SHORT NOTE
A wild Cape teal—yellowbill duck hybrid

by
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On 22 April 1973 a full-grown duck with an orange
bill was seen at Walvis Bay Municipal sewage
ponds, known as “Bird Paradise” (22°58’S
14°30’E). Closer examination through binoculars
revealed it to have several characters of both Cape
Teal Anas capensis and Yellowbill Duck A. undula-
ata. The former is a common species in this part
of South West Africa, but the Yellowbill Duck is a
vagrant — one example of unknown origin had
been at the sewage ponds for about a year prior to,
and including, the above date. H. H. Berry informed
us that he had seen the hybrid for some months
previously although he had not realized its identity.
The hybrid was slightly smaller than a Yellowbill
Duck, but considerably larger than a Cape Teal
and tending towards the former in body and head
proportions. Head and body colour resembled the
Yellowbill type, but the speculum was very like the
Cape Teal’s (Plate 2). Bill was light orange, tending
to Yellowbill size but Cape Teal shape. Legs were
dusky and light orange. The bird gave the loud
Yellowbill Duck quack (a call exclusive to the fe-
male of that species). It associated with both
parental species, although tending to occur most
often alone.

A subsequent visit by R. J. on 29 October 1973 re-
vealed the hybrid still present, but the putative
Yellowbill Duck parent had disappeared.

There appear to be no previous records of this cross
either in the wild or in captivity (Gray 1958,
Clancey 1967) although hybrids involving both
parental species have been reported (e.g. Rowan

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Plate 1. Yellowbill Duck x Cape Teal hybrid, Walvis Bay Oct. 1973 (Photo by W. Knouwds).

Plate 2. The hybrid duck displaying its speculum (Photo by W. Knouwds).