

WV BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT FORM

Please Type or Print Legibly

Species:	Eurasian Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)	Number: (leave blank)			
Location:	Belle Babb Lane, Grant Co.	Date:	3/19/15	Time:	12:45
Bird Seen:	3/18/15	To:	at least 3/22/15	Age/Sex:	Adult Male

Description: In lieu of physical material substantiating a record (e.g., specimen, diagnostic photograph, vocal recordings) a complete written description can serve as verification for the biological record. Please be as thorough as your field notes allow. Do not feel constrained by the space provided. Additional supporting descriptions/illustrations may be attached. Note that photographs or recordings WILL NOT BE RETURNED but become part of the permanent record for the observation.

Structure: (Overall size and shape plus details on the head, feet, tail, etc.)

Medium sized dabbling duck. Size was slightly larger than Wood Ducks and smaller than Mallards, both of which were present for direct comparison. Head shape was rounded with relatively small spatulate bill. Bill was pale blue-gray with blackish nail. Body size was average for a dabbling, tapering to a pointed tail while swimming. Distance was too great to make out any fine detail of the feet when they were briefly seen.

Plumage: (e.g. markings, coloration, molt)

Forehead was creamy buff, extending as a midcrown stripe extending just posterior to the eye. Head was a dark rusty color showing very little mottling. Rusty head coloration ended cleanly at the neck. Breast was grayish showing rosy tinting. The rosy tinting does not extend to the pale gray flanks. Back and wings also gray showing dark wingtips. Undertail is black separated from pale gray flanks by white. White specular patch sometimes visible while the bird was swimming.

Description of any vocalizations, if heard:

No vocalizations were heard.

Description of behavior:

Bird was seen swimming and feeding by dabbling amongst a group of other dabbling ducks.

Habitat: (General and Specific)

Habitat was an overflowing backwater from a small creek adjacent to a man made reservoir. The backwater had flooded some deciduous woods and the birds were happily feeding amongst the submerged vegetation. Specifically, this bird was seen just west of the small man made reservoir along the eastern end of Belle Babb Road in Grant County.

Circumstances of observation: (Include details of distance to bird, optics employed, lighting in relation to observer and the bird)

Bird was seen in good light and with largely unobstructed views for a good portion of the viewing. Viewing was made through Kowa TSN 883 20-60x Scope. Lighting was mostly bright overcast conditions. Viewing was looking almost directly south so sun glare was not an issue. Some haze was present but not enough to truly distort scope views. Bird was viewed at a distance of approximately 500 feet as estimated from Google Maps. Closer views were not possible given private property.

Previous experience with this species:

Have seen Eurasian Wigeon and hybrids maybe 1-2 dozen times along the Eastern coast and in nearby states.

Experiences with similarly appearing species which are eliminated by your description: (Please be specific)

Extensive experience with all other common/expected waterfowl. Diving ducks eliminated based on behavior and bill shape. Teal species have longer bills and differ greatly in plumage. Closest species would be Green-winged teal and this bird showed different head shape and pattern than GWTE amongst other differences. Mallards and American Black Duck have strikingly different plumage and larger bills. Wood Ducks are unmistakable in their plumage characteristics. Gadwall are more dull overall. Northern Pintail are larger and more elegant with more brownish head coloration, longer tails and white breast. American Wigeon and hybrids are the most likely confounders. Head and flank plumage eliminate pure American Wigeon. Elimination of hybrids will be addressed in discussion.

Other observers: (Names, Addresses, E-mail please)

If the others agree with your identification they can sign this form here. If they care to provide additional details they can submit their own report.

Frederick Atwood was the original finder ([REDACTED] g)

Terry Bronson was present with me during my observation ([REDACTED])

Numerous other respected birders throughout the state saw the bird as well.

Additional observer signature:

Additional observer signature:

Additional observer signature:

Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and especially how did these influence this description:

Sibley and National Geographic Guides used for confirmation.

How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?

22 months

Name:

Derek D. Courtney, MD

Address:

Date:

Signature:

Mail to: WV Bird Records Committee
Attn: Wil Hershberger
170 Stallion Ct.
Hedgesville, WV 25427
Or E-mail to:
wilhershberger@mac.com

Please use the space below to add any appropriate details you feel were missing from the above form or to expand on any answers whose allotted space was insufficient for a complete response:

As discussed earlier, the main confounders for Eurasian Wigeon identification are American Wigeon and hybrids between American and Eurasian Wigeon. Thankfully, this bird was an adult male in clean breeding plumage. This makes separation from pure American Wigeon much simpler. Most notably the head pattern and coloration easily eliminate American Wigeon from discussion. Other plumage characteristics back up this fact as well. But when dealing with vagrant waterfowl, some care must be taken to eliminate hybrids as well. Structurally, both Wigeon species are similar, so we look to plumage markers for clues. First, we look at the head. This bird shows relatively uniform rusty red coloration throughout the sides of the head. Furthermore, it shows no significant mottling, shading or pattern. Hybrid Wigeon often show some grayness to the cheek and rear, and show some mottling reflective of the American Wigeon genes. The median stripe on this bird is also a buff cream color which terminates just posterior to the eye. Hybrid wigeon will show a lighter stripe color extending further to the posterior of the crown again reflective of American Wigeon influence. Flank coloration is also another key means of separation. Here the bird shows clean pale gray flanks with no evidence of the pinkish hues noticeable on the breast. American Wigeon have warmer, brownish flanks with evidence of the pinkish tones from the breast extending through the flanks. This bird shows no such influence. Mantle coloration shows a similar if less obvious distinction between Eurasian and American Wigeon again with this bird lying squarely in the Eurasian spectrum. Origin must also be considered when examining vagrant waterfowl. While provenance can rarely be securely established, multiple observers saw no evidence of leg banding. Behaviorally, this bird acted similarly to the other migrant waterfowl in the area. Timing fits for sightings of vagrants. It was also not pinioned and moved on when water conditions changed as did the majority of other waterfowl. Natural vagrancy thus seems most likely.

