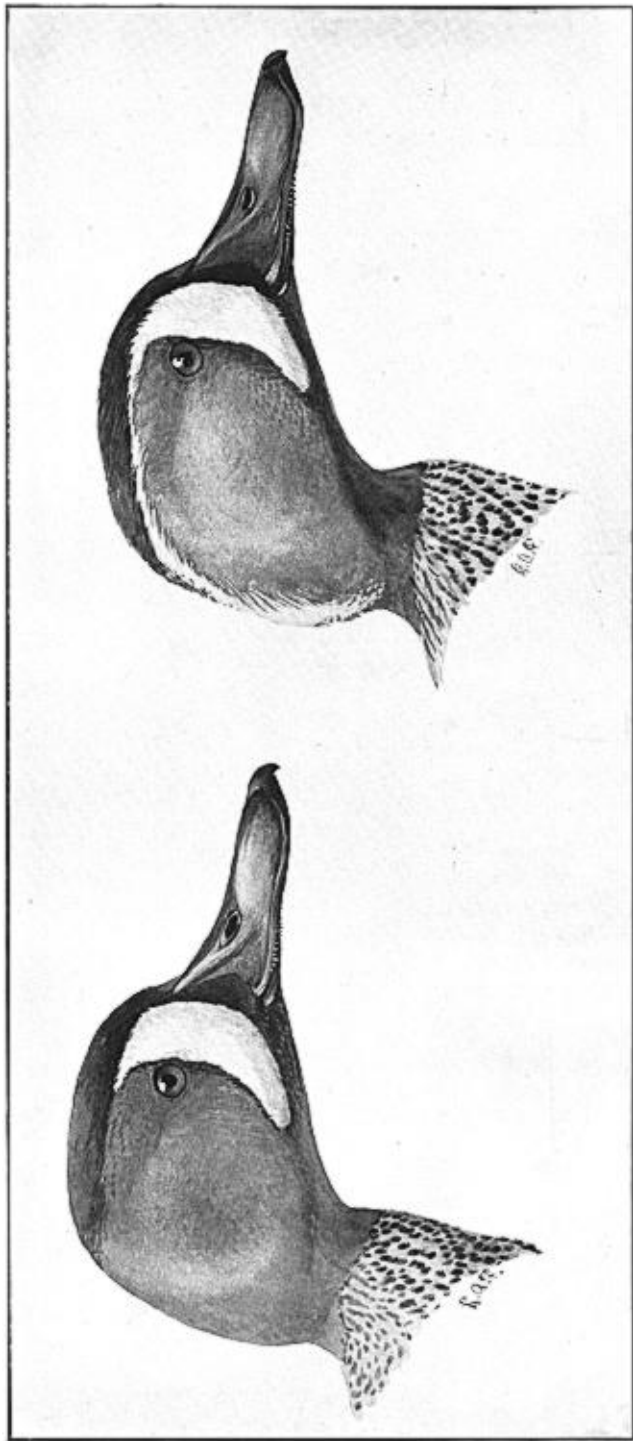
BY FRED H. KENNARD.

Plate XVII.

ON February 2, 1916, I had the good luck to be one of the guests of Mr. E. A. McIlhenny on his extremely interesting family estate at Avery Island, Louisiana. We had been watching the hundreds of wild ducks of several species that were swimming or flying about one of the ponds, when Mr. McIlhenny pointed out what he called a "Southern Teal," which, he said, was the type of Blue-winged Teal that breeds in Louisiana. Now as I had never even heard of a "Southern Teal" and, until then, had never realized that any kind of Teal bred in Louisiana, I was, of course, very much surprised and interested.

The bird was paddling about at a distance of perhaps 150 to 200 feet, and could be told at a glance from its fellows. It was, apparently, an adult male Blue-winged Teal, in nuptial plumage, but with the crescent-shaped white spot in front of the eye continued over the eye as a thin white line down to the nape, where it converged with the line from the opposite side, in a conspicuous white patch.

We saw a number of these birds while staying at Mr. McIlhenny's and later heard of them at Grand Chenier in Cameron Parish, from



1. BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Querquedula discors discors*), Cayuga Lake, N. Y. April 16, 1909.
2. SOUTHERN TEAL (*Querquedula discors albimucha*) Grand Chenier, La. April 2, 1916.

Mr. R. B. Worthen, a gunner and collector of wide experience. Later still, while staying on Mr. McIlhenny's houseboat on the Ward-McIlhenny Game Preserve, in Vermilion Parish, we again heard of the bird from his warden there, and saw numbers of them among the other Teal that were wintering in the adjacent sloughs. They are known locally as the "Necktie Teal" among the gunners and natives along the Louisiana marshes, and seem to be recognized by them as the resident breeding birds of the region.

