

Unusual Duck found at Colusa National Wildlife Refuge

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A male falcated duck was identified at Colusa National Wildlife Refuge on December 8. This vagrant from Asia is sometimes seen in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska, but an extreme rarity for California. Birds seen in the USA are sometimes escapees from captivity but no determination has been made on this bird yet. This duck is in the teal family and is named for the male's long, falcated (sickle-shaped) tertials (wing feathers near the body) that overhang onto the tail.



Male falcated duck. (Photo by Mike Peters)

Since it was identified that morning, over 1,000 vehicles packed with people have been to Colusa in 19 days. The bird luckily enjoys the pond near the viewing platform providing space for birders and scopes. Days when the bird does not show himself, the parking lot is overflowing with vehicles as birders swarm the platform waiting all day for the bird to be spotted. Birders have come in from across California and the country. Most weekend days, a volunteer assist visitors (birders and nonbirders) in spotting the bird.



Visitors on the viewing platform at the refuge watching for the falcated duck. (Photo by Mike Peters)