

# ON TWO HYBRID DUCKS

IN COUNT NINNI'S COLLECTION AT VENICE

BY

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**Hybrid between the Wigeon and Pintail.**

***Mareca penelope* L. × *Dafla acuta* L.**

(N<sup>o</sup> 264 ♂ ad., March 27<sup>th</sup> 1874. Venetian Estuary).

Wing-coverts light grey slightly darker towards the body with a whitish edge at the top more distinct in the medians, ending with a black band on the last row washed with rather light buff; secondaries gilt-green with a purple shade on the two anterior thirds of the outer web, velvet-black on the other third and edged at the top with whitish-buff; the green forms on the wing, when folded, a speculum limited anteriorly by a buffish-black and posteriorly by a velvet-black band edged with whitish buff; tertials inwardly brown, here and there shaded with black, especially near the shaft, outwardly grey-pearl near the shaft, there is besides a velvet-black band longways, surrounded by whitish-grey which in the outer ones is spotted with black; they all have a dark brown top, except the former which has a white edge all round the top of the feather, this edge is slightly buff on the outer side; wing, in the inner side, like the Wigeon.

Bill like Pintail in colour, it seems black on the ridge and on the top and lead-blue on the sides; irides hazel;

forehead and crown as far as the nape, of a buffish tint mixed with brown and black, the bases of the feathers being of this tint and in some also the middle of them, this colour is slightly vinaceous towards the forehead, this band is equal, as to space, to that of ♂ Pintail and it is relieved by the colour and design of the other parts of the head; throat and sides of neck dark-black with a velvety-tint of metallic-green, here and there appears, if attentively observed, a brownish hue, the feathers being black only at the top, brownish in the middle and whitish at the bases; nape velvety-black gloss on the middle, on the sides and in all the extension metallic-green with slight purplish shades extended also on the sides of head and round the eye; the head has two large spots: the first, the larger, is diffused on the cheeks occupying all the space between the eye, cheeks and bill; the second, instead, is extended only around the auricular region and not very low; these spots are divided by a brownish-black band, with few shades, which starts from the eye and is united to the dark colour of the sides of neck; the two spots are yellowish-white with small brownish dots round the bill, as for the remainder they are unicoloured; scapulars blackish with whitish zig-zags more visible on the longer ones and with a large velvety-black spot towards the top on the outer webs, the central part all along the feather in the larger ones is brownish and the black spot on the outer web is further from the apical part; the zig-zag colour on the posterior centre of the neck is very delicate and resembles rather that of Pintail, as is also that on the back and rump, whilst, instead, the upper tail-coverts are of the same tint as that observed in many semi-adult specimens of Wigeons; the zig-zags on the sides of breast and flanks are here and there interrupted by a vinaceous hue as is commonly seen in the ♂ Wigeon; sides and fore-neck and part of breast vinaceous-pink, lighter at the top of feathers, so that the colour seems undulated, the tint is richer on the neck and sides while in the middle the lighter and almost whitish-pink which occupies the

apical part of the feathers is more visible and the colour here is still more undulated; no black spots on the breast, only a few little lines on the upper part of neck, lines more visible on the sides; part of breast and abdomen with slight brownish little lines not very distinct like the Pintail; and like the latter it has also zig-zags on the sides of abdomen; the lateral feathers of vent and of under tail-coverts are white slightly yellow, this colour, as in the ♂ Pintail, forms a space and is seen very clearly, only not so richly tinted; under tail-coverts black with some feathers edged with white or entirely white with brownish spots in the middle; the longer upper tail-coverts black on the outer side and near the shaft also inwardly, white inwardly, but where near the shaft the two tints would meet, there is a light buffish hue; primaries darker outwardly towards the top; tail-feathers pearlsh-grey edged with greyish-white except the two central ones which are longer and like those of ♂ Wigeon, to which species the tail resembles very much. Total length about 23 inches; wing 11.3; tail 4.3; bill from forehead 1.85; tarsus 1.57; middle toe and claw 2.08.

This beautiful bird, stuffed by Count Nimmi, is easily recognizable as a hybrid between the Wigeon and Pintail, being in fact the intermedium between these two species. It has like the Pintail, the long slender neck, the bill, the colour of pileum, and of the whole wing except the metallic tint of speculum, the black space on some of the longer scapulars, the colour of lower belly and space of the sides of vent and of under tail-coverts; it has, like the Wigeon, the hue of breast and lower fore-neck, the zig-zags on the sides of breast mixed with vinaceous tint, the metallic colour of the speculum, that of the tail and under tail-coverts (see semi-ad. ♂ Wigeon). Remarkable are the two yellowish-white spots on the sides of the head and the total absence of the two white stripes on each side of hind-neck (see ♂ Pintail).

