

Ringed Teal

Scientific Name: *Callonetta leucophrys*

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae



The Ringed Teal is a small duck of South American forests. It is the only species of its genus *Callonetta*. The male and female remain colorful throughout the year. The drake has a rich chestnut back, pale grey flanks and a salmon-colored breast speckled in black. A black band runs from the top of its head down to the nape. Females have an olive-brownish back with the head blotched and striated in white, with pencilled barring on a pale chest and belly. Both have a dark tail, a contrasting pale rump, and a distinctive white patch on the wing. Their bills are grey, and legs and feet are pink in both sexes. Their contact calls are a cat-like *mee-oowing* in females and *peewoo* in drakes. Most Ringed Teals average 14-15 inches long, with a 28 inch wingspan. They typically weigh 11-12 ounces. Ringed Teals also have webbed toes with long, pointed claws that specialize in allowing the birds to sit on tree branches. These specialized toes are unique, as most waterfowl cannot easily remain perched on tree branches

Range

The Ringed Teal breeds in north-west Argentina and Paraguay and they are also found in Bolivia, Brazil and Uruguay.

Habitat

Their habitats include tropical, swampy forests and marshy clearings in well-wooded lowlands, as well as secluded pools and small streams.

Gestation

The eggs are incubated for an average of 29 days.

Litter

Females typically lay 6-12 eggs that are white in color. The bonding of the pair makes reproduction very efficient so that by the end of a breeding season it is possible for a pair to have laid and hatched up to 24 offspring.

Reproduction

Upon reaching sexual maturity, Ringed Teals form strong pair bonds easily which typically last a single breeding season but can last for their lifetime. A pair bond begins with the male courting the female. In general, courting consists of a lot of preening, flashing the iridescent green patches on the wings, and swimming in figure eights around the female of interest while vocalizing. Once a pair bond is solidified, mating occurs in the water. Nests are usually created out of hollow holes in tree cavities and are lined with down. The females tend to be the nest defender, while the male will defend the female against other males and potential predators throughout their pair bond. Both male and female participate in incubating the eggs. The chicks are precocial and are mostly developed upon hatching. They have a layer of down feathers which are not waterproof, can walk, function, and essentially feed themselves. Since the chicks spend most of their time the water, they rub on the parents, and in doing so, gain the essential oils needed for waterproofing.

Behavior

Both male and female play a large role in raising and defending the chicks until they fledge at 50-55 days old. Until fledging, the chicks and parents stay in a close group and the chicks quickly learn how to forage, swim efficiently and avoid predators. If the parents have a second clutch of eggs, the male continues to care for the first chicks while the female incubates the second clutch. Since Ringed Teals are “dabblers” they tend to submerge only their heads to “up-end” their bodies near the surface to eat.

Wild Diet

They tend to feed on plant and insect material near the surface of the water.