

Green-winged Teal

Anas crecca

The small, fast-flying Green-winged Teal is Vermont's smallest dabbling duck. This duck nests primarily across the boreal forest from Alaska to Labrador and south into the northern United States. It is found in smaller numbers in the Prairie Pothole Region of the north-central United States and south-central Canada (Johnson 1995). In the Northeast, the Green-winged Teal is not a common species. It breeds in northern parts of New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, as well as at a few coastal sites in Massachusetts and New York (Johnson 1995). In Vermont, Green-winged Teal are far more common in migration than during the breeding season.

The Green-winged Teal nests on the ground in dense herbaceous vegetation adjacent to ponds, often in wooded areas. Beaver ponds are frequently used as nesting sites (Baldassarre and Bolen 1994). In the Prairie Pothole Region, nesting often occurs in sedge meadows (Johnson 1995).

Green-winged Teal decreased by 70 percent in blocks surveyed during both atlas periods. No breeding confirmations were documented during the second atlas, and only seven records were reported. During the first atlas, breeding was confirmed in a total of 10 blocks (4 were non-priority blocks) with most activity at the northern and southern ends of Lake Champlain. Although likely never a common breeder in the state, the lack of breeding activity during the second atlas is perplexing.

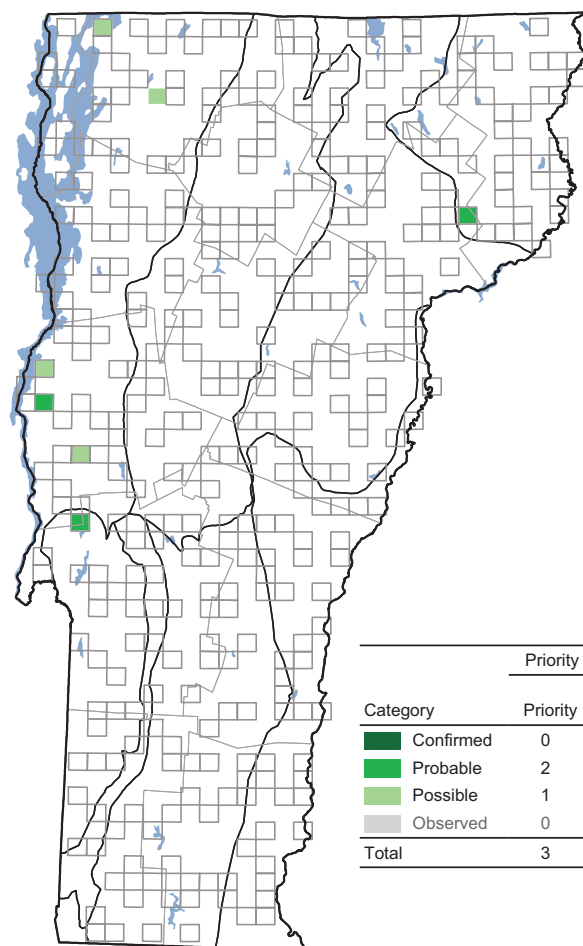
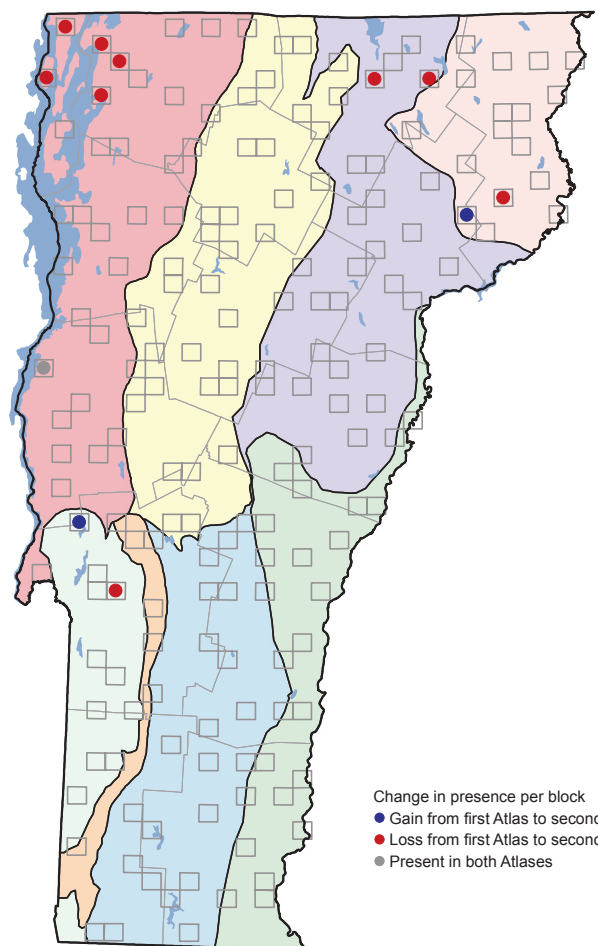
Green-winged Teal populations in the USFWS eastern survey region averaged 250,000 (from 231,000 to 260,000) during the second atlas period (USFWS 2008), a population level about 9 percent greater than the average population in this region since 1990. The mid-continental population has steadily increased since 1962, and since 1993 has exceeded the target population of 1.8 million established in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP 2004).

Why the Green-winged Teal breeding population has declined in Vermont is unclear, especially while the continent-wide population is increasing. Johnson (1995) suggested that the population was able to increase over the



past forty years because habitat remained intact north of the continent's primary agricultural areas, where most of the population nests. Populations in the southern portion of the breeding range may be susceptible to agricultural disturbances, particularly the increase in row crops such as corn or soybeans and early mowing of hayfields (Troy et al. 2005). Because the species typically nests in forested landscapes, maturation of forests in the Northeast would be expected to improve nesting habitat. Data from second atlases in both New York and Ontario illustrate this dichotomy. In Ontario, the Green-winged Teal has shown a non-significant increase in all regions of the province (Cadman et al. 2007). By contrast, in New York, the species has declined by 45 percent (McGowan and Corwin 2008). As other northeastern states complete their second atlases, it will be interesting to see whether this pattern holds, which would suggest latitudinal changes in distribution. Currently, the Green-winged Teal is a Species of Special Concern in Vermont, based on the species' small and dwindling breeding population in the state. Although the species has not been given special conservation status in neighboring states, targeted surveys would lend more certainty as to its nesting status in Vermont.

ALLAN STRONG



Category	Priority Block Count	
	Priority 1	Priority 1 & 2
Confirmed	0	0
Probable	2	3
Possible	1	3
Observed	0	0
Total	3	6

CHANGE IN DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN ATLASES

Biophysical Region	First Atlas	Second Atlas	Change	% Change
Champlain Valley	6	1	- 5	- 83
Northeastern Highlands	1	1	+ 0	+ 0
Northern Green Mountains	0	0	+ 0	+ 0
Northern Vermont Piedmont	2	0	- 2	- 100
Southern Green Mountains	0	0	+ 0	+ 0
Southern Vermont Piedmont	0	0	+ 0	+ 0
Taconic Mountains	1	1	+ 0	+ 0
Vermont Valley	0	0	+ 0	+ 0
Totals	10	3	- 7	- 70

DISTRIBUTION IN CURRENT ATLAS

Biophysical Region	% of region species occupies	% of all records for this species found in region
Champlain Valley	5	67
Northeastern Highlands	2	17
Northern Green Mountains	0	0
Northern Vermont Piedmont	0	0
Southern Green Mountains	0	0
Southern Vermont Piedmont	0	0
Taconic Mountains	4	17
Vermont Valley	0	0