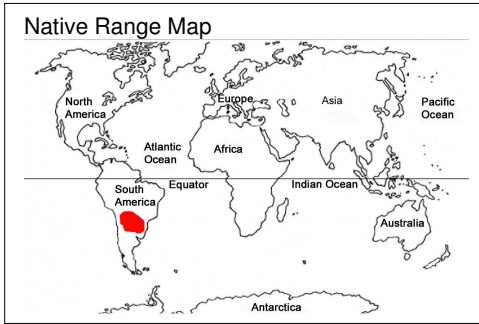


# Ringed Teal

Native Range Map



Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Subphylum: Vertebrata  
Class: Aves  
Order: Anseriformes  
Family: Anatidae  
Genus: *Callonetta*  
Species: *leucophrys*



Photo courtesy of Chris Tucci

## Habitat

- **In the Wild:** Ringed teals live in wetlands in South America from southern Bolivia, Paraguay, and southwestern Brazil, to northeastern Argentina and Uruguay. They are found near secluded pools, small streams, swampy tropical forests, ponds, marshy clearings in low woodlands, and often in forested habitats.
- **Exhibit Location:** Diversity of Birds

## Characteristics

- Length: 14-15 inches; Wingspan: 28 inches; Weight: 11-12 ounces
- Ringed teals are members of the wood duck group.
- Ringed teals have slender, gray-blue bills and brown eyes. They have light pink legs and feet and the toes have strong, pointed claws that allow them to easily perch in trees.
- The plumage of adults has beautiful iridescent green patterns. The identifying coloration of these ducks is a white patch in front of the green speculum (an iridescent patch of color on the wings).
- Adults are dimorphic. (Males and females have appearance differences.)
- Male ringed teals have a finely speckled, pinkish breast and a buff head that is bordered by a black line. This black line extends down to the base of the neck and then partially around it, forming an incomplete ring. Males also have dark, chestnut back and gray flanks.
- Females have an olive brown back, a barred chest and belly, and white blotches on the head. They have a dark tail and pale rump.
- The bills of the ringed teals have many tiny, plate-like ridges along the edge called lamellae. The lamellae of the ringed teals are coarse and allow them to cut vegetation like teeth.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** unknown; **In Captivity** approximately 10 – 15 years

## Behaviors

- The feeding habits of the ringed teal label them as “puddle ducks” or “dabblers.” They are surface feeders as opposed to diving ducks. They feed by dipping their head, neck and front of the body under water with the tail in the air. This behavior is called “up-ending.” They maintain this position with foot action, grazing on submerged bottom plants. After dabbling, they flap their wings vigorously a few times to shake out any water that might have entered the wing pockets and other air spaces.
- While swimming, they hold their tail horizontally so it does not touch the surface of the water.
- Like all wood ducks, the ringed teal's gait is peculiar, giving the effect of limping because they nod on only every other step.
- The male and female calls differ. The male has a soft, long whistle; the female a short, harsh quack.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** various insects

## Reproduction

- Ringed teals, like other wood ducks form strong pair-bonds, although they are not necessarily life-long.
- The male exhibits preening as part of his courtship displays, in which he flashes the iridescent wing colors toward the female to attract her attention. The male also swims around the female in a figure-eight pattern while throwing his head back and whistling. Breeding takes place in the water.

- Almost all ringed teal nests are in holes or other tree cavities. The nest is lined with down and 6-12 eggs are laid. The incubation period is about 29 days.
- Both the male and female take turns incubating the eggs and caring for the young. Hatching is timed to the weather and food availability, synchronizing with the best conditions. The chicks are precocial, meaning they are well developed when they are hatched.
- After hatching, the parents leave the nest. The ducklings follow sometimes making the leap from great heights.
- The chicks obtain oil for waterproofing their feathers by rubbing against their mother's abdominal plumage. They are called from the nest a day or two after hatching. After tumbling out, they follow their mother. They eat on their own, taking aquatic vegetation and insects as demonstrated by the adults. They can fly some 50-55 days after hatching and follow the adults to the winter feeding grounds.

### Diet

- **In the Wild:** water plants, insects, seeds
- **At the Zoo:** waterfowl diet, fish, insects

### Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** LC – least concern; **CITES Appendix:** not listed
- This species is not common, but neither is it globally threatened.
- Little is known about their numbers in the wild, but they seem to be locally abundant in certain areas.
- Predators: raptors, foxes, wild cats, humans

### Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- The ringed teal has long toes with strong, pointed claws. This adaptation allows them to sit and nest in trees.
- Roughly translated, the Latin name of the ringed teal, *Callonetta leucophrys*, means “the beautiful duck with the white wing patches.”
- During breeding season, ringed teals flock in groups of up to one hundred.
- They are one of the smallest ducks in the world.

### Sources:

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