

Apparent Garganey Sighting
Great Salt Lake
October 27, 1996
Submitted By Terry Sadler

On the morning of October 27, 1996 I observed what appeared to be a female Garganey along the Antelope Island Causeway in the Great Salt Lake. The duck was standing in very shallow water on the shoreline of the causeway approx. 2 miles west of the entrance station. I was able to observe the bird from a distance of 20 meters for 30 minutes using both 8.5x44 binoculars and a window mounted 15 to 45 variable power spotting scope.

The duck had a strong facial pattern: dark crown, contrasting white supercillium, dark eye line, pale line below the dark eye stripe and then a dusky cheek band below this. Near the front of the face, just above the base of the bill, was a clearly defined pale spot. There was no eye ring visible and the forehead had a gradual slope much like that of a Blue-winged Teal.

Other field marks included a white throat, rusty gray breast and a white belly which contrasted with the breast, flanks and speckled or spotted undertail coverts. The bill, legs and feet were all the same uniform dark gray color. The back and wing coverts were dark gray feathers sharply with contrasting white edges. Tertiary feathers were similar.

This bird was distinguished from a Blue-winged Teal by the striking facial pattern. While Green-winged Teal show a facial pattern it is not as pronounced as seen in the bird observed. The strong supercillium, dark eye line and dusky cheek band were very distinct as was the pale spot near the base of the bill. Adult Blue-wings have yellow legs. Also the grayish upper wing coverts and tertiary feathers in Blue-wings do not show dark gray with sharply contrasting white edges.

The duck observed was a different shaped bird than a Green-winged Teal with a larger more sloping forehead and larger bill. White belly contrasting the flanks and breast was more distinct than seen in Green-winged Teal..

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31 January

Dear Terry,

Your teal description from the Antelope Causeway last October does sound pretty good for Garganey. You cover the main distinctions between it and a Blue-winged or Cinnamon, at least for a bird at rest. The stronger facial pattern and dark cheek bar are shared by Green-winged, and some birders might misidentify that species rather than B-w/Cin., but your description seems to eliminate that species as well. The combination of facial pattern, overall shape, leg color, and distinct pale edgings to the tertials, etc., all sound good for Garganey.

If there is a fly in the ointment, it is only that you didn't see the bird in flight, or at least with the wing outstretched. The upperwing pattern on Garganey is quite distinct, both for males and females, as is the underwing, and noting details of those would have really helped to solidify the record even more. Given this was apparently a single-observer first state record (?), such additional information would really help. But, again, what you *did* see all sounds pretty good.

There are a few fall records now of Garganey for California for October. I took pictures of one such bird we had in CA in fall 1989 that appeared in *American Birds*. Spring records as well of course. There is also a spring record for Arizona. So the species certainly has the potential to occur in the interior West. While no doubt casual at best, I am sure most females and fall birds are escaping detection, and probably occur a bit more regularly than the few records to date suggest.

Hope this is of some help.

Good birding!!



Paul Lehman