This hybrid is the second between Wigeon and Pintail caught in Italy; the first was described together with a

coloured plate by Mr. Camillo Dal Fiume (1), it was killed in the marshes of Rovigo and is kept in the Collection of « Accademia dei Concordi » at Rovigo. This specimen is not quite adult, from the short description given by Dal Fiume and from the plate, I think it resembles our specimen very much, only it differs in colour on the forehead, crown, nape and round the eye which is of a rich red-bay as the description says, while from the plate it would appear brownish; the head has not the two spots, but instead a large space of an *isabelline* tint, which principally occupies the sides of head, under eye, partly the sides of neck and lores; the wing-speculum is also different being a shady dark-green edged anteriorly with cinnamon, posteriorly with black. However judging from plate they are very much alike; I saw some years ago the specimen at Rovigo and there is no doubt on its identity.

Other hybrids of Wigeon and Pintail were described by my friend A. Suchetet (2) of Rouen, they are however very rare and only five would really be authentic, among these he mentions the two specimens caught in Italy, that described by Mr. Dal Fiume and the one of which I am now speaking, which belongs to the Correr Museum, the latter after a communication he had from me; Mr. Suchetet (3) is astonished that these specimens present green tints above the eye in the direction of the nape and thinks to find some connexion with the American Wigeon (*Mareca americana*), he adds however, that some authors state that there are Wigeons with such tints but which he has never seen. This is very singular, for these Wigeons are very common, nay, I believe that when they are quite adult they are always seen with this character and that it is more or less developed according to their age. The following are the principal types I have had occasion to observe:

a. Specimen ♂ very old killed by me in the lake of the

(1) *Atti Soc. Ital. Sc. nat.*, XXXIV, 3<sup>o</sup> pag. 281-84 con tav. col. (1895).

(2) *Les Oiseaux hybr. renc. à l'état sauvage (Mém. Soc. zool. de France, 1890, and follow.)*.

(3) *Loc. cit.*, p. 637 of the *Ext.*

« Passaura » (Valle Zappa. — Ven. Est.) the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1893, stuffed by Mr. Bonomi and kept in my Collection n<sup>o</sup> 1072. — It offers a very distinct colour of a metallic-green round and above the eyes as far as towards nape, on the temporal region a space of the same colour; on the mesial line of nape as far as the beginning of the back and on the last feathers of pileum towards nape are seen bottle-green-black tints formed by the top of each separate feather; sides of the upper portion of neck, lores and cheeks chestnut, the latter spotted with black; chin, throat, partly the neck and sides deep-black. Among the several thousands of Wigeons I have killed or examined, I have found very few specimens like this and so old.

*b.* Specimens ♂ ad. with green tints only beyond and round the eye black hue on the cheeks more or less extended. Many authors speak of them (Savi, Olphe Gailard, Salvadori, etc.) and they are very easily found.

*c.* Specimens ♂ ad. with only chin black; neck chestnut with small black dots on the sides of head; pileum buff; there is absolutely no green colour (n<sup>o</sup> 332 my Collection). Pretty common.

*d.* Specimens ♂ ad. in moulting-plumage with green shades on the dark tints of pileum and nape (several specimens in my collection). Common.

*e.* Specimens ♂ juv. which have not yet white wing-coverts with green tints more or less extended and developed. Common.

*f.* Specimens ♀ with bottle-green tints of head and sides (three specimens in my collection). Not very common.

When specimens are moulting, they mostly offer such green tints, which however I have never observed in young ones in their first plumage, namely in that dress by which the males differ from the females especially by the metallic-green colour of wing-speculum.

M. Suchetet (1) observes that the wing-speculum in

(1) *Loc. cit.*, p. 636 of the *Ext.*

the passage from the full nuptial-dress to the moulting-plumage is modified in becoming more opaque, he says he has observed this in birds living in his aviaries. I have never noticed this fact in the several specimens of those Shovellers, Mallards, Wigeons, Pintails, Teals and Garganeys that I have had for some time and have still alive in my garden at Caoddo and the numerous specimens of my Collection, killed in their moulting-dress in the summer months, have never offered the speculum different from those killed in full wedding-dress.

**Hybrid between the Pintail and Teal**  
***Dafila acuta* L. × *Querquedula crecca* L.**

(N<sup>o</sup> 265 ♂ ad. (no date or locality).

A wide band buffish-bay from the sides of bill passes under the eye and ends about at half neck; the last row of wing-coverts edged with light buff; secondaries whitish-yellow at the top not very dark and pure, black in the outer web from the first to fourth; the following gilt and metallic-green which increases from fifth to last; the black and green form, on the folded wing, two long speculums one above the other, anteriorly and posteriorly edged by a light buffish and whitish-yellow band; tertials entirely brownish, blackish round the shaft, outwardly greyish-brown, the outermost with a black stripe along the outer web.