Mr. McIlhenny writes, regarding the white patch on the nape, "all of the birds that nest in the south seem to have the marking faintly, and about fifteen to twenty per cent have it very pronounced."

Mr. Worthen writes, "From what I can learn about the White-crested Teal, they are the birds that breed with us . . . All the Teal that I ever collected with the white crest were in pairs, and I think there is no doubt that they are the birds that stay with us, and the others go farther north to breed."

From the data that I have since been able to assemble, it appears that the Blue-winged Teal from the north begin to arrive along the Gulf Coast about the middle of September, and are there in large numbers until about the middle of October, when many of them leave for the south. By the first of December, the great majority of the large flocks have departed, though some birds remain throughout the winter. Mr. McIlhenny writes that "the regular migration of Blue-winged Teal from the north begins about the middle of September, and most of them have left by the end of October, although a great many stay here all winter," while Mr. Worthen states, "The Blue-winged Teal arrives here from the north from the 15th of September to the 15th of October and stays until the first of December and then goes farther south; some stay all winter."

After spending the winter farther south, these northern birds return to Louisiana, usually some time in March, and, picking up their fellows who happen to have wintered there, wend their way north early in April, practically all of them having departed by May 1. Of this northern movement Mr. McIlhenny writes, "There is a heavy migration in the spring, about March 10th. The birds increase in numbers until April 1st, when they begin to decrease and leave only resident birds in the marshes," and Mr. Worthen,

writing of the northern bird, says, "The Blue-winged Teal stays with us until about the first of April, and sometimes as late as May 1st."

With regard to the Southern Teal, it is difficult to say what proportion pass the winter on their breeding grounds or how many of them migrate. They are common during the winter, according to my own observations, in Iberia, Vermilion and Cameron Parishes, and, presumably, all along the Louisiana coastal marshes. Several specimens have been taken in Florida, where the bird may breed, and even as far east as the Isle of Pines and Andros Island. They have been taken in Texas and in Mexico, where they undoubtedly breed, and as far south as Costa Rica; and I have seen two specimens from Arizona and one from Lower California.

Mr. Louis Agassiz Fuertes writes of seeing them at Waldo, Texas, April 19, 1901, when he made a sketch of a specimen; and again in Mexico, "south of Tampico in the state of Tamaulipas, between April 18th and 21st, 1910," when he saw a flock of seventeen males, several of which were shot, but which unfortunately, owing to press of other work, were not made up into skins.

The Southern Teal starts nesting in Louisiana early in March, for Mr. McIlhenny writes, under date of April 3, 1919, "Blue-winged Teal are now nesting here, and there are a number of broods of young already hatched," and Mr. Worthen writes, "In regard to the breeding season of the Southern Blue-winged Teal, from what I know and what I can learn from the natives here who hunt, they have found the nest as early as the first of March. . . . I have found but one nest, and that was last April. I killed the male bird, and he was a fine specimen, with white running down the back of his head."

During the past year I have examined specimens in several collections, and am in receipt of data from a number of others scattered throughout the United States and Canada. Of the Teal examined, one hundred and thirty-eight were adult males in nuptial plumage, of which fifty-one were without doubt northern breeding birds, taken actually on the breeding ground or on the way there. Of these, twelve, taken in various places from North Carolina and Kansas to Manitoba, showed signs of southern blood, seven with the markings showing fairly distinctly, and five with the markings very faint. This intergradation, however, is only what should

be expected, in view of the mixup of the birds during the winter migration.

Owing to the fact that the Southern Teal begin nesting before the Blue-winged Teal depart for the north, it is difficult to separate the southern breeding birds, but of twenty-eight typical Southern Teal examined, all taken in the south, eighteen were probably breeding birds, while of a series of ten birds that were certainly breeding, collected on the breeding grounds in the second week in May, after all the northern birds had departed, all showed the diagnostic markings very distinctly, in spite of the worn state of the plumage.

Of the one hundred and thirty-eight Teal examined, only three typical Blue-winged Teal were apparently breeding in the south. One was taken at Ingram, Texas, and might have been a wounded bird; and the other two were taken in Arizona, where the two forms seem to meet, as both have been taken there during the breeding season.

