

THE MONTCLAIR BIRD CLUB

YOUR WEEKLY BIRD 69

December 29, 2024

by Rick Wright

Where Ya From?

This funny-looking little duck was one of the highlights of a recent VENT tour I led in Berlin and Brandenburg. Floating placidly on one of the still ponds tucked into Berlin's largest city park, she showed off for some eighteen months to an admiring audience of birders and curious passersby.



Much as we enjoyed seeing and photographing her, it is very unlikely that this female Baikal teal had made it to the Tiergarten under her own cute steam. Individuals of this Siberian breeder are known to wander—presumably wild birds have been recorded as far east as Arizona and Montana—but they are also widely available for sale, in Europe and around the world. These aren't mere poultry, as prices ranging from \$350 to \$500 a pair show, but any well-heeled and persistent waterfowl collector with an internet connection can easily acquire one or a flock. As one silver-tongued participant in an online waterfowl forum wrote, "Dude, it's not that hard to find them at all!"

And sure enough, "our" Baikal teal turned out to be wearing a green plastic band on her right tarsus. Oddly, given the market price for this species, no claimant appeared to take the bird home, and it has probably fallen prey by now to age, sickness, or one or the other of the forty famous pairs of Eurasian goshawks that nest in Berlin's parks.

The bird we found and so greatly admired was "just an escape." But our experience with this little creature was an instructive one nonetheless: who knows when a wild wanderer will arrive in New Jersey? Time spent getting to know a rare bird, even one of illegitimate provenance, can pay off later.

If you would like to see your photographs highlighted here, send one or two pictures with a short paragraph to Sandy Sorkin & Rick Wright at MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com.



Southwest Wings

