

## RARE SPECIES DOCUMENTATION

### Records of Vermont Birds

The following form has been prepared to encourage full documentation, when requested, of rare or unseasonal birds in the state of Vermont. These reports are put into a permanent file and should be as detailed as possible. New reports are reviewed annually by the Vermont Bird Records Committee, which evaluates records for their acceptability to future researchers and for inclusion in the state bird list.

Please print or type

**SPECIES:** Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

**NUMBER OBSERVED:** (1)

**OBSERVER MAKING REPORT: OTHER OBSERVERS** (and addresses if available)

J. Eddy Edwards  
85 Courser Road  
Enosburg Falls, VT 05450

Richard Lavallee  
2 Gazebo Road  
Swanton, VT 05488

**LOCATION:** (place, township, county)

Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)  
(Cranberry Pool)  
Swanton, Vermont  
Franklin County

**DATE:**

October 17, 2015

**TIME AND LENGTH OF OBSERVATION:**

9:35 am  
10-15 minutes

**DISTANCES FROM BIRD:** Maximum: 200 yards Minimum: 150 yards

**WEATHER:**

**Wind Direction:** South    **Wind Speed:** 5-10 mph

**Sky Cover:** Partly Cloudy    **Light in relation to observer's position:** Behind the observers

**Temperature:** Not sure of exact temperature but probably in the 50s.

**OPTICAL EQUIPMENT:** (make, power, etc.)

Lecia Televid APO 77mm spotting scope (Edwards)

Kowa spotting scope (Lavallee)

**OBSERVER'S PREVIOUS ACQUAINTANCE WITH THIS SPECIES OR SIMILAR FORMS:**

I have extensive experience with this species and have observed > 75 individual sightings in North America. Most of the observations were from the Sacramento Valley of California when I worked at the Sacramento NWR, however I have also seen Eurasian wigeon in Yukon Delta NWR, Humboldt Bay NWR and Parker River NWR.

I have compiled a collection of Eurasian wigeon and American wigeon study skins (mounts) and individual wings which I keep at the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV. I use these to teach waterfowl identification to new federal wildlife officers starting their careers with the Service. I know how to identify the differences between Eurasian wigeon from American wigeon by wing alone, and annually participate in the Service's Parts Survey (Wing bee) which examines thousands of individual waterfowl wings which are sent to the Service by waterfowl hunters.

Finally I have taken numerous photos of both Eurasian wigeon and American wigeon in both basic and alternate plumages. Some of these images can be found in the 2014 (fall/winter) publication entitled: North American Waterfowl Field Guide (Bosco/Grosz). This new field guide is a joint partnership between the Service and Delta Waterfowl in which more than 150 of my photos appear in the book.

**OTHER DOCUMENTATION:** Photo \_\_\_\_\_ Tape Recording \_\_\_\_\_ Specimen \_\_\_\_\_

If yes to the above, where is this information deposited? \_\_\_\_\_

**HABITAT:** (be as detailed as possible, include associated bird species)

Bird was seen feeding in Cranberry Pool (approximately 500 acres in size) that is in a restricted closed area of Missisquoi NWR. The pool is predominantly managed for wild rice production but does have a component of button bush, pickle weed, burreed, and smartweed. The bird was swimming in a part of the pool that was fairly open from emergent vegetation, thus making the bird easy to observe.

Approximately 12,000 waterfowl were surveyed in the pool during the day the bird was observed. More than 1,000 wigeon were tallied during the survey. Other species in the pool included green-winged teal, northern shoveler, northern pintail, gadwall, American black duck, mallard, blue-winged teal, and ring-necked duck.

**BIRD'S BEHAVIOR:** (feeding actions, manner of flight, displays or interactions, reaction to observer)

The Eurasian wigeon was observed swimming and feeding in the pool. The bird appeared to be the only Eurasian wigeon, but fed in a mixed flock of other dabblers. The bird fed on top of the water and did not dive to collect food.

While observing the bird, it flushed wildly with a group of other mixed waterfowl. The bird was located again about 10 minutes later, by Richard Lavallee (45 yards from the first location it was observed).

**VOCALIZATION:** (song or call)

Since the bird was surrounded by thousands of ducks in the pool it was impossible to hear it individually vocalize.

**DESCRIPTION:** (Describe what you actually saw during the observation. We hope that observers will take field notes during the observation and before consulting field guides, etc. Additional pages with sketches and copies of field notes are encouraged.)

**Relative size and shape:**

Medium size duck. Identical size as American wigeon that was also present in the pool. The bird was larger than green-winged teal but smaller than a northern pintail.

**Head** (crown, cheeks, eye, throat, nape):

Since the bird was in alternative plumage, the head was the first thing that caught my attention. The forehead and crown were blonde giving the "baldpate" appearance. The remainder of the head was a solid rufous color with no hints of green. Distance was too great to determine eye color. Neck was compact and short, not long like a northern pintail.

**Feet and Bill** (shape, color, length):

I was unable to see the feet since the bird was swimming. Bill color was a light pale blue with a black nail. Bill was identically in size to the American wigeon.

**Upper back:**

Light gray overall.

**Lower back and rump:**

The tertial feathers and primary feathers covered up the lower back. Rump was dark (black).

**Wings** (shape, length, markings):

The way the wing was folded against the body, I was unable to see green in the secondary feathers. The white shoulder patch (greater secondary and upper coverts) was partly displayed on the folded wing. Tertial feathers were long (black) and pointed at the tip with white edging. Primaries were shaded a black/brown coloration.

**Breast, belly, flanks, under tail coverts:**

Breast was a solid light pink coloration. Flanks of the bird were predominately light gray except for a white section near the under tail coverts. Under tail coverts were solid black. Belly was not observed due to the bird swimming.

**Tail** (shape, length, markings):

The dark tail was longer and more pointed than most waterfowl species in North America, but not as long as a drake northern pintail.

**IMPORTANT: WHAT SIMILAR SPECIES WERE ELIMINATED WHEN MAKING THIS IDENTIFICATION AND HOW WAS THIS BIRD DIFFERENT?**

**Green-winged teal:**

Was eliminated based overall size which is much smaller. The bird did not have a green mask in the head and bill color favored a wigeon compare to a green-winged teal. Direct comparison between the Eurasian wigeon and green-winged teal was noted during the sighting.

**American wigeon:**

Was eliminated based on no green mask in the head, no white forehead or crown, and the lack of light gray on the bird's back. Direct comparison between the Eurasian wigeon and American wigeon was noted during the sighting.

**American wigeon x Eurasian wigeon hybrid:**

Was eliminated because the head was a solid rufous color wiith no hints of green in the mask near the eye.

**COMMENTS:** (was age or sex determined?, etc.)

The bird was a drake. Without bird in hand, it is nearly impossible to determine if it was a hatch year (juvenile) or after hatch year (adult).

This report was written from notes taken during \_\_\_\_\_ immediately after \_\_\_\_\_ the observation, or written from memory X (please attach copies of notes if available)

**NAME (print):** J. Eddy Edwards

**SIGNATURE** (not req'd) \_\_\_\_\_

**MAILING ADDRESS:** 85 Courser Road, Enosburg Falls, Vermont 05450

**DATE:** October 22, 2014.

Return electronically (preferred) to: [vbrc@vtecostudies.org](mailto:vbrc@vtecostudies.org) or mail to: Vermont Bird Records Committee, Vermont Center for Ecostudies, PO Box 420, Norwich, VT 05055