

# Baikal Teal at Bhavnagar: a first photographic record for Gujarat

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The Baikal Teal (*Anas formosa*), also called the Bimaculate Duck or Squawk Duck, is a dabbling duck that breeds in eastern Russia and winters mainly in East Asia (Carboneras & Kirwan 2018). It is a rare winter migrant to India, with scattered and isolated records, mainly from northern and Northeast India (Grimmett *et al.* 2011).

On 4 February 2018, in the morning at around 08:45 hrs, I was watching birds with Andrew Allport & Beverly Allport at Krishna - Kunj Talav (21° 45' N, 72° 07' E), Victoria Park, Bhavnagar. We spotted a male Baikal Teal in a flock of Common Teals (*Anas crecca*). It was my second sighting of the Baikal Teal as I had seen the species earlier at Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary, Haryana, with Sharad Sridhar on 23 March 2013. So, I could easily identify it based on my previous experience. We took some photos and re-confirmed the identification. It was an adult male.

I shared this news with senior birders here. The news of this sighting was shared widely and many birders visited this site to see this individual because the Baikal Teal is a vagrant to Gujarat. There are only two previous records of the species from the state; a male was shot near Ahmedabad (Barton 1899) and another bird was collected from Bhimsar Lake, near Bhuj, in Kachchh (Maharao 1966). Both these individuals were sent to the BNHS and are kept in the specimen collection there (Abdulali 1968). Thus, this is only the third sighting of the species from Gujarat and the first photographic record from the state.

[This individual was seen by many birders here. It was seen till early March in the same area. Hence, it was seen for one month here.

An interesting observation about this individual seen in Bhavnagar was that there was a large protuberance on one side of its neck; probably a lump or a tumour. The bird was otherwise flying normally and appeared to be healthy as it was seen feeding,



flying and moving around without any problems. It was last seen in early March and after that, it was not seen again even after an extensive search of the area. It is presumed that it migrated back to its breeding grounds. Since this individual came here and then migrated back, it seemed that the lump / tumour on its neck did not hamper its movements, it was flying normally.

The Baikal Teal is a vagrant to Gujarat. As stated by the author, this is only the third record from Gujarat and the first photographic record from the state. It is possible that it is overlooked amongst flocks of ducks here. The female Baikal Teal is similar to other female ducks (*Anas sp.*) and careful observation is required to identify it. Birders are urged to look for this species in the winter months in flocks of ducks here – Eds]

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