

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

INCUBATION LENGTH OF DABBLING DUCKS

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Abstract. We collected unincubated eggs from wild Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Gadwall (*A. strepera*), Blue-winged Teal (*A. discors*), and Northern Shoveler (*A. clypeata*) nests and artificially incubated them at 37.5°C. Average incubation lengths of Mallard, Gadwall, and Northern Shoveler eggs did not differ from their wild-nesting counterparts, but artificially incubated Blue-winged Teal eggs required an additional 1.7 days to hatch, suggesting that wild-nesting teal incubated more effectively. A small sample of Mallard, Gadwall, and Northern Shoveler eggs artificially incubated at 38.3°C hatched 1 day sooner, indicating that incubation temperature affected incubation length. Mean incubation length of Blue-winged Teal declined by 1 day for each 11-day delay in nesting, but we found no such seasonal decline among Mallards, Gadwalls, or Northern Shovelers. There is no obvious explanation for the seasonal reduction in incubation length for Blue-winged Teal eggs incubated in a constant environment, and the phenomenon deserves further study.

Key words: Blue-winged Teal, dabbling ducks, Gadwall, incubation length, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, seasonal decline.