A PRESUMED WILD HYBRID BALDPATE × EURASIAN WIGEON

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A drake wigeon with characters intermediate between those of the Baldpate or American Wigeon (*Anas americana*) and the Eurasian Wigeon (*A. penelope*) was obtained in Florida by George N. Lawrence in 1845 and became part of the Smithsonian Institution collection (USNM 10376) in 1858. No further data are available for the specimen, but it was presumably a wild bird.

This historically important specimen has been mentioned at least five times in the North American literature. When collected it was probably the second North American record of a Eurasian Wigeon but was never so reported. The first American specimen was shot on Long Island in 1842 and may not have been preserved (G. N. Lawrence reported to Giraud, 1844: 309). The Florida specimen was described as a typical "*Mareca penelope*" by Baird et al. (1860: 785), but Figure 2, plate 91 (plate 14 of original 1858 edition) was apparently colored from a proper *penelope* "specimen in Mus. Phila. Acad." according to the hand-written annotation in Baird's personal copy in the Smithsonian Institution. Its *americana*-like characters were mentioned briefly without comment by Baird et al. (1884: 518). It was cited as a Florida distributional record by Hasbrouck (1944) and by Howell (1932: 135) who was later quoted by Sprunt (1954: 65).

The Baldpate and Eurasian Wigeon are closely related. The drakes look superficially alike except for head color. Some females are very difficult to separate. The characters of the intermediate drake are compared with those of *A. americana* and *A. penelope* drakes in Table 1.

The intermediacy of the Florida bird suggests that it may be of hybrid origin. If so, and if it was wild, this constitutes only the second known wild hybrid between these two species. The cross is frequently produced in captivity and the hybrids are fertile (Gray, 1958: 18) but Bailey's (1919) presumed hybrid drake from Virginia is apparently the only other wild hybrid recorded.

Both *A. americana* and *A. penelope* vary individually in head color and amount of gray on the axillaries. Out of 44 male Baldpates examined in the U. S. National Museum, 3 have a suggestion of buffish or cream on the cheeks or forehead. One drake *A. americana* taken in Currituck Sound, Virginia in 1931 (USNM 325414) approaches the Eurasian Wigeon in having both crown and cheeks cream, the latter very lightly speckled with black, and heavy black markings on the throat. It has the broad green

TABLE 1

CHARACTERS OF WIGEON DRAKES

	A. americana	USNM 10376	*A. penelope*
Bill	Lower at base	Higher at base	Higher at base
Frontal feathering	Straight	Straight	Forms acute angle
Forehead color	White	Cream	Cream to buff
Color of head	White heavily spotted with black	Pale rufous, lores and cheeks buff	Rufous to chestnut
Postocular stripe	Broad, bright metallic green	Absent, but metallic green spotting prominent behind eye	Absent, but small metallic green spots on entire head, especially near eye
Chin and throat	Same as rest of head	Extremely heavily spotted with black	Mostly black
Back	Vermiculated and washed with reddish brown	Vermiculated and washed with reddish brown	Vermiculated with black, appears gray
Flanks	Vermiculated and heavily washed with brown	Vermiculated and heavily washed with brown	Vermiculated with black
Axilliaries	Mostly white, occasionally lightly vermiculated at tips	Light gray, vermiculated at tips	Heavily vermiculated with gray
Green on speculum	Reduced	Extensive	Extensive

postocular band and other characters of *A. americana*. A male Eurasian Wigeon from Lenkhoran on the Caspian Sea (USNM 116360) has a broad but indistinct metallic green postocular band and a faint reddish brown wash on the back. Whether these characters constitute extremes in normal variability in the species or whether they are due to introgression is unclear. A presumed hybrid Eurasian Wigeon × Teal (*Anas crecca*) showed a head pattern reminiscent of the Lenkhoran specimen (Harrison, 1962) and a captive mating between *A. penelope* and a Chiloe Wigeon (*A. sibilatrix*) produced a hybrid which strikingly resembled the Baldpate (Shore-Bailey, 1918).