Regarding the plumage of the Blue-winged Teal, Mr. A. C. Bent, who has specialized somewhat on the subject, writes me that "the moult into the eclipse plumage begins in July. The eclipse plumage is complete in August and often lasts through September." In this plumage, so far as I know, the male Southern Teal is indistinguishable from the northern bird, and I have been unable to distinguish any difference between the females of the two forms at any season. This would seem to account for the fact that among all the specimens examined there were no autumn birds with the southern marking. Continuing, Mr. Bent says, "The moult out of the eclipse begins in September, but the progress of this moult is so slow that the full plumage is seldom complete before the middle of winter, and sometimes not until March." As a usual thing, however, the Southern Teal seems to acquire its full plumage in February, when the diagnostic markings are most distinct.

The typical Blue-winged Teal of the north is shown in Mr. Fuertes' sketch, and of them, perhaps twenty per cent may have the white crescentic patch in front of the eye, elongated a trifle just above the eye, but this must not be confused with the marking of the Southern Teal, in which the white nuchal patch seems diagnostic.

In the typical Southern Teal, shown by Mr. Fuertes, the cres-

centic patch in front of the eye is continued in a thin white line over the eye down to a conspicuous nuchal patch. The feathers along the lower side of the line have their upper halves white throughout their entire length, while the feathers along the upper side of the line have their lower halves white, thus accounting for the thinness of the line. The feathers of the nuchal patch are variegated, some of them part white, and some of them wholly white, and the markings on this bird should remain distinct until the moult into the eclipse plumage. According, however, to my data, and according to Mr. McIlhenny's observations also, only about one in six or seven of the Southern Teal is so heavily marked. In the majority of cases the diagnostic markings are extremely evanescent, many of the feathers having white tips only, which seem to wear away, until in June, and before the moult into the eclipse plumage takes place, nothing may remain of these markings but a few very worn white-tipped feathers at the nape.

While, personally, I am not quite in sympathy with all the sub-specific separations in which some of our systematic ornithologists at present indulge, it appears to me that the evidence collected would seem to show that the Southern Teal, conspicuously marked as it is, and breeding as it does in a range well separated from its northern cousins, is certainly worthy of sub-specific separation, and I suggest that, with due acknowledgment to Mr. McIlhenny, who seems to have been the first to accord the bird its proper recognition, we give it a descriptive name, as follows:

Querquedula discors albinucha subsp. nov.—SOUTHERN TEAL.

Type.—From Grand Chenier, Cameron Parish, Louisiana. Adult male. Collection of F. H. Kennard, April 2, 1916.

Characters.—Similar to *Querquedula discors discors*, except that in the nuptial plumage of the male, the crescentic white patch in front of the eye is continued over the eye in a thin superciliary line down to the nape, where it meets the line from the opposite side to form a white nuchal patch.

Range.—Breeds commonly in Louisiana, and possibly as far east as Florida, also, undoubtedly, in Texas and Mexico, and possibly as far west as Arizona and Lower California. In winter it has been taken in the Antilles and as far south as Costa Rica.

At first thought it seems odd that a bird so well marked as this should have escaped notice for so many years; but when one takes

into consideration the evanescence of the diagnostic markings, and the inaccessibility of the coastal marshes where the bird breeds, together with the fact that the few ornithologists who seem to have visited them were generally armed only with cameras, it is perhaps not so odd after all.

In assembling the data upon which these notes are based, besides those already mentioned, to whom I am particularly indebted, my thanks are due to Messrs. Stanley C. Arthur, O. Bangs, Howarth S. Boyle, William Brewster, Jonathan Dwight, J. H. Flemming, Harry C. Oberholser, Wilfred H. Osgood, T. S. Palmer, H. S. Swarth, P. A. Taverner, W. E. Clyde Todd, and John E. Thayer.

THE SYSTEMATIC POSITION OF THE RING-NECKED DUCK.

BY N. HOLLISTER.

THE group of fuliguline Ducks now called *Marila* in the American Ornithologists' Union 'Check-List' has had its full share of nomenclatorial shifts and changes, and many schemes have been proposed for its division into genera or subgenera. It has always seemed to me that the question of the number and rank of the named super-specific sections within this group is of little importance in comparison to the error involved in the sequence given the species in the 'Check-List,' where the Canvasback is placed between the Redhead and the Scaups, and the Ring-necked Duck is put at the end of the series in the typical subgenus *Marila*.

From a study of the literature of American Ducks it is evident that the belief prevails that the Ring-necked Duck (*Marila collaris*) is a Scaup, very closely related to the Greater and Lesser Bluebills (*Marila marila* and *M. affinis*), and this error is fostered by the arrangement of the species in the 'Check-List.' One would indeed be led to believe from some accounts that the Ring-neck is not readily distinguished from the Lesser Scaup Duck (*M. affinis*)