



Cape Teal

Teeleend

Anas capensis

The Cape Teal is concentrated in the drier parts of the Free State and Transvaal highveld, the Karoo, the Makgadikgadi pans area of Botswana, and the central and coastal parts of Namibia. It extends into Angola and eastward through the drier savannas of East Africa to Ethiopia, the Sudan, southern Libya and Chad.

It is a common resident and partial migrant in the southwestern Cape Province, mainly in the coastal lowlands; over 2000 birds have been recorded at the Strandfontein Sewage Works (3418BA) (Hockey *et al.* 1989) and at De Hoop Vlei (3420CA) (Winterbottom 1974c). It is widely but sparsely distributed in the Karoo, the maximum number of birds recorded being 200 at Britstown (3023DA) (Winterbottom 1974c). In the Free State it occurs mainly in the west and is locally fairly common in suitable habitat, chiefly in the dry season (Geldenhuis 1976a; Earlé & Grobler 1987), but it has taken to the mine dams of the Free State goldfields where over 1500 birds have been recorded (Winterbottom 1974c). In KwaZulu-Natal it is primarily estuarine and scarce inland (Cyrus & Robson 1980). In the Transvaal it is mainly a highveld species in small numbers: on the Witwatersrand numbers seldom exceed 200 birds (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). The population in southeastern Botswana is continuous with that in the Transvaal. In northern Botswana and western Zimbabwe, it is found on brackish pans in the Makgadikgadi region and along the Nata River into western Matabeleland and Hwange National Park (Smithers 1964; Irwin 1981). It has increased in Zimbabwe where it now occurs regularly and breeds in varying numbers along the central watershed to Harare (1731CC) (A.J. Tree pers. comm.). It is an uncommon visitor to Swaziland and a rare vagrant to southern Mozambique (Clancey 1971a; Parker 1994).

The Cape Teal is unlikely to be confused with any other species of duck because of its overall pale plumage, uniform head pattern and pinkish red bill. The speculum is uniquely patterned, making identification in flight easy.

Habitat: It frequents salt pans, estuaries and coastal lagoons in the southwestern Cape Province (Hockey *et al.* 1989). At inland sites it favours brackish or saline pans and dams, but has adapted to sewage works. In the Free State, numbers increased as the salinity of pans increased from 4723 ppm to over 8000 ppm (Winterbottom 1974c).

Movements: Birds ringed in the southwestern Cape Province have been recovered in Namibia and Mozambique

(Hockey *et al.* 1989) and birds from Barberspan (2625DA) have been recovered in the southern Cape Province (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). More than 5% of recoveries indicate movements of over 1000 km (Oatley & Prÿs-Jones 1986). The models, however, do not indicate any clear-cut patterns of migration. **Breeding:** Winterbottom (1974c) summarized egg-laying data for this species throughout southern Africa. As with many duck species, egg-laying can occur virtually throughout the year, but mainly during winter to early spring (June–November), although Tarboton *et al.* (1987b) reported a December–March peak in the Transvaal. In Botswana, egg-laying peaks April–August (N.J. Skinner *in litt.*).

The atlas data also show breeding throughout the year, with a winter/spring peak in most Zones. The models show two peaks (February–March and July–September) in Zone 3; these are probably a result of different peaks in the coastal winter-rainfall region and the summer-rainfall region further inland.

Interspecific relationships: The Cape Teal may sometimes be found in mixed flocks of other waterfowl.

Historical distribution and conservation: Always scarce (Stark & Sclater 1906), the Cape Teal appears not to have increased greatly in numbers since the turn of the 20th century, though its range may have increased to include the eastern Cape Province, KwaZulu-Natal and Zimbabwe, from which regions it was said not to have been recorded (Stark & Sclater 1906). The distribution map of the Cape Teal in southern Africa presented by Winterbottom (1974c) showed a similar pattern to that presented here.

Macleán & Darroll (1986) stated that 'because of its relatively remote habitats, the Cape Teal does not pose a conservation problem at present.' It has benefited from the provision of dams and sewage ponds.

G.L. Maclean

Recorded in 871 grid cells, 19.2%
Total number of records: 9909
Mean reporting rate for range: 13.2%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