Bill as to form like Pintail and also as to colour judging from the two lead-blue lines on the sides of it; irides hazel; forehead and crown as far as towards nape like ♂ Pintail both as to design and hue, that is, black with top and edge of feathers dark hair-brown, so that the design appears undulated; nape bright and metallic blue-black in the centre, bright metallic-green on sides, here and there with small buffish lines which would incline to show the two white stripes on hind neck of ♂ Pintail, the lines being to a certain point continued and beginning, as in the ♂ of Pintail, on the nape, here the colour is

however different; space round eye brownish-black with rich green shades; surrounding of bill brownish, near it begins a wide buffish-bay band that passes under the eye and auricular region, ending at about half on the sides of neck, near the auricular region, where it diminishes, is observed a greenish-black streak which is spread a little in the band; before the bill a buffish-white mark which surrounds, as far as under the eye, the wide buffish-bay band; the latter slightly resembles the design that the ♂ of Teal has in that region; throat and neck reddish-brown and glossy underneath; the wide buffish-bay band is almost enclosed by a frame on one side by the dark colour of cheek and neck, and on the other by the tint also dark of nape and upper neck; where the dark tint ends the neck is partly enframed by a buffish-yellow band which on the upper part ascends with two stripes on the nape and is united to the lines I have described on the sides of nape, this in some measure would show the white tints of the hind neck of ♂ Pintail; base of neck light buffish with black zig-zags; zig-zags of upper parts like Pintail; fore-breast light buffish-white with black spots, some of which round; abdomen unicolour dusty-white; lower abdomen with slight zig-zags like Pintail; the unicolour space at sides of vent and of under tail-coverts does not exist (see ♂ Pintail), it is however buffish, but with zig-zags; feathers on flanks with zig-zags rather large like ♂ Teal; some of the lateral under tail-coverts have a rich green tint, under tail-coverts bluish-black, lateral ones buffish-white in a part of outer web towards the top; with their light portions they form a space analogous to that of Teal; upper wing-coverts brownish, more like those of Pintail; larger scapulars black outwardly towards the top, the remainder buffish-white with black shaft, some of them entirely brown with lighter zig-zags towards the body, buffish-white at top, outer side with a large black stripe longways which occupies the outermost part of web; primaries like Pintail; upper greater tail-coverts as for design like

Pintail but with a rich green tint on some of the laterals; tail brownish edged with yellowish-brown, the central feathers darker and lengthened as is often seen in young male Pintails at that age, in which they have not yet assumed the long black feathers. Total length about 20 inches, the two long middle tail feathers exceeding about 0.63 inches the laterals included; wing 8.66; tail 4.3; bill from forehead 1.85; tarsus 1.45; middle toe and claw 1.86.

This specimen, which seems to have been prepared since a long time, has like the Pintail the shape, crown, nape, the signs of the two stripes on hind-neck, zig-zags on upper parts, upper wing-coverts and partly the tail; like the Teal it has the speculum, green tint on sides of nape, the signs of the light lines under eye, spots on breast, the zig-zags on sides of breast and abdomen and is without the space on sides of vent and of under tail-coverts (see ♂ Pintail), it has also some of the lateral feathers of the latter.

The wing-speculum in this hybrid is precisely like that noticed in the ♀ hybrid between the Pintail and Teal of my Collection (N<sup>o</sup> 1062, January 1887 — Valle Morosina, killed by Mr. B. Duse); in fact (1) the wing-coverts in last row are tipped with light buff, the speculum half black and half green placed one above the other, only in mine there is a slight brass tint, the tertials also are like the hybrid above mentioned, the bill is like that of Pintail; other comparisons cannot be made as my specimen is a female, but the wings being alike is of no common importance.

Six hybrids of this kind have been described in the appreciated monography of M. Suchetet (2), namely :

♂ and ♀ in the Collection of Mr. van Wickevoort-Crommelin at Harlem, caught in Holland, the ♂ February 25<sup>th</sup> 1868 and the ♀ October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1888.

(1) E. Arrigoni Degli Oddi, Notizie sopra un ibrido rarissimo (*Atti Soc. Ven. Tr. Sc. nat.*, vol. XI, 2<sup>o</sup> con tav. col. (1889).

(2) *Loc. cit.*, 135-37 and 680-82 of the *Ext.*



♀ in my Collection.

♂ in the Museum at Cambridge (« Found in Leadenhall Market by Johnson, April 1862, and brought of him, stuffed by Leadbeater »).

♂ in the Museum of the Hon. Walter Rothschild at Tring, killed in Holland in 1892.

♂ in the Correr Museum at Venice, known to the french Naturalist by means of a communication from me.

The males resemble, except perhaps that of Museum Rothschild, to the type of Teal in speculum, and in some parts of head and breast; to the Pintail in bill, crown and partly in colour of flanks; the female of the Collection of van Wickevoort-Crommelin has, like my specimen, physiognomy and bill of Pintail, « *cependant*, says Suchetet, *elle est d'un tiers plus petite.* »

Padua, Italy, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1898.

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