The Eurasian Wigeon is not rare in North America where it is generally found associating with *A. americana*. Between 1842 and 1944, the species was seen or collected at least 600 times in the New World (Hasbrouck, 1944). At present, individuals occur almost every year along the east coast (more than 298 records) and less frequently in Alaska (13 records), along the Pacific coast (96 records), and inland (187 records). Birds wintering along the east coast come in part from Iceland, where at least 7 specimens taken from Newfoundland south to the West Indies had been

banded previously (Cooke, 1945; Donker, 1959: 16–20). It may be significant that while *A. americana* has increased on the Atlantic seaboard since 1953, *A. penelope* has decreased in New York and New Jersey (Bull, 1964: 113–114). On the other hand, wintering records of *A. penelope* in Iceland have increased (Gudmundsson, 1951). In the central states, the Eurasian Wigeon is reported mostly in the spring or summer (131 out of 165 dated records) suggesting that either some east coast birds may also come from Siberia or that the main spring migration route is up the Mississippi flyway (Hasbrouck, 1944). There are no banding data to confirm either suggestion but the only records for Amchitka in the Aleutians are in spring (Kenyon, 1961). The large number of *A. penelope* records in North America, including an apparently mated pair on Long Island in March, an Alaskan record on 27 May, and four drakes in Canadian Labrador 13 June, led Forbush (1925: 204) to believe that the species was breeding in North America. Hasbrouck (1944) marshalls evidence showing that the presence of a small local breeding population in arctic Canada is highly likely, probably near Great Slave Lake, as Phillips (1923: 176) also believed. A young wigeon from Fort Rae, originally identified as *A. penelope* (Russell, 1898: 257), is in reality *A. americana* (Preble, 1908: 280). Nelson (1887: 68) thought the Eurasian Wigeon bred in the Aleutian Islands. No nests, however, have been found in Labrador (Todd, 1963: 156), arctic Canada (Godfrey, 1966: 62–63), Alaska (Gabrielson and Lincoln, 1959: 169), or the Aleutians (Kenyon, 1961). The westernmost records of breeding are in Iceland (Timmerman, 1949: 367–368) and the easternmost in Kamchatka (Vaurie, 1965: 115–116), but not in the Commander Islands, where it is regular on spring passage but rare in the fall (Johansen, 1961).

The Baldpate is occasionally reported wintering in Britain, western Europe, and eastern Asia (Witherby et al., 1939: 268), but the easternmost regular breeding of the species is along the west coast of Hudson Bay and in the Great Lakes; the westernmost breeding records are in Alaska (A.O.U., 1957: 79). The Baldpate is omitted from the list of breeding species in Iceland (Timmerman, 1949: 369) as Coburn's (1901) records of breeding there are doubted and have not been subsequently confirmed. Gardsson (1968) lists 11 Iceland records of Baldpate between May and August, but regards them as vagrants rather than breeding birds.

In wigeon, as in all the other well studied ducks of the genus *Anas,* pairing of experienced adults takes place by March on the wintering grounds and the already paired birds migrate to the breeding grounds. Birds less than a year old, on the other hand, usually pair on or near the breeding grounds. Occasional sympatry during the period when pairing could take place is well documented in Alaska (Gabrielson and Lincoln,

1959: 169) and eastern North America (Forbush, 1925: 204). Although still imperfectly known, the courtship displays of the two species are similar (Millais, 1902: 45; Townsend, 1916; Wetmore, 1920; Lorenz, 1953); the main differences cited are in the whistled calls of the drakes. In view of the frequency of the cross in captive birds and the opportunity for mixed pairing in North America and Iceland, it is surprising that more wild hybrids between the two species are not known.

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SUMMARY

A presumed hybrid drake *A. penelope* × *A. americana* was collected in Florida in 1845. This is only the second reported wild hybrid between these two closely related ducks. Some of the great variability in head pattern and axillary color in both species may be the result of introgression. The large number of aviary-bred hybrid wigeon and their apparent rarity in the wild, in spite of some sympatry while pairing takes place, suggest that yet unknown isolating mechanisms function more effectively in the wild than they do in captivity.

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