

September teal

Early season gives waterfowlers a tune-up

After fetching it, a Labrador retriever presents a blue-winged teal to his master. Alligators remain very active during warm Septembers in southern Alabama. In places where people might see alligators, leave the dogs home in September.

Photo by John N. Felsher



BY JOHN N. FELSHER

A harbinger of fall, blue-winged teal breed farther south and migrate much earlier than most ducks. After a brief stop in Alabama, most bluewings continue down to Mexico, Central or South America to winter. By the time the regular Alabama waterfowl season opens on Nov. 29, most bluewings probably already passed through the state.

“Teal are among the first nesters and breeders on the northern prairies, so they are the first waterfowl to migrate,” explained Seth Maddox, the migratory bird

biologist for the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. “Teal usually arrive in Alabama between the first and second weeks of September. The peak of the migration usually occurs in the second or third week of September.”

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, biologists estimated the 2019 blue-winged teal population at 5.43 million, down 16 percent from 6.45 million in 2018. However, bluewings remain six percent above the long-term average. Green-winged teal numbers came in at

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