

BLUE-WINGED TEAL

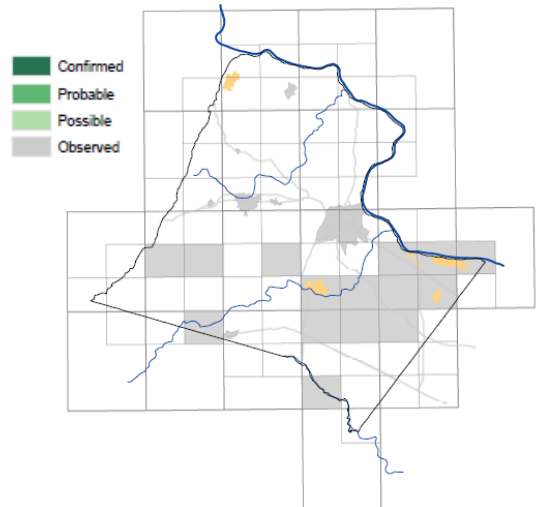
Anas discors

Occurrence: uncommon migrant, rare winter visitor

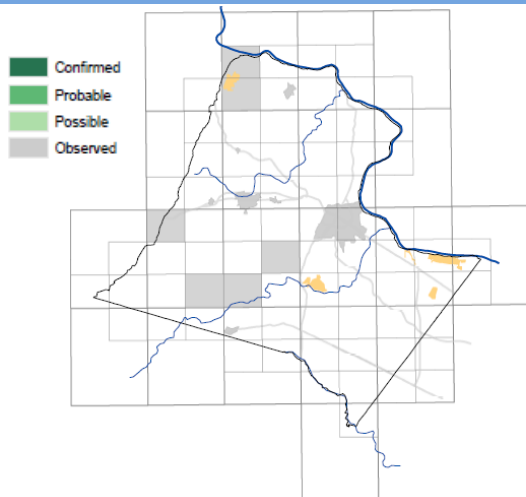
Southerly migration period: October 10 - November 13

Northerly migration period: March 21 - May 2

One of the smallest dabbling ducks, the Blue-winged Teal is usually found swimming through emergent vegetation in marshes and shallow ponds. The male in breeding plumage is easily recognized by its dark bluish-gray head with a large white crescent behind its bill and white hip patch. The large blue wing patch normally shows only in flight. Females and males in non-breeding plumage show a tight, uniform pattern of brown feathers with black centers. Blue-winged Teal were recorded in about one-fifth of the atlas blocks, mostly in southeastern Loudoun where there are many water bodies. The majority of sightings occurred in April, however, 2 atypical summer sightings were documented. Reports of Blue-winged Teal on two Central Loudoun CBCs indicate that, though rare, it may linger in Loudoun during mild winters. Breeding is concentrated heavily in the prairie pothole region of the northern Great Plains and central Canada, but extends through most of the U.S., absent only in the southeast and far southwest of the country. This species is the second most abundant duck in North America.



Written by Bill Brown



GOLDEN EAGLE

Aquila chrysaetos

Occurrence: rare migrant and winter visitor

Earliest fall sighting: September 19

Latest winter sighting: December 28

The Golden Eagle is a raptor of impressive size, with a wingspan of 6-8 feet, legs feathered to the toes, a small head, and dark brown plumage with golden feathers on the back of its head and neck. Juvenile Golden Eagles have white patches at the base of the tail and under the wings. The female is larger than the male, and pairs are monogamous, often bonding for life. Golden Eagles primarily hunt small mammals such as rabbits and squirrels, but they will also feed on deer carrion in winter.

During Atlas 2, Golden Eagles were observed in 6 blocks in western Loudoun, with three quarters of the sightings at Snickers Gap Hawkwatch in Bluemont 1 during fall migration. They were reported on only 1 of the past 20 Central Loudoun CBCs (2011). The Golden Eagles in Virginia are part of an Eastern population, numbering roughly 5,000 birds, that breed in northeastern Canada, migrate down the central Appalachians, and winter along heavily forested slopes of the Appalachian chain. This population is thought to be stable.

Written by Christine Perdue



NORTHERN BOBWHITE

Colinus virginianus

Occurrence: occasional breeder and year-round resident

Earliest/latest breeding confirmations: fewer than 5 atlas confirmations, see account for details

Populations of this once-common breeder in Loudoun have plummeted in recent decades. The Northern Bobwhite is now about as rarely encountered as a dairy farm in Loudoun, where its loud, upward-inflected whistling of its name, *Bob-White!* was once a familiar sound. This bird provides one of the most dramatic changes from Atlas 1, as shown by a loss of 29 blocks from Atlas 1 to Atlas 2. Of the 19 blocks with breeding evidence in Atlas 2, only 1 block had confirmed breeding (Middleburg 3, in late June 2013).

While it is a year-round resident, only 3 of the 35 reports occurred outside of the May 15 – August 15 window, perhaps due in part to their lack of vocalization then. The Northern Bobwhite was reported in 5 of the past 20 Central Loudoun CBCs, with all reports prior to 2005. Reasons for the bobwhite's decline include habitat loss, changes in agriculture, and fire suppression. Its IUCN status is "Near Threatened". Efforts are underway in many eastern states to bring back the Northern Bobwhite through reintroduction of native ground cover, controlled burning, and management of upland pine forests.

The bobwhite, or "quail," has always been more easily heard than seen, as its handsome dappled plumage provides excellent camouflage. Intricately patterned in rufous, brown, black, and white, the male has a bold head pattern with a slight crest and white throat; the female's throat and eye stripe are buffy. This small gamebird is plump with rounded wings, short tail, and very small bill. It forages in small coveys in brushy habitat and overgrown fields, flushing suddenly if alarmed; it also likes open pine or pine/hardwood forests.

Where conditions are good, bobwhites make up for their short lifespan (less than 6 years) by producing two to three broods totaling 25 or more offspring. They nest on the ground, which may be partially responsible for their decline. Young are highly precocial, walking and foraging within hours of hatching. Bobwhites feed on seeds and leaves, as well as insects during the breeding season.

Written by Mary Ann Good

