



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Hunting News

Conservation and Recreation

## Teal season opens Saturday



Iowa's first duck hunting season begins September 1 with the 16 day teal-only season. These fast flying early migrants use the first cool spell in late August as a sign to start heading south.

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## Location Location Location

Teal are most common on open wetlands with shallow water and/or abundant emergent and submergent vegetation.

Scouting to find concentrations of teal will greatly increase the likelihood of success. Teal migration is weather dependent so pay attention to weather forecasts. Scouting shortly before your hunt can increase success and reveal other waterfowl species using the wetland.

Avoid wooded wetlands where wood ducks are more common.

Use the sun to your advantage. Select hides with the sun at your back or over your shoulder so ducks are easier to ID. DO NOT set up so that you are looking or shooting into the sun. Ducks are harder to ID and hunters are more visible.

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## Know your ducks

Overall, Iowa hunters can identify ducks and do not shoot at ducks other than teal. Over the course of a three season study, Iowa hunters correctly identified ducks other than teal 94 percent of the time. Harvest during the previous teal seasons varied based on weather conditions and season lengths. In years when the peak teal migration occurred during teal season, the corresponding harvest was high. Years with warm and stagnant September weather resulted in lower harvest.

Only teal can be legally harvested during the teal season. Blue-winged teal will be the most common teal species in Iowa in September, but green-winged teal will also be present.

Other duck species will be flying around the marsh and to the untrained eye some can be confused with teal. The following distinguishing characteristics can help hunters identify ducks on the wing.

## Blue-winged Teal



Small, quick in twisting flocks flying low across marsh

Blue shoulder on wing

Females have distinctive yak-yak-yak call while males whistle

## Green-winged teal with blue-winged teal



Smallest duck on marsh

Mixed in flocks with blue-winged teal

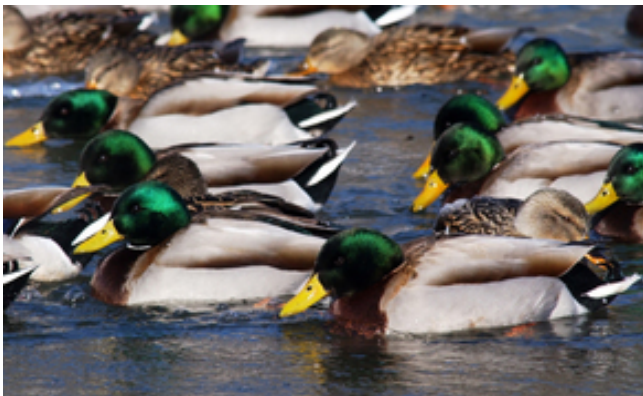
Green speculum on the wing

Females quack while males whistle or peep

Most common species other than teal are mallard, wood duck and northern shoveler

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## Mallard



“Big ducks” largest duck common in Iowa in September.

Females quack, while males give a slow raspy raeb call

Often fly higher over the marsh than teal

Blue speculum with white trim

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## Wood Duck



Closest in size to blue-winged teal

Squeak or squeal

Hold head in line or below body

Both sexes have a square tail, while females have white eye ring and males have a crested head

Photo below is wood ducks silhouetted against the twilight sky



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## Northern Shoveler

May fly in flocks with blue-winged teal

Have distinctive “shovel” shaped bill

Blue shoulder on wing

Larger than blue-winged teal, but not as acrobatic in flight

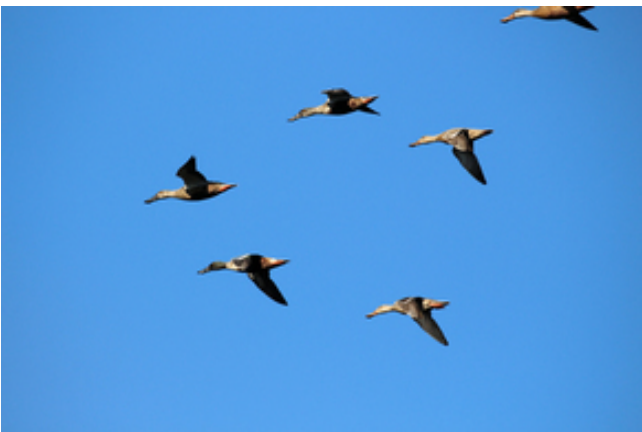


Photo courtesy of Carter Oliver.



*Photo courtesy of Lowell Washburn.*

Photo courtesy of Lowell Washburn



Shoveler (red arrow) with teal. Photo courtesy of Seth Maddox, Alabama Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources

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Less common species that are sometimes confused with teal are female hooded mergansers, pintails and grebes.

## **Hooded Merganser**

Crested head

White secondaries on the wing

Not very acrobatic flyers

Photo courtesy of Lowell Washburn



## Northern pintail



Long slender neck and wings in flight

Slightly smaller than a mallard

Males give a raspy whistled whee note, while females give a gravelly kuk-kuk noise

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## Grebes (non-game species)

Generally seen swimming around the marsh as opposed to flying

Commonly observed diving for food

Short pointed beak